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# A study of the effects of interactive writing on reading comprehension in fifth grade.

Elaine L. Rundle-Schwark  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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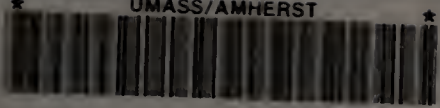
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**FIVE COLLEGE  
DEPOSITORY**

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTIVE WRITING  
ON READING COMPREHENSION IN FIFTH GRADE

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELAINE L. RUNDLE-SCHWARK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1992

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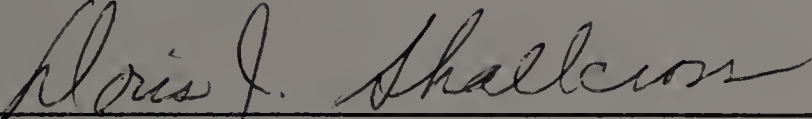
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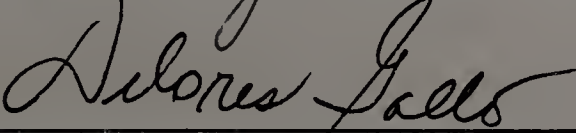
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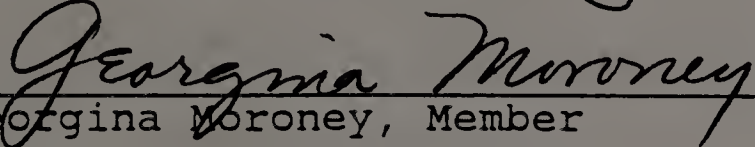
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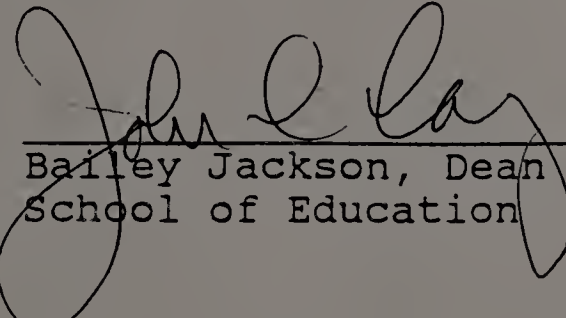
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## DEDICATION

To my husband, Dr. Stephen J. Schwark,  
who has loved, supported and encouraged  
me at all the right times and in all the  
right places

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Doris Shallcross, chairperson of my dissertation committee, for her encouragement, support and guidance.

I also wish to thank Dr. Delores Gallo, Dr. Robert Miltz and Dr. Georgina Moroney for their comments and suggestions, which improved the study.

Special thanks are due to Sr. Marilyn Jean Runkle, the principal of St. Agnes School at that time, for her encouragement, patience and forbearance and for permitting my intrusion into her school.

I earnestly and gratefully thank the following gifted writers, my students, who wrote bravely and freely, as I said they should, thereby teaching me more about writing than I ever knew. Their names are Jennifer, Nick C., Robert, Nick L., Melissa, Kristen, David, Angie, Jason, Anthony, Leigh, Christine, Lynn and Jeffrey.

There are many others, whose names are too numerous to list, who deserve thanks for their contributions to the completion of the study. Among these are my family and my friends, who showed great understanding and support during the many months of work, and three very important fellow students at the University of Massachusetts Harbor Campus, who have worked, suffered and celebrated with me for the past ten years.

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF INTERACTIVE WRITING ON READING  
COMPREHENSION IN FIFTH GRADE

MAY 1992

ELAINE L. RUNDLE-SCHWARK, B.S., STATE COLLEGE AT BOSTON

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Directed by: Professor Doris Shallcross

This study describes an experimental fifth grade reading class in which an interactive writing program replaced the traditional school model's follow-up activities of workbooks, skill worksheets or assigned comprehension questions. For the purpose of the case-study, the researcher made careful, systematic observations, collected samples of the students' work and kept detailed ethnographic notes for an entire year. The researcher hoped to learn about the complementary relationship between reading and writing and more specifically the effects of a writing-infused program on the reading comprehension ability of the students involved.

The subjects of the study were a group of fourteen students selected from the middle of a class of sixty-one fifth graders. The median IQ for the entire fifth grade was 108, while it was 100 for the fourteen students participating in the study group. The IQ ranged from 93-117.



In this dissertation can be found the results of the writer's exploration and her answers to five research questions. Did the students make observable improvements in their writing abilities and skills? Did the writing-infused students make gains in reading comprehension? How did the writing-infused students perform in tests measuring traditional language and reading achievement as compared to the other fifth grade students in the same school receiving traditional reading instruction as recommended by the teacher's manual for their basal reader? How useful did the writing-infused students feel the writing activities were to their reading and writing development? And lastly, how much interest and enjoyment did the students have in the interactive writing activities?

The findings cited in this study support the researcher's belief that students can be taught a process of writing that will positively affect their general reading ability - specifically their reading comprehension. The performance of the reading-writing students compared favorably to the performance of the students in the traditional classrooms. The students found the writing instruction to be appealing, informative and instructive and as a result made great progress in their competencies.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Rationale For Study

There can be no doubt that children's reading comprehension performance concerns educators at all levels today. We are devoting much intellectual and emotional energy to helping students better understand the texts that we require them to read in our schools. We no longer spend much energy on the same issues we did over the past 15 or 20 years (Peters and Carlsen, 1989). When I first started teaching we used to debate what the best way to teach beginning reading was: should the alphabet be taught as a prerequisite to reading instruction, or how could a school build a sound individualized program? Very little energy or effort was focused on the comprehension issue. "For better or worse, at least if one regards available instructional materials as a barometer of practice, the issue of early reading seems settled, with most commercial programs teaching phonics early and extensively, teaching the alphabet early on, and the progress in individualization monitored frequently, minutely (note the myriad of specific skills tests at the end of each unit and level), and individually. Individualized instruction also meant offering practice materials for children to complete individually and independently" (Pearson, 1985, p. 724).



New interest in comprehension came directly from concerns of practitioners. Data from National Assessment (NAEP, 1981) indicates that during the 70's American education made excellent progress for 9 year olds, however, we did not fare well in helping 13 or 17 year olds, especially on test items requiring inferential or interpretive comprehension. Also, the relatively new field of cognitive psychology considers the reading process to be one of its most valuable objects of study, encompassing as it does subprocesses like attention, perception, encoding, comprehension, memory, information storage, and retrieval (Pearson, 1985).

Prior to 1970, comprehension was considered as some degree of "approximation" to the text read. But no longer do we see text as a fixed object that the reader is supposed to "approximate" as closely as possible. Instead we now view text as a sort of blueprint for meaning, a set of clues that the reader uses as s/he builds a model of what the text means (Collins, Brown and Larkin, 1980). In short, this new view suggests that readers play a much more active constructive role in their own comprehension. How does the classroom teacher promote this new comprehension in her room?

The challenge we must meet is the question posed by the National Assessment Committee, "What can we do about comprehension?" We have gathered enough research, theory, and practical wisdom to know we must make several changes. The

writer believes we must accept the new view of comprehension. We must change the kinds of questions we ask about selections children read (Singer and Dolan, 1982; Hansen and Pearson, 1983). We must change our attitude toward and practices of teaching vocabulary (Johnson, 1983). We must change the way we teach comprehension skills (Durkin, 1978-79). And we must change our conception of the teacher's role in the reading program (Shannon, 1983).

There is little information about the effects of specific instructional practices in reading curricula and, even if there were, it would be difficult to determine which aspects of the programs were functional and which were frivolous, since programs are comprehensive and each contains a broad collection of instructional practices (Jenkins and Pany 1981, 163). Not all variables that influence comprehension qualify as instructional variables, however. For example, story plot (Thorndyke, 1977), text organization (Meyer, 1975), and syntactic structures (Chomsky, 1972) are factors which influence the comprehensibility of prose, but they are not instructional variables. Passage characteristics such as those cited above definitely can affect a reader's acquisition of an author's message and can legitimately be considered instructional variables with respect to this intended message. However, since they are characteristics of a particular passage, they cannot be manipulated without changing the passage itself. Researchers do not consider the modification

of a passage to make it more comprehensible to be an instance of teaching reading comprehension.

Since a good theory of reading which identifies promising instructional interventions and/or aids in the understanding and classification of variables affecting comprehension has not emerged (Jenkins and Pany, 1965), it is necessary for this thesis writer to suggest one and research its effectiveness.

Several years ago, while working with a class of fifth grade inner-city children who seemed to fall into two distinct ability groups - one group of children with depressed reading ability and the other with average to above average reading abilities, the writer had several enlightening experiences that led to an interest in the supportive relationship between writing and reading activities for both of these types of students. The writer strongly believes in an integral link between the acts of composing and reading literature.

It is from these experiences that the writer has come to believe that writing activities have both general and specific influences on reading comprehension. The writer has done much research in the theoretical basis and nature of the relationship between writing and reading, which suggests how they are similar yet independent. The relationships between reading and writing processes are interesting, highly complex, and resistant to "pat-answer" theoretical explanation. A review of the current literature indicates three directions that research has taken to show how reading and writing are

interrelated (Langer, 1986). Those who see the connection as one of construction talk in terms of reading (the decoding) and writing (the encoding) as being clearly related and that their separation as being illogical (Sealey, Sealey, and Millmore, 1979; Chall and Jacobs, 1984; Page, 1974; Shanahan, 1984). Those who hold the contextually embedded view of reading and writing as processes of meaning-making and the communication of ideas say that both require thought and evoke thought and share common cognitive behaviors (Harste, Burke, and Woodward 1983; Bissex, 1980; DeFord, 1982; Teale, 1982; Reagan, 1986). And those who believe the relationship is one of composing, say that both involve knowledge use and knowledge development (Calkins, 1983; Tierney and Pearson, 1983; Petrosky, 1982; Graves and Hanson, 1983; Stotsky, 1982). Finally, as Tierney, Leys, and Rogers (1984) have recently noted reading and writing are acts of social negotiation as well as cognition. In both their use and their development, reading and writing are influenced by the social context in which they evolve.

But most of these propositions are based on introspection and informal observation and most deal with beginning learners or higher educational levels of schooling - from junior high to college. The decision to conduct this study with children in the middle elementary grades was based on several considerations. Below grade three, reading instruction typically emphasizes word decoding rather than comprehension, a practice that is not without its critics (Smith, 1973).

Beyond grade eight, classroom instruction becomes increasingly content oriented, with less emphasis given to reading process. It is in the middle elementary grades that schools explicitly admit to teaching reading comprehension (Jenkins and Pany, 1981). By confining the study to one conducted with children as opposed to those with more mature readers, the researcher does not mean to imply that these studies are without relevance, only that her interest is primarily in instructional factors which effect the development of the ability to comprehend written discourse.

#### B. Questions

In this dissertation can be found the results of the writer's exploration, through a case study procedure, an analysis of samples of writing and the naturalistic observation of children while writing, and the study of the effects on reading comprehension of infusing a significant amount of interactive process writing components into a fifth grade reading program. The writing components took place during and replaced 50% of the regular reading instruction time. With this level of infusion, there were five research questions. Did the students make observable improvements in their writing abilities and skills? Did the writing-infused students make gains in reading comprehension? How did the writing-infused students perform in tests measuring traditional language and reading achievement as compared to the other fifth grade

students in the same school receiving traditional reading instruction as recommended by the teacher's manual for their basal reader? How useful did the writing-infused students feel the writing activities were to their reading and writing development? Finally, how much interest and enjoyment did the students have in the interactive writing activities?

### C. Background and Significance of the Study

Walter Loban was one of the first to note the reading-writing relationship following his 1976 longitudinal study of children's language development. Since then studies of the reading-writing relationship have abounded.

The earliest studies were those attempting to improve writing through writing instruction with effects on reading. Most studies in this category were experimental studies examining the effects of sentence-combining practice on writing maturity, writing quality, and reading comprehension. Combs in "Examining the Fit of Practice in Syntactic Manipulation and Scores in Reading Comprehension" (1979) concluded that the effects of sentence-combining practice on reading comprehension are ambiguous. He found that specifically designed measures were largely positive, but the results of cloze tests were varied, and standardized measures consistently showed non-significant or negative results between groups (p. 55).

Carmen Collins, as part of a study for her doctoral dissertation, "The Effects of Writing Experience in the

Expressive Mode Upon Reading, Self Esteem, Attitudes and Academic Achievement in Freshmen in a College Reading Course" (1979) worked with developmental students in a reading course for college freshmen. Ten minutes of writing expressively each day revealed that the simple act of expressive writing could significantly improve student's reading comprehension, enhance their attitudes toward instruction, and make them feel better about themselves as readers, writers, and learners (Collins, 1979). She says that "The idea that writing brings order, understanding and meaning to one's thoughts and experiences is another way of saying that writing processes internal information, makes it external, and holds it in graphic relief for reflection and learning." Students who write expressively seem to be thinking on paper, are seeing relationships, connections, and ideas which once were elusive and abstract and their convictions are strengthened. Most important, they are in a better position to understand another writer's organization of ideas (p. 52). When writing and reading are used together in this way, students soon become conscious of themselves as writers working through a process, then as readers working through the product of another writer's process. They learn to think as the writer generating text; they learn to think as the reader making meaning from text.

H. Walter-Lewis (1981) also found that writing for both "expressive, as well as receptive modes of language communication" combined with reading instruction in a

college-level reading course for academically underprepared students improved their reading comprehension significantly more than did a "traditional non-integrated" method for a control group.

No study had been done with elementary school-level writers and readers on the two processes simultaneously prior to the work of Jane Hansen and Donald Graves from 1981-1983. Their work was on children's understanding of the relationship between reading and writing, including "authorship" concepts, as it develops in beginning readers. Composing in each of these processes, according to Hansen and Graves, consists of imitating and inventing during encoding, decoding, and making meaning. "Children realize authors have options because they do the following in both the reading and writing process: exercising topic choice, revise by choice, observe different types of composing, and become exposed to variant interpretations." (p. 182)

#### D. Limitations of the Study

##### 1. Definition of Terms

In this study, writing is defined as engaging in the occupation of a writer or author-to communicate. According to Vygotsky in Thought and Language "Writing is elaborating the web of meaning."

In Let Them Write Creatively (1973), Grace Pratt-Butler says, "Creative writing" can be defined as the child's own



written expression of what he really feels" (p.6). To this the writer would add, what he thinks, knows, conjectures, observes.

The process writing approach consists of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. The process approach was constituted initially by its opposition to texts.

Free-writing is a method of writing developed by Kenneth Macrorie (1966) and adopted by Peter Elbow (1973) as a developmental process that would lead writers to what they wanted to say. The assumption is that writing shapes itself from within and reflects the processes of the individual's creative imagination. Students are asked to write whatever comes into their minds for a given period of time. Correctness is unimportant, the ideas are.

Peer-writing is when writing is a collaborative learning activity. Authors have different strengths and areas of expertise. As children watch each other, react to each other's ideas and rough drafts, talk together about their work, they provide important demonstrations for one another.

In the process writing approach, draft-writing is another name for the writing stage. This includes the first and all improved drafts which precede the final and published copy. In the writing process, authors often produce multiple, mental drafts even before they begin the document that is usually considered the first rough drafts (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). Draft form, a technique in which students write on every other line, is used in this study in writing each draft

copy. This technique enables the writer to transcribe thoughts freely and fluently without concern for form or convention. In addition, the skipped lines facilitate improvement without erasure. Thus, the writer retains his original ideas throughout the draft process. This retention of the writer's ideas expedites a transition to the editing and revision process. Students should generally be allowed to choose the topics they want to write about. These choices will stem mainly from their own experiences and interests.

The word reading implies comprehension and comprehension is getting one's questions answered. A particular meaning is the answer a reader gets to a particular question. Meaning therefore also depends on the questions that are asked. According to Frank Smith in Understanding Reading, a reader gets the meaning "of a book or poem from the writer's point of view only when the reader asks questions that the writer implicitly expected to be asked"(p. 167).

Reading comprehension is comprised of the following skills and abilities: understanding sentences; grasping details; summarizing; determining the main idea of the passage; choosing an appropriate title; drawing conclusions; comprehending implied information, such as a character's emotion; predicting outcomes; perceiving relationships like cause and effect, sequence, and comparison and contrast; understanding the author's purpose, opinion and style. Reading comprehension consists of representing and organizing

information in terms of one's previously acquired knowledge. In other words, reading comprehension depends on how readers use the various types of knowledge they possess to construct meaning from the printed page (Peters and Carlsen, 1989).

Literacy is the process by which we mediate the world for the purpose of learning. "To mediate the world is to create sign systems-language that stand between the world as it is and the world as we perceive it. These sign systems act as prisms that, through reflection, permit us better to understand ourselves and our world." (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988) The function of the sign systems we create is learning. The sign systems permit new insights and understandings and, in the process of their creation and use, expand humankind's potential to mean.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines author as "the writer of a literary work (as a book)." But authoring means much more. Authoring is a form of learning through writing. It involves "making" meanings, a process in which we originate, negotiate, and revise ideas to achieve personal and social goals. The process of working with words allows us to construct and generate meanings for ourselves as well as others (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988).

## 2. Methodological Limitations of the Study

The findings in my research must be viewed with caution due to the following factors and/or conditions which affect my

study. The pupils and teachers could not be randomly assigned to the study group due to the constraints caused by the grade level team-teaching already in place in the school. So there is the possibility that unsuspected variables may have contributed to the achievement gains in reading comprehension.

The validity of my findings from the student survey depended on the mood of the students when they completed the survey as well as the quality of the survey items. An instrument was devised and an atmosphere established which allowed for the least possible effect on the results of the student survey.

When we test reading comprehension, we test a complex of processes which are, for the most part, interactive. Curtis and Glaser (1983), Hanche and Gordon (1984), Johnson (1984), Marr (1983), Pearson and Valencia (1987), and Roser (1984), among others, have written about the problems involved in testing reading. Testing is not a perfectly developed procedure because testers cannot observe or completely understand what is happening when people read. In their struggle to understand and measure reading comprehension, testers have come up with a variety of different approaches. These include the usual standardized formats of reading passage accompanied by multiple choice questions, cloze tests, and vocabulary tests.

For the purposes of this study, the one test that was used was the SRA Achievement Series. Special emphasis was given to

the scores from the reading comprehension sections. This test was used because it is the testing program already in place for the school. The scores are reported in grade equivalency levels. One of the problems with this test was that the readers must see what the tester wants them to see. This is often literal, factual information, which is easy to locate in the test without careful reading (Cummins,1981). Also, it is a multiple choice test and multiple choice tests do not test the reader's ability to grasp a central idea and to perceive organization. Many of the special topics, skills, and abilities that are taught in the presently described reading/writing class' curriculum are not evaluated by these tests. For example, no prereading skills, including previewing or surveying, setting a purpose for reading, and making initial judgments about the text and author's purpose are tested. The influence that prior knowledge and familiarity with the language of the passage have on comprehension are not tested either. No postreading skills, including reflecting, elaborating, associating, reviewing, and checking one's own understanding are tested. Other active reading strategies that are not tested include asking questions, analyzing the functions of sentences and paragraphs in context, predicting outcomes, making accurate inferences, associating and synthesizing information across the text, and analyzing the author's tone, purpose, and style. Critical reading skills such as analyzing the author's motive and bias, distinguishing

fact from opinion, and making value judgments about the text are usually not tested at all, or at least not tested well. The personal and effective values that student readers are encouraged to assign to the text are not tested either (Wood, 1988).

This test, by no means, measured all that students had been taught and should be able to do as a result of reading instruction. But it provided the researcher with a tool with which to compare the improvement in reading achievement of the writing-infused group of students and the rest of the fifth grade student body. Therefore, because they are so limited in scope, the currently used test, cannot be allowed to determine the entire results of the case-study.

#### E. Overview of the Process Used in the Study

Using a case-study approach, the researcher documented through ethnographic field notes and copies of student writings the progress of fourteen students in writing and reading comprehension achievement. The researcher was a participant observer who noted verbal and non-verbal behavior that happened during the class and recorded it at the end of the class period. The data collection was principally through on-hand recordings of the children composing and conferencing in writing and reading. The investigator attempted to discern on-going behavior as it occurred and to make appropriate notes about its salient features. These observations continued over

a full academic year. Over a period of several months, by a careful sampling of the data, the researcher built up a detailed picture of effective techniques for teaching an interactive writing curriculum, the relationship between writing and reading and the effects of writing on reading comprehension.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### A. On Creative Writing

Before beginning this section of the chapter, it is necessary to set down a few premises which may be both a clarification and definition for what is to come. Writing is a complex symbolic representation of a person's thoughts and images. Ideas are the substance of writing. Often, it is indicative of the search for meaning and reveals the degree of knowing.

Although ideas are the substance of all written expression, the content of ideas is varied. Some written pieces are simply a reflection of the world as perceived by the observer. Other pieces of writing suggest relationships existing in the world. Written content may also be an expression of feeling. Then too, some written communication is sheer invention. The writer builds a character, an event, and even a place. To write different kinds of content, one must be able to work with different kinds of ideas. To teach children to write is first to help them create ideas from the raw materials of experiences they have had and are having with the real and imaginary world.

Creative writing can be defined as the child's own written expression of what he really feels. Then once it is down, his judgement may work upon it. Skills can be introduced and choices made, after the initial expression of feeling has come



forth. Creative writing is a means of expression which everyone can and should enjoy in one or more of its forms.

We can expand our own vision, our own creativity, by learning to recognize creativity when we see it. Freeing our inner potential for creativity from self-criticism and self-condemnation is important. Here are some ingredients that contribute to creative writing:

1. recognizing patterns that were not recognized before, seeing new patterns
2. making connections, making meaning
3. taking risks
4. challenging assumptions
5. taking advantage of chance
6. seeing in new ways.

Every work in writing is different because it combines elements in different ways, it causes us to see connections and patterns we were not aware of. Just by writing or reading this sentence you are recognizing patterns, for that is what language is, a complicated pattern of symbols and combination of symbols. This also often happens when we think of a piece of writing in terms of its relationship to different audiences.

Making or seeing connections is bringing together seemingly unrelated ideas, objects or events in a way that leads to new understanding. Writers make new connections in their work - vivid new images of things we have never thought about in quite that way before. The art of poetry, at least in

part, involves combining descriptive elements to produce unusual and powerful images. By making connections, we bring new things into our awareness.

It takes courage to create, to be responsible for bringing something new and strange into the world. The greatest creative scientists, artists, inventors, explorers and writers have had to withstand the ridicule and sometimes even the hatred of their contemporaries. James Joyce's famous book, Ulysses, was at first banned in the United States. To suggest, see, or make something new, and to keep suggesting, seeing, or making it new, we must be able to stand by ourselves, to believe in the worth of what we do. Change and newness can be threatening.

In order to challenge an assumption we must be able to ask, "What if?" or "Why not?" We need to see the possibility of a new way of being ourselves and of doing things. Challenge can lead to growth. Young children are often much better at challenging assumptions than adults are.

Artists and writers often take advantage of chance to find relationships they might not have seen. Perhaps chance occurrences express a part of ourselves that we are not consciously aware of. Or, perhaps we are surrounded by lucky chances, but we must be creative to recognize when they are new and useful patterns.

Sometimes young children hang off the bed and look at the world upside down. Everything looks different: the ceiling

becomes the empty floor with dips and corners, the chairs become elaborate ceiling structures, bookcases and lamps look like rock formations hanging from the roofs of caves. The room is seen in a new way. The process of "making the familiar strange" is intimately bound up with the process of creation. Creative people turn things around in their minds, actively seeking new ways of seeing things.

To be creative involves seeing things differently than one usually does, differently, perhaps, from the way other people do. Growth, change, and creation come from allowing the world to transform itself.

Constance McCullough, in Handbook for Teaching the Language Arts (1969), says, "all writing that comes from out of the head and heart of the child instead of out of the book or out of the teacher's mouth may be said to be creative writing." It is the writer's contention that all writing discussed in this paper is "creative writing" because it contains or requires use of all of the afore mentioned ingredients. Therefore, throughout the paper, whenever the word writing is used, it is used to mean creative writing - writing that the author created in order to recognize patterns, make connections, challenge assumptions, see in new ways while willingly taking risks or advantage of chance.

This part of the review, then, is a personal journey to discover all the writer can about the teaching of writing as it deals with the actual process of writing. It is an attempt to

understand the paradigms and perspectives on which a writing program can be based. It is an attempt to learn what processes writers use, what children do when they write and how these behaviors change as they grow older, and how the behaviors of skilled and unskilled writers differ. We know through commonsense observations that writing produced by children has different features from writing produced by more mature people. How are they different and why are they different? What is the teacher's responsibilities in helping changes in their students' writing happen?

It is the hope of the writer that, once she has a good understanding of how to teach writing, she will be able to select or design a writing program that will lead to a major impact on her students' writing program and result in better comprehension of materials written by others. For as Penny Platt said as early as 1977, " The ability to organize one's thoughts in writing is helpful for full comprehension of someone else's written thoughts" (p.268). It would seem that a child who has experienced authoring can more easily relate to the works of another author. And it would seem that the writer of this paper can learn about writing by writing it.

## 1. Paradigms and Perspectives

### a. Introduction

In the American elementary curriculum, writing is being recognized as important to the development of skills in

reading, speaking, listening and thinking. Writing once again is viewed as a skill basic to functioning in school and society. In education, there has been growing concern over a perceived lack of writing abilities in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary students. As attention to writing skills increases, it has become apparent that many teachers are poorly prepared to teach writing. They often do not write themselves and/or are ignorant of how to teach writing, or they are not knowledgeable about the variety of practices available and used by teachers. Most are also unfamiliar with the research on the teaching of writing.

The recent literature (Clay, DeFord, Ferreiro, Harste and Burke) stresses the activeness of children's minds, who long before school entry, begin to construct their own notions of how written language works. As Lucy Calkins says, "There is no plot line in the bewildering complexity of our lives but that which we make and find for ourselves. By articulating experience, we frame selected moments in our lives, to uncover and to celebrate the organizing patterns of our existence." Writing is the process of shaping and forming. When children write, they represent their constructions of relationships: that is what composing means. From this perspective, the teacher's role is to support and extend the strategies the child has begun to use at home.

As the writer sees it, methods are derived from philosophical perspectives on language, on meaning, on

communication, on learning, and on the ways to assist learning. The writer believes it's important for teachers to become reflective practitioners of the philosophical dimensions of their work because nothing short of consciousness will make instruction sensible and deliberate, the result of knowledge and design rather than custom and accident. C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, in their book on rhetoric and the teaching of writing, say that too many teachers proceed unreflectively from recollections of how they were taught and from hearsay about what "everybody does" supported by the outmoded premises, illusory distinctions, false claims, regimented methods, and prescriptivist emphases enshrined in composition textbooks...What mainly sustains this barren school work is a powerful intellectual inertia - bred over centuries, not just years, of unreflective practice - which allows teachers to ignore, or even fail to notice, the striking discrepancies between what writers actually do and what textbooks tell us they do, or between how people develop as language users and what traditional pedagogy recommends to enhance that development. Without philosophical awareness and a willingness to act upon the results of observation, there is nothing to challenge the inertia.

Before this can be done, answers to the following questions must be found: How is development in writing conceived of by teachers and researchers? How does one develop from an inexperienced to a mature writer? How can schools,

particularly teachers of writing, assist the development of independent writers? Although the writer has listed these questions separately, researchers in the field do not necessarily see them as distinct and therefore do not always focus on answering one apart from another. The writer will also look at the substance of current controversies over appropriate teaching responsibilities and methods. This disagreement is wide-spread but not without remedy if we assume that teachers are not faced with an either/or choice.

The major reason why few adequate answers have been forth-coming is that research has been conducted in the absence of leading paradigms of writing. In an article discussing needed research in composing, Richard Young calls for historical research in the field of composing rhetoric, particularly investigations of the development of contemporary approaches to the teaching of writing (1978,29). Young asserts that our approaches to composition teaching should be based on sets of tacit assumptions, and that these assumptions form a paradigm, or system of widely shared values, beliefs, and methods that determines the nature and conduct of the discipline. The paradigm determines what is included and what is excluded from the discipline, what is taught and what is not taught, what problems are regarded as important and unimportant, and, by implication, what research is regarded as valuable in developing the discipline. What the writer will attempt to do in this paper is to explore the nature of the

controlling paradigms in composition and the approaches to writing instruction based on these paradigms. There are numerous perspectives on the nature of the controlling paradigms in composition. There is no single best conceptualization of the system that determines the nature and conduct of the discipline. Each provides a different "window" through which to perceive the writing process.

b. As Proposed By Barry M. Kroll

In an article on developmental perspectives and the teaching of composition, Barry M. Kroll proposes that throughout this century, the field of composition teaching has been influenced by two dominant but opposing paradigms, two theoretical perspectives from which to approach the teaching of writing (1980, 742). These perspectives are most usefully differentiated by their conceptions of human development. They are competing perspectives which have coexisted uneasily in composition pedagogy. He says that a resolution of conflicting views is being achieved through an emergent synthesis by selecting and modifying knowledge from the incompatible perspectives with new thinking and developing a new perspective which is internally consistent and more adequate than its precursors. (See Table 1 for a comparison of the emphases and assumptions of the perspectives as proposed by Barry Kroll.)

Historically, there have been two competing schools of thought concerning human development, colloquially summarized as nature versus nurture, and each theory has led to a distinct



Table 1.--Distinctions in Emphasis and Assumptions Among Interventionism, Interactionism, and Maturationism.

INTERVENTIONISM	INTERACTIONISM	MATURATIONISM
<p>Emphases on:</p> <p>product  teacher as dispenser of accepted conventions  textbook  curriculum  traditional rhetorical modes (narration, description, exposition, argument)  models of polished writing and analyses of them  linear composing process : (plan or outline, write, revise)  style (subordination, coordination, parallelism, economy, variety, etc.)  conventions of mechanics, usage, punctuation, and grammar--the belief that teaching editing is teaching writing</p>	<p>Emphases on:</p> <p>the writing process  invention and discovery strategies  problem-solving strategies  rhetoric: creating the appropriate voice, form, and message for the particular audience and occasion  communication between writer and reader  personal and expository writing</p>	<p>Emphases on:</p> <p>the writer  the writing process  the growth of the writer through self-examination and self-discovery  the discovery of voice  the discovery of appropriate form  the process of knowing through writing  personal or expressive writing</p>
<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Reality is unchanging and the writer's task is to describe reality accurately, which means within the conventions of accepted language and form.</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Writing is an ongoing and recursive process of discovery and of knowing, a dialectical process of accomodation and assimilation. Reality lies between the reader and writer, is continually recreated in the interaction between each.</p>	<p>Assumptions:</p> <p>Writing is epistomic, a way of knowing and creating our world. Reality is not a <u>priori</u>, but is made and remade by the writer.</p>

Christopher Hayes, "Revising and Classifying Basic Writing Rhetorics"  
Detroit, 18 March 1983

definition of the main tasks of education (Kohlberg). Proponents of the "nurture" theory maintain that the environment is the essential source of development. The basic task of education is to systematically arrange specific environmental inputs so that learning of essential skills is assured. Proponents of the "nature" theory say that the individual organism contains the seeds of its own growth. The basic task of education, therefore, is to provide those general conditions of freedom and security within which an individual can find fulfillment. There are an abundant number of approaches to composition instruction which can be described as either "nature" or "nurture" in emphasis, or as belonging to one of the dominant developmental perspectives: interventionism or maturationism.

i. Interventionism In his report, "A Classification and Review of Basic Writing Rhetorics", Christopher Hayes says that the predominant philosophy of basic writing instruction is interventionism (1983, 2). Essentially, the purpose of the teacher and textbooks is to intervene in the learning process in order to teach the conventions of acceptable form and usage. According to the interventionist perspective, education is a process of transmitting fundamental knowledge and skills. The two main pedagogical concerns of interventionism are the content of instruction (what is to be transmitted to the student) and the agent of instruction (who or what is to effect the transmission). The archetypal interventionist rhetoric

text would emphasize the written product; would present a linear formulaic conception of the composing process (i.e., outline, write, and revise); would stress the traditional modes of narration, description, exposition and secondary stress on argument; would devote a great many pages to patterns of paragraph development (comparison, classification, exemplification, etc.); would probably include models of "good" (i.e., professional) writing that students are to emulate; and would likely devote a number of pages to style. For the interventionist, the writer's task is to capture reality accurately in the universal conventions of usage and form.

The two main proponents of interventionism - the essentialists and the educational technologists - agree that transmission is the aim of education, but they differ in their answers to the questions of what and who is to be involved in the transmission.

For the essentialist, education involves the transmission of cultural knowledge and humanistic values. The major concern of the essentialist course is the content of instruction. The dual aims of education for them are to transmit an appreciation of the great literature of the West and to teach the skills of written composition. The active agent in this process is the humanely educated teacher, who must motivate students to apply the mental discipline required to master essential knowledge. The essentialist's concern for humanistic knowledge can lead to a strong literature emphasis in the composition course,

ostensibly used as models, but often intended to exert a humanizing influence on the students. The essentialists' concern for communication skills often leads to an emphasis on the techniques of expository and argumentative writing. Such a course is concerned with written products, with teaching students to understand and use those features which characterize good texts. Instruction would focus on such topics as standard usage, sentence structure, style, paragraph structure, kinds of prose, and written conventions like punctuation and mechanics.

Proponents of the approach of educational technology agree that the aim of education is to transmit basic skills useful in a technological society. They, however, focus their concern on the agent of education. The agent is often not the humanely educated teacher, but a program - a technology of instruction which is "teacher-proof". The teacher's role is minimal: to maintain records and monitor systems. In designing learning programs, the technologist assumes that all learning is hierarchical, a cumulative sequence of smaller to larger units, and hence that language and composition can be programmed into a standard sequence of steps. Easiest to program are the basic word-and-sentence level skills such as spelling, usage, and grammatical analysis, although there have been efforts to use the approach of educational technology in teaching higher-level composing skills. In most basic skills courses constructed on the educational technology model, students are first tested to

ascertain their entry point (or "baseline") in one or more skills areas, and then are assigned a sequence of teaching units to complete. The system usually requires that students demonstrate mastery of each discrete skill before moving to the next unit in the sequence. Program texts, skill building modules, and computer assisted instructional programs are all crucial elements, because the program itself is the primary agent of education, and because there is the additional assumption, adopted from the behaviorist learning theory, that immediate feedback on one's performance is essential for effective learning (Kroll 1980, 745).

Interventionist textbooks do not emphasize what has come to be called the "process" of composing. Instead, they present writing as a learnable skill that can be mastered if the student follows a prescribed sequence of steps and masters the conventions that traditional authorities have agreed upon in their analysis of well-composed products. A good example of a textbook written with this emphasis is William J. Kerrigan's Writing to the Point: Six Basic Steps (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanivich, 1979).

ii. Maturationism The maturationist perspective is the antithesis of interventionism. The maturationist perspective assumes multiple realities, individual voices, and diverse form. The maturationist composition course centers on exploring the mind of the writer rather than on prescriptive conventions. The focus in maturationism is the person. Since

this is the "nature" theory of growth development, it is viewed as the working out of the individual's unique inner potential for growth. The pedagogical emphases are on the student (the active agent of education) and on self-actualization, the full, healthy functioning of the student in relation to present circumstances. There are two central concepts underlying programs which lean toward the maturationist perspective. One core concept is that of personal writing, writing centered on the experiences and emotions of the students and aimed at fostering personal growth. Not prescriptive conventions, but the exploring mind of the writer lies at the center of the maturationist writing. Composition programs have been developed which proceed "from the convention that the primary goal of any writing course is self-discovery for the student and that the most viable indication of that self-discovery is the appearance, in the student's writing, of an authentic voice." (Stewart 1972, xii). The second core concept is that of writing as artistic expression. The conviction is that when writing is not being taught as art, as more than a craft or skill, it is not writing that is being taught, but something else. The focus is on the art of writing itself, to emphasize the process of composing, particularly the process of skilled writers. The writing teacher's task is to create a climate which will enable students to experience the process of writing in the same ways professional writers do. There are no prescriptive rhetorics or grammar. No collections of readings

to serve as models of organization or to provide a content for the course. The classes are not textbook-oriented, assignment-centered, or teacher-dominated.

The maturationist teacher and textbook would not ignore conventions of form or style, but the primary emphasis would fall on developing writing fluency, using writing as a means of self-discovery, and encouraging the student to allow the organic process of writing to dictate relevant content, appropriate structure, and authentic voice (Hayes 1983, 6). The drawback that some teachers will see with the usual maturationist textbooks, is that while they encourage fluency, they seem to take too long to get to the academic "theme writing". The attention devoted to self-expression and exploratory drafting is fine for the casual writer but unnecessarily indulgent and time consuming in the timetable to teach students the conventions of audience-centered academic discourse.

A strong advocate of the maturationist perspective, Lou Kelly, in his book on competence and creativity says, "I believe that the student's own language and experience - the external and internal - that he shares with the class make the best content for composition. Or to say it another way: the best content for composition is the writer - as he reveals his self, thoughtfully and feelingly in his own language, with his own voice."(1972, 348).

Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers (1973) is perhaps the best known book among teachers with a maturationist orientation. Elbow popularized free writing as a way to explore ideas and feelings, to find an authentic voice, and to allow the preconscious mind to find form. In the book, Elbow tries two things: to help the writer actually generate words better - more freely, and powerfully: not to make judgments about words but to generate them better; and to help the writer improve his ability to make his own judgment about which parts of his writing to keep and which parts to throw away. He feels writing is a natural activity of the mind. Elbow's approach grows out of his sense that what blocks student writing is the fear of error and messiness, the tyranny of wanting to get it right the first time. Elbow argues that invention, concept-formation, planning, and organization occur as one writer, as the human mind, doing what it naturally does, generates a logical flow of connections among images, words and syntax. (Hayes 1983, 8)

Elbow's "teacherless class" suspends the rigors of grading to allow for a different kind of rigor, the investigation of the reader's response to writing. For Elbow, "writing without teachers" changes the ambience of the classroom by replacing the traditional teacher-oriented "doubting game" with the "believing game". In the "doubting game" the teacher has the authority of the final arbiter, the last word that closes the student's writing. The "believing game" keeps the writing



open. The "believing game" lets the student writers begin to see what effects their words have on readers.

Donald M. Murray is another well-known author with maturationist leanings. In A Writer Teaches Writing (1968), he explains the writing process in terms of what writers do. According to him, writers discover a subject, sense an audience, search for specifics, create a design, write, develop a critical eye, and rewrite. Murray says that using this process, writers write for themselves and not other readers. He suggests that writers be encouraged to develop an "other self" to evaluate their own writing. "The successful writer does not so much correct error as discover what is working and extend that element in the writing. The writer looks for the voice, the order, the relationship of information that is working well, and concentrates on making the entire piece of writing have the effectiveness of the successful fragment." (Murray 1982, 146). He suggests that the responsive teacher should always be attempting to get the student to bypass the global evaluations of failure and move into an element that is working well. The teacher should listen to what the student is saying - and not saying - to help the student hear the "other self" that has been monitoring what isn't yet on the page or what may be beginning to be on the page. This is frequently done through student-teacher conferences which should be short and frequent.

iii. Interactionism The third developmental perspective- interactionism- seems to offer an alternative for composition

pedagogy. Interactionism entails neither a "nurture" nor a "nature" conception of development. Development is viewed as a dynamic interaction between individual and environment, between internal and external influences. The interactionist approach attempts to balance text, writer, and reader in the active process of creating a particular message in an appropriate form for an identified audience. In its emphasis on audience, interactionism has affinities with the New Rhetoric, and by engaging students and teacher in identifying and solving problems, interactionism shows its affinity with cognitive psychology (a la Piaget, Vygotsky, and Freire) and with John Dewey's theories on progressive education.

The main spokesman for an interactive theory of development has been Jean Piaget. He argues that growth always involves a dialectical relationship between external stimuli and an organism's internal structure. The mechanisms for the development are assimilation and accommodation. In the process of assimilation, the knower changes the known reality to fit existing cognitive structures; in the process of accommodation, the structures are modified to fit the properties of the known.

In the interactionist's view, the aim of education is the development of higher levels of active intelligence - those forms of reflective thinking which require not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the attainment of intellectual discipline and conceptual skills. Both the teachers and students share responsibility for learning; both

are agents of education (Kroll 1980, 748). The teacher's tasks are to propose meaningful, challenging assignments and to help students acquire the skills or knowledge necessary to do the assignments. The students are responsible for active participation, working together cooperatively.

John Dewey was also an early interactionist. The following list of seven basic conditions for education is a succinct version of Dewey's most important principles which are particularly applicable to the teaching of writing (Frankens 1965, 170).

1. Student should engage in activities.
2. Education should involve prolonged activity.
3. Education should involve a problem to be solved by thinking.
4. Activities should be carried out in cooperation with other students and their teacher.
5. Activities should challenge the student, but be within their capacities and appeal to their interests.
6. The group atmosphere in the classroom should be as free and democratic as possible.
7. The educational experience should be worthwhile in itself, as well as, promote desirable future experiences.

When Dewey's conditions of education are applied, the writing activity is a prolonged experience through which students discover that writing is a sustained organic process. A collaborative situation is created in which students can learn from one another. For Dewey, learning should be experimental and should occur through the interaction of learners and the wider social environment, not through the teacher's imposition of subject matter from above and outside the experience of learners (Trimbur 1985, 91). And of course, a major aim is to develop composing skills which can be useful in future writing problems.

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire argues that the social construction of knowledge occurs within and reproduces structures of power and cultural domination. Traditional education, Freire says, is based on a "banking" metaphor: the bank clerk educator makes deposits to fill up the student's account. The students "receive" the world as "passive entities". In contrast to the banking concept of education, Freire and the teachers he has influenced propose "conscientization", the process of cultural interaction in which the everyday experiences of the oppressed and powerless can be reclaimed and reinterpreted. Conscientization is a method of resistance where learners are no longer passive recipients of knowledge but rather knowing subjects whose learning leads them to a deepening awareness of the social forces and relations of power that shape their immediate

experience. The role of the teacher is to join with the students as "critical co-investigators" in a dialogical relation (Trimbur 1985, 93).

Interactionism holds real promise as a theoretical perspective which can synthesize opposing elements in the major approaches to composition teaching. If we look at the concerns of evaluating writing, treating errors, dealing with poor skills and attitudes, and making assignments, we can see how an interactionist perspective functions as a synthesis to the divergent approaches of the interventionist and maturationist perspectives while maintaining its own integrity.

Evaluation of students' writing is a central task for most composition teachers. In the interventionist perspective, the student's paper is compared with some standard of excellence and is judged according to how closely it approximates the standard. This is a predominately text-centered approach to evaluation. On the other hand, in the maturationist perspective, a student's paper is judged in the context of the student's intentions, efforts and past performance. An interactionist approach would result in an integration of both the text and the context procedures. The evaluator must balance both procedures.

The problem of errors is a related concern. Text-centered evaluation involves comprehensive error making. The second procedure is to overlook many specific errors because they are trivial features of a composition and tell little about an

individual writer's progress in sincere, self-confident expression. The interactionist approach synthesizes these procedures in its emphasis on discovering the intelligent strategies which underlie a student's errors. By analyzing patterns of errors, the teacher hopes to detect why a student makes certain mistakes (Kroll and Schafer 1978, 242-248 ). And so, errors are not ignored, but neither are they simply made the basis on which to rate an assignment.

In dealing with the tentative and fearful attitudes of unskilled, insecure writers, the interactionist approach emphasizes both the student's skills and self-esteem. In contrast, an interventionist places priority on teaching the basic skills which the students lack, assuming that once the students acquire control of such skills their written work will show marked improvement, and therefore, their self-esteem will improve as writers. A maturationist focuses on the self-confidence of the students, assuming that only when these writers are able to engage freely in the process of composing will they produce the quantities of writing necessary for improvement. The interactionist grants the logic of both viewpoints and works simultaneously on improving skills and self-confidence.

The dominant perspectives support quite different positions on the nature and function of assignments. In the interventionist classes, tight control over assignments is important in order to ensure sequence and continuity of

instruction, to justify the use of models and to permit evaluation according to specific textual standards. There is far less concern with assignment making in the maturationist class, where students find their own meaning, their own subjects for writing. The interactionist balances these approaches with guided work on wholistic writing problems. The students willingly engage in work that will challenge and advance their composing skills. The interactionist believes that development results from the conflicts that arise when a student confronts a writing problem which cannot adequately be resolved through routine strategies. Such situations force the student to extend thinking and problem solving skills.

Thus interactionism integrates elements of maturation and intervention approaches. It also offers a distinct emphasis in its approach to written communication. Interventionism focuses on the production of texts which conform to designated specifications, while maturationism emphasizes discovery and expression of personal meaning. Interactionism, however, places its emphasis on writing as communication, focusing on the constructing of messages. The writer here must be aware of the purpose for communicating, and of the reader's needs and expectations. In writing, the aim is to build bridges between one's own beliefs or ideas and those of others. For the novice writer, determining the reader presents special difficulties. James Moffet traces even basic problems in mechanics and organization to the writer's insensitivity to the reader's

perspective. The interactionist places special emphasis on helping writers become aware of the reader's point of view - anticipating the reader's responses, predicting the reader's questions and focusing on the reader's difficulties in understanding the message. Writing results in the creation of shared meanings - in short, in communication.

The interventionist and the maturationist perspectives have played influential roles in shaping the teaching of writing. They have led to consistent and coherent pedagogies. Choosing between the two would leave a teacher with the ambivalent feeling that each captures only part of the truth. A teacher could choose a philosophy of eclecticism, but the interactionist perspective offers its own view of human development and synthesizes a number of divergent approaches in the teaching of composition. It promises a more unified perspective and enables a sustained program of research in the field of composition. (See Table 2. for a comparison of the significant elements of the perspectives as proposed by Barry Kroll.)

c. As Described By Nan Johnson

Another author, Nan Johnson, describes an alternative set of perspectives for the field of composition in her article, "Three Nineteenth-Century Rhetoricians: The Humanist Alternative to Rhetoric As Skills Management" (Johnson, 1982). The category names she uses are different, but the assumptions, beliefs and positions are very similar to those previously



Table 2.--Dominant Paradigms As Proposed by Barry M. Kroll - A Comparison

	Interventionism	Interactionism	Maturationism
Influencing Conceptions of Human Development	"Mature" view Inherited traits determined once developed.	Dev. is a dynamic interaction between individual and environment-internal and external influences.	"Nurture" view environment or experience is essential source of development.
Definition of Education	Process of transmitting basic knowledge and skills.	Dialectical process between external stimuli and internal structure.	Process centered on mind of writer.
Task of Education	To provide gen. conditions of freedom needed for learning.	To dev. higher levels of active intelligence and discipline.	To systematically arrange environment so learning is assured.
Conception of Composing Process	Writing produces texts with linear, formulaic, designated specifications.	Writing communicates balance in text, writer, and reader by active process of creating a message for a specific audience.	Writing is an art with no prescribed rhetorics or grammar, but with personal message through discovery.
Purpose of teacher and Textbook	-learning agent -intervening to teach form and usage -motivating students' mental discipline.	-sharing students' responsibility to be learner -proposing meaningful assignments -helping students acquire skills.	-helping dev. fluency and self-discovery -encouraging students' organic process find content, structure and authentic voice.
Content of Instruction in Writing	Texts emphasize written product in narration, description, and argument-paragraph patterns-models of "good" writing- study skills.	Active participation of students in cooperative learning.	Personal Writing: centered on the experience and emotions of student and aimed at fostering personal growth (indicated by dev. "authentic" voice and self-discovery.

Adapted from Elaine L. Rundle-Schwark, "Paradigm, Perspectives and Approaches, December, 1987.

detailed. She describes rhetoric as skills management as a "back-to-basics" curriculum for composition which focuses on teaching the skills of writing. Proponents question whether teachers can rightfully involve themselves in the complex task of raising students' consciousness when the same students are confused about grammar, punctuation, organization, topic sentences, and the differences between specific and general. In his book on the philosophy of composition, E.D. Hirsch says that he assumes that students cannot write effectively or even competently because they never have been taught basic information about how to write correctly and that if these students are exposed to standards of correctness termed "typical rules and maxims", the know-how will subsequently evolve. Hirsch proposes that teachers of composition can best teach writing by teaching students "readability", a quality of style that emphasizes "speed of closure and semantic adequacy". He equates "readability" with "communicative writing" (Hirsch 1977, 144).

The contemporary humanist approach addresses discourse competence as a personally expressive and socially significant discourse. Joseph Duffey in an article on literature and literacy urged teachers towards instilling in students an awareness of the vital connection among language skills, self-expression, and social contributions (Duffey, 1979). Proponents feel that students need to be made aware that each has an individual writing voice and that language competence

can have both social impact and cultural relevance. James Britton, Janet Emig and Donald Murray were among the first to attempt to direct pedagogical practice toward a presentation of writing as a communicative process.

Mina Shaughnessy, in her book on errors and expectations, (Shaughnessy, 1977) advocates a pedagogical approach that retains a balance between a humanistic perspective on language competence and an emphasis on the important skills and standards. She argues that correctness should be presented to students as significant, replicable standards because of the way these standards facilitate the communicative intentions of writers. Shaughnessy argues that programs are not the answers to students' learning problems but that teachers can be. Teachers must develop programs in response to the needs of individual student populations. The text proposes that if students understand why they are being asked to learn something, they will be disposed to learn it.

#### d. Summary

The writer has attempted in this portion of the chapter to explore how development in writing is conceived of by several researchers, authors and teachers. It is a tentative formulation. It does not at all pretend to be exhaustive or definitive. What is needed is a perspective that has a larger acceptance by educators so that teachers will know what is taught and what is not taught, what problems are regarded as important and unimportant, and, by implication, what research is regarded as valuable in developing the discipline.

In the rest of this section, the writer will shift from a focus on the theoretical aspects of the study of writing to a more practical one. The process of writing, the development of an inexperienced writer into a mature writer, the teacher's responsibility in the student writer's growth, and some contemporary approaches to writing instruction are some of the issues that will be explored more fully.

## 2. The Process of Writing

### a. Introduction

Until recently, textbooks devoted to the study of composition were difficult, if not impossible, to find. Writing was considered part of general language arts. During the last fifteen years, however, there have been dramatic changes in the way writing is perceived, researched and taught. Beginning with theorists such as Moffet, Murray and Elbow and researchers like Janet Emig and Donald Graves, the study of writing has become important for both teachers and researchers.

Before 1970, composition was one of the least researched areas in the field of education. Graves pointed out that "for every \$3,000 spent on children's ability to receive information (through reading) \$1.00 was spent on their power to send it in writing. The funds for writing research come to less than one - tenth of one percent of the research funds for education" (1984, 84).

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The field has undergone a paradigm shift. Now, instead of asking only, "What are the forms of good writing?", many teachers and researchers are asking, "What processes do writers use?", "What do children do when they write and how do these behaviors change as they grow older?", and "How do the behaviors of skilled and unskilled writers differ?". The focus has shifted from products to process.

#### b.As A Linear Process

Interest in the writer writing, or in the "process of composing", as it has come to be called, has caused scholars and researchers as much interest as the final version of the text. The "process of composing" has presented its own problems, perhaps the most difficult being one of definition: what, in fact, does "process" mean? For several years the dominant view of composing was that the process was linear, proceeding from prewriting or prevision, to writing or composing or vision, to rewriting or revision, and finally, to editing.

According to Emig (1971), Stallard (1976), Britton et al (1975), Murray (1978), and Graves (1973), the stages may be defined as follows:

The prewriting stage involves preparation for writing and includes intention, planning and organization. Essentially, the writer thinks through the writing task.

The composing stage is characterized by the actual writing of the text, which involves a complex process of developing the topic and making a number of decisions about the form and context. During this stage, the writer does not write continuously; he/she pauses, rereads what has been written and rewrites. Research indicates that different patterns are evident in good and poor writers at this stage. Good writers have more pauses which are used for the planning, reorienting and revising of the writing; while less able writers have fewer pauses which are less purposeful such as glancing around (Ranka, 1978 and Graves, 1973).

In the rewriting stage the writer rewrites, alters, confirms or develops his/her writing.

In Learning By Teaching, Donald M. Murray presents a clear, accurate description of the writing process and suggestions for improving writing instruction, some hard to accept without adaptation, but many that are useful.

Prevision, according to Murray, includes everything that precedes the first draft. He devotes a large portion of the book to the discussion of this stage, one he believes warrants more attention since "at least 70% of the writing process takes place before the completed first draft" (p. 51). The second stage, the one requiring the least amount of time, is vision. This is simply the completion of the first draft, and it is here that "the writer stakes out a territory to explore" (p.73). After they complete this stage, writers go through the revision stage by confirming, altering, or developing, usually through numerous drafts, what they have suggested in the first draft. Murray makes a clear distinction between internal revision, "everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say," and external revision, "what writers do to communicate what they have found to another audience" (p. 77).

After much activity based on this model of composing, researchers began to point out the insufficiency of the theory for describing the actual behaviors of writers (Brannon 1984, 11).

#### c. As A Recursive Process

Writing, in fact, does not proceed in a neat and organized way, nor does it necessarily follow a set of fixed stages. Few, if any, writers plan a piece totally before they begin to write and leave all revision until they have an entire manuscript in front of them. Process, then, could not be

defined as a set of separate operations happening in fixed stages in the production of a text and still account for the behaviors of most experienced writers.

The dominant theory today proposes that writing is a recursive process, happening in no fixed sequence. The process has been described as movements forward where writers attend to shaping thoughts as they move along, making their meaning clear for their intended readers and as movements backward, where writers shuttle back and forth from what they want to say, to the words they have written, and back to their inward sense of their ideas. Writers rely on this sense to determine whether or not to continue writing or to revise (Brannon, 11). Sondra Perl (1980) calls the movements forward "projective structuring" and the movements backward "retrospective structuring". And the nonlinguistic feelings, by which a writer determines if what has been said is indeed what is intended, she calls "felt sense". James Britton offers a similar theory in Prospect and Retrospect. He writes about "shaping at the point of utterance", which he describes as "the moment by moment interpretive process by which we make sense of what is happening around us", and the enactment of the pattern-forming propensity of the mind, where one draws on a storehouse of perceived events, and, through the intention to share perceptions, shapes them anew. Ann Bertoff describes this process as "learning the uses of chaos", trusting the form-finding, form-creating processes of discovering connections amid the chaos, and shaping a coherence through



language. The value of the writing lies in the meaning-making and reflecting activities that it makes possible.

d. Flower And Hayes' New Model

Linda Flower and John Hayes (1977) have suggested another model which acknowledges the recursive model and incorporates activities that stress using memory, assessing the rhetorical situation, and rescanning written drafts during the production of the piece of work.

e. As A Process Of Dialogue

Lucy Calkins, who wrote The Art of Teaching Writing, likes to think of writing as a process of dialogue between the writer and the emerging text. She suggests that we focus in to write, then pull back to ask questions of our text. We ask the same questions over and over, and we ask them whether we are writing a poem or an expository essay:

What have I said so far? What am I trying to say?

How do I like it? What's good here that I can build on? What's not so good that I can fix? How does it sound? How does it look? How else could I have done this? What will my reader think as he or she reads this? What questions will they ask? What will they notice? Feel? Think?

What am I going to do next?

In his important article, "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader," Murray (1982) likens writing to a conversation between two workmen muttering to each other at a bench. "The self speaks, the other self listens and considers.

The self proposes, the other self considers. The self makes, the other self evaluates. The two selves collaborate" (165). Closeness and distance, pushing forward and pulling back, creation and criticism: it is this combination of forces which makes writing such a powerful tool for learning. Whereas spoken words fade away, with print we can fasten our thoughts onto paper. We can hold our ideas in our hands. We can carry them in our own pockets.

#### f. Summary And Conclusions

A characterization of the nature of composing in writing still eludes us. The problems of developing a theory are enormously complex principally because so much of the writing process either resists reliable observation or remains inaccessible to it. Whenever we look at writers in order to study them, our acts of looking affect their behavior (Brannon,14). When we understand the process, we can help each of our students invent, use and adapt effective writing strategies. If we, as teachers of writing, watch how our students go about writing, then we can help them develop more effective strategies for writing. In doing this, we can draw on two major areas of research:

Studies of how students go about writing.  
(Perl, Sommers, Emig, Graves, Calkins etc.)

Reports on how professional writers go about writing  
(Murray, Writers at Work  
Interviews, Elbow, Macrorie, etc.)

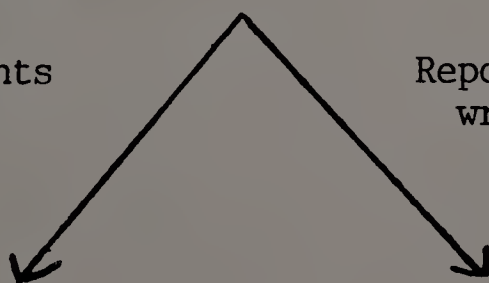


Figure 1. Areas of research which aid students with effective strategies.

One thing we know for sure is that each of us, and each of our students has a composing process. We have our own strategies for composing and our own rhythms of work that we draw on whenever we write. We must become researchers, observing how our students go about writing and learn from them how we can help. There is a thin line between research and teaching. We can assist writers best if we observe what works and what does not work for them as writers.

From the work of scholars such as Murray, Macrorie, Elbow, and from what writers report about their composing processes, we have begun to recognize that many writers follow a process of craft when they work, much as researchers follow a specific method.

Theorists, as has been shown in this section, describe the writing process in different ways: as prewriting, writing, and rewriting; as circling out and circling back; as collecting and connecting; as a recursive process; as a process of dialogue between the writer and developing text. The writer prefers Donald Murray's terms: rehearsal, drafting, revision and editing.

Rehearsal is the way a story begins. It may begin as an image or picture in the mind of the author, a sentence that lingers in the mind, a memory. Writers see potential stories everywhere. Rehearsal may also include gathering raw material, noticing things and making connections between ideas. Writers begin to sense the shape of their subject as they explore and

gather their raw materials. Perhaps a controlling vision emerges, or a way to begin, or a sense of audience. Sometimes during the rehearsal, writers map possible lines of development for their ideas. Often they rehearse by talking, observing or reading (Calkins 1986, 17).

The writer likes the word "drafting" better than "writing" or "prewriting" for the next stage in the composing process because it implies the tentativeness of the early efforts. Each writer has his or her own style. Some jot down ideas quickly. Others work in small units, one line or idea at a time. "Get it down," Faulkner writes. "Take chances. It may be bad, but it is the only way you can do anything really good."

Drafting soon evolves into revision. Revision means seeing again. The writer re-sees what he has written - what he has said. And the writer explores and discovers what he has to say. Murray describes the process this way: Writers become readers, then writers again. They cross out a section, insert a line, move a detail, change the tone or form of a piece.

Editing for many has a negative connotation, but, for the writer, it is one of the best parts of writing. It is time during which the writer makes connections, links sentences, works with the feelings of the material and uses more vivid details. The piece begins to look stronger and sound better, tighter, clearer. The writer tries to work with a critical eye.

Different writers spend varying amounts of time as they move through the stages. Some spend longer on rehearsal, others on revision. Some revisions fit between the lines of a draft, others require a sequence of drafts. In their own way and at their own pace, most writers follow a cycle in their writing: rehearsal, drafting, revision, and editing. In their research of several years ago, Susan Sowers, Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins found that even young children go through these processes. The shifts between rehearsal, drafting, revision and editing occur minute by minute, second by second, throughout the writing process (Calkins 1986, 18). If a classroom is filled with twenty-five young authors, they are all working at different stages in their writing. The writing process does not fit into teacher-led, whole-class methods of instruction. The teacher cannot feel justified in keeping the entire class synchronized, working them in unison.

### 3. From Inexperienced to Mature

#### a. Introduction

We know through common sense observation that writing produced by children has different features from writing produced by more mature people. They differ in syntactic sophistication, rhetorical sensitivity, command of material, intellectual penetration of a subject, and world view. Piaget, Vygotsky, and others suggest that the powers of the mind develop in observable and progressive stages which are

inaccessible to a person at an earlier stage. On the other hand, Bissex and Donaldson, language-acquisition researchers, show us that, from birth to about age five, children develop all the essential linguistic resources of English in a predictable sequence of steps. But after age five, children continue to develop a competence they already have through repeated application. It is different, when we speak of writing development, considering conflicting points of view like this, to point out exactly what is developing and to determine what the indices of writing development are. The research in this area is limited and still embryonic. We have a limited knowledge of the stages of development that writers may go through.

#### b. Traditional School Model

This is further constrained by the requirements and preoccupations of the school environment which have traditionally imposed their own model of development and have taught in accordance with it. The model assumes that writers acquire competence by mastering gradually more complicated skills, from the making of sentences to organizing paragraphs to developing essays. The teachers determine the skills that students need to master and note the extent to which they match those of adult writers. The skills are then arranged in ascending order of complexity through the school curriculum (Brannon, 18).

c. New Models Of Development

i. Peter Elbow According to Peter Elbow, in his book Writing Without Teachers, "Learning to write seems to mean learning contrasting but interdependent skills - double binds: learning X and Y, but you can't do X till you can do Y, but you can't do Y till you can do X." (135). There are long plateaus when you don't seem to make any progress at all. You are trying to get better at lots of different skills but always being at a disadvantage since you lack the other skills that are prerequisites. " And even to the extent that you make progress and actually do come closer to being able to perform some of these skills - this progress is never visible: nothing bridges till everything bridges." There's also back sliding. Regressing and falling apart are a crucial and usually necessary part of any complex learning. Writing badly is a crucial part of learning to write well.

Recently new models of development have begun to oppose the traditional school model. Traditionally it was felt that skills developed from correctness, to clarity, and finally to fluency. But now the order is thought to be precisely the opposite: from fluency, to clarity, to correctness (Mayher, Lester and Pradl, 1983).

When children write, teachers and researchers are often overwhelmed by what they reveal to us. They use so many different voices, they make so many errors and choices, and have so many hopes. Teachers and researchers have to investigate a two-pronged question: how do children change as

writers and how can we extend that growth? When these two questions guide our teaching, then the teachers' teaching and the students' learning will mesh. "When we search for the logic in their errors and the patterns in their growth, then we no longer spin our wheels (Calkins 1986, 32).

ii. Lucy McCormick Calkins It is important to remember that what children do as writers depends largely on the context in which they write and their backgrounds as writers. This is why scope and sequence charts on writing are inadequate and perhaps harmful. Even within one writer, development does not consist of forward-moving progress at an even pace. One day the writing is good and on another it is terrible. By studying the ups and downs of what individual children do in effective writing classrooms, and by reveling in the tremendous diversity within these classrooms, Lucy McCormick Calkins in her book, The Art Of Teaching Writing, develops some tentative notions about the range of writing behaviors one might find in first through sixth grade classrooms. It is an oversimplification, but its intention is to inspire teachers to become observers. A description of writing behaviors as noted by Lucy Calkins in her research follows:

In kindergarten and at the beginning of first grade are found early attempts into writing. Writing is exploration with markers and pencils and pens. Early efforts are a testimony to what children could do before they came to school. Although few children begin school with a mastery of every sound-symbol



relationship, most begin knowing the names and shapes of at least a handful of letters. This is enough to write phone messages, shopping lists, labels and stories. With only this rudimentary knowledge of print, they perceive themselves as writers and quickly learn more conventions of written language. Some children know less than this. Usually these children come from homes without books and from families who do not read, from families where parents may not have the time to talk with and listen to their children.

If teachers are to help children learn written language, they will have to allow children to use it as best they can, for oral purposes, and by having adults see through their errors to what they want to see. The teacher's job is to respond in such a way that youngsters learn that marks on the paper have the power to convey meaning. Within this kind of context, growth happens very quickly. Recognizing that writing involves particular kinds of marks, children may move from wiggly lines to rows of lollipops and triangles, from these to the alphabet letters in their own names, and then to the letters they find in environmental print and in their early reading experiences (Calkins 1986, 39).

Some children may be interested in developing their story line rather than in using the written codes. They, for a time, may bypass print altogether. Teachers should not dismiss these picture-stories.

Classrooms must provide rich, literate environments. The teachers need to create a mood of appreciation in the classroom. Children should be allowed to share their writing. Teachers need to delight in what youngsters do.

First grade is a time of more confidence. The children learn to write by writing and by having the self-perception that they can. They will notice the conventions of written language everywhere and will learn punctuation and spelling from what they see in the environment. Growth for them is spectacular.

They begin by rehearsing for writing by drawing. Once they are developed, rehearsal involves considering various topics, planning a story, anticipating an audience's response and pushing beyond writer's block. But there are many steps in between these two extremes. The act of drawing and the picture itself both provide a supportive scaffolding within which the piece of writing can be constructed, beginning with single words and progressing to action stories or narratives. The break through into narrative often occurs when children begin drawing figures in profile (Calkins 1986, 53). Drawings may eventually be of no help for writing. A child's choice of topics in writing may be limited by the youngster's pictorial repertoire.

Children's growth in spelling is so spectacular that it is easy to overlook other aspects of their growth in writing, including changes in conventions, voicing behaviors and story content. When children write before they read, they often

don't know how the written words are laid out on a page. There may be no spaces between the words; or too much space; or dots, dashes, and slashes. They often use darkened letters, oversized print, or capitals to add the sound of a voice to their print. As children's writing becomes more fluent, the children are apt to produce more pieces in a single session and more extended pieces. There will be an easily detected organizational framework to these pieces.

Revision for a young child, involves the natural process of adding on. Children write, and if given the chance to share with a responsive listener, they often realize they have more to tell and someone who hopes they will tell it. Before long, children are "making stories grow" on their own. They are not quick to reread their own emerging texts and more concerned with moving on. They can also learn to make their written texts more explicit or to rearrange the events in their stories.

Teachers can help children grow as writers by understanding some of the sequences of development that commonly occur in the early grades. Lucy Calkins oversimplifies this sequence into rehearsal, drafting, revision and editing. During rehearsal, she suggests that teachers provide students with markers, crayons, colored pencils and with either unlined or experience-chart paper because of the many ways drawing contributes to early writing. And as they grow, teachers must watch for signs indicating whether drawing is extending or limiting the child's writing.

Once children are writing narratives and "adding on" to their stories, it is important for teachers to support the children's growth by encouraging them to read what they have written to other children and most of all, to themselves. Teachers need to encourage peer-conferences.

Second grade is a time of extremes. To say something "in general" about second-grade students is very difficult. Some write fluently, with carefree confidence, and others write slowly and carefully on their papers. Some students will write in short bursts. Carl Bereiter (1982) points out that this may be because in oral language, after one person speaks in a short burst, the other person says, in effect, "tell me more". It is not uncommon for them to develop patterns in their writing. They notice that "real" books have dedications, pages entitled "About the Author", and lists of the author's other books. They adopt these conventions. There are, however, some general growth currents:

From writing for oneself toward writing also for an internalized audience.

From writing for the sake of the activity itself (all process) toward writing also to create a final product.

From less to more fluency.

From writing episodes that do not begin before or last beyond the actual penning of a text, toward broader writing episodes that encompass looking ahead and

looking back, anticipating and critiquing.

Developmental psychologist Howard Gardner characterizes the seven- and eight-year-old child by saying that now, for the first time, the child in the middle of singing and dancing will stop and anxiously ask, "Is this right?" Gardner claims that because seven-year-old children want to use words "right," their use of figurative language declines. In their drawings, they replace expressive dynamic pictures with spiked suns and rows of tulips. In their playground games, these children argue over how to play "the right way." The seven-year-olds' concern with the right way to do things, combined with their new ability to look ahead and to look back, means that rehearsal takes on a very different meaning for them than it does for their younger counterparts (Gardner 1980,150).

Second graders need to realize they have something worth writing about. If they do not learn this, they will probably resort to the formalized, voiceless stories which are so common in classrooms where children rarely write. Writing well requires an act of confidence. A writer implicitly claims, "I have something important to say." When an author speaks out clearly, forcefully, and honestly, the writing is strong. It is this forthright, honest quality which brings charm to many first-grade pieces. First graders often assume that their ideas are worth writing about (after all, these children are the center of their universe). Second graders tend to be less self-assured, and so rehearsal becomes a time for finding

topics, for pushing beyond writer's block. Writers sometimes feel awkward and self-conscious and they sometimes hide behind hasty efforts and comfortable convention.

Talking can be effective in providing a supportive scaffolding for second graders. By now, writing has often surpassed drawing. The goal now is to have writing catch up with talking. The goal is fluency and voice, for the lilt of oral language to come through in a child's writing. There will come a time when writing surpasses talking; when writing will be more explicit, more layered with meaning, more structured than oral language. Chatting about one's subject with an interested friend seems to be an ideal method and should be allowed by teachers. The focus of these discussions should be on content and can take the form of interviews. Teachers can demonstrate interviewing skills.

Because revisions fit easily into the seven-year-olds' developmental level and interests, the process of revision catches hold easily. The children develop revision strategies such as those used to insert information in texts and they revise independently and eagerly.

The third grade is a concrete, cautious, conventional time. The concern for correctness and convention that is seen creeping in during second grade has reached tremendous proportions by the time children are in third grade. Third-grade stories seem conventional, cautious, wooden. Voice has been lost. In Lessons from a Child (1983, 13), Lucy

Calkins writes to describe the third-grade plateau, "It seemed that having learned to write politely, and with detachment, many children were no longer learning to write well" and speculates that in our society, many people never get much beyond this plateau. Their writing becomes more correct, more conventional. Around third grade, writing development for many children slows to a halt. They write tightly structured pieces, everything is given equal attention. There is very little commentary or elaboration, and time moves along at an even pace. Most of the third-graders write without stopping and to reread and reconsider what they have written. What many of these children lack is what Carl Bereiter refers to as " a central executive function" that allows them to shift attention back and forth between reading, writing, talking, thinking, writing and so forth. They don't stop to learn from their writing. Their revisions tend to be corrections. Their purpose is to make the text match the subject that was in their mind when they began writing.

Writing development need not come to a halt in third grade. Providing teachers find ways to rekindle in children the energy for writing and the willingness to take risks, middle childhood can be a time for tremendous new growth in writing. Teachers can help students understand that writing is more than a display of their spelling and penmanship: it is a chance to create and to share their creations. When the students revise their work they should be encouraged to

understand the open-ended, exploratory value of revision. They should not be merely looking to see what they have left out or misrepresented, but to experiment with their draft, or to explore other possible approaches. Students can best do this if teachers help to extend our students' sense of what makes good writing.

Fourth, fifth and sixth grades are times of new flexibility. At this stage, children alternate between writing, reading, redrafting, rereading, inserting information, rereading, and trying another draft. The process shows little resemblance to the forward moving, one-tracked process described in earlier grade level writing.

Changes are largely brought about by teaching, but in this instance and others, instruction does not necessarily come from the teacher. The teacher provides the student with an external executive function and the students dislodge themselves from endlessly adding-on and begin to reread, reflect on, and reconsider their drafts, and to move back and forth between one process and another. The student makes revisions almost independently. As Vygotsky says, "What a child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (Vygotsky 1962, 101). With time, assistance, and experience, children find it easier to conceive of different ways to say the same thing. They are a little more capable of thinking through their options.



### c. Summary

When childrens' revisions seem overly elaborate and wasteful of time and effort, teachers can trust that this will not always be the case. Revision strategies are eventually internalized, becoming more scaffolding for thought. As children do more and more writing in their minds, their composing process becomes more complex. The growing sophistication in children's processes and products is echoed also in their growing sophistication about the components of good writing.

## 4. Teachers Assist the Development of Writers

### a. Introduction

Until recently, the teaching of writing has been governed more by tradition and personal preference than by theoretical research or knowledge and had not been regarded as a subject for reflection or reconsideration. Textbooks, like their late nineteenth-century ancestors, still offer a hodgepodge of concepts, formulas and instructional methods drawn from rhetorical traditions with little philosophical or historical awareness and little more than conventional wisdom to sustain the enterprise (Stewart, 1972). The new teacher's introduction to writing instruction ordinarily comes from these books, not from rigorous academic training in composition studies, so misinformation and confusion is perpetuated. Much of the other literature on teaching writing is given over to statements from teachers about what "worked" in their classrooms or comparisons pitting one method against another.

Slowly, however, the teaching itself is improving beyond the books intended to support it. In the last ten years, new research has resulted in some movement away from textbook lore and toward practices more closely related to contemporary theory. Traditionally, students memorized the parts of speech and other technical information; they endured drilling in mechanics and punctuation usage; occasionally, they were provided with opportunities to write paragraphs, and even themes, to the teacher's specifications. This relentless drill and practice, and its exaggerated emphasis on correctness, has slowly given way to more sophisticated lines of argument. The central debate today concerns the role of teachers in assisting in the process of writing (Brannon 1985, 21-22). The debate presumes that writers grow only by learning "the basics" or by producing correct but perfunctory products. The questions are: How should the teacher intervene? What information, support, encouragement should the teacher provide? Is the teacher's function to give students something they need but do not have (skills, strategies, forms, etc.) or to enhance capacities that they have already but need to practice additionally to extend?

#### b. Teacher's Role To Provide Strategies For Composing

Many writing teachers believe that students need strategies for composing, a repertory of invention heuristics and organizational structures from which they can choose as they compose. The teacher's role is to give the students such

strategies and to monitor their practice of them. Teachers who believe in giving writers skills and strategies (called "transmission" teachers by Lil Brannon in her book on rhetoric traditions and teaching writing) offer a variety of tactics, plans, and models to guide the process of composing. Theorists and teachers who currently emphasize invention in their work may be included in this group. Richard Young and his colleagues Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike, designed an invention schema which is intended to assist a writer in finding ways to approach a subject. Linda Flower, basing her teaching recommendations on her observations of professional writers at work, developed problem-solving strategies and planning diagrams for writers by reasoning that, if professional writers plan their texts in particular ways, then students should explicitly learn to plan their texts in those ways as well. Also research on sentence-combining practice suggests that it might generally assist students' writing performance. Sentence-combining exercises have been used in composition teaching to develop technical competence and stylistic diversity. And some theorists and teachers have looked to the depiction of cases, as used in business and law school, to provide students with simulations of real world audiences and purposes for their work. They believe that students will be motivated to learn to write if they are given instances in which to practice the form that they are learning and if they are given problems to solve that are similar to those they might encounter in the future.

c. Teacher's Role To Provide Context For Composing Innate Language Capacities

A growing number of teachers, on the other hand, believe that they do not give writers things those writers lack, but that they provide a classroom context in which students have a chance to exercise innate language capacities like talking, reading and writing. This should be done in meaningful ways with motivation through a variety of challenges to development of their abilities. This group of teachers are called "reactive" by Lil Brannon. They advocate engaging writers in intellectually provocative issues or imaginatively challenging tensions, usually of the students' choice, so that the students have an internal need to write, to seek response to ideas, to revise their pieces so that their intentions can be realized. Teachers in this group, like Nancy Martin, Donald Murray, and Peter Elbow, describe ways to stimulate committed writing and to bring about communities of writers in the classroom.

d. Donald Murray

In Learning By Teaching, Donald M. Murray suggests that writing teachers have five major responsibilities. Their primary one is to create a proper psychological and physical environment. Murray believes that teachers, once they have created a favorable environment, must impose and enforce deadlines and "create artificial pressure which makes the student commit himself on paper again and again and again" (p.

143). The teacher's third responsibility is to cultivate a climate where failure is acceptable so the student can learn "to shape the failure of his drafts into successes of his final copy" (p.143). The fourth responsibility of writing teachers is to be diagnosticians. They should read only those papers on which students are having trouble, papers selected by the students themselves. In Murray's opinion, effective teachers do not correct papers but simply listen to students as they propose solutions and then suggest alternate treatment. The final responsibility of teachers is to write and fail with their students, a necessary act if they are to gain their respect.

Another essential aspect is collaborative learning, having pieces read and responding to one another's work in cooperative projects. Collaborative learning is a generic term, covering a range of techniques that have become increasingly visible in the past ten years, practices such as reader response, peer critiques, small writing groups, joint writing projects, and peer tutoring in writing centers and classrooms. By shifting initiative and responsibility from the group leader to the members of the group, collaborative learning offers a style of leadership that actively involves the participants in their learning (Trimbur 1985, 87).

Teachers' responses are also crucial. They can better assist writers by responding as facilitators rather than evaluators. The time to respond should be when the student

writer and the teacher reader alike view the writing as completed. They also suggest that the best way to guide writers is by sustaining their intellectual and rhetorical choice making through successive drafts and according to the unique potential and problems of individual texts.

Each group of teachers finds limitations in the other. The "transmission" group believes the "reactive" group leaves its students without a structure. Transmission teachers believe that students need ways of exploring a subject and making connections and that reactive teachers leave them to wander and stumble into effective activity. Reactive teachers think transmission teachers make thinking and writing very mechanized and arbitrary. Reactive teachers believe that organized structures are already part of one's mental capacity and point to learning theory and other research favoring their vantage points. To them, students have the natural capacity to think systematically: by thinking about subjects that matter to them in dialogue with a trusted adult who can challenge their connection making, students exercise and extend their natural human competence (Brannon, 23-24).

#### e. Summary

Determining what kind of instruction is best is dependent on our answering those prior questions about the nature of composing and about the growth and development of writers. Even if we knew the answers to these questions, the problems of teaching will not be automatically solved. Teaching practice

is always dependent on the personalities, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers. Finally, the personal creative energy that sustains teaching and engages students will always matter more than the answers to research questions. The major work in composition remains before us.

## 5. Contemporary Approaches to Writing

### a. Introduction

Donald Graves surveyed the instructional priorities concerning writing instruction in the most commonly used language arts texts and found that over 70% of the activities dealt with the technicalities of writing - grammar, punctuation, spelling, proofreading, and editing - all taught in isolation from actual composing. He recently replicated this survey and found few major changes; the "writing" activities that were added were generally unrelated to the context of writing (Graves 1984, 52-60).

Beyond the use of texts, there are other approaches to the teaching of composition that need to be examined. What emerges from the examination done by this writer of the theory and practice of teaching writing is neither a void nor a series of unconnected gimmicks, but a fairly large number of approaches, each with its own tradition in research and practice, and each with its special strengths for particular students. At the present time, there is little consensus on how the various approaches to the teaching of writing might best be described. In the next few pages the writer will

develop three frameworks that have been used to organize the various approaches to the teaching of writing. Following this will be a more fully detailed explanation of the framework the writer has chosen to use and the reasons for that decision. And finally representative approaches of each perspective within that framework will be described.

b. Frameworks

i. By Methodology and Composing Instruction The International Encyclopedia of Education (1985), in an article on composition instruction, says that broadly speaking, the approaches might appear to fall into a heritage model, using classical texts and imitation; a competence model, using analysis and emphasizing correctness; and a process model, using free expression and emphasizing growth (Mandel 1980). More specifically tied to methodology and composition, there appear to be five dominant approaches:

fixed product: an approach that aims at teaching a selected number of specific types of writing and that emphasizes the correct forms, structures, and language;

variable product: an approach that aims at teaching a variety of different forms and types of composition dependent on audience and task, and that emphasizes appropriate structures, forms and language;

phase instruction: an approach that emphasizes the various stages of writing, and that aims at developing security in the process;



content instruction: an approach that aims at writing skill indirectly, and that emphasizes the learning of appropriate discourse about a subject;

knowledge instruction: an approach that emphasizes the teaching of information about language and writing and aims at correct use of structures, forms, and language through the acquisition of such knowledge.

ii. By Influencing the Composing Process for Change In the past, methods of writing instruction have grown up piecemeal, connected to one another only by broad premises. Research on the composing process has advanced far enough, however, that it is now possible to identify certain basic ways of trying to influence the composing process and thus to consider particular methods in terms of how they attempt to bring about such changes. In the Handbook of Research on Teaching (1986) are suggested four basic approaches that will be considered here. They are strategy instruction similar to those suggested by Flower in 1981 (the most direct approach), procedural facilitation (a generic label for a variety of ways of helping students adapt more sophisticated composing strategies by providing external supports), product-oriented instruction (instruction that attempts to promote strategy development by providing students with clearer knowledge of goals to strive for in the written product), and inquiry learning (learning through guided experimentation and exploration as suggested by George Hillocks).

iii. By Differential Impact on Learning In "What Works in Teaching Composition: A Meta Analysis of Experimental Treatment Studies", George Hillocks writes that the various approaches to teaching writing appear to have differential impact on student learning. He labels the traditional approach to the teaching of writing presentational. He outlines two competing forms of contemporary practice—the natural (writing) process and the environmental approach. According to Hillocks' research, the environmental approach is four times as effective as the presentational and three times more effective than the natural process (Hillocks 1984, 160).

In the most common and widespread mode (presentational), the instructor dominates all activity, with the students acting as the passive recipients of rules, advice, and examples of good writing. In the natural process mode, the instructor encourages students to write for other students, to receive comments from them, and to revise their drafts in light of comments from both students and the instructor. But the instructor does not plan activities to help develop specific strategies of composing. The most effective mode of instruction labeled "environmental" is so because it brings teacher, student, and materials more nearly into balance and, in effect, takes advantage of all resources of the classroom. In this mode, the instructor plans and uses activities that result in high levels of student interaction concerning particular problems parallel to those encountered in certain

kinds of writing, such as generating criteria and examples to develop extended definitions of concepts or generating agreeable assertions from appropriate data and predicting and countering opposing arguments.

In contrast to the presentational mode, the environmental mode places priority on high levels of student involvement. In contrast to the natural process mode, this mode places priority on the structured problem-solving activities, with clear objectives, planned to enable students to deal with similar problems in composing.

iv. By Philosophical Perspective In the previous explorations of how the various approaches to the teaching of writing might be described, the writer has looked at three frameworks that can and have been used. Approaches to writing instruction were classified in terms of methodology and composition instruction, ways of influencing the composing process to bring about change, and their differential impact on student learning. At the present time, however, there is little consensus on how the approaches might be described. After careful consideration of each of these frameworks, the writer has chosen to use none of them as a basis for her explorations. One reason for this is that some of the frameworks do not discuss writing approaches in terms that are appropriate for younger school-age writers. One framework is more of an experimental treatment than is needed. And another one looks at writing more in terms of product than process.

The writer has decided to use a framework based on the three philosophical perspectives described earlier in this chapter. She does this most obviously to be consistent with her earlier work, but, more to the point at hand, Barry Kroll's classification provides a set of criteria by which we can evaluate our approaches and our textbooks and the programs in which we use those texts. In the remainder of this section, the writer will quickly present the defining characteristics of each of Kroll's development perspectives and then describe the representative approaches, programs, or textbooks. Earlier in the paper, Tables 1 and 2 summarize the major tenets of each perspective if more review is necessary.

Essentially, an interventionist sees the purpose of the teachers and textbooks as being to intervene in the learning process in order to teach the conventions of acceptable form and usage. Thus, an interventionist course is teacher- and text-centered. The interventionist works first on the parts of an essay and then combines the parts into a whole.

Grammar, defined as the study of parts of speech and sentences, remains a common treatment in composition instruction in schools and colleges. The teaching of mechanics attends to matters of usage and punctuation through use of set classroom exercises or a particular text.

In composition, students are sometimes involved in the use of scales, defined as a set of criteria embodied in an actual scale or set of questions for application to pieces of writing.

Students apply the criteria to their own writing, to that of their peers, to writings supplied by the teacher, or to some combination of these. The scales must be manifest in some concrete form, not simply existing in the mind of the teacher and used as part of class discussion. Generally, the instructional use of scales engages students in applying the criteria and formulating possible revisions or ideas for revisions (Hillocks 1984, 153). Students ordinarily are taught the criteria before they set out to apply them independently.

The studies of model pieces of writing or discourse is one of the oldest tools in the writing teacher's repertoire, dating back to ancient Greek academics, which required that their students memorize orations. All through history - and today is no exception - examples, though used differently have been part of the production assembly line (Kinneavy, 1973). In today's composition curricula, use of models of excellence is still common. Usually, students are required to read and analyze these pieces of writing in order to recognize and then imitate their features.

The models approach assumes that a child can develop a skill through imitation before he has the power to sustain a thought and reading can introduce the students to ideas and structures that the student, left to his own devices, cannot generate from his personal experiences. "Students learn to write by reading a great deal" (Myers 1978, 38).

Rollo Brown and I.A. Richards tested this approach in two different practices. Rollo Brown used dictation and paragraphs from acknowledged masters, read aloud to his students and asked them to copy exactly what they said. Brown believed that dictation helped students concentrate on how good writers write and caused them to internalize "good standards of speech." I.A. Richards asked students, limiting them to a basic English vocabulary of 850 words, to write translations (paraphrases) of different passages. Richards believed that requiring translations prevented mindless copying and forced the student to focus not only on sentence and paragraph structure but also on nuances of meaning (Myers 1978, 38).

Lessons using models emphasize the product, not the process, and fail to inform students about the steps that writers go through when they write. Teachers have applied the ideas of Brown and Richards in hundreds of variations. Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer (1983) suggest what they call the "skilled writers" approach in which the student uses other writers as models.

What the writer has referred to as teaching from models undoubtedly has a place in a writing program. Research indicates that emphasis on the presentation of good pieces of writing as models is significantly more useful than the study of grammar. At the same time, treatments that use the study of models almost exclusively are less effective than other available techniques (Hillocks, 1984).

The sentence-combining approach shares with the "models" approach the assumption that one can learn a skill through imitation of structures. The supporters of sentence-combining, believe that asking a beginning student to write a complete essay is equivalent to assigning all the problems of composition at once. The student, this approach says, should begin with the sentence, because it provides some concrete boundaries within which the teacher and the student together examine the basic principles of composition (Myers 39).

The sentence-combining treatment is one pioneered by Mellon (1969) and O'Hare (1973) who showed that practice in combining simple sentences into more complex ones resulted in greater t-unit length ( a t-unit being a traditionally defined main clause and all its appended modifiers) (Hillocks 152). That this treatment results in students' writing longer t-units is hardly open to question. But a number of critics question that it produces writing of higher quality while others (e.g. Mellon, 1969) say that exposing students to systematic practice in sentence combining over three or four months or more have demonstrated convincingly that such practice does transfer to free composition, i.e., students tend to write more mature or complex sentences on their own.

Sentence-combining has its roots in linguistics with people like Noam Chomsky and Kellogg Hunt. Noam Chomsky is concerned with the difference between how the sentence appears on the printed page and how the sentence began. Kellogg Hunt was a transformational generative grammarian who studied the

growing child and their relationship to their sentences or surface structure.

There are a couple of problems with this approach. Unfortunately, some teachers think this is a "complete" writing program. The exercises encouraged a heavily embedded sentence and not the cumulative sentence found in adult expository writing (Christensen, 1967).

The maturationalist perspective assumes multiple realities, individual voices, and diverse forms. The maturationalist course centers on exploring the mind of the writer rather than on prescriptive conventions. Invention, concept-formation, planning, and organization occur as one writes, as the human mind, doing what it naturally does, generates a logical flow of connections among images, words, and syntax. Composing is a holistic process. As Mandel says, "Writing unfolds truths which the mind then learns." (1980)

Textbook authors commonly associated with such an approach include Peter Elbow, Lou Kelly, Ken Macrorie, James E. Miller and Donald Murray.

Free writing is a treatment commonly prescribed in the professional literature, particularly since the early seventies. Generally, it involves asking students to write about whatever they are interested in, in journals, which are considered inviolate, or in preparation for sharing ideas, experiences, and images with the other students or with the teacher. Such writing is free in two senses: topics are not



prescribed, and the writing is ordinarily not graded. The idea underlying this treatment is simply that allowing students to write without restrictions will help them discover both what they have to say and their own voices in saying it. As a major instructional technique free writing is more effective than teaching grammar in raising the quality of student writing (Hillocks, 161).

In Writing the Natural Way by Gabriele Lusser Rico, she describes a process called "clustering". The clustering process grew out of her fascination with the findings from brain research of the past twenty years, and it represents a way to involve the talents of the mute right brain in the complex symbolic activity that we call writing. Simply put, the left brain has primarily logical, linear, and syntactic capabilities while the right brain has holistic, image-making, and synthetic capabilities.

Clustering is based on the premise that any effective writing effort moves from a whole - no matter how vague or tenuous - to the parts, then back to a more clearly delineated whole. What is of overwhelming importance for writing is that the talents of both hemispheres of the brain be brought into play in the process. Clustering focuses on that initial whole by fashioning a trial web of knowings from the clusterer's mental store house. Clustering can be defined as a nonlinear brainstorming process that generates ideas, images, and feelings around a stimulus word until a pattern becomes discernible.

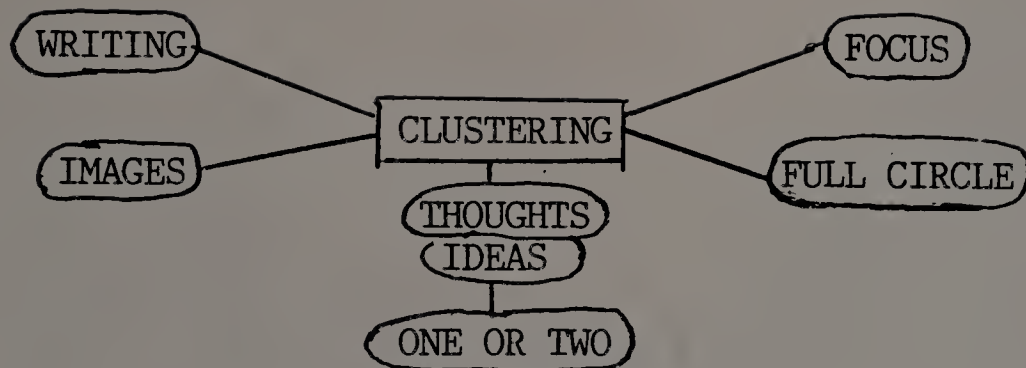


Figure 2. A "clustering" of the word clustering.

She says that, "The most effective means for getting the feel of clustering is to introduce it conjointly with journal writing. Journal writing...will take on new dimensions through the focusing power of clustering. As students begin to experience that sense of accomplishment in actually producing a cluster, they will discover that they do have something to say after all" (Rico 1983, 20). They also discover that writing begins to flow on its own if a sense of play is allowed to enter the process.

Writing can also be an inquiry strategy. An approach focuses on inquiry when it presents students with sets of data (or occasionally required students to find them) and initiated activities designed to help students develop skills or strategies for dealing with the data in order to say or write something about it. Ordinarily, activities are designed to enhance particular skills or strategies such as formulating and testing explanatory generalizations, observing and reporting significant details to achieve an effect, or generating

criteria for contrasting similar phenomena. In this sense, instruction in inquiry is different from instruction that presents models illustrating already formed generalizations, significant details, or criteria and that may demand that students produce such features in their own writing. Such strategies are basic because they are common to divergent disciplines and because they appear to be a sine qua non in the production of insights (Hillocks 1983, 662). A study by George Hillocks (1979) presents students in experimental groups with various sets of data and asks them to think of words, phrases, sentences, and whole compositions to describe them. The teacher pushes for more and more detail and precision. After describing them orally, students are asked to write sentences about the last one they talked about, incorporating whatever oral suggestions they think best convey their ideas. Students may read their sentences aloud for feedback from the class or teacher. Then students move to writing a short composition. Hillocks' work, which involved students in using the strategies of inquiring requisite to and underlying particular writing tasks, is likely to result in far greater gains than does involving them only in the study of appropriate models. (See Figure 3. for a model of the basic inquiry process.)

The steps approach to writing is another strategy of learning (Myers 1978, 39). It assumes that the writer goes through three distinct steps in the process of writing: prewriting, composing, and editing; that writing is helped by

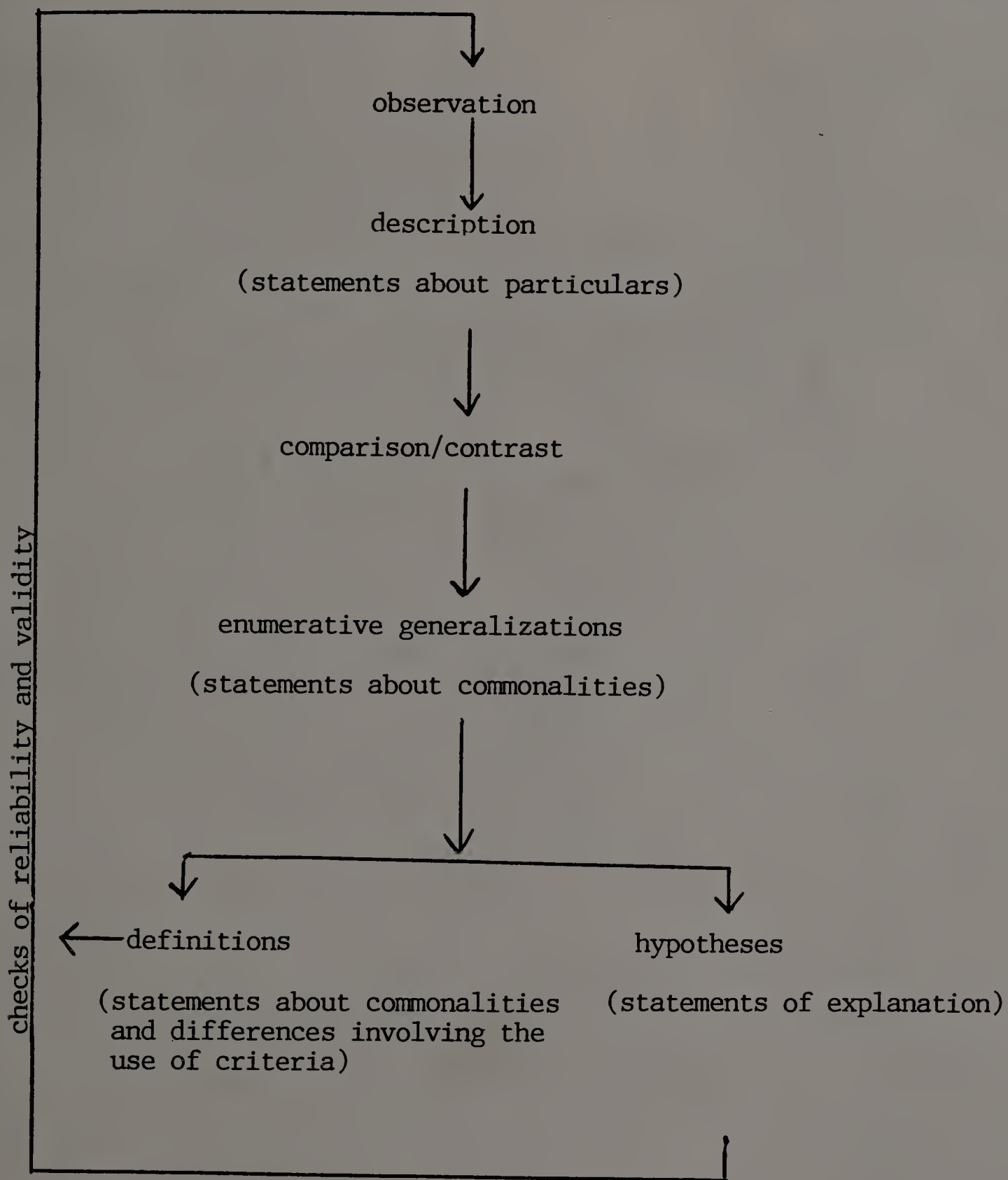


Figure 3. A model of basic inquiry.

George Hillocks, "Inquiry and the Composing Process: Theory and Research", College English, November, 1982

heuristic procedures (problem solving strategies) more than by rules; and that students can edit each other's work. Teachers who use this approach find its roots in the research of Gordon Rothman on prewriting for exploration and discovery, the work of Peter Elbow and Janet Emig on prewriting and composing, and the workshop descriptions of Ken Macrorie and Robert Zoellner. Zoellner, believing that talking and writing go together, recommended that the writing classes be run like art classes. That is, the students write with felt pens on butcher paper draped over easels, using their own subjects or a common subject and stopping now and then to examine the work of others and to discuss with them special features and problems (Myers, 39). Those who would refute the steps approach say, "Much of what is written involves a whole lifetime of preparation- of experiencing reading, reflecting, and arguing. The act of writing does not break itself down into neatly identifiable and manageable "steps": rather, it is part of all existence" (Smith 1982, 46).

The interactionist approach attempts to balance text, writer, and reader in the active process of creating a particular message in an appropriate form for an identified audience. Both Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers and Lil Brannon, Melinda Knight, and Vara Neverow-Turk's Writers Writing combine the maturationist tenets of self-discovery and the recursiveness of the writing process. Elbow does not ignore the necessity of shaping writing to fit the needs of the

reader, and in the second half of Writing Without Teachers, he stresses the importance of receiving feedback from other writers. "Writing is not just getting things down on paper," he says in Chapter 4, "it is getting things inside someone else's head"; it's a "transaction with other people." In his emphasis on writing as a transactional activity, Elbow points out the necessary interaction among writer, reader, and message.

There is another approach that emphasizes relationships between writer and audience and between writer and the subject. The assumption is that the changes in distance from writer to audience and writer to subject can be arranged so that the relationships parallel the child's natural development, both socially and intellectually.

James Moffet and James Britton are helpful in explaining the relationships approach. In James Britton's view , "expressive writing - writing about one's own experience as a spectator of the event - is basic to any adequate development of skills in transactional writing and expressive poetic writing. For young children, for example, an assignment in which the writer writes to a close audience on a personal subject is a natural place to begin for the very young, who are by nature egocentric. Extending the distance of audience, from the friend to the community at large, requires a decrease in egocentrism, a natural development as the young mature. Piaget's stages of cognitive development - preoperational to

concrete - appear to parallel this sequence. Teachers find two problems in the relationships approach: How can students be brought into contact with diverse audiences? How can students be helped to make the transition from personal experiences to idea writing? This is very important in Junior High when the transition from narration to exposition must be made.

It's an atmosphere of intellectual attentiveness that mainly differentiates activities of the workshop approach from those designed by the closet classicist. Writing from personal experience is a case in point, because it's quite different from the official "personal" or "expressive" writing so often introduced in classrooms professedly modern but secretly allied to Cicero. The difference is between an opportunity for writing in certain areas and a procedure for writing in certain ways. "Personal narrative is just another school genre, in concept precisely the same as "expository writing" or "persuasive writing," a ritual exercise nearly always resulting in formulaic writing. Crucial to sustaining the atmosphere of intellectual responsibility in a workshop is the teacher's willingness to trust students' abilities to discover their own stances on important questions and willingness to give them time and flexibility for pursuing their own conclusions. Since, for example, most writers require periods of imaginative incubation, which may include conversing with others, reading and research, moments of contemplation, and unfocused or partly focused scribbling, it's reasonable to suppose that student

writers can profit from these activities as well. Useful thought takes time, and workshops make time available. Besides making use of time, however, teachers also must recognize the importance of lowering their visibility in order to show that students do indeed have the authority to make their own intellectual way, and that students are expected to be responsible for what they say - expected to contribute to the community of writers and readers. In workshops everybody writes. Teachers who compose along with their students have no choice but to implicate themselves in the same messy struggle toward meaning (Knoblauch and Brannon 1984,110). Numerous books and articles are available to help set up writing workshops such as An Introduction to the Teaching of Writing by Stephen N. Judy and Susan J. Judy.

In summary, it can be said that each of the approaches has a relatively long history and each has a number of advocates in many countries around the world. In practice, teachers do not use a single approach exclusively (most teachers are eclectic and pragmatic), yet it appears that one or another of these approaches tends to dominate the thinking of a particular teacher. Each approach clearly bears implications for what would go on in class, what sort of assignment for a composition is made, and what sort of feedback would be given.

In a classification such as this, one runs the risk by oversimplification of "pigeon-holing" approaches, programs, teachers, or textbooks and of limiting pedagogy to practices



that fall within a narrow theoretical framework. And yet every time that we read a set of student-papers, we measure our goals against our students' outcomes and, consciously or unconsciously, evaluate our methodology. Though restrictive and incomplete, the triad of developmental perspectives presented here offers a theoretical focal point for reconsidering our goals and judging the effectiveness with which our approaches and textbooks match those goals. At the least, we may find a need to adjust the "fit" and so choose a different approach or kind of textbook. At the most, we may find ourselves adrift in the crossroads of change, and if that is the case we might find in the triad a beacon light that will point out a clear direction in choices of theory and approaches.

## 6. Conclusions

As Richard Young (1978) and Patricia Bizzell (1979) have asserted, we are now in the midst of a paradigm shift. Several paradigms are competing for supremacy over the discipline. Practitioners must seek answers for themselves since there is no consensus on how writing should be taught. Many paradigms in composition are thriving simultaneously, while being modified as current theory and practice dictate. Perhaps one will become dominant. But, at present, there is no best way to teach writing, especially if "best" means empirically verifiable and universally applicable. There is a

growing body of revealing information about sentence-combining, writing behaviors, evaluation procedures, and so on. However, such statistical data must always be interpreted according to someone's definition of good writing or good teaching and it is not always applicable to every educational context. Moreover, teaching is, like writing itself, an art that depends less on formula than on a blend of knowledge, skill, and creativity. Indeed, if anything, the new paradigms require that teachers be flexible enough to respond to students as individuals and be ready to pursue any appropriate methodology.

Yet teachers must still develop a coherent approach to writing instruction that is based soundly in theory and that succeeds in practice. Teachers need to make decisions for themselves about the nature of composition, how it may (or may not) be taught, and, most importantly, how it may best be learned. In other words, each teacher needs to embrace the theories, methods, and standards of a distinct paradigm and associated approaches that will carry the teacher and the students alike through the writing course. Consistency is of great importance.

## B. On Reading Comprehension/Comprehension of Text

### 1. Introduction

Relative to research on teaching reading comprehension, this section of the chapter is a review of what this researcher knows about reading-comprehension instruction and provides a framework for addressing the existing knowledge about reading

comprehension instruction. A review which exhausted the literature is neither realistic nor within the bounds of the researcher's goals. Two basic questions will drive the researcher's discussion: With whom, in what situations, and in what ways does teaching improve reading comprehension? How should research in teaching reading comprehension proceed?

Approximately sixty-five years ago William S. Gray published the first summary of investigations related to reading. In that 1925 monograph, Gray summarized 436 reports of reading research published in the U.S. and England prior to July, 1924. He suggested that the research summary should be useful to school officers and teachers in their efforts to reorganize courses of study in reading, and to suggest future directions for research and reading. Subsequent to the publication of Gray's 1925 monograph, he and a number of successors have published to the present time annual summaries of reading research. From 1925 through the early 1960's, between 75 and 150 published reports of research in reading were reviewed and summarized each year (Pearson, 1984).

During the 1970's, the scope of the research on reading broadened. To illustrate prior research on reading one might look at the Reading Research Quarterly published in winter 1970. In that issue 436 reports of reading research were compiled under William Gray's classic categories of sociology, physiology, psychology and the teaching of reading. Within the psychology of reading, a preponderance of studies was on

cognitive processes. The majority of published research papers on cognitive processes was focused on visual perception, auditory processes, and visual-auditory integration. The word, as opposed to the phrase, the paragraph, or the story, was used as the unit of analysis. The only foreshadow of research to come in the 70's was the work of Lawrence Frase on questions and memory for text which was published mostly in the Journal of Educational Psychology and regarded at the time as intriguing but somehow beyond the pale of reading. Also in 1970, the teaching of reading attracted the attention of educational researchers, but the bulk of the investigations pertained to methods of instruction (Guthrie 1981, iii).

By 1980, the cognitive processes in reading under investigation were expanded to include the comprehension of story structure, integration of sentences, drawing inferences, testing hypotheses, relating background knowledge to textual information, and reading as a process of information search. To accommodate the explosion in the areas of research, several journals were founded, including Cognitive Psychology, Discourse Processes, and Cognitive Science. And some other periodicals have undergone a substantial reorientation. Some of the agents of expansion in this vein included David Rumelhart, Tom Trabasso, David Pearson, and Richard Anderson.

In the studies of classroom practice for reading education, the boundaries have been extended to include studies to increase the proficiency with which children perform

cognitive processes that are found to be related to reading ability, studies on exemplary reading programs, and studies in which reading instruction is viewed as a complex organization in which the optimal use of time is investigated (Guthrie, 1981).

Our concept of the comprehension process also has changed dramatically in the past fifteen years. We have moved away from a static view of reading that does not account for such important factors as prior knowledge, story schema, text structure, or metacognitive knowledge toward one that explains how the interaction among these factors influences comprehension (Peters and Carlson 1989, 104). In the past, reading teachers have been more concerned about the skills or particular strategies being taught and less about what students need to know about interpreting literature.

Based on classroom observation, one Delores Durkin study (1978-1979) concluded that comprehension instruction in the schools is meager at best. Typical comprehension consisted of mentioning the skill, having students practice it via workbooks or worksheets, and then assessing whether skill mastery had been achieved. Students were seldom given corrective feedback on their performance of the skill.

To determine why this was a common mode of reading instruction, Durkin (1981) analyzed several basal programs for suggestions on comprehension instruction. She found that the dominant provisions were (a) lots of questions for students to

answer about the selection they read and (b) lots of dittos and workbook pages for students to complete independently.

In a more recent study, Durkin (1983) again observed how teachers at various grade levels used suggestions provided in the basal manuals. She found little or no time was spent on new vocabulary, background knowledge, or prereading questions, whereas considerable attention was given to comprehension assessment questions and written practice.

In "Metacognitive Development and Reading", Ann L. Brown says that the goal of reading is to achieve understanding of text. Yet understanding is not an all or none phenomenon: it must be set by the reader as a goal of the activity. Readers' purposes vary and, as such, criteria of comprehension also change as a function of the particular reading task at hand. Under the heading "reading strategies" can be incorporated any deliberate planful control of activities that give birth to comprehension. In short, the effective reader engages in a variety of deliberate tactics to ensure efficiency. "The efficient reader learns to evaluate strategy selection not only in terms of the pay off value of the attempt; information is analyzed only to the depth necessary to meet current needs. This ability implies a subtle monitoring of the task demands, the reader's own capacities and limitations, and the interaction between the two (1980, 456)." All these activities involve metacognition - conscious deliberate attempts to understand and orchestrate one's own efforts at being strategic.

For the remainder of this chapter, the author will attempt to describe the broad spectrum of reading strategies used and recommended under the three main categories of prior knowledge, story schema and text structure. These descriptions are not meant to be all inclusive but as representative as possible. To provide a completely comprehensive account of how reading comprehension is currently taught is probably not possible; there may be as many ways to teach reading comprehension as there are reading teachers. Some of the differences between instructional practices are not important and need not be described.

## 2. Reading Strategies

### a. Prior Knowledge

Prior knowledge includes what people know about the way that text is organized and structured, as well as what they know about the subject matter of the text. Whether we are aware of it or not, it is the interaction of new information with old information that we mean when we use the term comprehension. The critical role of prior knowledge in reading comprehension has been amply demonstrated in recent research (Anderson and Pearson 1984, 255).

If readers have the necessary background knowledge prior to reading to learn, what can or should be done to activate that knowledge or focus attention in order to expedite their

learning from text? Many theorists and practitioners advocate strategies which encourage students actively to relate the new information they gain from reading to their prior knowledge. Such strategies are based on the assumption that learning is a constructive rather than a merely reproductive process (R. Tierney and J. Cunningham 1984, 614). A number of suggestions for activating background knowledge have arisen. The researcher has selected the following as illustrative of strategies for activating background knowledge.

i. Donna Ogle and KWL Almost all school reading, beyond elementary basal instruction and literature classes, is filled with exposition. Teachers assume students know how to read and learn these materials, yet seldom stop to inform students about how to do so successfully. In "The Know, Want To Know, Learn Strategy" by Donna Ogle, the author describes a strategy designed to address these needs which she calls KWL strategy. The KWL involves readers before, during, and after reading. The teacher models each step and then has students make personal commitments using a three column worksheet. The first column is for listing what students think they know, the second for listing what students want to learn, and the third for recording what students do learn from their reading.

Learning begins when students have a sense of disequilibrium in their own knowledge and are stimulated to want to learn. The KWL is a simple, teacher guided process that actively engages a class in learning. Brainstorming,



categorizing, anticipating, and questioning all are used to model the reality that the learning process begins with the learner. Using knowledge categories and searching for important information makes it clear that both the learner and the author need to be taken seriously. The reflection that goes on after reading is important as a clarification time for showing whether students have learned at all that is important and whether misconceptions still remain.

Classroom research studies (Dewitz and Carr, 1987; Ogle and Jennings, 1987) have provided confirmation of the effectiveness of KWL in enhancing students' comprehension in social studies. Tests of students' ability to internalize the process for independent learning also have been demonstrated for elementary and remedial-secondary students (Carr and Ogle, 1986).

ii. Analogies Model In "The Teaching with Analogies Model", Shawn M. Glynn writes that one of the most effective ways for students to integrate their existing knowledge with text content is by using analogical reasoning. Analogical reasoning can play an important role in elementary school children's comprehension of text in content areas. Comprehending the concepts in an expository text can be difficult . "To facilitate students' meaningful comprehension, teachers and text authors must help students relate new concepts to concepts with which they are already familiar. If familiar concepts and new ones are related correctly, then the

student will comprehend that text in a meaningful fashion" (192). Otherwise, comprehension will breakdown and the student will not understand critical concepts. Analogical reasoning is one of the most effective ways for students to integrate their existing knowledge with text knowledge (Sternberg, 1985).

Meaningful learning has been defined by Wittrock (1985, 261-262) as a "student generative process that entails construction of relations, either assimilative or accommodative, among experience, concepts, and higher order principles and frameworks. It is the construction of these relations between and within concepts that produces meaningful learning". When an analogy is drawn between concepts, a powerful relation is constructed that leads to the meaningful learning described by Wittrock. An analogical relationship is powerful because it comprises an entire set of associative relationships between features of the concepts being compared.

#### b. Story Schema

Story grammars are based on the premise that stories have a predictable structure and sequence and that readers use prior knowledge to story structure to aid in comprehension. This knowledge is held in memory as a story schema that helps them understand, predict, recall and create stories. M.K. Rand (1984) describes the effect of story schema on the reader: "The schema helps the reader attend to certain aspects of the incoming material while keeping track of what has gone on before. The schema lets the reader know when a part of the

story is complete and can be stored in memory, or whether the information should be held until more is added" (377).

Most children come to school with a schema for stories (Stein and Glenn, 1979), but a significant number appear to lack this story sense (Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1983). Given the growing body of evidence that teaching story structure can improve student's comprehension of stories, it seems wise for teachers to make children aware of story structure by teaching parts and relating them to the text to enhance comprehension. Even children who already have a sense of story structure can benefit from being given labels for their knowledge. Knowledge of story structure empowers students in monitoring their own reading comprehension to determine whether what they are reading sounds right and makes sense.

Several story grammars have been described and used in research (Stein and Glenn, 1979; Rumelhart, 1978). They are based on simple stories such as folktales and fables. They use different terminology, but all include character, setting, a problem, one or more attempts to overcome the problem, a resolution and an ending. Some include other elements such as motives, goals, and consequences. While there is considerable agreement that it is useful for children to acquire knowledge of story features, there is some debate about whether and how features should be taught (Fitzgerald, 1989). A large variety of strategies have been proposed as a starting place for teaching story comprehension.

A growing body of evidence suggests that understanding story parts aids a child's ability to comprehend a story (Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1983; Stein and Glenn, 1979). Recognizing story elements can help children to anticipate, predict, and recall story events and to understand characters, motives, goals, actions, feelings. Students need to be strategic when reading texts. Being strategic involves knowing when, how, and why to use certain text strategies.

c. Text Structure

i. "Textual Power" According to Scholes (1985), we must provide the reader with textual power. This involves systematically providing students with the textual knowledge and skills that allow them to read, interpret, and criticize literary materials, requiring the reader to unlock the narrative codes embedded within literature. These codes take the form of cultural and generic codes, and together they influence strategy selection (Peters and Carlsen, 106). And as students unlock the cultural and generic codes found in literature, and understand the interrelationship between the two, they begin to formulate a literary framework that helps students understand the differences that exist within the various types of narrative material.

ii. Recognizable Organizations In "Teaching Expository Text Structure in Reading and Writing", the authors describe a method of how ideas are organized and related in what they read and write. They believe this method will help students read

their content material more effectively with more comprehension and help them write informative material more clearly. "While effective authors do not write to a formula, they do use some recognizable organizations or structures in their writing to help readers get the point" (168). Donald Richgels et al. based their descriptions on the organizational components used by Meyers and Freedle (1984). According to Meyers and Freedle, the description text structure is merely a grouping of ideas by association. With the collection text structure, other organizational components such as ordering or sequencing of elements are added. The causation text structure goes another step toward greater organization by including causal links between elements, in addition to grouping or sequence. The problem/solution text structure is related to the causation structure, but is still more organized. In this structure, a causal link is part of either the problem or the solution. That is, there may be a causal link that is disrupted by the problem and restored by the solution, or the solution may involve blocking the cause of a problem. Finally, a comparison/contrast text structure may have any number of organizational components, depending on how many differences and similarities the author includes.

Readers who have structure awareness comprehend well structured texts better than poorly structured texts (Taylor and Samuels, 1983). Many students, even in elementary school, are beginning to develop an awareness of text structure

(Richgels et al., 1987) and, with good instruction, can improve their structure awareness and their use of structure guided reading comprehension strategies (Piccolo, 1987; Taylor and Beach, 1984).

The strategy described by Richgels et al. uses graphic organizers to show students text structure. It helps students compare well structured writing they have produced following a graphic organizer with their textbook passages. They have developed a seven step approach to teaching students about expository text structure. The first two steps involve teacher preparation, and the last five steps involve instruction.

iii. And Main Ideas In "Research on Expository Text: Implications for Teachers", Wayne Slater and Michael Graves wrote attempting to translate the results from research studies focused on readers and their recall and comprehension of expository rather than narrative text. Students from fourth grade through college increasingly develop their ability to use expository text structure and/or main ideas to facilitate comprehension and recall. The results from studies conducted with students in elementary schools (Berkowitz, 1986; Taylor and Samuels, 1983), middle schools (Garner et al., 1986; Taylor and Beach, 1984), high schools (Slater, Graves, and Piche', 1985), and college (Slater et al., 1988) have generally shown that students' ability to use text structure and/or main ideas for comprehension purposes increases with age. Students who can identify and use text structure and/or main ideas remember

more of what they read than do students who cannot or do not (Slater et al., 1988; Taylor and Beach, 1984; Taylor, 1982). Main ideas generally are retained better than lower-level ideas. Studies where students are asked to recall information from passages they have read usually demonstrate that main ideas are more memorable than supporting ideas (Meyer, 1984; Meyer and Rice, 1984). Students can be taught to identify expository text structures and main ideas (Berkowitz, 1986; Taylor and Beach, 1984; Slater, Graves, and Piche', 1985; Slater et al., 1988). This research provides evidence that students who are given instruction focused on identifying expository text structure and main ideas can identify those elements more reliably than students who have not received such instruction. Students' prior knowledge of the content of the experimental passages helped increase comprehension and recall significantly (Taylor and Beach, 1984; Taylor, 1982). Taken together, these findings suggest that students' knowledge and understanding of expository text structure in prose is crucial for the comprehension of the information in text.

#### d. Interaction Among These Perspectives

A synthesis of much of the current research suggests that reading is a process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text, and the context of the reading situation (Anderson et al., 1985; Wixson and Peters, 1984). At the core of this interactive perspective is the constructivist assumption that comprehension consists of

representing or organizing information in terms of one's previously acquired knowledge. In other words, reading comprehension depends on how readers use the various types of knowledge they possess to construct meaning from the printed page.

Comprehension involves constructing a holistic representation of a text, and to do this readers must be sensitive to the relationship among the various elements of information within a text so they can integrate the new knowledge with existing knowledge. Readers cannot strategically select the appropriate skills or strategies to use until they know the purposes for learning, the structure of the material, and the assigned task.

### 3. "The Comprehension Experience" of James Mosenthal

According to James Mosenthal, if we ask what happens when a reader comprehends a text, we are asking about the reader's experience comprehending it. In instruction, we want to cultivate the quality of that experience. We strive to achieve that cultivation by studying the comprehension process and designing strategies for reading and writing that stimulate comprehension processes. "But the comprehension process and reader's experiences comprehending are different issues. The former deals with theory and the latter with personal experience" (Mosenthal, 244). To be the most helpful to a teacher, the comprehension experience should be placed against



the background of a theory based approach to reading comprehension instruction using reading strategies. These strategies are based on the theoretical delineation of the comprehension process which typically identifies the component, interactive processes of accessing prior knowledge, inferring, and monitoring (Pearson, 1984). The use of reading strategy helps a student experience the sense of a text and learn what it means to make sense of text. A reading strategy is a means of cultivating this experience, but it is not a means for directly teaching the experience. What is taught is the use of the strategy. The effective use of strategies over time helps the student learn to experience, simultaneously, a part of the text and the developing whole to which it contributes. The wholeness or coherence of the text is basic to the comprehension experience. As we are involved in the reading of text we comprehend as we are drawn into the movement of the whole, which we see as a series of significant moments (245-247).

The involvement of students in the identification of relevant moments is half the battle in cultivating self-regulated comprehension, as opposed to a dependency on book characteristics or a teacher's knowledge. The other half of the battle is the student's potential to pursue the satisfaction of making sense out of text. The experience of the sense of text is much more multifaceted than what one strategy can reveal. Teacher and students must lead themselves

in directions that build from levels of expertise established in prior instruction (255-257). Teachers can choose and sequence the types of moments and operations students confront by choosing, sequencing, and adapting the strategies to be used.

#### 4. Standardized Reading Comprehension Tests

Unfortunately, the research on narrative and expository text are not reflected in the current reading tests. Most standardized reading comprehension tests are still based on the literal and inferential questions about the content of a series of unrelated paragraphs (Nelson-Herber and Johnson 1989, 275). Although questions may require knowledge of story elements such as characters and events, or in the case of expository text, knowledge of cause and effect, sequence, or comparisons and contrasts, they are not specifically designed to measure awareness or use of text structure in comprehending. Reading skills texts still focus on vocabulary and word recognition. The newer tests of reading comprehension based on the cloze process may be more promising, but they have not been designed to test student's use of prior knowledge, story schema, or structure in comprehending.

Some new approaches to research on testing seek to expand the range of behaviors assessed by reading tests. Tests are being developed to include background knowledge, reading comprehension, reading strategies, and reading attitudes

(Wixson and Peters, 1984). In any testing the focus should be on measuring comprehension. Skills and strategies should be measured only in terms of how they enhance comprehension and how they effect attitudes toward reading. The goal is to make children competent and enthusiastic readers.

## 5. Summary

A number of different reading strategies to reading comprehension instruction have been identified; however, the extent of the real differences among these approaches is a matter of conjecture (Jenkins and Pany, 572). The approaches clearly differ in reading corpus and with respect to their identification of specific comprehension skills. If the questions and exercises provided by different strategies are taken to reflect what is taught, then they appear to teach many of the same skills and techniques.

Because few comparative evaluations of comprehension programs exist, practitioners lack basic information needed for intelligent program selection, and researchers lack data that could alert them to important program components. Some well-conceived, empirical program evaluations would do little damage and might possibly raise the present state. In their absence, programs can only be compared on someone's subjective list of so-called critical features. Which, if any, of these critical features is important to reading comprehension achievement is a matter of opinion.

## C. On The Reading-Writing Relationship

### 1. Introduction

Inasmuch as reading and writing are both language processes, one can assume relationships between them. However, the exact nature of these relationships, as well as the influence of specific teaching methods and curricular activities upon their development, has not yet been determined. A large body of research has been devoted to conceptualizing the reading process and to exploring alternative approaches to the development of reading skills and a large body of theoretical and experimental research in writing has focused on methodological issues. But a limited amount of research in reading has examined the influence of writing instruction or writing activity on the development of reading comprehension or in writing has examined the influence of reading instruction or reading experience on the development of writing ability.

Many researchers believe that we need to view reading and writing as integrated and supportive processes - not isolated skills to be practiced, dissected and analyzed in artificial settings (Tierney and Pearson, 1983). The relationships between the reading and writing processes are interesting, highly complex, and resistant to "pat-answer" theoretical explanation. A review of the current literature indicates four directions that research has taken to show how reading and

writing are related. Some researchers say that the relationship is one of construction because reading and writing are language-based related processes. They say that reading and writing activities provide models for identifying syntactic, semantic, and organizational structures that cue meanings and signal how ideas are related and qualified. There is also a contextually embedded view of reading and writing as processes of meaning-making and the communication of ideas. Both require thought and evoke thought and both share common cognitive behaviors. Andrea Butler and Jan Turbill and many other researchers say that reading and writing are both acts of composing. Readers, using their background of knowledge and experience, compose meaning from the text; writers, using their background of knowledge and experience, compose meaning into text. Before both processes it is helpful to look at what readers and writers do in each of three different phases, i.e. before the act of reading and writing, during the act and after the act (Butler and Turbill 1984, 13-14). Judith Langer holds a different and somewhat sociocognitive point of view. She believes that the essential characteristic of reading and writing lies in the process of symbolization. She says that all learning is socially based, that language learning is ultimately an interactive process, that cognitive factors are influenced by context, and that they, in turn, affect the meaning that is produced (Langer, 1986).

## 2. Based on Construction

In Children's Writing: An Approach for the Primary grades, Leonard Sealey, Nancy Sealey, and Marcia Millmore talk in terms of reading (the decoding) and writing (the encoding) being clearly related and that their separation is illogical. "When children are writing, they should alternate between encoding and decoding as they struggle first to form words and sentences and then read them to check the match between their thoughts and their writing...Clearly, some constructive skills necessary for writing can become analytic skills required for reading, or the opposite can apply "(p. 7-8).

Through the research of Timothy Shanahan described in "Nature of the Reading-Writing Relationship: An Exploratory Multivariate Analysis", reading and writing were found to be significantly related and the nature of that relationship appears to be stable across grade-levels. He says that phonics knowledge is the most important aspect of reading that relates to writing performance for beginning readers. Also for beginning readers, spelling appears to contribute more highly to the reading-writing relationship than do other variables. As early as the start of Grade 1, children use organizational structures that are clearly differentiated by genre. Even before Grade 1, children's written work (including their scribbles) begins to reflect the surface forms of stories, letters, and shopping lists. As students become more proficient, there is an increasing importance of sophisticated

vocabulary and story structure to writing achievement, and the increasing importance of the comprehension of larger units of text to reading achievement (p.475).

In "Comprehension of Text Structures" by P.D. Pearson and Kaybeth Camperell, the authors suggest their concern to know more about the point in time when children are able to handle certain complex kinds of syntactic structures. There was a time in the late sixties when the conventional wisdom concerning syntactic development seemed to suggest that, by the age of six, children had mastered nearly all the syntactic structures they would use as adults. Then the work of C. Chomsky (1969), Bormuth, Manning, Carr, and Pearson (1971), Olds (1968), and others pointed out that even by age ten children still had trouble within the structures. Somehow the rush toward semantic and structural concerns in the mid-seventies buried what was an incomplete and fruitful line of research (p. 338). According to them, we still need to finish the job.

Mark W. Aulls wrote "Relating Reading Comprehension and Writing Competency" after working with bilingual children with depressed abilities, as well as with above average readers from middle to upper middle class backgrounds. He developed several propositions which he calls speculations based on introspection and informal observations. Collectively, they imply that reading and writing activities provide models for identifying syntactic, semantic, and organizational structures that cue

meanings and signal how the ideas are related and qualified. First, he says that reading is a process of getting meaning from written symbols. Writing is a process of expressing meaning with written symbols. Both processes entail projecting meaning, rereading to maintain direction in thinking about the meaning intended, and weighing what is said against what is intended. Second, both reading and writing are learned processes. The quality of meaning obtained in both processes can be severely diminished when the mind is primarily involved in the recoding of sounds rather than the evolving of ideas. Third, reading involves the application of a learned assembly of strategies and levels of thinking to decode the ideas others have expressed. Similarly, writing involves the application of a learned set of strategies and levels of thinking for expressing ideas to others. Both activities essentially draw upon the same language and experiential base from which meaning is formulated. Both utilize phrase or sentence units as the primary structure for assigning meaning temporarily to a larger context. A consistent cycle of reading and writing experiences throughout increases the child's sensitivity as a reader to syntactic and semantic structures which cue meaning and make it particular or valid. Fourth, vital and pleasurable experiences in writing and reading provide a more comprehensive means of internalizing the life-lifting properties of language. Children who get involved in the reading-writing chain of events are much more likely to view written language as



something very real and alive. And fifth, the reader's reactions during reading and writer's creations during writing are also a function of both cognitive and affective operations. A sixth relationship concerns the development and role of word meaning in reading and writing. Reading often requires the ability to assign and deduce meaning from individual words and clusters of words. Writing requires the ability to evoke meanings, often as images of things or sounds, and to choose those which accurately represent ideas, relationships, images and sounds. To the degree that the two vocabularies are in fact covariant, an increase in one vocabulary should to some degree transfer to the other.

### 3. Based on Communication

According to Frank Smith in Understanding Reading, there is no formal definition of reading, because like other common words in our language the word "reading" can take a variety of meanings depending on the context in which it occurs.

Sometimes, for example, the verb "to read" clearly implies comprehension. But at other times the verb does not entail comprehension; one might say, "I've read that book already and didn't understand it." Everything depends on the context in which the words are used. In its specific detail the act of reading itself depends on the situation in which it is accomplished and the intention of the reader. There are differences between reading a novel, a poem, a social studies

text, a mathematical formula, a telephone directory, a recipe, an advertisement, a street sign. In all of the preceding examples, the reader is seeking information. This leads to a definition that Frank Smith prefers, that comprehension is getting one's questions answered. A particular meaning is the answer a reader gets to a particular question. Meaning therefore also depends on the questions that are asked (p. 167). "A reader" gets the meaning "of a book or poem from the writer's point of view only when the reader asks questions that the writer implicitly expected to be asked". A particular skill of accomplished writers is to lead readers to ask the questions that they consider appropriate. Thus, the basis of fluent reading is the ability to find answers in the visual information of written language to the particular questions that are being asked. Written language makes sense when readers can relate it to what they know already. And reading is relevant and interesting when it can be related to what the reader wants to know.

Later in his article, Frank Smith, says that the predictions of readers, the intentions of writers, and the conventions of texts all interact to make communication through written language and the experience of reading possible. Familiarity and the conventions of written language, the nonvisual information (information we already have) which makes sense of texts, is the essential requirement both of reading and for learning to read (p. 180).

Reading is considered to be the passive process and writing is considered the active process of communication by many (Harte et al, 1982). They also believe that reading and writing employ similiar cognitive processes and rely upon a common text knowledge. In "Teaching Reading in the Writing Classroom", Sally Barr Reagan says that experienced readers are usually proficient writers, while inexperienced readers are almost always basic writers (1986). Given the fact that reading and writing involve similiar cognitive processes, teachers need to design a course which gradually builds cognitive skills and increases the writers' knowledge of language by engaging the students in carefully coordinated reading and writing assignments.

#### 4. Based on Composing

In their article "The Authors' Chair" (1983) Donald Graves and Jane Hansen, describe both reading and writing with the same definition: "They are composing acts" (p. 177). From a reader's perspective, meaning is created as a reader uses his background of experience together with the author's cues to comprehend both what the writer is getting him to do or think and what the reader decides and creates for himself. As a writer writes, he uses his own background of experience to generate ideas and filters his drafts through his judgments about what his reader's background of experiences will be, what he wants to say, and what he wants to get the reader to think

or do (Tierney and Pearson, 1983). Few would disagree that writers compose meaning, but not many would agree that readers also compose meaning (that there is no meaning on the page until a reader decides it).

In "Both are Acts of Composing", Robert Tierney and P. David Pearson demonstrate their agreement with the above by describing the several aspects of the composing process that they believe are held in parallel by reading and writing. These essential characteristics of effective composing include: planning, drafting, aligning, revising, and monitoring. A writer plans what he wants to say with the knowledge resources at his disposal. Readers, depending on their knowledge and what they want to learn from their reading, vary the goals they initiate and pursue. Goals may emerge, be discovered, or change. Drafting is the refinement of meaning which occurs as readers and writers deal with the print on the page. The reader and the writer are driven by the desire to make sense of what is happening - to make things cohere. A writer achieves the fit by deciding what information to include and what to withhold. The reader accomplishes the fit by filling in gaps or making uncued connections. The alignment a reader or writer adopts can have an overriding influence on a composer's ability to achieve coherence. Alignment includes the stances a reader and writer assumes in collaboration with their author or audience and roles within which the reader and writer immerse themselves as they proceed with the topic. A writer's stance

might be intimate, challenging or quite neutral (p. 573). Revision should be considered as integral to reading as it is to writing. If readers are to develop some control over and a sense of discovery with the models of meaning they build, they must approach text with the same deliberation, time and reflection that a writer employs as he revises a text. They must examine their developing interpretations and view the models they build as draft-like in quality - subject to revision. Monitoring is the executive function by which a reader or writer distances themselves from the texts they have created to evaluate what they have developed. Tierney and Pearson's diagrammatic representation of the major components of these processes are given in Figure 4.

When writers and readers compose text, they negotiate its meaning with what Murray in "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader (1982) calls the other self - that inner reader (the author's first reader) who continually reacts to what the writer has written, is writing and will write or what the reader has read, is reading and will read. It is this other self which is the reader's or writer's counsel, judge and prompter. This other self oversees what the reader and writer is trying to do, defines the nature of collaboration between the reader and writer, and decides how well the reader as writer or the writer as reader is achieving his or her goals.

Gordon M. Pradl talks about the implications of this relationship for teachers in "Contexts for Composing: the

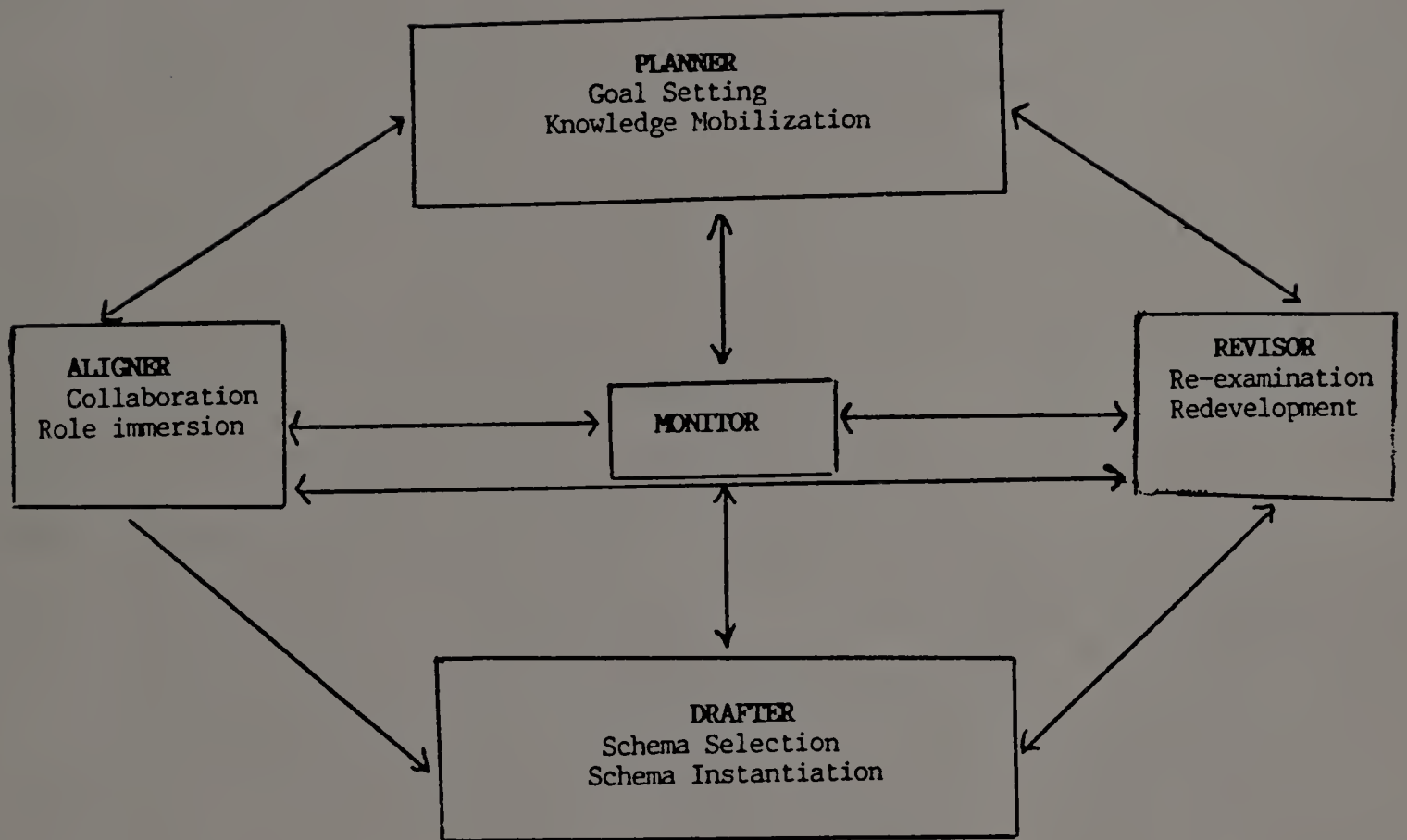


Figure 4. Some components of the composing model of reading.

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Robert J. Tierney and P. David Pearson, "Toward a Composing Model of Reading", May, 1983.

Mirror Function of Reading and Writing". He says that in getting students to the perception that one way of saying something is not the same as another, we want them to know that the difference is everything because, in fact, it is a meaning difference. "Every reflection in the mirror is not the same because every identity is not the same. And our widespread, piecemeal, and compartmentalized approaches to the teaching of isolated reading and writing skills, belie this organic connection that is so necessary in the process of creating competent composers " (p. 55). He suggests that teachers must create an ongoing series of "contexts for composing". They must introduce texts which demand a response or say things that matter. Students must have a prewriting exploration of the life around us and about those events and issues that determine our experience with literature. And finally, teachers must involve students in critical dialogue with what is going on around them, a dialogue that allows them to construct their individual maps of the world. "Composing never occurs in a vacuum; rather, it is part of an ongoing dialectic " (p. 74).

Sandra Stotsky, in "The Role of Writing", continues by talking about reading as being inherent in most writing. "All meaning is a putting down on paper of one's own thoughts or the thoughts of others; by its very nature, writing should entail reading" (p. 338). She goes on by saying that thoughtful or critical responses to literature of informational reading material in the form of essays, research reports, etc. have

long been used in teaching composition. Dictation, the reproduction exercise, paraphrase writing, precis writing, sentence combining, and sentence pattern exercises are less frequently used writing activities. All of these writing activities are directly tied to a sample of written language. "Students are expected to reproduce, reduce, manipulate, or add to the context, language or syntax of the original selection. By requiring students to respond in writing to words and ideas that they are asked to recall, reproduce, restate, select from, generalize, recognize, integrate, or elaborate on we may be providing them with the most active comprehension practice possible" (p. 339). It is worth noting that in all these writing exercises the student never moves beyond literal understanding of the text.

##### 5. Based on Symbolization

From a rather different point of view, Judith Langer suggests that reading and writing are interrelated because they are both acts of social negotiation as well as acts of cognition. In Children Reading and Writing: Structures and Strategies, she says, "I believe that the essential characteristic of reading and writing lies in the process of symbolization...Even in young children, reading and writing not only serve purposes of communication but provide the basis of a developing system of personal thought. These notions of the personal and symbolic underpinnings of language underlie my



view that reading and writing, as child language, are driven by child-oriented rules and child-driven purposes...Writing as well as reading, calls upon a wide range of knowledge both in text and in the mind of the individual - it is the interplay of mind and text that brings about new interpretations, reformulations of ideas, and new learnings" (p. 2-3). The two together - mind and text - bring meaning and evoke meaning, and reading and writing need to be studied with both in mind according to her. In reading, meaning is not completely identical with the text, and therefore must always remain vital, in the process of becoming rather than fully realized. In writing, the path of the author's thinking must be understood by the reader; the writer provides instructions and the reader construes them. In this way, both reading and writing can be seen as meaning building activities where ideas flex and form; writers leave clues which readers construe and build upon. Both reading and writing need to be interpreted in light of these presuppositions.

## 6. Conclusion

There may be other ways to organize the research on the relationship between reading and writing, to be sure. There may be other relationships. The four types of relationships that this writer has described merely suggest that reading and writing are interrelated and they are supportive. Through an integrated reading and writing approach, it just may be that

many children could begin to internalize much deeper fundamental insights into the function of language and thought, as readers and as writers. Certainly it is time to take this proposition much more seriously than most teachers and researchers have attempted to in the past.

#### D. Summary

In this chapter, the writer has discussed some recent literature on creative writing, reading and the reading-writing relationship. Such a review must of necessity be highly restrictive in each area. The reading teacher, as well as the education professor, needs not only to be cognizant of what is happening in these (and other) fields, but to keep some perspective among them. If we fail to keep this balance, we are at the mercy of temporary fads which offer panaceas on the basis of limited data.

If education is to be a science, it must progress in the same way other sciences do, by acquiring a systematic body of knowledge, rather than by chasing every fad which claims to have some scientific basis. Education is particularly vulnerable to faddism, because its sources of input are more numerous, but at the same time disparate. Consequently, educators need to be in one sense more open to new developments, and yet more defensive. They must scrutinize each innovation for its scientific underpinnings, and determine whether these conflict with what is known in other fields.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### A. Subjects

The subjects were selected from a population of 61 fifth grade students at a large midwestern urban parochial grade school (St. Agnes School, Springfield, Illinois). The school population is primarily composed of Caucasian students from middle-class families. Since this is the state capital, many of the families are employed by the state government. The other large employers are the medical facilities and the insurance companies located in the area. The selection of the fourteen students, due to constraints caused by the team-teaching approach already in place in the school, was done by the school principal rather than by a random assignment. The median IQ for the entire fifth grade is 108, while it is 100 for the fourteen students participating in the study group. The range for the pupils in the study group is from 93 to 117. (See next two pages for detailed information on the students in the study group.) The fifth grade class at St. Agnes as a whole has traditionally scored low on standardized tests. This particular group of students has historically scored lower than the rest of the school as it progressed through each grade. The reasons for this are unclear.

Table 3.--Data on Students Participating in Study

(See next page for more detail on terms)

Name	Age as of 9/1/88	1988 Educational Ability	1987 Total Rdg. Achievement Grade Equiv. Score	1988 Total Rdg. Ach. G.E.S. Score	1988 National Rdg. %ile	1987 Rdg. Comprehension G.E.S.	1988 Rdg. Comp. G.E.S.	Comments
Jenny A.	10-1	117	4.7	5.5	59	5.3	4.9	
Nick C.	10-8	106	2.2	4.1	34	2.0	3.9	
Jason F.	9-11	99	4.5	6.7	77	4.9	7.5	
Anthony G.	10-5	99	3.6	4.7	47	4.2	4.2	
Leigh H.	10-9	109	5.5*	6.6	75	5.5*	6.7	*New Student for grade 5 Scores for gr.4, from CAT
Robert H.	11-1	98	4.7	5.5	54	4.9	4.9	
Nick L.	9-11	98	4.4	5.4	58	2.9	4.3	
Melissa L.	10-2	106	*	5.1	50	*	4.9	In spec. ed. for gr. 4 for lang. *- No grades available.
Kristen L.	10-6	100	3.6	4.9	49	3.4	4.9	
Christine M.	9-11	108	4.4	5.2	53	4.9	5.5	
Lynn P.	9-11	108	6.4	6.9	79	6.9	6.7	
David R.	10-2	93	2.5	5.1	50	4.5	2.3	
Jeff S.	9-11	106	4.5	5.7	63	3.6	5.5	
Angie W.	10-2	99	4.3	4.6	45	4.9	4.6	

Tests used for data:

1987 - SRA Achievement Series Level D Form 1 Semester 1

Optional Score Nonpublic

1988 - SRA Achievement Series Level E Form 1 Semester 1

Optional Score Nonpublic

Educational Ability Score (EAS): The EAS measures those factors most closely associated with overall academic performance. It provides an estimate of general learning ability for students.

Grade Equivalent Score: The grade equivalent score is a converted score based on the national percentile. It indicates how a students' grade score values (GSVs) compare with the GSVs obtained nationally by students in various grades.

Specifically the GE is defined by the GSV.

Total Reading: The G.E.S. from the vocabulary and reading comprehension subtests being combined.

National Reading Percentile: This is the national percentile associated with the local GSV mean. It is not the average of individual percentile scores.

## B. Design

In making educational assessments, we often wish to describe the skills, abilities, and knowledge which an individual possesses. In this case study, this is particularly true, where attempts are to be made to develop and improve these characteristics in students in reading. The teachers and administrators who are responsible for the students' education must be constantly aware of and continually assessing the intellectual capacity of the student, if effective teaching is to be accomplished and if the student is to be guided or helped along the sometimes complicated educational path (Seibel, 1968). Describing an individual's intellectual status is considerably more difficult than describing his physical characteristics. We have no convenient, easily understood measuring tools such as scales, micrometers, tape measures, or balances, and we have no standard units of measurement such as feet, pounds, centimeters, or grams. According to Dean Seibel, "The science of measuring intellectual factors is young and the tools of the measurement are unrefined and easily subject to misunderstanding " ( p. 261). Even so, substantial advances have been made in this science.

Since we cannot get inside a person's mind to measure anything, we must be content with measuring that which we can observe - his behavior. The assumption is that what a person does under certain conditions is an indication of his intellectual characteristics. In fact, since we can only

hypothesize about the existence of mental characteristics, it is convenient to define these characteristics in terms of overt behavior. There are many ways in which human behavior may be observed and recorded.

In any attempt to observe human behavior, it is necessary that we exercise some control over the observation. It is more efficient and orderly to exercise some control over the situation by specifying the circumstances in which the behavior is to occur and by eliciting, under the specified circumstances, the kind of behavior we wish to observe.

One way of exercising this control is to provide individuals with specific tasks to perform. The nature of the tasks can be varied to elicit the kind of behavior we wish to observe, and the same tasks can be presented to several individuals under the same circumstances in order to elicit behaviors which may be logically compared.

For the purposes of the case-study, the researcher made careful, systematic observations and kept detailed ethnographic notes of as much of a normal day's activities in the writing/reading class as possible. This note taking continued for nearly an entire school year. The observations made and the insights gained one day often influenced the activities of the next day. Observations were made of instances of using reading and writing in purposeful and related ways, of making choices about what to write and read, of opportunities to talk over both what is read and what is written, of writing

techniques used by the students, of working on texts that the students have created, of sharing their written efforts and the efforts of other authors, and of finding opportunities to connect with literature that makes sense to them. The researcher hoped to learn about the complementary relationship between reading and writing and the effects of a writing-infused program on the students involved.

The researcher was also interested in an analysis of the student's classroom participation and work products. It was hoped that these systematic observations and analysis would lead to a discovery of who many of the students were as writers, where they had been, or how they had grown.

Another way to observe and record human behavior is through the use of achievement testing. Once a reliable achievement test has been administered, it is important to have some method of attaching meaning to the scores obtained. It must be acknowledged that a person's obtained score is not an exact index of ability, but is, rather a clue to the range of scores within which the true score lies. Test scores, then, should never be used as the sole basis for making important decisions about students. They should be used with other kinds of information and then only as approximate indicators of ability. Having accepted this point of view, the researcher decided to look at the mean change in total reading and reading comprehension scores achieved by the students in the writing-infused group between grades 5 and 6. The researcher



also looked at these same scores for those students who were in the traditional reading program. The purpose for this exploration was to see if there were any strong indications of the effects of the writing-reading program on the participating students, as well as, in comparison to those not in the program. The researcher also compared the scores of the writing-infused students to those of the "national norms" provided by the test publishers.

### C. Materials

All of the fifth grade teachers in the school used the same eclectic reading program (Macmillan Series R) and covered the same content but in different ways. The traditional program, based on the researcher's observations of instruction once a month in each of the other two classes, consisted of reading the basal reader, group instruction on the skills, activities and abilities perscribed by the teachers' manual and some elaboration by the teachers above and beyond that inherent in the program. Detailed observations of these practices using unstructured written accounts were made. The researcher, functioning as participant observer, was interested in considering an analysis of the effects of a new dimension to those typically included under the rubric of reading methods: that is the traditional reading categories of an eclectic basal, linear skills, natural language, interest, and an integrated curriculum. This new dimension was the infusion of

a process writing component in place of the customary skill sheets and workbook pages.

Before all the data was collected, it was not possible to say exactly what final form the analysis would take. But the process of analysis began in part with the first field experiences and built gradually as the materials were collected (Lofland, 1971). A combination of descriptive and experimental research was used. The emphasis was on the descriptive and ethnographic observations made. However, both pupil performance and achievement measured in quantitative data were used as an evaluative tool. Careful records were kept of the students' marks on class assignments as well as report card grades in order to note any significant gains in their classroom work in reading.

Two samples of students' writing were collected from all the subjects during the first two weeks of the 1988-1989 school year (pretest). In the last few days of May, 1989, two more writing samples were collected from all the subjects (posttest). Two topics were assigned for the pretest and two for the posttest. During each writing occasion, however, students wrote on a single topic on a given day. During the pretest occasion, therefore, students wrote on each of two topics, and again during the posttest period, each wrote on basically the same two topics. In all, each student wrote four papers. The pretest consisted of a non-fiction assignment called "I Remember" and a fiction assignment about a teacher

becoming invisible. The posttest was a slight variation of the pretest. Most papers should have been completed in thirty minutes but the time limit for the students was not enforced, especially for the fiction pieces which required use of the imagination. Students were generally allowed extra time if they need it. An analysis of the student's writing skill, as exemplified in his/her pretests and posttests, was made in order to note any significant improvements in their writing abilities.

Two formal data-gathering instruments were used. The Macmillan Series R is the basal system used by the entire school. The Macmillan Series reading tests and profile cards (Levels 25-30) were used at the completion of each unit of reading work to check the mastery of criterion determined by the basal program and to provide the administration of the school with a means to follow the progress of the students. The results of these tests provided some indication of achievement of mastery of specific reading comprehension skills and abilities.

The 1978 SRA Achievement Test Series, a battery of standardized tests in basic curriculum which measures what students have learned, was utilized at the beginning of the fifth grade to provide base-line scores for the students in reading comprehension and total reading performance. And they were administered again at the beginning of the sixth grade in order to evaluate the growth in reading achievement that had

occurred. The test is traditionally given in October of the year. The reliability coefficients are reported to range from .91 to .96 on the reading subtests based on spring 1978 national samples and reviewers are in agreement concerning its high content validity. It was also hoped that the scores from these tests might provide a means of comparison of growth in reading achievement between the writing-infused group and the rest of the fifth grade student population. Although standardized tests have undergone severe criticism as screening devices and evaluative measures of children's literacy, they unfortunately continue to be highly regarded as definitive evidence of children's learning (Chittendon 1989).

In May, 1989, during the last full week of classes, a student survey was administered to all the students in the fifth grade for post information. This was done in order to evaluate the utility of the writing activities for the writing-infused group in their reading and writing development and as a possible means for comparison of the feelings about reading and writing of those students in and not involved in the program (sample of the survey to be found in appendix 1).

#### D. Procedure

In early September, 1988, prior to the assignment of students to their reading class, a list of the sixty-one students scheduled to the fifth grade was obtained. The students were placed in rank order based on their overall

reading score in their previous SRA Achievement Test. Using this list, fourteen students were selected from the middle of the list to participate in the study. These fourteen students were assigned to the researcher's reading/writing class in which 50% of the hour long period would be spent with their regular reading basal and 50% would be spent in an interactive writing program.

Once the students were selected a permission slip (see copy in appendix 1) was sent to be signed by their parents in order for them to participate in this program. Within a week's time of their selection a coffee hour was held for the participants' parents to explain the program and its emphasis. On the next Monday the reading/writing program began.

The curriculum for the group included a variety of things.

1. The study group used the fifth grade text and workbooks of the Macmillan Series R. The text is called Echos of Time. The workbook has three kinds of exercises:

Learning new vocabulary words for the stories

Comprehension questions for the selection

Practicing exercises for various reading skills

2. At the same time, the teacher read every other day to the group from children's literature that she personally likes or from books that she was trying to interest the children in reading or from pieces of writing the children had read, liked and requested that she read. The teacher read from a variety

of literary forms including poetry, stories, descriptions, and essays. While this was being done, she made sure to read about the author whenever possible. It is very important not to separate the person from the work. After reading to the students for several weeks, the teacher began to use many of the books read as models of good writing. Together the teacher and students examined interesting phrases and words, noticed how the author began and ended the story, and observed how the punctuation and spelling were used. In many cases the children decided to use these books as models for their own writing.

3. The class participated in numerous semi-structured, fun prewriting activities such as brain-storming, clustering, collective stories and simple activities leading to creating with words.

4. The students each had a writing folder in which to keep the drafts they were currently working on or drafts they had put aside to work on again later. The students were encouraged to review and revise past ideas and past products. The students were not pressured to present only fully formed ideas. If they had been, they probably would have been unlikely to take the risk of exploring creative solutions to their writing problems by themselves or by conferencing with their peers. Occasionally the students were asked to compare various drafts of their pieces to document their own growth. A wide variety of types of writing was expected. The folder also held "spelling helps", topic ideas, interest inventories and any

other "helps" that were felt needed and provided for the use of the students during the school year. These hints or helps usually were provided as part of a mini-lesson which had been taught to the whole class or those needing the instruction. When a student was satisfied with his/her final draft of a particular piece, it could be published in a variety of ways. It could be displayed in the classroom, rewritten in a book or added to the student's collection of completed pieces. Published student books became part of a classroom library to be read by other class members for reading pleasure or to provide ideas for a story or piece of their own.

5. As part of each day's work, there were short mini-lessons. In the mini-lessons the teacher would develop the simple notions of setting, plot (including the rising and falling of story lines and the climax), description, conversation of characters, character development and style, etc. In the group instruction lessons, the class would develop these same concepts by exploring their basal reading series in order to see how professional authors handled them.

6. Another important part of the class experience was what we called the "Author's Corner". A student would go to this spot ( a comfortable chair in the front of the classroom) to read their own published books or pieces, to explain something they are trying to do with their writing and ask for ideas or help, to read part of a trade book that they liked and wished to share, and to give oral book reports on trade books they

have finished reading. When a student finished reading a piece of his own, he indicated he was ready for questions and to accept comments by putting down his work and saying, "Now." Some sample comments began or included the following:

I like the part...

Why did you choose...?

Did you consider writing it this way...?

How do you feel about being an author for this piece?

The Author's Corner was used only one or two times during each day's class because of time constraints.

7. A publication program is essential to making the authoring cycle work in a classroom. Publication encourages authorship and makes involvement in the authoring cycle a functional activity. Children's work should be treated as the "real" thing. If the teacher introduces only published professional works, children learn that their own writings are not the "real" thing. The essential criteria of a publication program is that the published document has a real audience and continuing use that keeps it alive and functional in the classroom or for a wider audience. A class newspaper of works of the members of the class was published twice during the course of the year. The title of the newspaper was "From Our Minds to Yours". The title was chosen by the students. "Publishing provides the motivation for children to correctly edit, rework, polish and finally proof-read their pieces so that they may communicate ideas clearly for others to read."



(Butler and Turbill, 1984, p.56.)

8. Brief discussions or "conferences" with an individual child or small group of children can occur before, during and after the reading or writing takes place. This allows the teacher to provide individualized support and guidance at the child's own point of need.

9. In short, the teacher tried to free the students to capture the incredibly rich raw materials of their senses through daily school life. The teacher tried to give them a private means of recording what they cared about and what they felt and saw and to help them see that words are tools a writer uses to explore the world and to mine its meaning.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### A. On Creative Writing

##### 1. From the Case Study

###### a. Introduction

This chapter tells what the writer has learned so far about fifth grade children and their writing and reading. It also describes what was done in the classroom and why it was done. It tells stories about the teaching and the learning.

Before classes began the teacher spent a week getting the classroom organized. The time spent in preparation saved her and her students incalculable time once class began. She set up different work sites; put out supplies, resources, and references where writers would choose materials; identified and designated areas; set up a file for folders where writers would put work-in-progress or pieces that were ready to be edited or photocopied. These permanent writing folders served as a writer's organizational and record-keeping system; contained lists and helpful hints (see appendix 3) to aid the writers in their development; and became each student's story of who they were as writers, rich with evidence of what they were able to do and how they were able to do it. Nancy Atwell writes "Writing can vary and writers can grow when the environment is unvaryingly reliable. The predictable schedule, physical

arrangement of my classroom, and patterns of my responses combine with the predictable structure of each day's class so that writers' minds can range"(1987, 74).

#### b. Topics

One of the first and most controversial decisions to be made concerned the appropriate method to be used for choice of or assigning of writing topics. While many teachers remain firmly committed to the idea that students' writing should be based on self-selected topics such as suggested by Graves (1983), others raise questions which indicate a deep rooted concern as to whether a steady diet of self-selection will result in competence that transfers to writing tasks such as reports and essay questions (Lee 1987, 180).

Some teachers assigned topics because they believe that most of the kids are so intimidated by expressing themselves on paper that they would not write without a prompt. In addition they believe that their control is necessary for kids to write well. When it comes right down to it, though, teachers assign topics because they believe that their ideas are more believable and important than any their kids might possibly entertain (Atwell, 6).

In practice and theory, many writing programs draw heavily on James Moffett's hierarchy of discourse (1976); its basic tenet was that students learn to write by working systematically through an assigned sequence of modes - drama to narrative to idea writing - with extensive pre- and post-writing activities.

Close reading of the current literature on process writing yields some information about topic selection. Teachers are encouraged to allow students free choice of topic when following the Graves' model and this does lead to creating classroom libraries of students' "published writings". But, there appears to be little evidence that teachers are admonished never to assign students a topic. Graves' specific recommendations are for helping students identify those topics about which they know a great deal (Lee 1987, 181). Donald Graves believes that it is best not to start students off with assigned topics, gradually easing into self-selection. He says that when we assign topics we create a welfare system, putting our students on writers' welfare. The student who writes today on a topic provided by the teacher is going to show up the next time and the next time requiring more topic hand-outs. This cycle can be stopped but it is difficult. It is better to start off immediately with students using their own ideas (1983, 98).

John Collins (1985) in his handbook, The Effective Writing Teacher, proclaims that students of all grade levels need a balance between composing on teacher assigned topics and composing that requires them to develop and refine (their own) topics...As students become more skilled writers, the balance between writing about more limited and more academic topics begins to shift, and more assignments can be teacher directed.

What the researcher did was to gather her students one day during the first week of classes and explain how the topic choices were to be made. The children were to come up with their own topics. The students' reactions ranged from tentative to very enthusiastic. But gradually they all learned that they did have ideas for writing. Some even had good ideas.

After the novelty of self-selected topics faded and they had exhausted their topic sources, the writing did not always come easily. The students began to ask the teacher for ideas, but were directed towards finding a topic for themselves. They interviewed their families for anecdotal stories, filled out personal inventories, and collected story titles and story starters (see appendix 4). They were asked a few open-ended questions that helped them discover topics from their inventories or about the writer's experiences, observations, or areas of interest or expertise; they were sent to look at the finished pieces of other students or to circulate to see what others were presently working on in order to get ideas; they were reminded of things they had read which could become models for original pieces. Sometimes an old piece suggested new ideas. The teacher might show them a brainstorming or clustering (Gabrielle Rico) activity or how to write down as quickly as possible as many ideas as possible. But basically, they were encouraged to write about what they cared about, what they knew, or what they did not know. They took some chances, tried new subjects, styles and format.

The results for most were wonderful. The students did some real writing. Eventually, they began taking responsibility for their writing, sometimes judging a single draft sufficient, other times deciding the second or third draft represented their best effort. They took care editing and proofreading so that their readers could understand their meaning. Sometimes they even took time writing and planning their writing outside of school as well as in.

Much of what happened in the writing-reading classroom was informed by the work of Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Lucy Calkins, Susan Sowers, and Mary Ellen Giacobbe. But the new curriculum was not a neat formulation of skills and methods. It was messy; as the teacher learned more, it changed. But a framework of seven ideas or beliefs undergird this messy curriculum and guided the teaching and learning:

1. Writers need regular blocks of time. They need time to think, write, confer, read, change their minds and write some more. Writers need time that they can count on, so even when they are not writing, they know when they will be. Writers need time to write well (Atwell 1987,17).

2. Writers need their own topics. Right from the very first day of class students should use writing as a way to think about and give shape to their own ideas and concerns (Graves).

3. Writers need response. Helpful response comes during and not after the composing. It comes from the writer's peers and from the teacher, who is consistently modelling the kinds of restatements and questions that help writers reflect on the content of their writing.
4. Writers learn mechanics in context. They are taught by the teacher who addresses errors as they occur within individual pieces of writing, where the rules and forms will have more meaning.
5. Writers need to read. They need access to a wide-ranging variety of texts, prose, and poetry, fiction and non-fiction.
6. Writers learn to think of themselves as authors.
7. The teacher needs to make room for audiences other than the teacher by developing ways young writers could go public.

#### c. Organization

From the beginning of the class, the teacher organized and reorganized her teaching to support writing, reading, and learning. She had to define organization in a new way, discovering what writers needed, and providing plenty of it.

Even before the students came to her classroom at the beginning of October, she wanted to be ready. She wanted to know what she expected to happen; to know how, where, and when she expected it to take place; and to know who was expected to

do it. She organized her classroom as best she could as a place that invites and supports the writing process so that when her students arrived they found what they needed to become writers. Murray says , "...it is our job as teachers of writing to create a context that is as appropriate for writing as the gym is for basketball" (First Silence 1983, 228). She found that she had to provide three big basics: time, ownership, and response.

#### d. Time

It was important that the students wrote everyday, Monday through Friday. Writers, according to D.M. Murray, need time - regular, frequent chunks of time that they can count on, anticipate, and plan for. He says that when we make time for writing in school, designating it a high priority of the reading program, our students will develop the habits - and the compulsions. They begin to think about writing when they are not writing.

Graves recommends allotting at least three hours or periods a week in order for this habit of mind to take hold, for students to begin to rehearse their writing off stage and come up with their own topics with some degree of success (1983, 223). The teacher met with her students five days a week for a one hour period. That time was generally equally divided between writing and reading.

According to Nancy Atwell, frequent time for writing also allows students to write well. When they have sufficient time



to consider and reconsider what they've written, they're more likely to achieve the clarity, logic, voice and grace of good writing" (1987, 55). Kurt Vonnegut wrote "...novelists...have, on the average, about the same IQs as the cosmetic consultants in Bloomingdale's department store. Our power is patience. We have discovered that writing allows even a stupid person to seem halfway intelligent, if only that person will write the same thought over and over again, improving it just a little bit each time. It is a lot like inflating a blimp with a bicycle pump. Anybody can do it. All it takes is time (1981, 128).

The teacher found that the reality of writing was that good writers and writing did not take less time; they took more time. The students did not produce polished, first-time drafts or weekly assignments on demand. Regular, frequent time also helped writers grow. Even when students wrote every day, growth in writing was slow and seldom followed a linear movement, each piece representing an improvement over the last. It also meant regular, frequent occasions for teaching and learning more about writing. The teacher dealt with one new skill or issue at a time with her class in the form of mini-lessons. She also helped students with their specific needs during student-teacher conferences. Over the whole year, her students tried out new subjects, rules, forms, devices, techniques, and strategies. With sufficient time to take risks and reflect, the writers began to be able to consider what was

working and what needed more work, to apply new knowledge, and to take control. It became possible for them to capture who they were and then come back and measure themselves against that earlier self.

#### e. Ownership

In late September, when it came time to decorate her classroom, the teacher decided to put up one eye-catching bulletin board pertaining to writing. She left the majority of the room's walls bare to be filled by student's work and reminders of mini-lessons which had been taught. She cleared most of the countertops for display of student books as well as professional books and paperbacks for the students to read. Hundreds of titles and plenty of bookmarks and a sign-out book formed the original fifth grade library along one section of countertop space. As each season or holiday approached, the library would be added to with time appropriate books. There were also two chairs where students could sit and read a little of a book to see if it appealed to them.

There was another table which became a place for writers to choose materials: as many different kinds of paper as she could budget, create, or scare up; plastic bags holding markers, pens, pencils, or crayons; rulers, a stapler, scissors, white-out liquid, and a variety of tape; collections of writers' resources and references including dictionaries, spellers, and a thesaurus; in short, everything a writer might possibly need, each item consigned to its own space.

Each student had two folders, one a daily folder for the work in progress and writing aids and another that stayed on file in the classroom to store the whole collection of a student's finished drafts with accompanying drafts and notes. Angie's folder was typical of the diversity and depth of writing that the researcher saw in her students. By the end of the year, she had twenty-two drafts: three poems, eight personal narratives, two character sketches, two letters, one play, two essays, and four fiction pieces. Everything that contributed to the final draft: lists, rough drafts, and sketches of ideas were stapled together. All published versions of the student's finished pieces were on a countertop where they could be easily read by the other students. At the side of the room was a kind of file cabinet. Each student had access to one section which was the repository for their permanent writing folders, their books and workbooks and anything else they needed to keep from class session to class session.

There was also a carpeted area at the front of the classroom from which students could read and share work they had finished and needed help on. This area came to be called the "Author's Corner". The students arranged their desks and chairs to sit near whomever they wished. They were frequently rearranged as the students learned best with whom they could work and share responses. They also learned how to share and still keep to a noise level low enough to allow others to work.

They were also grouped so that the teacher could walk around them to confer with individual writers.

This predictable environment, with each area and its uses clearly established, set the stage for students' experimentation, decision-making, and independence. The writers in this classroom exerted ownership because they were not waiting for the teacher's motivational pre-writing activity or directions about what to write; instead, they were using the tools and procedures at their disposal to motivate and improve their own writing. Their writing belonged to them and they were responsible for it. As Don McQuade remarked in a presentation at the Northeastern University Writing Workshops, "The good writing teacher isn't responsible for his student's writing. He is responsible to his students" (1984). If we sit quietly and wait and listen, our students will tell us what they are trying to do as writers. We must give them time and the right to ownership.

#### f. Response

When a student writes, their inner self is laid open for everyone to see. It makes them vulnerable. The writer, according to D. M. Murray (First Silence, 1983), wants response that is courteous and gentle, that helps without threatening the writer's dignity. They want responses that take them seriously and move them forward. Writers need to be listened to. They need honest, concerned reactions. Writers need response while the words are churning out, in the midst of the

messy, tentative act of drafting meaning. As Graves says, "Writing is such an unpredictable, up-and-down affair, that the help structure should be highly predictable. The more unsettled the writer, the more he needs to find the teacher's approach predictable" (1983, 273).

The first step towards producing literate students was to break what Janet Emig calls "magical thinking" - the idea that good writing equals first-time perfection. Correcting this misconception involved teaching the composing process, encouraging students to produce unevaluated writings and multiple drafts, having them read and respond to peers' papers, and, most importantly, evaluating the inexperienced writers' papers by responding more to content than to form.

The students soon learned that the teacher would respond in person during the writing rather than in written comments on their papers at the end of their writing. If students left her with a piece of work to read at the end of class, she would read it overnight and begin conferencing on the next class day with these students. This was particularly important because the purpose of the class was to develop as writers. And it was the teacher's belief that after-the-fact responses came too late to do a writer much good; it assumed that the students would remember the teacher's admonitions until the next time they wrote a piece and transfer it to an entirely new situation.

The teacher worked with her students at their desks as well as at her own desk. In an effort to keep conferences brief, and to see every writer every day, the teacher kept on the move. She did not want to be put in the position of taking too much responsibility for their work by listening to whole pieces of writing, identifying problems, and coming up with solutions. The purpose of their talks was not to get the writer to revise, it was to work with them on their content - what was working, what needed more work, and/or what to do next. They worked on one thing at a time. The goal was what Vygotsky termed "mediated learning: "What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow " (1962, 104). The writer was offered options or alternatives, given opportunities to share and reflect, and nudged in the writing conferences. Murray writes: "Teachers should not withhold information that will help the student solve a writing problem. The most effective teacher, however, will try by questioning to get the student to solve the problem alone. If that fails, the teacher may offer three or more alternative solutions, and remind the student to ignore any of them if a solution of the writer's own comes to mind (First Silence, 1983, 233).

Nancy Atwell, in In The Middle, suggests that " In considering the realities of adolescence, if we know that social relationships come first, it simply makes good sense to bring those relationships into the classroom and put them to work" (1987, 41). Social needs found a legitimate forum in student's conferences about their writing. The students talked

about their ideas. Genuine conversation occurred between students as well as between students and teachers. "One-to-one and in small groups, writers and readers socialize about the world of written language and teach each other what they know." Some of the reasons students sought each others' responses included: to get many perspectives on a problem simultaneously, to try out something new, to share a successful new technique, to run a couple of alternative solutions past another writer, to celebrate a finished piece. It was unimportant how the peer groups were formed; what was important was how the collaboration moved a student forward in the context of what the individual was trying to do. Students decided who could give the kind of help they needed as they needed it: if Melissa knew the skills for writing dialogue, they called on her; if Christine knew about writing good description, they called on her; and if Lynn knew about leads, they talked to her. The small groups formed and broke up in the time it took for a writer to call on one or more other writers, share a piece or discuss a problem, and go back to work.

When one student confers with one or two others, it should be for purposeful dialogue. The teacher did not believe every writer needed to constantly share a piece; the point was to make a place for students who required a wider response on a given day than from the teacher alone. Sometimes students became too dependent on conferring with their peers and needed to be encouraged to write or read themselves. Nancy Atwell

says that students must be encouraged to develop into discriminating writers whose own careful readings of their pieces will aid them in requesting specific help in conferences with others (1987, 103).

The group-sharing time was another peer conferring format. The writer would read his or her piece and call upon peers for comments. The class rules called for saying first what they liked about the piece, as specifically as possible, and then asking questions to make things clearer. The questions the children asked grew to be modeled on those they had heard the teacher ask in individual conferences. When the students made a change after a group share, in response to a question, they were becoming a more critical reader. The atmosphere created for sharing the writing was significant and the trusting environment allowed for risk-taking.

In student-teacher conferences, the teacher asked questions that nudged the students to reflect on personal experiences in order for them to uncover and bring meaning to their memories of friendship and family, to explore ideas and issues around personal experiences, to consider topics of general concern. In order for this to happen, a relationship needed to be developed as quickly as possible between the teacher and her students. Shirley Brice Heath (1986) says that the research clearly indicates that if a child is going to be a reader and a writer, that child needs a bonded relationship with a joyful literate adult. In the end conferring comes down



to a matter of relationship. The conferences tended to be individualized, although there were occasions when one or more other children would join in. Because the children were writing on topics they had chosen, the teaching and their learning were about as individualized as they could get. And so was the evaluation of individual changes and self-improvement.

Asking students to edit before the content is set reflects a misunderstanding of what writers do and deemphasizes the revision process. Nancy Atwell says, "Editorial issues should be addressed after the content of a piece of writing is set. When the writer is satisfied with what he or she has said, whether it has taken one draft or twelve, then the writer attends formally and finally to the conventions of written American English" (1987, 106). And as Donald Murray remarks, "The greatest compliment I can give a student is to mark up a paper. But I can only mark up the best drafts. You can't go to work on a piece of writing until it is near the end of the process, until the author has found something important to say and a way to say it" (1982, 161).

Once the content was set, the writer himself edited first. They had been encouraged to write their drafts on every other line to facilitate easy editing. They could also edit in a pen or pencil different in color from the text. Then the teacher edited by correcting, or more likely, indicating any errors that the writer missed and then chose one or two high-priority

concerns to address in an individual conference in the following day's class. Finally, the students wrote a perfect final copy from the corrected text. This copy was called the "published copy". This editing is editing in the strictest sense of the word. These editorial issues ranged from syntax to usage to spelling, punctuation, format, and stylistic concerns and were based on the skill level of the writer.

g. Library

A classroom library was established. Nancy Atwell in In the Middle says that a classroom filled with popular titles serves as an invitation to readers to browse, chat about books, select and be selective (1987, 162). It also provides an important demonstration, showing students that supplying books for them to choose and read, in Donald Graves' phrase "surrounding them with literature" (1983, 65), is a high priority of their teacher and school. Gradually, books of adolescent literature, a genre that barely existed twenty years ago, were added to a small collection of children's classics. There are several authors of juvenile fiction who write as well for adolescents as some favorite contemporary authors (Atwell, 20). The books included novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, and poetry.

The students read some of the books avidly and others with less enthusiasm. Some books were chosen by the students to be read aloud to the whole class. The students kept a list of the books they read individually in their folders. The students

averaged twenty-two titles during the school year. There was a need for new books to be added to the collection by mid-year. Other practices of the teacher evolved in response to the readers' needs: she helped the students find books that they wanted to read; she learned how to talk to readers in a sensible, sensitive way and to give readers ways of conferring with each other; and she made room for audiences for reading by other than the teacher.

## 2. The Four Difficulties of Writers

### a. Introduction

Writing samples collected from both of the pre-testing exercises were used by the researcher as a base-line for mapping ability. The writing samples were used to determine the course of development of the student's relative strengths and weaknesses in writing ability for each child.

On reading and rereading the writing samples for analysis, the author was able to make some observations about the students' abilities to handle content and form. Generally, the students produced stories that were composed of lists of loosely connected sentences and ideas. Some of the stories were slightly more interesting and contained some slightly varied presentations of facts, with some explicit connections made between those facts. Few students, however, produced stories that were developed using strategies such as cause and effect, illustration, example, or detail; most stories were unsophisticated enumerations of facts.

The students had equally, if not slightly more, problems with form as they did with content in their narratives. The students exhibited sentence-structure problems, including fragments and run-on sentences, as well as grammatical and mechanical problems. The organization of the students' writing was not strong. Most of the students relied on the simplest, list-like, temporal relation (for example, "and then") to describe the action in their stories. A few students wrote only slightly more complex stories, incorporating some cause and effect and conditional relations. The organization the students used most often in their narratives, temporal relations, is not sophisticated in an absolute sense; this relationship is that used earliest in oral language and most frequently in writing (Jacobs, 1986).

The tendency that the researcher found for this sample of children to have slightly better ideas than ways of expressing them successfully in their writing is confirmed in other research. For example, Shaughnessy (1977) found the same tendency among a group of college students she termed "basic writers". She noted that these students "know more about sentences than they can initially demonstrate as writers" (88-89). The students' difficulty with form may well have a limiting effect on the overall maturity of their writing. This may be especially true for the below-average readers, who seemed to have particular problems in dealing with the multiple

constraints of the task (Flower and Hayes, 1980). Jeanne Chall et al (1990) also found similar problems in their research with poor children in grades 2 through 7. In The Reading Crises: Why Poor Children Fall Behind, they write a detailed analysis of the deceleration patterns in writing development which appeared across most measures.

Given the strong side of the students' writing, that they had creative ideas to express especially in their narratives, and its weak side, that they lacked the precise form and vocabulary with which to express their ideas, what did and does this researcher recommend to help the students to improve their writing?

In 1934, Dorothea Brande wrote a book called Becoming A Writer in which she said that the root problems of the writer, whether the writer is young or old, starting out or much published, are personality problems: he or she cannot get started; or when s/he starts a story well, then s/he gets lost or loses heart; or writes very well some of the time, but badly the rest of the time; or writes brilliantly, but after one superb story or novel, cannot write again; or writes brilliantly while the creative writing instruction lasts, but after it is over can no longer write (11-12). In other words, they are problems of confidence, self-respect, anxiety and freedom. All of this is not to say that no students start to write easily and well and are able to continue that way .

This researcher agrees heartily with Dorothea Brande's theory about writer's personality problems interfering with their writing. But rather than follow Brande's prescribed methods for eliminating these problems, she thought that the "process writing" program (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1986) she would infuse in her writing-reading class would do much more to alleviate these problems in her students and would have a strong influence on the writer's ability to produce. Brande, for her part, felt that the writer needed to know what kinds of habits of thought and action impeded progress, what unnoticed forces undermined confidence, and so on (13). The researcher believed that the writers needed to know what kinds of habits of thought and action encouraged progress, what forces built up confidence, and so on. The whole focus, for both points of view, is on the writer's mind and heart. John Gardner, in the forward to Becoming A Writer, says, "No one can write successfully without some measure of technical mastery and an ability to analyze truthfully and usefully the virtues and defects in his own work or the work of others".

Dorothea Brande believed that the basis of discontent for the average student or young writer began long before he had come to the place where he could benefit by technical instruction in writing. And it is those early negative feelings that need to be dealt with early in a writer's development. In the researcher's classroom four difficulties repeatedly turned up. Almost everyone in the class suffered from one or another of these troubles to varying degrees.

Until they had been overcome, the student was limited in their ability to benefit from the mechanical or technical training provided in the classroom.

#### b. Writing At All

First there was the difficulty of writing at all. The writer simply could not get started writing. There are many possible reasons for the difficulty which can range from humility, to self-consciousness, to misapprehensions about writing, to fear of being embarrassed.

Some specific lessons were used in class to encourage the students to attempt to write. For example, students were asked to bring something to class (a photo or other memento) about which they could talk and then write. The teacher modelled this procedure a few times for the class before the students were asked to try the exercise themselves. The students were encouraged to find and finish a story of their own about their own; not writing a few pages which would be judged for correctness alone, but with the prospect of turning out paragraph after paragraph and page after page which would be read for style, content, and effectiveness. The students were encouraged to think that they had something worth saying.

Another stimuli employed was to ask the students to talk to members of their families and collect anecdotes about themselves or their relatives. They were then asked to turn these anecdotes into stories to which they could add detail and embellish in other ways. The teacher helped them by trying to make them feel freer and bolder.

The students were also encouraged to write anything that came into their heads: last night's dream, if they were able to remember it; the activities of the day before; a conversation, real or imaginary; an examination of conscience. They could write anything that happened or passed their minds in the morning, rapidly and uncritically. The excellence or ultimate worth of what they wrote was of no importance, yet. What they were doing was to simply train themselves to write. After a day or two the students found that they could write more and more things easily and without strain. Within a very short time, most had found that the actual work of writing no longer seemed impossible, dull, or arduous. They had gained some fluency and now needed work on control. Here in the pile of pages the students had written during this period was priceless material.

Dorothea Brande suggests that the students at this point should read what they wrote as though they had the work of a stranger in their hands, and to discover there what the tastes and talents of this alien writer might be. She says that this examination can show the writer where his richest and most easily tapped vein lies (84-85). Conferences between the teacher and student at this time were very important. This conference about the student's discoveries was an attempt to put some focus on what the student had found.



When this stage of instruction was reached, there was, for many students, a burst of activity. The researcher believes that seeing the results of the writing which they have reason to believe came almost without effort had helped. Before long it became an effort to get them to stop. Several students moaned and complained when the class period was over. Fortunately, for a reason unknown to the teacher, the principal informed her that she had decided to lengthen the block of time for class by ten minutes. These spontaneous writings were usually very interesting, and often, with some shaping, could be turned into satisfactory finished work. They may have been a little rambling, a little discursive, but they provided wonderful first drafts.

Thomas A. West Jr. in his book, Our Students Can Write tells of similar results when he writes: "He will start to focus on what he sees, hears, feels, believes, touches - and will grow more capable of identifying with his environment and communicating thoughts about it to others. Instead of panoramic generalities, he will write detail. The process removes the blinders, the head-set, gets him off his ten-speed or out of his car, and the possibilities from there are boundless" (1978, 142).

In order to show how many of the students' writing expanded under these types of encouragement and positive teaching, the researcher will describe the work of a few of her

students (at least one for each type of difficulty to be described). What happened to these few happened to all of them in varying degrees.

Jeffrey's most serious problem as a writer was coming up with topics. His first efforts at writing were hesitant and quite awkward - incomplete thoughts, scratching out and scattered ideas. He was often stumped. When he did write, he stopped many pieces before they were half done because he did not care enough about the subjects he chose. Most of the subjects he did choose were borrowed from others. That is, Jeff borrowed from things he read and from ideas he heard in class conferences. He also borrowed ideas from movies, TV shows and video games. One of his earliest pieces was based on Dennis the Menace:

One Day Dennis was wearing his best outfit - a stripped shirt with red overalls and a tan baseball cap. He was playing soccer. When his dad asked, "Dennis do you want to go to Mount Rushmore." "O.K. lets go." On the way there he asked, "Are we there yet." "Ya, Dennis, there it is." Dennis asked, "Can we go in the big hill?" "No", said Dad. "Aw Dad", said Dennis "I want to climb through his ear and drop rocks through his nose". When he got there, they went out on the balcony of a building and Dennis was gone. They saw him on Lincoln's nose. The workers got fed up and chased him out. They said, "I hope I never see him again". A man carved Dennises face on the mountain.

Shortly after this, he wrote a sixteen chapter book based on the Smurfs, which began with an eight page illustrated introduction and glossary. He borrowed what he needed, then created something entirely his own from it.

Ideas often spread through the classroom, as students borrowed topics and themes from each other because they were aware of and liked each other's topics. "There is no more important source of inspiration for writers in the class than other writer's pieces, no single more important kind of reading. When the context is right - when kids can choose their own topics and share what they've written - other students respond to the authentic voices and information by borrowing what captivates them to create voice and information of their own" (Atwell, 1987, 249).

One of the last pieces that Jeff wrote was titled My Sister Emilie and was written after he had interviewed her:

I interviewed my sister on April 4, 1988. I interviewed her because I thought I might learn something about her I didn't know before.

Emilie is seven and a half years old. She is in second grade at St. Agnes School. For a little sister, she's really pretty cute. She comes up to my shoulder and is on the line between thin and chubby. Her hair is light brown and curly and usually a mess. She has pretty green eyes and thousands of eyelashes and I guess her eyes are the best part of her face. She has about three frekles on her nose. They are about the

size of Rice Krispies and look like something splattered on her face. She has three teeth missing in the front which looks funny when she smiles, but she has a dimple to make up for the lost teeth. She always has dirty fingernails which drives my mom crazy. She wears a uniform to school and acts like a cool dudette. Actually, she's pretty cool. She's not afraid of anything, which is neat for a little kid.

Emilie loves to dance and draw. She's good at both. Her favorite thing to do with Mom is watch old musicals on TV. She wants to be the second Judy Garland. She also says she is going to be an architect when she grows up.

In the interview she said her favorite vacation was to Disney World. She loved all the rides. Her favorite day was this fall when we raked leaves and I dumped her out of the wheel barrel into the leaves. She also likes swimming, playing dress up, and Barbies.

She has two boy friends in her class.

Emilie liked being interviewed by me and I liked learning about her.

### c. Early Success

Second, there was the writer who had had an early success but could not repeat it. Usually the student did not consider himself a one-piece author or s/he would quit altogether. Often these writers went on reshaping, recombining, and

objectifying the same stories and experiences. They became discouraged and desperate.

It was evident, if a writer had had a deserved success, that he already knew something of the technical end of the writing. "It is also believed that each writer's mind will be found to have a type-story of its own: because of the individual's history, he will tend to see certain dilemmas as dramatic and overlook others entirely...it follows that each writer's stories will always bear a fundamental likeness to each other" (Brandt, 46). The teacher felt she must help the students to become aware of this possible monotony so that the writer would be lead to change, recombine, and introduce elements of surprise and freshness into each new story element. "The writer needs to believe that with a little more trouble s/he might have been able to turn up equivalent touches, just as valid, just as effective emotionally, and far less stale" (Brandt, 113). The truth seems to be that writers often return to the familiar and safe over and over.

In order to collect some new and different materials for their stories, there were some exercises that the students were asked to perform. They were asked to pretend for a short period of time that they were a stranger in their own streets. They were to notice and tell themselves about every single thing that their eyes rested on; what colors they were; where and how things were placed; how people dressed; how they stood or sat; what they were reading; what sounds they heard; what

smells reached them; how things felt. At another time the students were told to speculate on the person opposite them in a particular place. They were to guess what s/he was coming from and where s/he was going; what they could tell about them from their face, their attitude, their clothes; and what they thought their home was like. The ideas that the student's collected from these activities were put into definite words to be used in future writings. Finding the exact words was not always necessary or easy, but persistently going after the right phrase would reward them with a striking, well-realized item sometime when they needed it badly.

David wrote an early piece he called Building in which he talked about liking to build and work in his father's workshop. The teacher did not describe this piece as a "success", but it was successful in that David had felt for the better part of the week prior to his writing it that he had nothing to write about:

I like building because it is good exercize, it is fun, and you might build something neat to play with. On March 6, 1989 I build a Superman symbol, a ball, and a weardo with spikey hair and a skinny neck of clay. I also cleaned my dad's workbench that was very, very unorganized. I also cleaned the floor, put toys in the toybox and sweep the dust and dirt. This took me about two hourers. When I was finished I went up stairs and ate cookies.

Immediately after this piece David wrote about "Skating" and again wrote about why he liked it even if he did not get to skate that often. David wrote four other pieces about things he liked: "Guns", "Sports", "The Funnies", and "Poems". It was very difficult to make David aware of and lead him away from repeatedly writing fundamentally the same piece. He was very reluctant to make the effort to introduce freshness and interest into his work. He eventually did write pieces that were substantially different, but he never became a very sophisticated writer. One of his last pieces was called Birthday Underwear:

On my birthday my grandma gave me underwear. I was so embarrassed because all my sisters were in the room and I had a funny look on my face. They were regular underwear. At first I thought it was a joke and the underwear had come out of my drawer. But it didn't. Then I picked it up and a ten dollar bill fell out of it. Everybody laughed. I appreciated the ten dollars, but I wish it wasn't in the underwear.

#### d. Can Only Write At Long Intervals

The third difficulty was a sort of combination of the first two: there were writers who could, at very long intervals, write with great effectiveness. Leigh put out one excellent piece every four to six weeks. The periods in between were filled with frustrating efforts, to say the least. She seemed to write in twenty minute spurts spread out over

the class period. In between these fleeting moments of writing, she sprawled across her desk and chatted about this and that. Each time she found herself unable to write she was certain she would never repeat her success. But, after a long while, she always wrote again, and wrote well.

The teacher in her teacher-student conferences had to form a definite idea of the root of the trouble and give help accordingly. One decision made during these conferences was that Leigh would write even when there were no new ideas. She could write anything at all until an idea came. She could write sense or nonsense; write what she thought of her teacher or a friend; write a story summary or a fragment of dialogue, or the description of someone she knew or recently noticed. If she had to, she could write, "I am finding this work really hard," and say what she thought were the reasons for the difficulty. This type of writing is called free writing by Peter Elbow in Writing With Power. He says that when the blocked writer free writes, he is often catapulted immediately into vivid, forceful language. He is not instantly transformed into someone who can make all the micro-decisions needed for writing. He gets words down on the page, but a lot of the decisions are still being made by the words themselves. Thus he has frequent bursts of power in his writing but little control. If you are a blocked writer, Elbow believes, free writing will help you overcome resistance and move you gradually in the direction of more fluency and control (1981, 18-19).



Another technique that was demonstrated and used in order to find a story to write was a creative-search process suggested by Gabriele Rico in her book Writing The Natural Way called "clustering". Clustering is a non-linear brainstorming process akin to free association. Through clustering a nucleus word or short phrase acts as the stimulus for recording all the associations that spring to mind in a very brief period of time. It is the writing tool that accepts wondering, not knowing, seeming chaos, and gradually mapping an interior landscape as ideas begin to emerge. Clustering is not merely the spilling of words and phrases at random. Each association leads inexorably to the next with a logic of its own. Gabriele Rico says that at some point you experience a sudden sense of what you are going to write about. At that point, you simply stop clustering and begin writing (Rico,18-36).

Throughout the course of the class Leigh wrote several very exciting and well-written pieces. The fiction piece, Fantasy Island, that is printed here started and stopped several times, but eventually Leigh was able to return to its writing and complete it.

I was twelve years old and I loved unicorns more than anything. I had twelve pictures of unicorns on my wall, unicorn sun-catchers, unicorn mares, little unicorn statues, anything unicorn you could imagine.

It was time for my favorite TV show, Fantasy Island.

It's about people going off on a boat and landing on a beautiful island with what people dream of and best of all with a rainbow waterfall with a whole different world behind it full of unicorns. I ran downstairs and watched my show. It was a rerun. I was laying on the couch and the next thing I knew I was on the Fantasy Island boat. It was very strange. Everyone on the boat jumped in the ocean. I was left on the ship alone. I was scared, but happy at the same time. Bang! The boat hit something. My gosh! I'm on Fantasy Island. It really was real-just like the show. I walked around looking for the rainbow waterfall, but I couldn't find it. I had walked a mile when I stumbled over a hollow log and landed in the Rainbow River. I flowed down the river on a piece of driftwood and I fell asleep.

And when I woke up, I was inside the Rainbow Waterfall. The unicorns couldn't even be described. They were so beautiful. They were very shy, but one unicorn bent down so I could ride it. I didn't even think about it; I just got on her. I named her Raindrop. We rode everywhere and I loved every minute of it. I saw parts of the island no one's ever seen before. Eventually, I knew it was time for me to go because something was hitting me. I wanted Raindrop to come home with me, but she couldn't.

I finally woke-up to my parents trying to wake me up. I told my parents all about my dream and they said it was quite a fantasy. I asked them why they had their hands behind their backs? Then they showed me a beautiful glass unicorn that looked just like Raindrop. I ran to my room to put it in the glass cabinet. I found a little note at the bottom of the box it was in that said, " Even though it was just a dream, it was real enough for me".

e. Can Not End A Story

The fourth difficulty had to do with the ability to bring a story to a successful conclusion. Students who complained of this difficulty could start a story well, but found that it was out of control after a few pages. Or they wrote a good story so drily or boring that all its fine features were lost. Sometimes the student could not truly get into the story and so the story carried no conviction.

It is quite true that those who found themselves in this pass could have been greatly helped by learning about structure, about the various forms which the story might take, of the innocuous "tricks of the trade" which would help a story over the stile (Brandes, 32). The writer, however, lacked the self-confidence or experience to present his ideas well enough to bring his story to life.

This also included the writer who turned out one weak or abruptly told story after another, who obviously needed

something more than to have his or her individual pieces criticized. Lynn began the year writing a series of pieces which told a story by listing a series of events that happened during a particular occasion. One of her early pieces was My Summer Trip.

It was in July when my friend Jessica called me up and asked if I could go to Hannibal, Missouri and spend three days with her. My father said, "Yes."

When she picked me up we went to her house we ate, swam, and played till 1:00 AM then we had to go to bed.

The next morning we ate Melo Cream Donuts and off we went to Hannibal.

When we got to Hannibal we ate again at Hardees, took a ride on a barge, went shopping and spent all her parents money. We also went to the Mark Twain Cave. It was extremely fun and the last thing we did was go to the museum and see manequins of Becky Thatcher, Mark Twain, and his friend Huck Finn.

When we got home Jessica and me played pool and went outside to swim.

After this we ate and went to take a shower. Then we talked and went to bed.

The next morning we went fishing and I didn't catch any because they would eat the bait before I could get it.

But after all this I missed my parents and family.

As soon as possible a student like Lynn needed to learn to trust her own feelings for the story, and to relax in the telling, until she had learned to master her own writing.

To help the students in the class who fell into this group, much time was spent looking at the writings of others for ideas. It was hoped that the students would take into their own writings any styles or techniques that they could use with full acquaintance and acceptance. Robert Cormier in "An Interview with Robert Cormier: Part II" (Silvey 1985, 289) describes his reading by saying, "Reading is the most important thing I do besides the actual writing. I'm always asking as I read, 'How did the writer do this?'" Lucy McCormick in Living Between the Lines writes that too often, in trying to make reading-writing connections, we approach texts with dissecting kits, so intent on separating out the qualities of good writing that we forget why we read and write in the first place (1991, 173).

Dorothea Brande (106) suggests another technique when she says, "...technical excellences can be imitated, and with great advantage. When you have found a passage, long or short, which seems to you far better than anything of the sort you are yet able to do, sit down to learn from it." The works of many writers were looked at in this way. The students wrote paragraphs of their own, imitating their models sentence by sentence. The teacher hoped that some part of the students

mind would be awakened to use the styles and techniques of the works that they had been studying and that they would make them their own.

The students were also encouraged to use more specific or descriptive words in their stories. They were encouraged to be on the alert to find appropriate words whenever they read, to list them in their folders, and to use them. The writers needed to be sure that the words were congruous when side by side with the words of their own vocabulary. They were also given lists of more vivid verbs to use in their stories and kept these lists in their folders for reference (see appendix 3). And they were encouraged to use a thesaurus and dictionary as tools during their writing.

Peer conferences were helpful with the child who could not find an ending for their story; who could not write a fully developed plot—a vignette. The author of the story would read their piece aloud to the group and request suggestions from the other students. The suggestions offered frequently provided an idea or stimulated an association to an idea that captured the wholeness needed.

This process was used several times during the year with Lynn who would start writing a story with a particular plot in her mind, but once she was well into the project, she would become so embroiled in the plot that she would not know how to bring it to a successful conclusion.

In a piece called The Waterfall, Lynn wrote of a casual walk that leads into a tropical forest and discovers a magical waterfall by eating hallucinatory strawberries and grapes. Beyond the waterfall, she finds a giant fish in a gigantic rocking recliner who serves tea; a unicorn called Snowball who gives her a ride; singing, white, misty gates; and a need to use disguises of a pink flamingo and a fairy with a purple, light-blue, and green grass dress.

After working on the story for over a week, Lynn became frustrated because she did not know how to bring it to an end. She asked for a conference with several of her classmates, read her story to them, and collected ideas on how to pull it all together. She listened carefully to the suggestions, taking advantage of some and disregarding others. Eventually, she reached a point where, after many hours of work, she was capable of writing her ending:

Once we were finally able to return to the waterfall, we removed our disguises. I was the young girl Emily again and Snowball was back to her regular self. Later that day, I slipped another strawberry and grape into my mouth. I immediately was in my own backyard and laying on the ground was a beautiful stuffed white unicorn.

f. "Born Writer"

Occasionally, a teacher will find that one of her students is a "born writer", a student who has the skills and techniques necessary to take the story that arises in his or her mind and

prune, alter, synthesize and strengthen its elements and then, eventually, to write the story.

Everyone is unique. No one else was born with their parents, at the same time in history; no one has had the same experiences, reached the same conclusions, or holds the same set of ideas that s/he has. So s/he can tell a story or write a piece as it can appear to him or her of all the people on the earth; s/he can have, inevitably, a piece of work that is original. Jennings at John Hopkins, who knows more about heredity and the genes and chromosomes than any man in the world, says that no individual is exactly like any other individual, that no two identical persons have ever existed. Consequently, if you speak or write from yourself you cannot help being original (Ulland 1987, 4). It is their own individual character, unmistakably showing through their work, which will lead them to success or failure.

For this student most exercises and many lessons are simply uninspirational. The student far prefers to be off by herself to write on her own. One of these was Christine, who every five or six days submitted a completed draft several pages in length. She was not only prolific but also extraordinarily self-directed. For her, the teacher was on hand to react to her material, to act as a nudge, to provide deadlines by simply existing as her "teacher", and to listen to her occasionally gnash teeth and mutter over a temporary writer's block, which soon vanished.



## Always Be Prepared

The worst thing about school is tests. You know they're coming sooner or later. Guaranteed, if you haven't studied over the weekend, your teacher will say, "You're going to have a big test, today". Your hands get sweaty and cold, and your knees start shaking. You don't know what to do. She passes out the test paper and you freeze. You pick up your pen and the first couple questions are easy. Then the hard ones. You're finally finished, and she says you have to trade papers with someone to check. You finish checking it and the person you traded with missed zero and you missed five! And now you have to worry about showing it to your parents.

### g. Conclusion

In general, all the students eventually wrote enthusiastically and were continually perfecting and successfully rearranging their uses and views in written language. The students learned to approach written language expecting the same sense of satisfaction as all literate humans. Harste, Woodward and Burke recently wrote that there are "no developmental stages to literacy, but rather, only experience, and with it fine-tuning and continuing orchestration" (1984, X).

## B. On Reading

In Breaking Ground, Jane Hansen and Thomas Newkirk say that new ground in writing has been broken by other researchers, but it's time to break new ground in reading. The philosophy behind writing process instruction is incompatible with the philosophy behind reading worksheets, tests, basals, and the fear that any deviation will endanger the students' ability to learn to read. Too many students read fifty worksheets for every book they pick up. Their teachers teach what's next in the teachers' guide instead of what the students need next. Too many classrooms revolve around the teacher (1985, IX).

The writing-reading program that this teacher-researcher developed over the course of the year incorporated a process writing program into a reading program in place of the typical worksheets, workbooks, end of the chapter questions and tests. The basals were used periodically throughout the year as a source of literature to be used in/for mini-lessons with the whole class. The program represented a teaching philosophy in which the teacher expected her students to work together. Students were not separated into ability groups. They were all part of the same class. The environment was one in which the students made decisions and did as many things as possible by themselves. Much time was spent in reading so that the students could talk comfortably about their own processes.

The necessary reading skills were taught in the context of the children's reading as well as their writing. Much, if not all, of the skills were taught through mini-lessons. At the start of the school year, most reading mini-lessons described procedures and routines. These procedural lessons included ways to choose books, explanations of the classroom library and how it worked, and methods that would deal with evaluation. In these mini-lessons, students got a quick shot of one particular kind of information and a chance to ask questions when the teacher was finished. They still did not "get" everything the first time through, but mini-lessons provided a more practical forum for introducing explanations, expectations and guidelines. There appeared to be less overload, a better sense of how and why things worked, and greater student independence earlier on.

Other mini-lesson topics dealt with what we read and what we knew about what we read. They included different genres, authors, and elements of literary works. "The familiarity of the genre makes reading easy, something that should be a main goal of teachers of reading" (Atwell 1987, 205). The lessons, which were literature based, ranged from the language itself to literary devices, techniques, and publishing conventions. Obviously there were lessons that dealt with literary elements of plot, theme and author's motivation. The students responded to these lessons easily. Other mini-lessons were more sophisticated. They discussed titles and leads, which are the ways authors bring us into their works. The teacher also

discussed prologues and epilogues, sequels and trilogies and how they serve authors' ends. A rather difficult lesson dealt with theme or what is shown to us about life through a story.

The students also learned the conventions of publishing, such as author's pseudonyms and why they use them, copyrights, copyright dates as a quick way to know when the book you are reading was written, numbers of reprintings as an indication of a book's popularity, jacket copy and cover illustrations, and how novels are adapted for film as screen plays. Readers who know how books are published make better choices. "They're more confident, less intimidated by libraries and bookstores. They have more information that dispels the mystique of literature (Atwell 1987, 207).

Another influence on what the teacher taught was the work of Frank Smith, particularly Reading Without Nonsense (1984). Here he encourages teachers to have students read as much as possible as quickly as possible because it increases concentration; speed also diminishes distractions. Frank Smith believes that competent readers do not depend on phonics, which is the reading method most frequently taught in the U.S. schools. He believes guessing is the most efficient way to read and learn to read. Smith calls it "informed guessing"-making reasonable guesses from a relatively small set of possibilities. Some of the mini-lessons, supported by Smith's concepts, included skill issues that discouraged reading with a card to underline a line of print as they read; that discouraged lip-reading and vocalizing as bad habits; and that

untaught regressing, which is going back over material already read in an attempt to comprehend it.

Other mini-lessons had to do with the reading process; with how, where, when to read; and about the rereading of good books and about abandoning of books that they did not like. And still another series of lessons had to do with what authors do, why authors wrote certain stories the way they did and why they used particular techniques in their stories to achieve certain effects. In reading, students looked at texts from the inside, from a writer's point of view (Newkirk 1982, 113). They criticized and analyzed what they read, suggested revisions, and selected and rejected. The teacher also believed that children who write want to know about the lives and intentions of the writer and provided this information whenever it was available.

The effects of attitude and motivation upon reading were basic to the model. "Favorable attitude toward content, whether preexisting or experimentally induced should give rise to heightened attention and comprehension of reading materials. In addition, favorable attitude should stimulate recall, reflection, and application. Favorable attitude can also influence reading behavior" (Mathewson 1985, 851-2).

For the purposes of this study, modeling was the most common strategy the teacher used for changing attitude toward reading. Seeing an admired person reading can stimulate heightened behavior in a reluctant reader. The teacher herself

read to the group and served as a model. The teacher would use what Nancy Atwell calls "'my reader's voice', the part of me that chooses, loves, and lives literature" (1987, 199). Donald Graves advises teachers to discover what we love of literature; to draw on our personal tastes and talents in the classroom (1983, 75). The teacher and students read together during many classes and a modeling effect was established which began changing the students' attitudes, motives, and affects with respect to reading. The school principal read portions from a favorite book of hers. Children from other classes dropped by and read books or pieces they had recently written. A local author, David Everson, also visited the class to discuss the mysteries he had written. He told wonderful anecdotes about where he found the ideas for his stories and how he collected facts, descriptions and ideas for dialogues. And finally he read selections from two of his books with much excitement and enthusiasm.

### C. Assessing the Students' Growth in Writing and Reading

A final issue to be covered in this chapter is the assessment of the students' growth. In the writing-reading class, the teacher had given up most traditional records of growth. She did know that the folders were filling up, books and articles were being published, the process was continuing (prewriting, drafting, revising and editing); but were the students going anywhere? Was there really any significant progress?

As new approaches to reading and writing are brought into our classroom, it soon becomes clear that conventional forms of assessment do not attend to the behaviors we value. Tests do not reveal whether children show confident readerlike behavior. They do not show children's book-handling behaviors. They do not reveal whether children have experiences reading and writing a wide range of genres. They do not draw attention to whether children regard themselves as readers and writers, or to children's level of independence, involvement, confidence, or enjoyment (Calkins 1991, 250). This point of view, held by Lucy McCormick Calkins, is consistent with the Vygotsian notion that learning is initially supported and collaborative and that independence grows as a child internalizes the collaboration. In observing children's writing and reading teachers need to look for this movement from reliance to independence.

The previous sections of this chapter document in detail the kind of growth movement in writing that Vygotsky would have rejoiced in. Generally the students began to demonstrate movement from needing another person's support in order to write or read to having internalized enough strategies to be independent. They grew to approach writing, reading and books of many genres with the mind of an author.

But the researcher must be honest and say that the writing-reading classroom was not filled with success stories alone; it also contained stories of struggle, of bravado and

jealousy, of students who thought at times that they had nothing to say, and of students who periodically would spend more time on their margins, pictures, and handwriting than on the content of their writing. However, the growth far outweighed the struggles and backsliding.

There was much in the process with which to delight. No longer did the students view writing as a one-shot deal. No longer did they try to produce finished pieces in an instant. They wrote rough drafts, read these aloud to the teacher and/or other students in class and in conferences, and later added clarifying information and edited and revised. The students learned to use a variety of strategies in order to turn little bits of writing into more respectable finished products. They fixed leads, inserted details, strengthened weak sections, and reworked endings.

Another way to record this growth was achieved through reading and writing surveys. At the beginning of the year a mini-lesson explored the students' feelings about these subjects. Only two of the students, Christine and Lynn, reported liking to read and their favorite books were from the Sweet Valley High and Sweet Valley Twins series. Three students said they liked to write, but none thought they were very good at it.

At the end of the year (May, 1989), the researcher administered formal printed reading and writing surveys, adapted from those described in Nancy Atwell's In the Middle



(1987, 270-272), to explore the same topics. In a nation where the average college graduate reads one book a year, the students reported that they read an average of ten full-length works during the course of the class and wrote book reports on 86% of these books. And seventy-eight percent of the students indicated that they read regularly at home for pleasure. When they were asked how many books they owned, the average figure was forty-six. This researcher has no way of knowing whether this was more books than at the beginning of the fifth grade, but many parents had asked the teacher to recommend books for gifts for their children during the year and several children had talked about adding books, read in class, to their personal libraries.

In the writing survey in May, the students indicated that they all now considered themselves writers. Their feelings were much more positive about their writing: "I feel good about what I write", "I feel very happy about what I write because I know it's the best", "I feel good about what I write and I think most of my stories are good" and "I feel good about what I write especially when I'm finished because it makes me happy to read what I wrote".

It is important, for the purposes of this study, to look at some test results, but not give them inordinate power. The information received from the test scores needs to be balanced with other kinds of information.

Reading comprehension and skills were periodically assessed within the basal system, MacMillan Series R, by administration of "End of the Unit Tests". The time of the testing was determined by the apparent mastery of the skills included in the test by the students in the class. The students took six Unit Tests (Units 25-30) during the year. Ninety-five percent of the Unit Tests were passed by the students (see Table 4. on next page).

Reading achievement tests were administered in the students' homerooms every October every year. The tests that were given at the beginning of grade five were used as pretests for the students in the writing/reading class. And the posttests were the tests given the next year, when the students were in grade six. The test used was the 1983 SRA Achievement Series Test, Level E, which covers a wide range of skill areas for achievement evaluation and, in particular, consists of reading tests in the following areas: vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading. For the purposes of this research only the scores in reading comprehension and total reading are of any significance. And it should be noted that the total reading score is not an arithmetical average of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

One way that the students' scores on these standardized achievement tests was reported was in terms of national percentiles. The scores for the class averaged at the fifty-seventh percentile in Total Reading in October 1988 and at the sixty-second percentile in 1989. And the scores in

Table 4.--Scores from End of the Unit Tests

MacMillan Series R

Name	Unit 27	Unit 28	Unit 29	Unit 30	Unit 25	Unit 26
Jason	94	94	94	85	100	94
Anthony	97	78	84	79	80	97
Leigh	88	86	78	88	100	88
Christine	95	96	86	94	100	94
Lynn	98	96	84	96	99	100
Jeffrey	93	86	86	73	95	94
Jennifer	89	88	84	91	94	94
Nick C.	85	90	70	82	85	76
Robert	85	90	86	88	99	100
Nick L.	100	92	90	91	72	94
Kristen	79	80	80	73	85	91
David	99	76	68	79	94	91
Angie	76	96	80	88	91	94
Melissa	86	86	74	82	80	91

Scores below 70 indicate failure.

Reading Comprehension were at the fifty-second percentile for the first testing and at the sixty-second for the second testing. There was a five percent average improvement in total reading and a ten percent average improvement in reading comprehension. There were five students who did not show an improvement in percentile scores: Nick C., Melissa, Leigh, David and Jason. And the other nine achieved an average percentile improvement of fifteen points in Total Reading and twenty-three points in Comprehension. For those students who improved in terms of these national percentiles, the gain was dramatic (see Table 5. on next page).

The percentile scores for the entire fifth grade at the school were sixty-eight for Total Reading and sixty-five for Reading Comprehension and seventy-four in both areas for the entire sixth grade the next year. This is an increase of six percentile points in Total Reading and nine in Reading Comprehension over a years time. It is interesting to note that this improvement is within one percentile point of the improvements for the writing-reading class students (five in Total Reading and ten in Reading Comprehension). The students in the traditional-program classrooms also improved five points in Total Reading, but only four percentile points in Reading Comprehension. This data shows that the improvement made in Reading Comprehension by the writing-reading class had a strong impact on the average improvement made by the entire sixth grade in comprehension.

Table 5.--Scores from SRA Achievement Test, Level E in National Percentiles

Names	Oct., 1988		Oct., 1989	
	T. Rdg.	Comp.	T. Rdg.	Comp.
Jennifer	59	49	72	64
Nick C.	34	35	19	24
Robert	54	46	68	64
Nick L.	58	39	68	68
Melissa	50	49	27	32
Kristen	49	37	55	51
David	50	43	44	41
Angie	45	46	59	87
Jason	77	82	70	51
Anthony	47	37	83	82
Leigh	75	75	68	64
Christine	53	58	83	78
Lynn	79	75	75	78
Jeffrey	63	58	77	78
Average P	57	52	62	62

Table 6.--National Percentile Scores

Classes	Total Reading		Rdg. Comprehension	
	Oct.,1988	Oct.,1989	Oct., 1988	OCT., 1989
Total Fifth Grade	68 %ile	74 %ile	65 %ile	74 %ile
Traditional Program	72 %ile	77 %ile	73 %ile	77 %ile
Reading/Writing Program	57 %ile	62 %ile	52 %ile	62 %ile

Another way that the students' scores were reported from this achievement test was in terms of G.E. (Grade Equivalent) which is defined by the median GSV (Growth Scale Values) - the GSV that falls at the 50th percentile - of the national sample of students in a given grade and month in school. The SRA Achievement Series growth scales were developed in 1967 (SRA User's Guide, 15) to provide an appropriate method of charting educational growth as measured by the tests and to estimate future growth.

The GE scores for Reading Comprehension for grades four, five and six for each student can be graphed individually and the growth of each student shown (see appendix 2). For many of the students the change in GE between the fifth and sixth grade was larger than between the fourth and fifth grade. Between the fourth and fifth grade only six of these students showed a growth of one full year, while eleven grew one or more years

between fifth and sixth grade. The average change between fourth and fifth grade was .6 or six months, while it was 2.3 or two years and three months between grades five and six. Melissa's scores were not included here because they were unavailable for grade four as she was a special education student then.

Since the achievement test was administered during the first week of October each year, the students who could be considered "on-level" would receive a score of that grade.one. The margin for error would allow for scores of .3 above or below this score. The average GE score for the writing/reading class in Reading Comprehension for the fourth (4.5) and the fifth (5.1) grade was very close to grade level, but the average GE score for the sixth grade (7.4) was well above grade level (see Table 7. on the next page).

Table 7.-- GE Scores For the Writing-Reading Class

Student	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Jennifer	5.3	4.9	6.9
Nick C.	2.0	3.9	4.2
Jason	4.9	7.5	9.3
Anthony	4.2	4.2	9.3
Leigh	5.5	6.7	6.9
Robert	4.9	4.9	6.9
Nick L.	2.9	4.3	7.4
Kristen	3.4	4.9	6.2
Christine	4.9	5.5	8.8
Lynn	6.9	6.7	8.8
David	4.5	2.3	5.4
Jeffrey	3.6	5.5	8.8
Angie	4.9	4.6	10.0
<u>Averages</u>	4.5	5.1	7.4



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### A. Introduction

"What can we do about comprehension?" Finding an answer to this question from the 1981 NAEP Report was the original challenge that led to the research described in this thesis. During this teacher's year long case study, enough research and practical wisdom were collected to lead to several conclusions about both the general and specific influences of an infusion of interactive process writing components and activities on a reading program, specifically on reading comprehension. She found conclusive answers for the five original research questions stated earlier in this work: Did the students make observable improvements in their writing abilities and skills? Did the writing-infused students make gains in reading comprehension? How did the writing-infused students perform in tests measuring traditional language and reading achievement as compared to the other fifth grade students in the same school receiving traditional reading instruction as recommended by the teacher's manual for their basal reader? How useful did the writing-infused students feel the activities were to their reading and writing development? How much interest and enjoyment did the students have in the interactive writing activities?

## B. Discussion

As stated in the previous chapter, all students came to write enthusiastically and were continually perfecting and successfully rearranging their uses for and views in written language. Through their own writing efforts the students became sensitive to the basic tools the writer uses to involve the reader and to communicate with feeling. Through the experience of story, essay, poetry, and book writing the students took their first step toward recognizing that the fruit of writing is tasted when it is read and shared by others.

The findings cited in chapter four support this researcher's belief that students can be taught a process of writing that will affect their general reading ability—specifically their reading comprehension. Students who are able to organize their thinking on paper are in a better position to understand another writer's organization of ideas. This is what reading comprehension is all about and this is what makes expressive writing a powerful teaching tool for reading comprehension. When writing and reading are used together in this way, students soon become conscious of themselves as writers working through a process, then as readers working through the product of another writer's process (Collins 1985).

Over a year's time, the students in the reading-writing class improved an average of ten percentile points in reading

comprehension. This was 2.3 years in grade-level improvement. It is believed by this researcher that these gains in reading comprehension occurred because these students, who were continually involved in a writing and reading cycle, began to internalize insights into ways to think about what they had read. They cared about the way information was stated. A new meaning emerged as writing took on genuine importance because the students were also authors and had developed a kind of realistic empathy for the author's craft.

The performance of the reading-writing students compared favorably to the performance of the students in the traditional classroom. This is especially interesting because the mean IQ for the entire fifth grade was 108, while it was only 100 for the fourteen students participating in the study group. As stated earlier in this work, the improvement made in reading comprehension by the reading-writing class had a strong impact on the average improvement made by the entire class in comprehension. But a closer look at the data collected on the reading-writing class as compared to those in the traditional program is also worth noting. Both groups of students improved five percentile points in total reading (on the SRA Achievement Test) between the fifth and sixth grades. But the reading-writing class improved ten percentile points while the traditional classes improved only four percentile points in reading comprehension. Though these results may not permit our making strong directives to other practitioners, the findings

at least provide promising leads for subsequent investigations. A recommendation that might be made for future instructional research would be that multiple measures of comprehension be built into any further studies. Multiple measures would provide results that would be more definitive and prevent charges that the researcher had made erroneous conclusions about what the effects on reading comprehension were and how widespread the impact on reading comprehension was.

The activities developed for the class were based on the principles of child development in writing and reading. The lessons began with simple constructions and progressed through units on more complicated skills in composition. This researcher and teacher was well aware that no writing-reading course could provide a total program. However, this program provided within a developmental framework a broad range of models and activities for extending experiences with written language.

The development of written composition skills was paramount throughout the study, but the skills were emphasized with the students' interests in mind. They were appealing as well as informative and instructive. The students were encouraged to write expressively and this gave them an implicit message that they had something worthwhile to say (Graves 1978). It also freed them from the fear of writing, from a lack of confidence in their writing, from a lack of fluency with written language (Southwell 1977).

Another goal of the writing program was to help pupils achieve enough competence in writing skills so that they would be able to identify and correct common errors in their own writing which they should not have been making at their developmental level. The writing samples found earlier in this work demonstrate that the students made great progress in their writing competencies during the course of this study.

The other area of study to be developed through the writing activities was reading. This case study was an attempt to show that students who practiced expressive and spontaneous writing might improve in their total reading but especially in reading comprehension. It was logical to expect writing and reading to interact and reinforce each other and they did. Everyone in the class gradually became very interested in reading because of their newly found identity as writers/authors. Even the poorer readers hounded the teacher to read more often to them. Somehow the whole class had come to recognize a new relationship with books that had not been there before for many of them. A new meaning emerged as books took on a genuine importance because the students were also authors. There was a definite increase in the volume and range of reading done by the students who were engaged in this regular writing program. They seemed to become increasingly attuned to the logical and creative aspects of reading through their own struggles to express meaning. They became more attuned to the meaning other authors were trying to express through their writings.

The writing activities that were used during the study had a broad appeal for the students. They liked this writing. They thought of it as "their" time of day, and the teacher liked the writing because her students liked it. When they wrote, the students made more decisions than they were accustomed to at other times of the day. And this authority, given them by their teacher, pleased them.

Their classroom provided a supportive, accepting environment in which the children felt free to experiment and risk errors and it allowed for maximum exploration of the process of writing. Many of the students also worked outside of the class writing stories, interviewing subjects, making illustrations, and making publishable copies. Several students came to class before school and often lingered after class to talk about their writing. Many parents made an extra effort to come into the classroom to talk to the teacher about how much their children were enjoying the writing. They asked what they might do at home to support the growth in writing and reading that they felt their children were experiencing.

Another area of interest and enjoyment was found in the sharing of writing, where students read aloud and commented on one another's work. They knew that the students were speaking in their own voices about things that counted to them in their writings. This sharing from the self led to real listening and close attention. They were listening to the work of authors they knew.

The aim of this thesis was to summarize the effects of an infusion of interactive process writing into a reading program and to give in detail the answers to the five research questions asked. In addition to finding the answers to these questions, the author has also learned that the emphasis of instructional method is reflected in the learning; children tend to learn what they are taught. In particular, methods that promote the development of writing skills tend to yield higher learning of writing-related skills. This was substantively demonstrated by the growth in the writing abilities of the students who took part in the study.

There was an important area of reading instruction that received little emphasis during this class and that was the area of vocabulary development. The only instances when vocabulary development was a point of specific instruction was when new vocabulary appeared in the literature that was being read or new vocabulary was needed by a student to be more detailed in their writing. If this researcher were to make any change in the instructional methods she used, it would be to add a stronger focus to vocabulary development to the writing components in her reading program. The importance of word meaning knowledge to reading comprehension would seem to be self-evident. According to Spache in Toward Better Reading (1966), "Understanding the vocabulary is second only to the factor of reasoning in the process of comprehension, and some

writers would say it is even more important than reasoning. It is sufficient to say that comprehension is significantly promoted by attention to vocabulary growth" (p. 78). Although the research on vocabulary is enormous, it is largely descriptive and few of the studies directly document the effects of vocabulary instruction on reading comprehension. It is felt by this researcher, however, that an addition of a more significant vocabulary focus to this reading program could add to its success or at least yield some very useful information for practitioners.

If we are to continue in our progress toward acquiring a body of knowledge about interactive writing and its relationship to reading comprehension, there are several research questions that should be considered for further study. Would the results be the same if the study were replicated several times? How can this writing/reading program be used in traditional classroom settings with 35 students? How can the instructional strategies and curriculum used in the writing/reading class be translated and/or disseminated to other practitioners? What is the most appropriate form for the assessment of the comprehension growth that results from the infusion of interactive writing into a reading program? The results of this new research, hopefully, will put us in a better position to answer the question, "Why does it work?"



### C. Summary

It is from the many previously described experiences that this researcher has come to believe that process writing activities definitely have both general and specific influences on student's general reading ability and in particular on reading comprehension. And through a reading program with a significant (50%) writing component, it may be that many students could begin to internalize much deeper fundamental insights into the function of language and thought, as readers and as writers.

For the purposes of this case study writing was taught as a process, but in order to keep it as a constant reading was taught in a somewhat traditional way. This created an artificial division, especially considering our knowledge that writers write reading and readers read writing. But this research-teacher knew that in her teaching she could bite off only so many changes at one time. Doing this might also help other teachers grow in similar understandings, gradually getting a handle on the theory and practice of process teaching and learning in one area and then the other.

This case study represents what this teacher has come to understand about teaching writing and reading at this point in her evolution. She also knows that she and her students will continue to learn and change.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE COPIES

WRITING SURVEY

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you a writer? \_\_\_\_\_  
(If your answer is YES, answer question 2a. If your answer is NO, answer question 2b..)

2a. How did you learn to write? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2b. How do people learn to write? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why do people write? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think a good writer need to do in order to write well? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. How does your teacher decide which pieces of writing are the good ones? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. In general, how do you feel about what you write? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from Atwell, N. 1987. In The Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann.

READING SURVEY

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. If you had to guess...  
How many books would you say you owned? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many books would you say there are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many novels would you say you have read in the last twelve months? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did you learn to read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do people read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does someone have to do in order to be a good reader? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What kind of books do you like to read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you decide which book you will read? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever re-read a book? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, can you name it or them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you ever read at home for pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how often do you read at home for pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you like to have your teacher read to you? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, is there anything special you like to hear? \_\_\_\_\_
10. In general, how do you feel about reading? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Saint Agnes School

251 North Amos Avenue  
Springfield, Illinois 62702  
217-793-1370

September 23, 1988

Dear

We have been offered the opportunity to participate in a one year research project that deals with student progress in Reading Comprehension Skills. The program seeks to infuse process writing skills into the fifth grade reading instruction time. The combining of writing skills with regular reading comprehension skills attempts to make a significant difference in total comprehension gains in the reading curriculum.

Your son or daughter has been selected from our present fifth grade to participate in this research project, which would take place in the regular reading block during this school year beginning the first part of October.

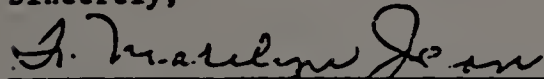
Ms. Elaine Rundle-Schwark, who is involved in completing her Doctoral Thesis from the University of Massachusetts, will conduct the above reading class in our school. Ms. Rundle-Schwark will present her program to parents of students recommended for participation on September 30th at 9:00 a.m. at St. Agnes School. I would very much like at least one parent of each of the students selected to attend this session.

With your permission, we would then proceed to let your son or daughter participate in this project for the school year.

Ms. Rundle-Schwark has taught fifth grade for twenty years in the Boston Public Schools. She has used the program she would be using with our students successfully there. She has re-located in the Springfield area and was given our school as a possible location for completing her research. In addition to using our regular reading series, Ms. Rundle-Schwark would incorporate multiple materials to build reading and writing skills.

Please indicate below your willingness to let your child participate in this program. Also, feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Sr. Marilyn Jean Runkel, Principal

-----  
DETACH AND RETURN BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30th to Sr. Marilyn Jean.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will attend the Sept. 30th presentation.

\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot attend the session, but I would like my child to participate.

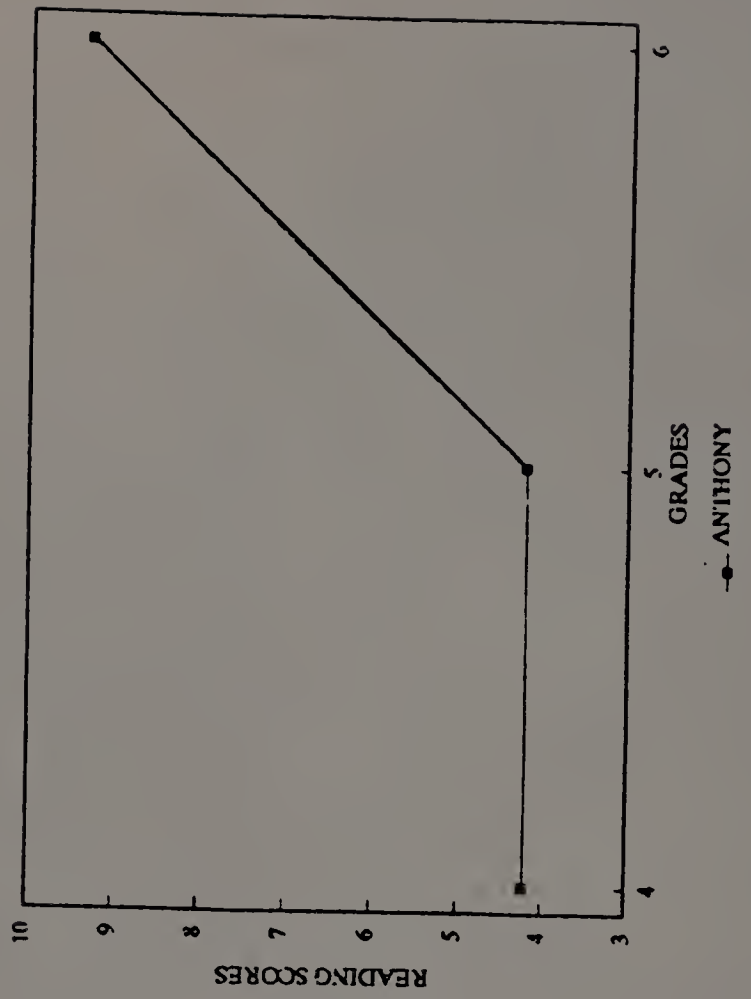
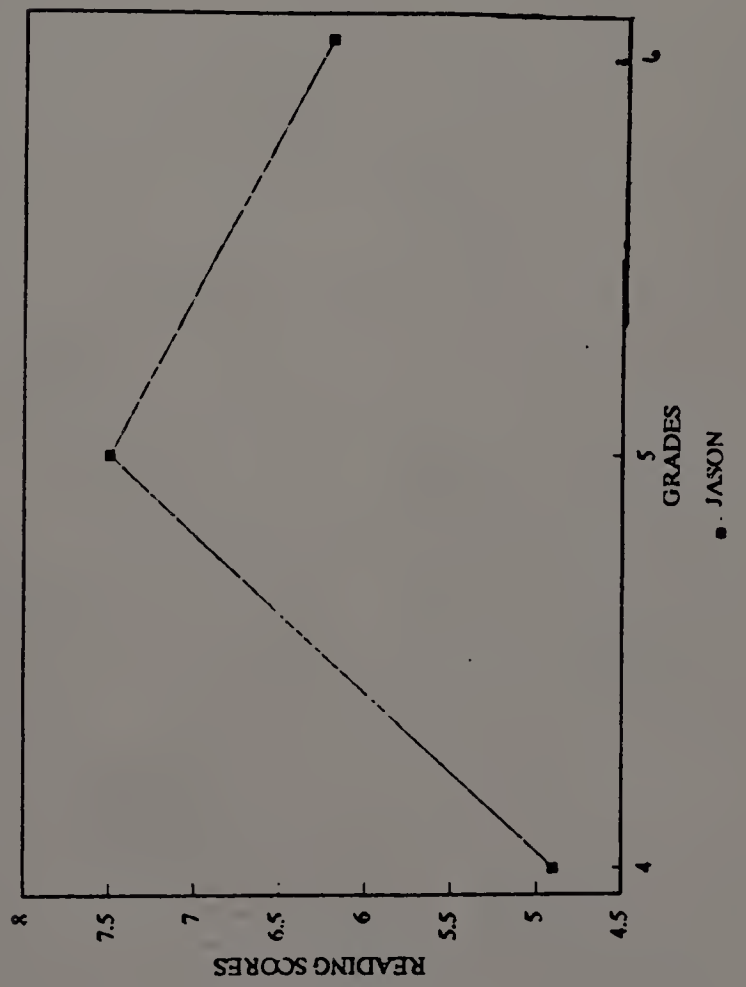
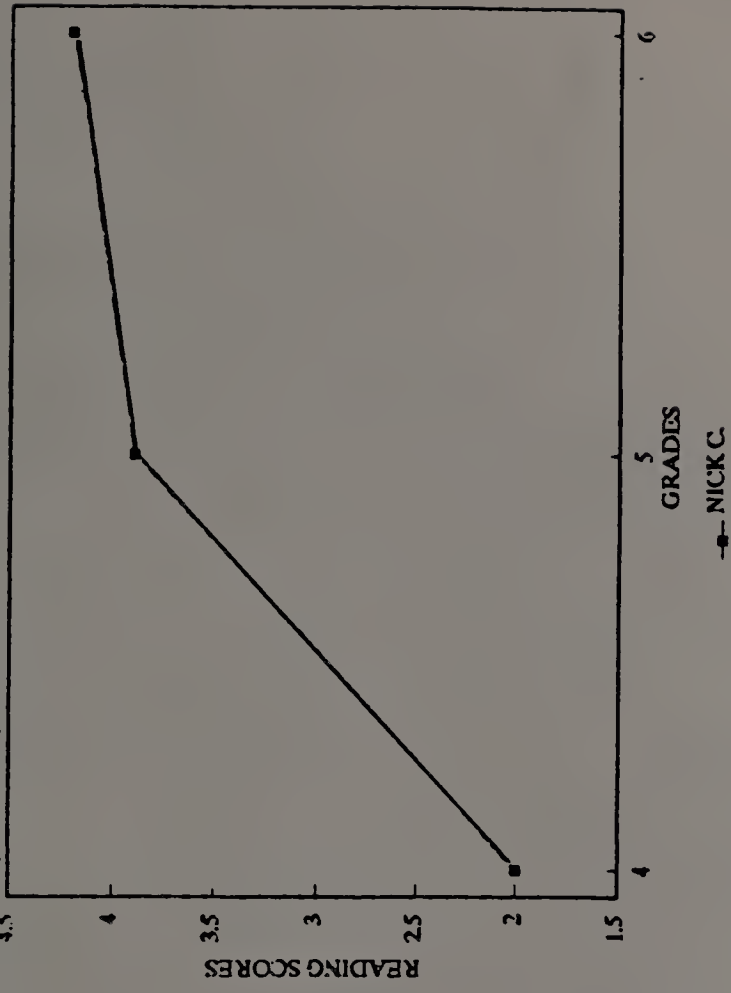
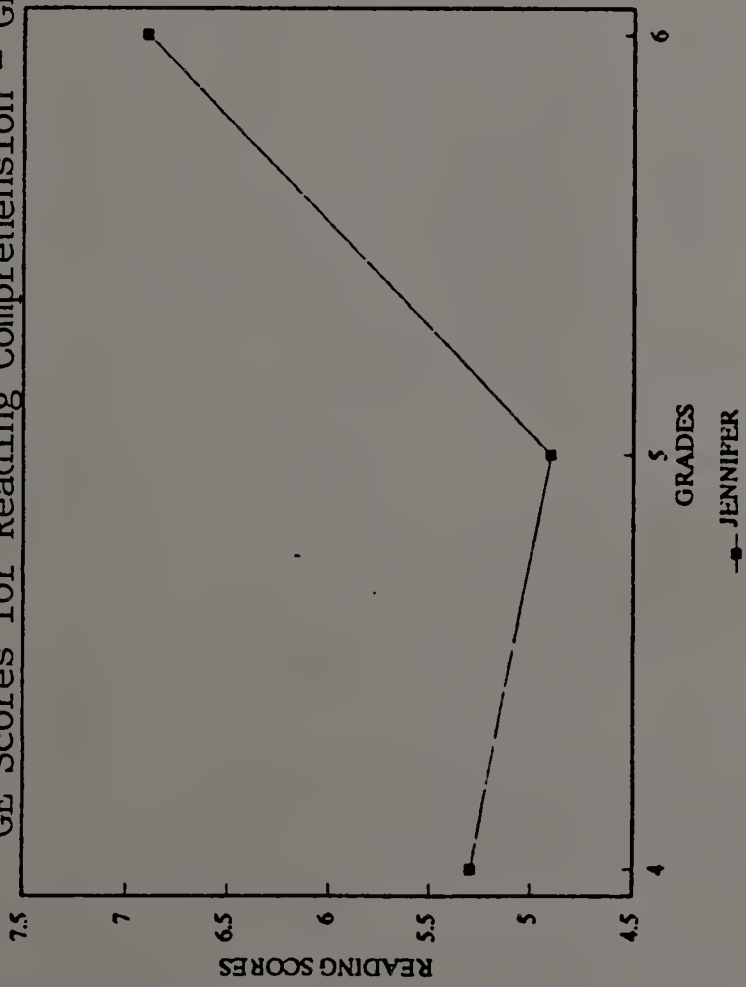
I request that my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ participate in the class being offered by Ms. Elaine Rundle-Schwark.

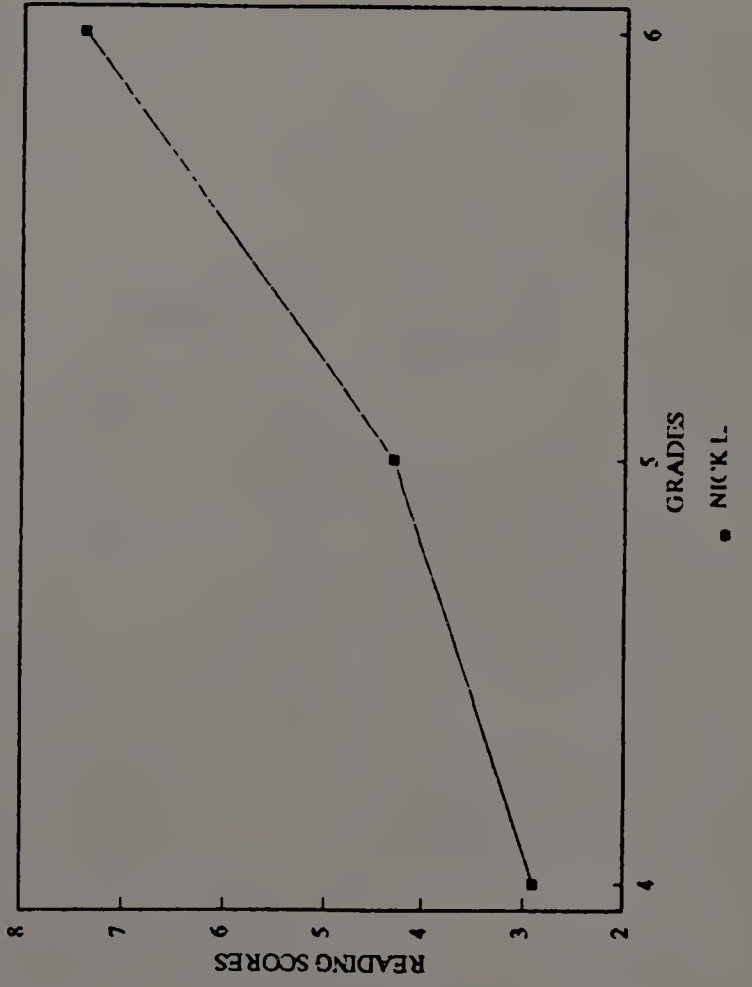
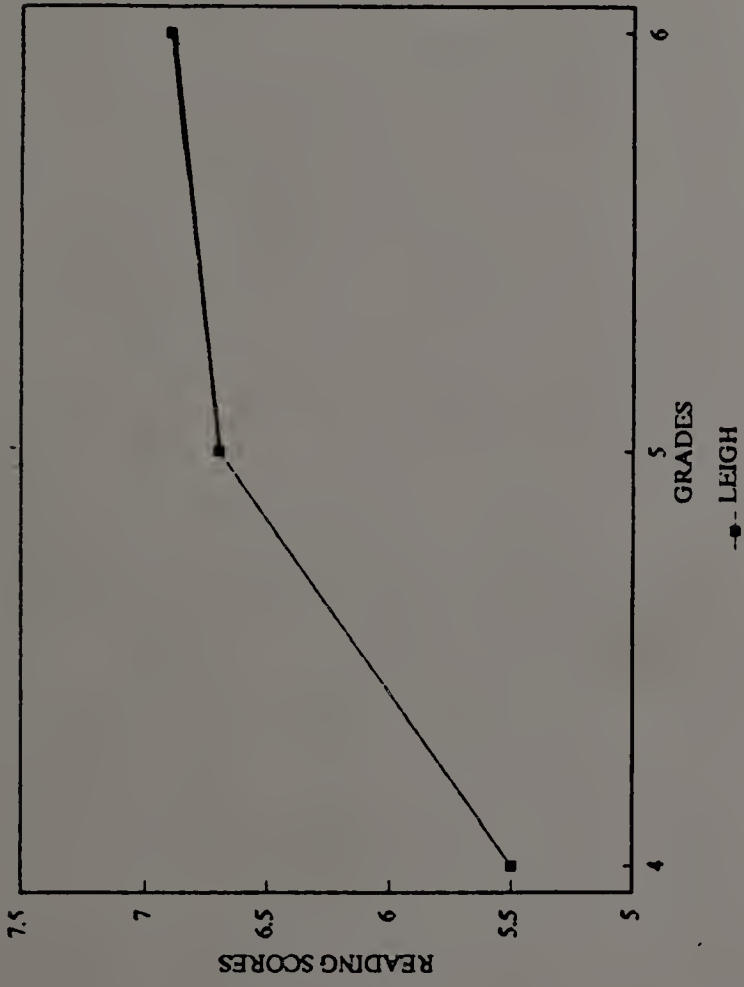
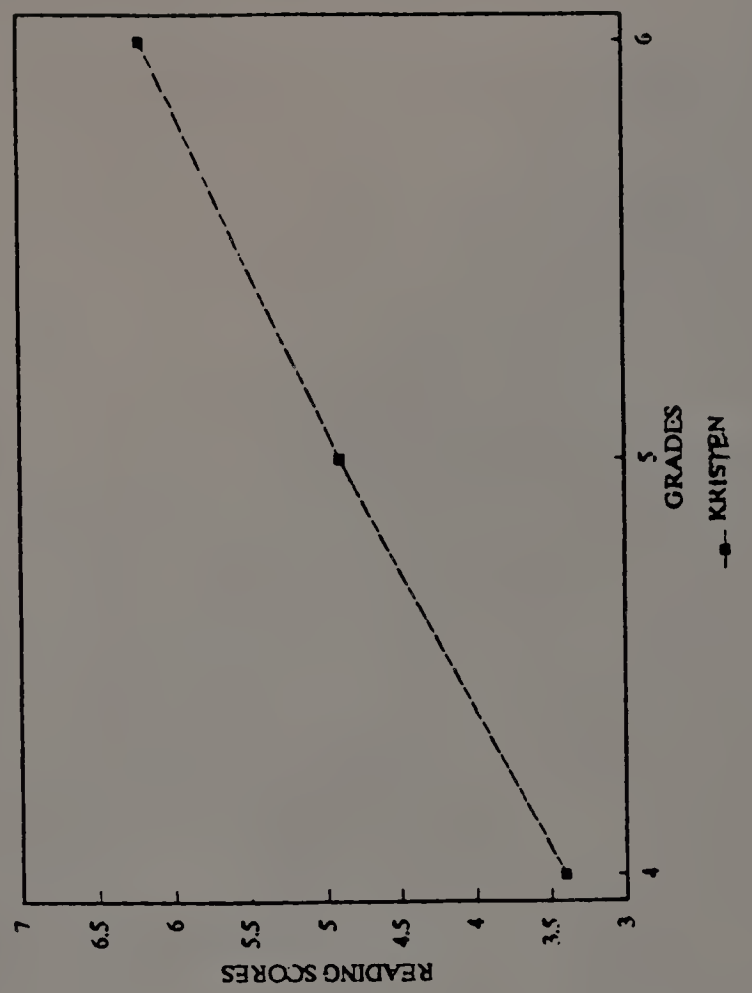
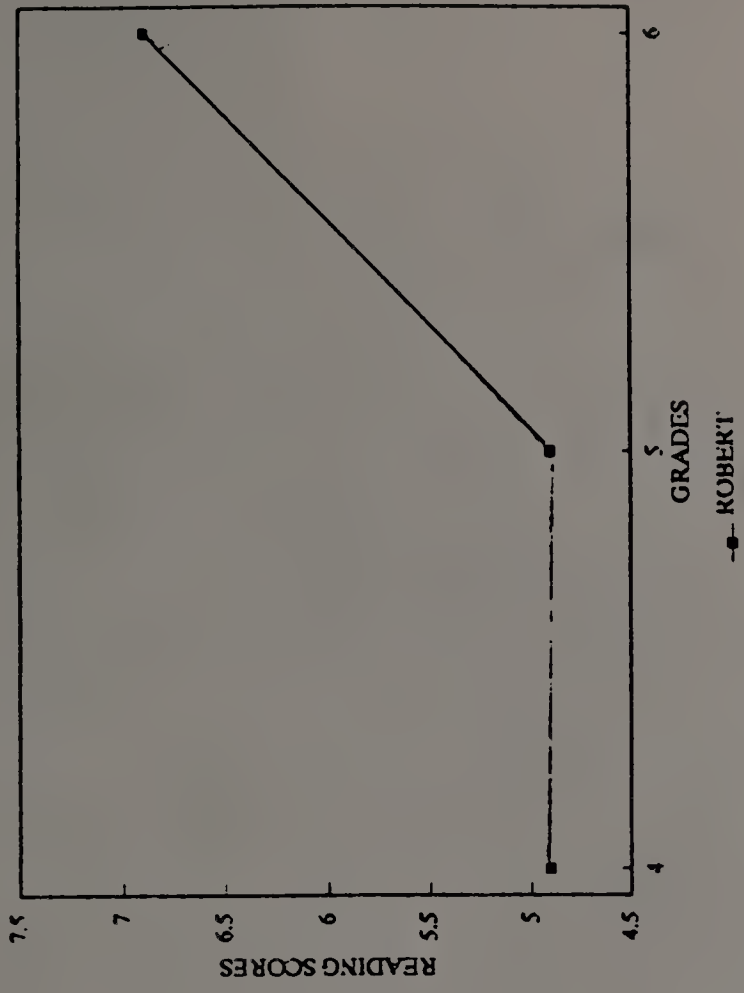
\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

APPENDIX B

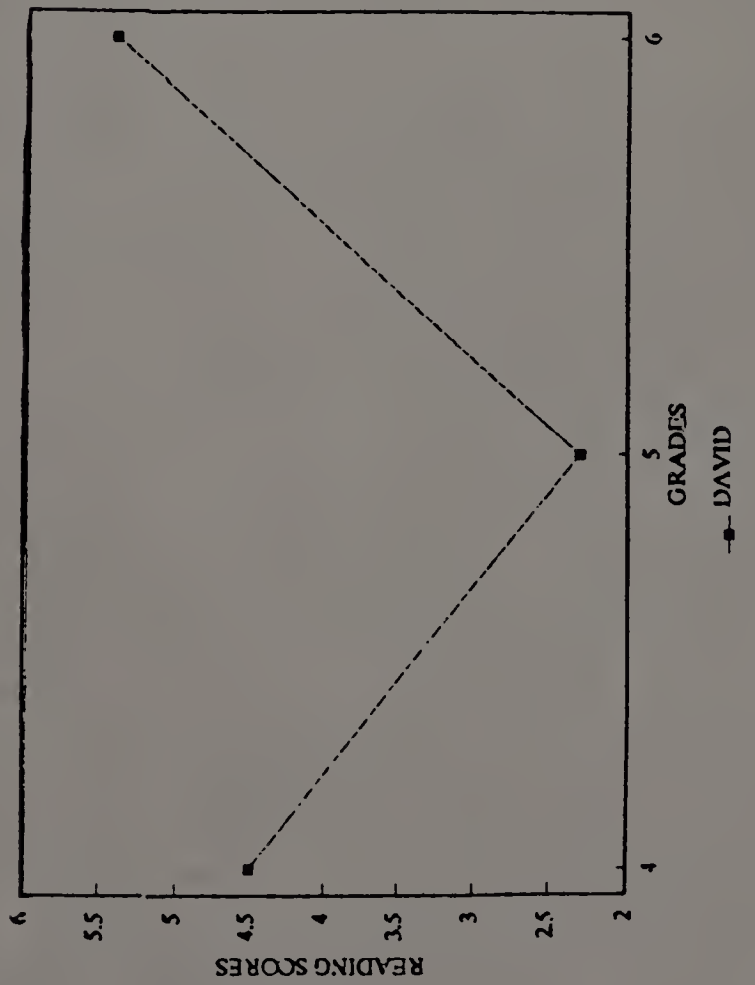
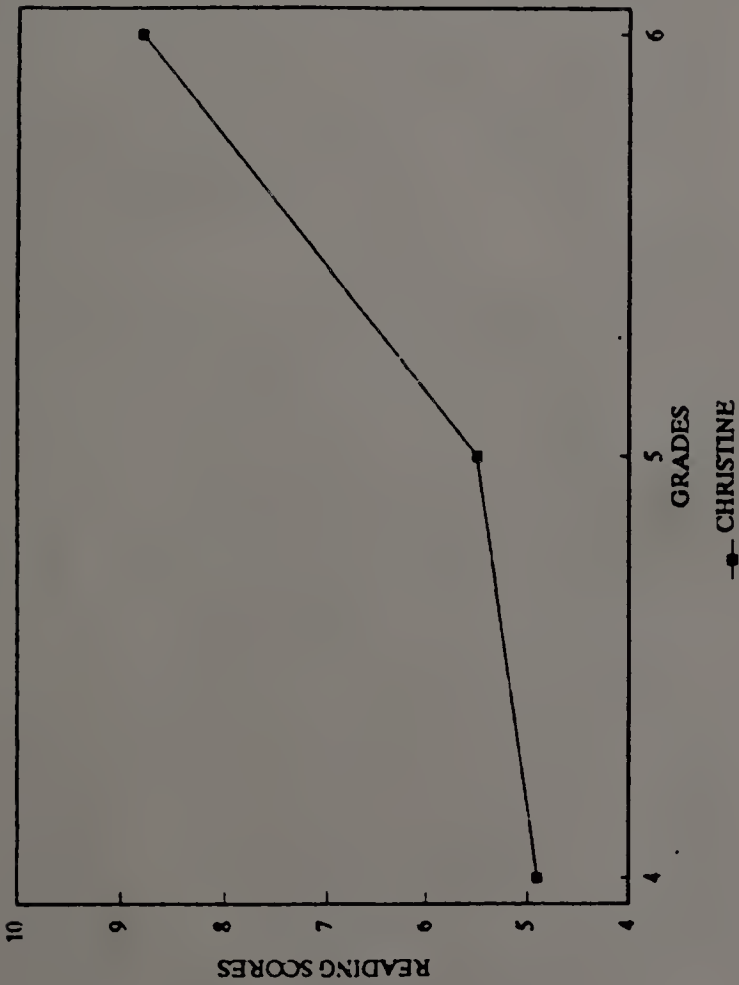
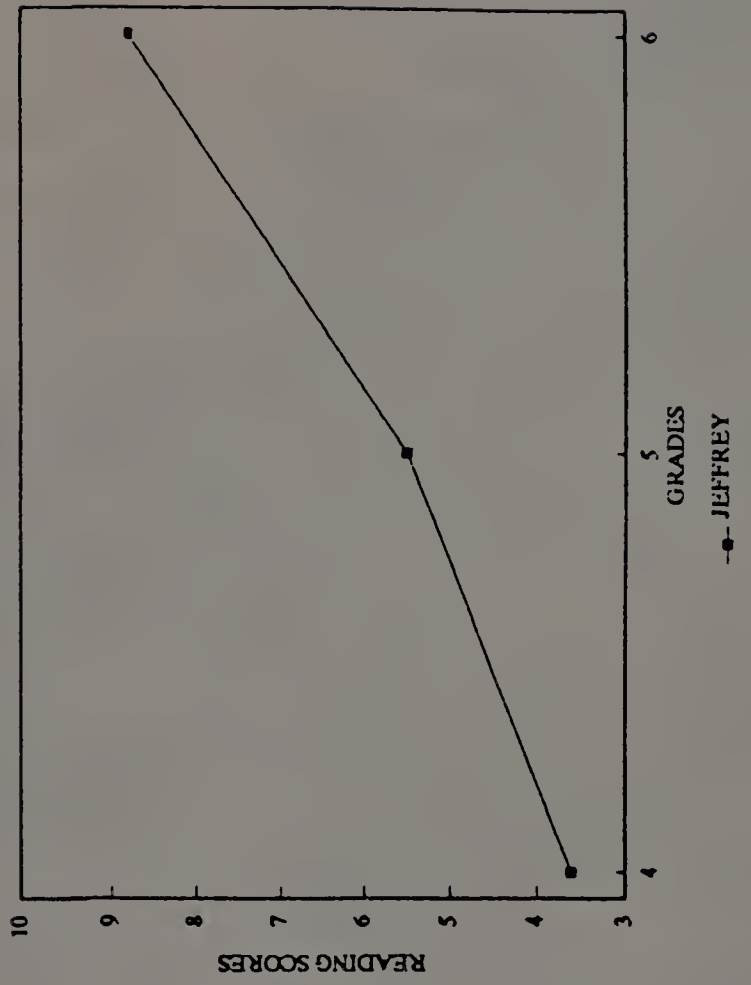
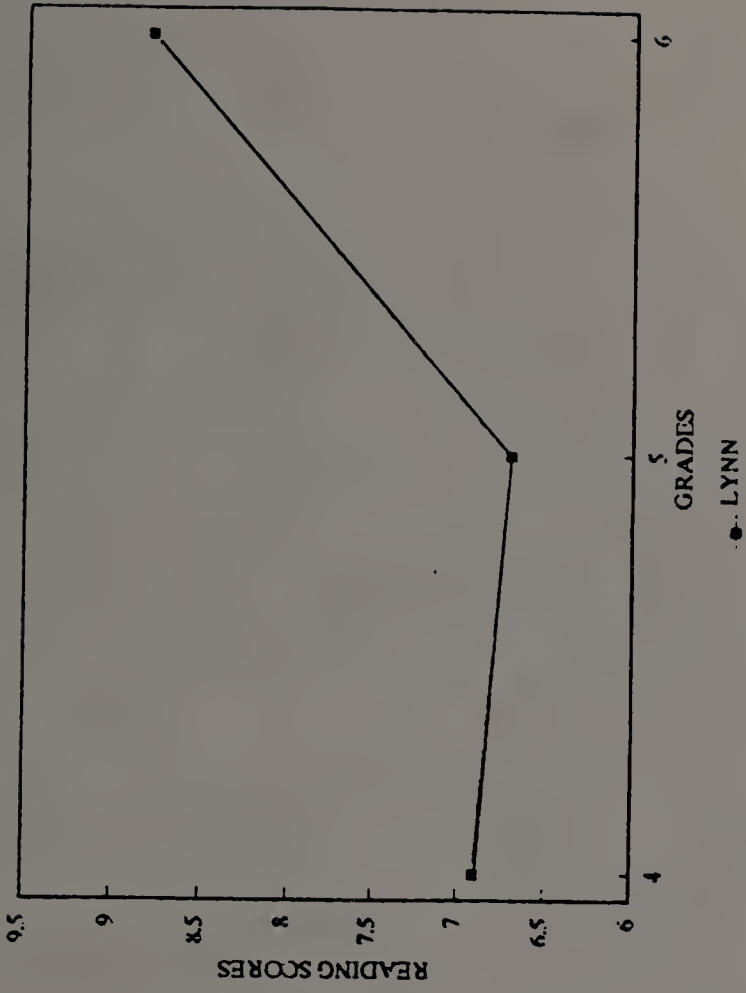
GRAPHS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENT'S GROWTH  
IN READING COMPREHENSION

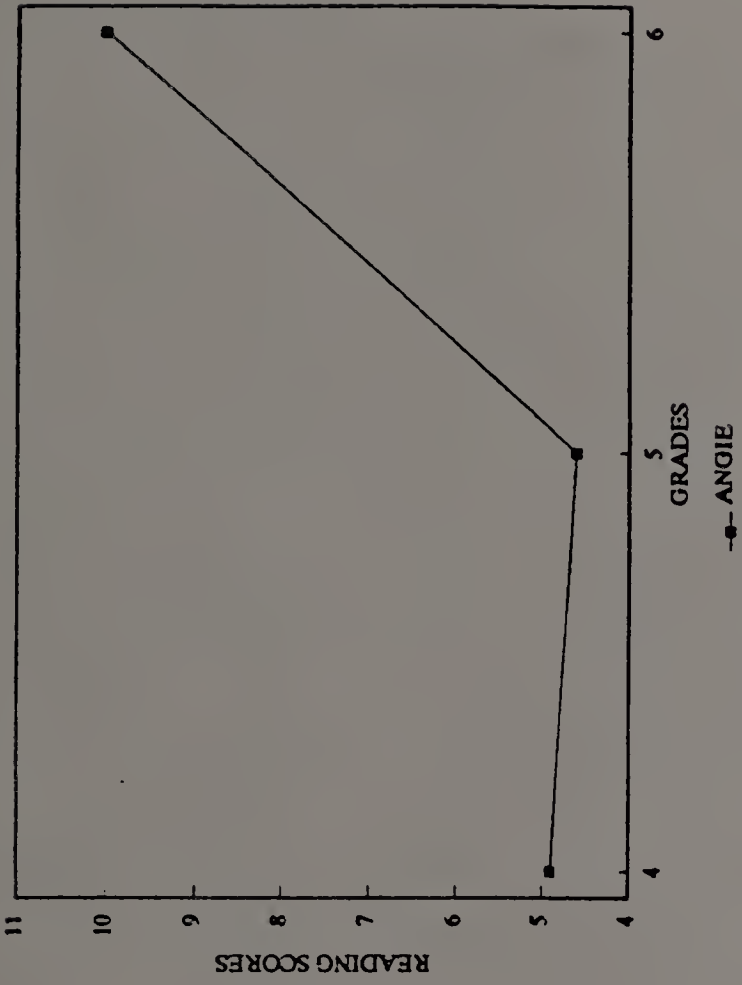
GE Scores for Reading Comprehension - Grades Four, Five, and Six











APPENDIX C

LISTS AND HELPFUL HINTS

# PUT IT IN WRITING

---

## WORDS USED INSTEAD OF "SAID"

### More Common

added	crowed	nudged	stammered
admitted	dared	offered	stated
answered	decided	ordered	stuttered
argued	declared	panted	suggested
asked	demanded	pleaded	tempted
babbled	denied	praised	wailed
bawled	ended	prayed	wept
bet	exclaimed	promised	whispered
blurted	explained	questioned	wondered
bragged	fretted	quoted	yelled
bugged	gaspd	ranted	
called	greeted	reminded	
cautioned	hinted	replied	
chatted	informed	requested	
cheered	insisted	roared	
chuckled	laughed	sassed	
coaxed	lied	sighed	
confessed	murmured	smiled	
corrected	muttered	smirked	
cried	named	snickered	
croaked	nodded		

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From the Teacher's Book of Lists,  
Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc., 1979

# 100 WORDS WE OFTEN MISSPELL

again  
all right  
already  
always  
angry  
animal  
answer  
asked  
aunt  
awful  
babies  
beautiful  
because  
believe  
bought  
break  
catch  
caught  
chief  
children  
clothes  
course  
cousin  
different  
doesn't

dropped  
every  
February  
finally  
first  
forty  
fourth  
friend  
goes  
going  
guess  
half  
haven't  
hear  
heard  
here  
hour  
interest  
its  
it's  
jumped  
knew  
know  
let's  
listen

little  
loose  
lose  
many  
minute  
money  
nickel  
ninety  
ninth  
of  
off  
often  
once  
only  
people  
really  
receive  
said  
school  
surprise  
their  
there  
they're  
threw  
through

tied  
tired  
to  
too  
tried  
truly  
two  
tying  
uncle  
until  
very  
we'll  
went  
were  
we're  
weren't  
when  
which  
who's  
whose  
woman  
women  
wouldn't  
your  
you're

## MORE WORDS

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Adjectives give clues to a person's character. A person's thoughts, feelings, actions, and words give clues to the person's character.

Descriptive words to use:

discouraged  
angry  
bewildered  
ashamed  
careful  
determined  
encouraging  
embarrassed  
confident  
brave  
bold  
energetic  
content  
cheerful  
daring  
dull  
bored  
adventurous

inquisitive  
hard-working  
generous  
helpful  
kindhearted  
impatient  
fun-loving  
happy  
frightened  
hostile  
kind  
irresponsible  
interested  
gloomy  
impulsive  
jittery  
kindly

musical  
neat  
mean  
obedient  
prudent  
responsible  
loving  
maladjusted  
nostalgic  
opened-faced  
original  
pale  
primitive  
passive  
peevish  
quiet  
ravishing

talkative  
satisfied  
shy  
unhappy  
unafraid  
selfish  
sad  
tired  
smart  
reasonable  
sarcastic  
sturdy  
terrible  
refined  
simple  
terrific  
weak

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APPENDIX D

PERSONAL INVENTORIES, STORY TITLES, AND  
STORY STARTERS

## INTEREST INVENTORY

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— snowmobiles</li> <li>— snowshoeing</li> <li>— downhill skiing</li> <li>— cross-country skiing</li> <li>— ice skating</li> <li>— roller skating</li> <li>— bowling</li> <li>— pool</li> <li>— ping-pong</li> <li>— soccer</li> <li>— football</li> <li>— hockey</li> <li>— handball</li> <li>— basketball</li> <li>— volleyball</li> <li>— baseball</li> <li>— softball</li> <li>— shot put</li> <li>— jumping</li> <li>— running</li> <li>— swimming</li> <li>— tennis</li> <li>— golf</li> <li>— horse racing</li> <li>— motorcycles</li> <li>— car racing</li> <li>— bikes</li> <li>— construction</li> <li>— storekeeping</li> <li>— building</li> <li>— calculators</li> <li>— movie stars</li> <li>— humor</li> <li>— candles</li> <li>— cartoons</li> <li>— guns</li> <li>— drawing</li> <li>— chess</li> <li>— world history</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— wild animals</li> <li>— baking</li> <li>— hiking</li> <li>— acting</li> <li>— jokes</li> <li>— stenciling</li> <li>— French</li> <li>— current events</li> <li>— artists</li> <li>— modern art</li> <li>— sculpture</li> <li>— hot lunch</li> <li>— sewing</li> <li>— macrame</li> <li>— knitting</li> <li>— crocheting</li> <li>— embroidery</li> <li>— decoupage</li> <li>— painting</li> <li>— poetry</li> <li>— classical music</li> <li>— country music</li> <li>— rock music</li> <li>— jazz</li> <li>— ballet</li> <li>— dancing</li> <li>— square dancing</li> <li>— dolls</li> <li>— jewelry</li> <li>— stained glass</li> <li>— bottles</li> <li>— antiques</li> <li>— electricity</li> <li>— stars</li> <li>— astrology</li> <li>— geology</li> <li>— video games</li> <li>— flowers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— gardening</li> <li>— gymnastics</li> <li>— makeup</li> <li>— grammar</li> <li>— computers</li> <li>— TV</li> <li>— writing</li> <li>— leather working</li> <li>— Vt. History</li> <li>— forts</li> <li>— skateboards</li> <li>— sugaring</li> <li>— insects</li> <li>— boats</li> <li>— radios</li> <li>— karate</li> <li>— presidents</li> <li>— selling</li> <li>— camping</li> <li>— airplanes</li> <li>— newspapers</li> <li>— continents</li> <li>— Women's Lib</li> <li>— cooking</li> <li>— carpentry</li> <li>— cars</li> <li>— machinery</li> <li>— horses</li> <li>— cows</li> <li>— sheep</li> <li>— chickens</li> <li>— dogs</li> <li>— cats</li> <li>— child care</li> <li>— books</li> <li>— U.S. History</li> <li>— geography</li> <li>— stamps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— coins</li> <li>— plants</li> <li>— trees</li> <li>— religion</li> <li>— quilting</li> <li>— fishing</li> <li>— tropical fish</li> <li>— canoes</li> <li>— exploring</li> <li>— canning</li> <li>— birds</li> <li>— pinball</li> <li>— woodcarving</li> <li>— spelling</li> <li>— math</li> <li>— TV shows</li> <li>— cameras</li> <li>— hunting</li> <li>— law</li> <li>— lumbering</li> <li>— cards</li> <li>— trapping</li> <li>— weaving</li> <li>— rockets</li> <li>— singing</li> <li>— building models</li> <li>— other nations</li> <li>— jungles</li> <li>— Canada</li> <li>— Scouting</li> <li>— 4-H</li> <li>— government</li> <li>— puzzles</li> <li>— myths and legends</li> <li>— abortion</li> <li>— unions</li> <li>— administration</li> <li>— 4-day work week</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|--|

- 1. have an interest in
- 2. have no interest in
- 3. have an interest in but know little about it
- 4. have an interest in and know much about it
- 5. have no interest and do not want to know anything about it

"The Writer's Chart of Discovery" by Jean Simmons from  
Understanding Writing, Thomas Newkirk and Nancy Atwell,  
 Heinemann Educ., Portsmouth, N.H., 1988



TOPIC IDEAS  
(Apple Shines)  
by Bob Eberle

Directions:

Complete the topic by adding one or more words in the blank space. Then write a story about your topic. The stories can be fiction or non-fiction.

The Day My \_\_\_\_\_ Learned to Talk

The \_\_\_\_\_ That Hurried Too Fast

Leftover \_\_\_\_\_

All About a Stubborn \_\_\_\_\_

The Sound of a \_\_\_\_\_

My Talk With a Famous \_\_\_\_\_

The Invisible \_\_\_\_\_

Adventures of \_\_\_\_\_

The Boy Who Wanted to Draw \_\_\_\_\_

A Trip on \_\_\_\_\_

The Unhappy \_\_\_\_\_

Aunt Ann Sells Here \_\_\_\_\_

IDEAS FOR STORY TITLES

A Summer Storm

The Lion and The Mouse

If You Should Meet a Crocodile

The Umbrella

Five Trees

Going Fishing

Jelly on the Plate

The Mysterious Egg

Just A Little Walk

The Kitten Who Wouldn't Purr

Herny's Ears

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TOPICS I WANT TO WRITE ABOUT


THE MAYFLOWER MOUSE

You are a mouse who has just jumped aboard the Mayflower. You will be going to the New World.

What kinds of people do you see on the ship?  
Are you excited or frightened?

Write a story about your voyage.



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From Write On! Vol. 2 No. 2331 Educational Insights. Carson, CA

TITLE

AUTHOR



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