

PART C

CONTEXT AND EXPLICATION

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT ENGLISH AND PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The project of histories of the present can be understood as the making of histories that locate the present as a strange, rather than familiar landscape, where that which has gone without saying becomes problematic (Tyler & Johnson 1991: 2).

5.1 Introduction

In Part B, Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the attitudes and ideas of preservice and practising teachers to teaching English in the primary school. This addressed both the broad research question and the specific questions A and B outlined in 1.1. How the respondents have come to these views is explored in Part C which addresses question C (*What are the influences (historical and contemporary) impacting on the roles of children's literature in English teaching in the primary school?*).

The three chapters of Part C together form a tapestry of the context of the primary classroom, of subject English, of the role of the literary and of curriculum policy. Chapter 5 focuses on the historical development of subject English and primary schooling, spanning a century, and Chapter 6 provides the link between the chapters, focussing on the genre of children's literature and literary practice over the same period. Chapter 7 explores developments in current English curriculum policy. As had been argued in Chapter 2, and reinforced in the quote above from Tyler and Johnson, an historical analysis can shed light on the contemporary scene.

There are at least four 'stories', which need to be identified if we are to understand the roles of children's literature in English today:

- The story of ideas: discourses of English
- The story of English in primary education in New South Wales: from ideas to praxis
- The story of children's literature as a genre

- The story of children's literature as a critical study

This chapter considers the first two 'stories' to explore the question: *What is English in the primary school setting?*

5.2 The story of ideas: discourses of English—legacies of the past

What is lost to a profession ignorant of its own history is the weave of ideology in the discourse of English studies from its inception (Morgan 1990: 231).

A history of English, it seems, is a history of the theory of the child, of learning theory, of societal expectations, and of theories of English, and how they interact in given periods of time. Much of the legacy of English teaching in the primary school has developed from the ebb and flow of various powers and pedagogies but has not necessarily been grounded on systematically coherent theoretical principles. This section of the study has a three-fold purpose: to allay ignorance of the past; to critically examine persisting assumptions that have been made about English; and to put the contemporary scene into perspective through an understanding of the broader context of the historical past.

It would be presumptuous to assume that an adequate picture may be drawn by simply considering the major ideas and their implementation and not being cognisant of the hidden and even external forces that have worked to mould subject English in any era. As Brock (1996: 41) reminds us: 'Such an assumption ignores the powerful influences wielded by factors such as errors and ignorance; the role played by key individuals and their particular passions, preferences and/or idiosyncrasies; coincidences and "serendipity", as well as other "external" forces such as political ideologies and bureaucratic processes'. In order to create a meaningful picture, Murray's (1988: 1) warning on the perennial problem of history, that 'it is often difficult to say whether one finds a pattern in the past or imposes a pattern upon it', needs to be kept in mind in examining such influences.

Two commonly used metaphors by researchers effectively describe the characteristics of the complex ideas, which have come to form subject English. The first is that of a tapestry woven of social, political, economic and academic threads. As Morgan notes in the quote that began this section, a failure of teachers to know the history of English is a failure to understand the threads that go to form subject English. The second metaphor is that of the maze of ideas that have formed literacy studies which Meek (1991: 230) has aptly described as 'labyrinthine', a metaphor which Harvey Graff (1987) explores in *The Labyrinths of Literacy*. It suggests paradox, confusion and contradictions. It demands

exploration of the 'deadends' and a search for paths that bring success. It is for this reason that an historical approach to exploring these ideas has been selected, in the hope that by mapping the past it is possible to understand the present better. Two major approaches are used to explore the paths of the labyrinths and to help complete the tapestry. The first is a brief history of ideas, focussing on the influence of individuals and to a lesser extent on movements. The second approach examines the impact of a changing social and political context on the nature of what is English. An analysis of curriculum documents attempts to show to what extent these influences have been expressed officially.

Constantly competing claims for what should provide the significant body of knowledge and an accompanying pedagogy mark the history of subject English. English, it may be said, has been affected by: firstly, changing attitudes to schooling; secondly, developing theories of education; and thirdly, academic movements. It has also been about political control, as Goodson and Medway (1990) point out in their aptly titled text *Bringing English to Order: The History and Politics of a School Subject*. The place and role of literature throughout this history have closely reflected the dominant influences of the time and have frequently been contested (Green 1990).

A clear definition of English is difficult, as there is neither clarity about what knowledge is central to English nor what 'subjects' make up English. It has been characterised by a lack of a sound theoretical base and, in turn, a clearly identified purpose. Writing three decades ago, Shayer (1972: 2) commented that it was disturbing to consider how poorly teaching practices related to well thought-out theory. The findings in Chapters 3 and 4 suggest that Shayer's comments are applicable today. Subject English has been charged with being the centrally educative subject, given the task of being the way to 'humanising', morally developing the learner. This, Mathieson (1975: 26) suggests, is the problem where, in today's highly diversified society, English can find 'no single sense of purpose'.

The story of English, it could be said, has been largely about two things: the *nature* of literature and literary studies and the *role* or *function* of literature and literary studies. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore these ideas in great detail as this has already been done in many excellent publications (Shayer 1972; Mathieson 1975; Graff 1979, 1987; Goodson & Medway 1990). From the legacies of the past have emerged a number of models, which are still evident in contemporary discourses of English. As noted in Chapter 1, Morgan (1997: 17) categorises the influences on dominant English discourses according to their primary concerns: *aesthetic*, *ethical*, *rhetorical* and *political*, terms that are borrowed in the following discussion. There is also evidence of a fifth discourse, a

sociocultural discourse that embraces culture and meaning. However, it is the literary paradigm in each discourse, and the ‘ripple’ effect each has had on English, that is central to this exploration.

5.2.1 *An aesthetic discourse*

moral armour (Arnold 1869).

rigour and purpose (Mathieson 1975).

An aesthetic discourse, which drew on a cultural heritage approach to English, had its foundations in the work of Matthew Arnold and later of F. R. Leavis and his theory of New Criticism. Its thinking on the value of literature could best be summed up in the two quotes above. Such views are still evident in two ways: the revering of a children’s canon of books of the Golden Ages of children’s literature, and more recently, in this country, an embracing of patriotism for Australianness.

Texts, in the nineteenth century, had been seen as inculcating particular behaviour codes and moral expectations, founded on what Graff (1987: 187) called a ‘moral economy’. Churches, particularly Protestant ones, and missionaries who took responsibility for education had long believed in the value of literature, in particular religious works and Scriptures as text. Here literacy and morality merged. It was no accident that parallels were drawn between English teaching and religion, between literature and moral values, as English came to be seen as a bonding force, to establish patriotism against outside forces rather than as an internal force that helped maintain the class structure. Against a background of material prosperity in Britain, Arnold took the view that to restore moral and cultural values, all classes of children needed to study literature to counter the ‘mechanical’ society where the worship of machinery had become the religion. He saw literature as the nationalistic, unifying power, as an antidote to England’s cultural crisis and a means of achieving equality across classes. Arnold (1869) in *Culture and Anarchy* portrayed industrialisation as an evil to be countered by the teaching of literature to build ‘moral armour’. A further legacy of Arnold’s work lies in his belief in the formative powers of literature. As Willinsky (1991: 77–8) put it: ‘The totality of Arnold’s political and literary theory, though it has been only partially translated into the educational practice of our day, provides a credo for the English teacher that might read—to civilise until right is ready and then to entrust with the disinterested play of ideas and the criticism of life.’

Arnold had added a further dimension to what it meant to be literate. Not only were mechanical skills addressed, but so too were cultural. English had broken with the Classic tradition and become established as a subject in its own right. However, the dispute between the supremacy of grammar or literature established at that time persisted and, is

still evident, as will be explored in Chapter 7, in contemporary times (Ball 1985). By the beginning of the twentieth century in England, subject English was a controlling mechanism of the masses. Literature became the link between literacy and moral education. It would, claimed George Gordon, Professor of English Literature at Oxford, 'save our souls and heal the state' (Baldick 1983: 156).

The maintenance of Classics teaching at university level, with students focusing on language studies and philology, ensured that change in attitude and approach to teaching English would be gradual. Leavis (1943, 1948) and the Cambridge School of New Critics did much to reverse this impediment. Literature, not grammar, Leavis saw as the avenue to cultural enrichment, social order and morality. He shared with Sampson (1921) the value of traditional culture, 'The Great Tradition', to fight what seemed the destructive power of the industrial age. For Leavis, the solution to 'cultural disintegration' was the development of the young's ability to respond to great literature and, through critical awareness, reject lesser works. Literature was seen as a vehicle for social mobility through its established moral values. While the impact of Leavis and his theory of New Criticism was greater on secondary English teaching, the shock waves filtered down to the primary school in an aesthetic discourse. In Mathieson's (1975: 122) words, Leavis brought 'rigour and purpose to English studies'.

The adoption of a cultural heritage approach by Arnold and Leavis and the New Critics had challenged the central place of grammar in English and had emphasised the value of literature either as providing a weapon against social ills or as a tool for educational development.

5.2.2 *An ethical discourse*

art for life's sake (Dennis 1965).

[T]he struggle for reclaiming one's own voice (Giroux 1988).

Two sets of ideas contributed to the development of an ethical discourse: growing interest in psychological development and changed approaches to theories of learning and the importance of the individual.

Various versions of an ethical discourse developed over several decades, while driven by different theories of literature and language-in-education, yet espousing a common model—a model of personal growth. A 'growth model' drew on the Romanticism of the late eighteenth century where interest focused on the individual. Such notions were not translated into elementary education until the twentieth century. Its foundation can probably be traced to educators such as Montessori and later to the growth of interest in

child development in the 1920s alongside the Progressive Movement's romantic belief in the basic goodness of the child and a need to foster his/her expression of feelings and exploration of the imagination. The Progressives of this period, influenced by Herbert Read, Marjorie Hourd and others, believed that the English teacher should allow for the full development of the child's personality. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in a climate of progressive thought, Rosenblatt (1938: v) was stressing the sense of moral purpose of literature—as social democracy. In her book *Literature as Exploration*, she highlighted the importance of the social and political roles of literature and the importance of literature to inform and sensitise the student: 'The study of literature can have a very real, and even central, relation to the points of growth in the social and cultural life of a democracy.' Whilst agreeing with Leavis and the New Critics 'deploring the neglect of literature as an art', Rosenblatt (1990: 102) disagreed with their approach to the self-contained nature of the text and the irrelevance of the reader and focused her attention on the reader's response to the text. Such views on literature and the child were to shift the focus and form the foundation for Reader Response Theory, which was to become significant in the 1970s (Rosenblatt 1978).

The 1960s saw a new wave of educators who, while not explicitly aligning themselves with a growth model, did recognise that literary studies could offer personal development. They included Whitehead, Dennis, Ford and Holbrook who had initially been inspired by the Leavisite approach to standard form, correctness, and to the use of traditional texts, but who ultimately challenged it to broaden the definition of literature and to focus on pupil-centred rather than teacher-centred learning.

For Whitehead (1970) and Dennis (1965), the shift in the significance of literature was not in the gaining of a single correct idea, but in the developing of experience, a 'liberal' studies emphasis. For Dennis (1965: 40), this was 'art for life's sake' where literature did not provide a single truth but might be viewed from different perspectives. For Whitehead (1966: 26), reading should be a 'thought-getting' process so that it followed that reading-material must be interesting and should have the power 'to draw forth strong motivation by its close relationship to the reader's most vital concerns and experience'. Books, Whitehead (1966: 55) saw, performed two important functions: to provide both imaginative experience and as a way of dealing with the complexities of growing up. He advised that the teacher's role was to guide the reader 'in range and quality of imaginative experiences'...beyond 'the repetitive vapidness of Blyton or the standardised thrills of Biggles'. Whitehead (1966: 259) identified a fifth stage of reading development, given that the first four stages were: Preparing for Reading; Learning to Read; Thoughtful Silent Reading; and Wide Reading. This fifth stage, Critical Reading, would challenge the cognitive and emotional skills of the reader.

Boris Ford's *Young Writers, Young Readers*, published in 1960, stressed the importance of accepting children's writing as literature. Whilst not an advocate of the growth model, Ford was influenced by psychologist D.W. Winnicott's notion of moral development through creativity and the need to focus on the child. Reflecting the Romantic concepts of the eighteenth century, Ford believed that the young could value both their creativity and the cultural heritage of literature, two notions which had been considered diametrically opposed up to that time. David Holbrook was also a key figure in the reconstruction of English in the 1950s and 1960s. Echoes of the Progressive Movement emerged in Holbrook's (1973: 210) emphasis on children's own creativity where 'a concern with a creative approach to the humanities is an attempt to foster the release of human potentialities'. For Holbrook, borrowing Winnicott's terms, creativity belonged to *separateness* (one's personal search for the meaning of life) and *union* (a sense of cultural heritage). English, Holbrook (1973: 215) argued, was bound up with *separateness*.

In this same period, James Britton and the London School saw the need for pupils to gain linguistic control to survive in society, control coming through an exploration of good models of literature. Here an ethical discourse was based on the role of language, which is seen to be active, meaning that language organises feelings and moulds the child's identity. For Britton, humans moved between two roles to deal with experience: a 'participant' role where personal experience is significant and a 'spectator' role where one reflects, evaluates, reads and writes about an experience. Each role had its own language: the participant role used explicit language (what Britton called 'transactional') and the spectator role used language as art (what Britton called 'poetic'). Literature (written by others or by one self) was seen as useful to explore 'the relationships in which the human quality of the emotional relationship is part of what is afoot' (Dartmouth Seminar papers NCTE 1969).

Reinventing the 1960s Progressive Education, Willinsky's (1990: 242) 'New Literacy' of the 1970s and 1980s constructed the child as the focal point where all literacy involved his/her 'active pursuit of meaning', Willinsky (1987) drew parallels between the New Literacy paradigm and the Romantic movement of the eighteenth century, where the mind was seen as creative, exploring imagination and the self, rather than as an information processor, not the 'tabula rasa' that Locke espoused. The New Literacy embraced Reader Response theory, psycholinguistics, process, and a Whole Language approach. The New Literacy was significant in a number of ways in how it viewed the role of children's literature. Firstly, it questioned the value of the 'engineered' basal reader over children's literature (Willinsky 1987). Secondly, it saw 'self expression' as important in two major

ways: in transacting with text and in creating one's own text, challenging the supremacy of reading instruction as the monolith of English.

The shift, from a belief that literary texts have a single meaning deduced from the word on the page to the interaction between reader and text, heralded the development of Reader Response theory. This was reflected in a reading pedagogy where reading was regarded as an active role with the reader at the centre. A segment of New Literacy, the Whole Language movement, took hold in primary schools. Here teachers adopted less authoritarian approaches, drawing on humanistic views of child-centred learning where the teacher took on the role of facilitator within 'natural' conditions (Cambourne 1988: 33).

Yet, Willinsky sounded a note of caution that, if one offered only what he called 'an upper middle-class hominess and a little corporate panache' (1990: 20) and did not meet the needs of the working class, New Literacy was inadequate. If it were assumed that Progressive Education in the guise of the New Literacy was necessarily democratic and freed the working class, the system would fail. Supporting this view, Giroux (1988: 65) said, 'To be literate is *not* to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's own voice, history, and future'. The nineteen-nineties saw the way in which this false assumption impacted on English teaching, as accusations of the need for accountability surfaced, a point that will be explored further in Chapter 7.

While the 'growth model' was to influence curriculum documents for some twenty years, for Christie (1998: 5), it could not deliver for two reasons: firstly, it was based on the romantic notion of the individual but failed to acknowledge the importance of 'language as a social phenomenon'; and secondly, by focussing on a person's own construction of meaning, it deflected attention from the nature of language so that teachers did not teach *about* language.

5.2.3 *A rhetorical discourse*

to understand the very large range of written forms (Christie 1990: 3).

The nineteen-nineties were characterised by criticism of New Literacy, especially by the genrists and what has come to be known as the Sydney School (Green 1997: 20). They saw it as lacking academic rigour and failing to encourage the child to embrace the world beyond his/her own centre—to explore the sociocultural parameters.

A rhetorical discourse, it was argued, could offer patterns for the study of culture. Such a discourse, based on structuralism which sprang from 'the ironic act of shutting out the material world in order the better to illuminate our consciousness of it' (Eagleton 1983: 109), gave order and helped show relationships within the system. A rhetorical discourse

could be applied to literacy learning using a functional systemic approach. Halliday's (1985) functional grammar and Martin and Rothery's (1980, 1981) theory of genre informed the thinking of the 1994 (and to a lesser extent the 1998) NSW *English K-6 Syllabus*. The theory was founded on the principle that knowledge of language functions could provide awareness of the powerful genres that would, it assumes, give students from all groups an entree to public life and, in turn, would offer possible economic and social benefits to the community—a view that is understandably applauded by governments. It viewed literacy as a linguistic and social practice where the language features of conventional genres (or, as the Syllabus called them 'text types') were identified and spoken of in a 'metalanguage' (Christie 1995). The rhetorical approach had two main aspects: the notions of *structure* and *function* (which formed the basis of the study of functional systemic linguistics) and the study of how language functions in social activity (which formed one aspect of cultural studies).

In a rhetorical discourse, the role of literature shifted. For the functional linguists of the 1990s, literature was subsumed in a larger emphasis on text types. As Christie (1990: 3) puts it, 'to be literate in the contemporary world is to understand the very large range of written forms, text types or—as I shall call them here, genres—which we all need for both the reading and the writing essential to participation in the community'. Genre theorists believed there was a need to give children back the power they had lost when mass education of the late nineteenth century became a device of social control. Christie (1990: 22) however, conceded there was a flaw in the genrists' argument in that no reliable data currently exists on the range of written genres that people are required to write in their working and social life. This, in turn, raises questions about how desirable and possible it is for curriculum to keep pace with complex society.

The current understanding of a rhetorical discourse in the primary English classroom, then, is of a text-centred approach driven by functional systemic linguistics.

The argument to return to the 'basics' of the 60s, as Luke argues (1999a), is not necessarily functional. There is an identifiable example of the impact on teachers of the 'back-to-basics' rhetoric and its concomitant practice, to be found in the text of the interview of Sally, discussed in Chapter 4. Sally sees teaching functional literacy skills as paramount, and literature, its experience and enjoyment, as more of an out-of-school activity.

5.2.4 *A political discourse*

The role of literacy in enactments and productions of power (Lankshear 1997: 44).

The three discourses discussed thus far, essentially conservative and liberal, were challenged by a radical one, a political discourse of critical pedagogy, which drew on the critical consciousness, identified social and political contradictions and invited the student to respond. It challenged the cultural heritage model as a means of maintaining inequities and focused attention on the relationship between individuals and the world. A political discourse, Lankshear (1997: 46) believes, adopted a critical perspective on literacy in general, on particular texts and on wider social practices. Critical literacy attempted to break down this class structure by denying the distinction between what Lankshear (1993: 258) calls 'representational' texts, including popular culture, and creative texts.

For Lankshear, 'critical' implied two things, a judgement and an object of judgement. Critical readers were given the power to 'handle the inherently ideological dimension of literacy, and the role of literacy in enactments and productions of power' (Lankshear 1997: 44). Critical literacy has been an evolving discourse. From an earlier definition of critical literacy as 'responding to working class culture' (Aronowitz & Giroux 1985: 133), the definition has broadened and been viewed from different perspectives of discourse analysis, reader response theory, poststructuralism, functional linguistics, etc. Earlier approaches to critical literacy tended to focus on the deconstructive rather than the reconstructive. It explored how meaning is made and what powers are generated by such practice. It drew on Freire's belief that critical literacy enables one to read the world. Comprehension also embraced the capacity to use text as a means for decision-making and to critically assess. Yet, as Lankshear (1997: 40) warns, 'critical' has become a 'magic bullet' term that is erroneously seen as providing solutions to social needs.

In a political discourse of the present, it is not just the reader's response to text alone that is important but also his/her ability to deconstruct and reconstruct text. It is the reconstruction that is significant as it is no longer the individual interaction with text that is paramount, but the interaction of text and what Gilbert (1990: 63) calls 'the social nature of language practices'. Such interaction would develop new Discourses (with a capital D), which Gee (1997: xv) defines as 'a way of being together in the world'. It can be argued that each Discourse includes a particular theory that may be accepted unquestioningly by members of that Discourse. The development of new Discourses challenge the existing ones and question the theories on which they are based. What this means in terms of reader interaction with text is that readers might find themselves as part of a number of Discourses if they assume a critical approach to text. Central to critical reading is the place of discourse (that is, the language component of a Discourse) in shaping meaning. It provides the means of drawing the links between literacy and critical thinking and understanding, and offers opportunities to search for more valid meanings and encourages multiple readings.

Such an approach has two major implications which teachers need to address. Firstly, it challenges what reading is and secondly, it requires texts that are provocative. The teacher's role is here cast as what Morgan (1997: 20) calls 'an agent of enlightenment'.

5.2.5 'Sedimentation'

The analysis of data collected by questionnaire in this study showed that teacher education students saw children's literature serving a range of purposes (Table 3: 16). Ideologically, their views cast back to Arnold with 70% of participants supporting the importance of the teachers' need to develop a sense of 'cultural heritage', and to Leavis and New Criticism where 91% saw literature as stimulating intellectual growth and 81% saw it as developing literary appreciation. The interviews revealed that some teachers favoured specific discourses. For example, Ellen and Gloria saw children's literature as primarily developing the individual socially and in terms of self, while Sally and Kay saw its value in its modelling and development of language and genre. However, other teachers such as John had been influenced by a number of ideological perceptions and reflected a number of incompletely articulated approaches: of cultural heritage, text-centred and personal growth. It was found that teachers were affected by residual applications together with their own experiences—what Ball (1985: 88) aptly calls 'sedimentation of generations'. Chapters 3 and 4, indeed, reflected that preservice and practising teachers have formed their approaches through such 'sedimentation'. This sedimentation is not merely one of 'theory', but also one of praxis which went hand in hand with the above outlined movements in theoretical perspectives. This point will be explored in 5.3.

5.3 The story of English in primary education in New South Wales: from ideas to praxis

English is the cornerstone of the curriculum, for it is the subject the treatment of which in the school contributes the largest quota towards the ultimate equipment of the pupil for life (Board 1932: 86).

The history of the role of children's literature in the English curriculum has oscillated between differences in emphasis upon 'education' and 'schooling'. The distinction that Bessant and Spaul (1976: xi), made in *Politics of Schooling* between these two terms is pertinent here: 'Education' is seen as 'experience of knowledge for their (that is, students') own sakes' while 'schooling' is seen to be in the interests of society. As 'schooling', literature is seen as a means of moral development, a way of controlling thinking and of producing a trained but docile workforce: as 'education', literature offers individuals the opportunity to explore ideas, think critically and broaden understanding. As Burgess (1996: 60) points out, 'the development of English has been bound up from

the first with the development of schooling'. The question might be asked: 'Can it also be shown that the development of English reflects the development of education?'

In Australia, key educational documents such as reports and syllabuses have interpreted the major ideas of each era to provide a formal structure to English teaching in the primary school. Such documents have been influenced by individuals such as Peter Board, by educational reviews such as the NSW Department of Education Report on secondary schools called the Wyndham Report (1958) and seminars such as the Australian UNESCO seminar. The documents, to borrow Ball, Kenny and Gardiner's (1990: 68) terms, may be seen as 'curriculum policing actions...redefining the boundaries of acceptable practice'. Two British reports, which responded to the political concerns of the day, The Newbolt Report (1921), and The Bullock Report (1975), impacted on the Australian scene. The two reports were similar in that they offered comprehensive recommendations on the teaching of English. However, they were vastly different in that the Bullock Report was 'powered by educational research rather than by literature' (Burgess 1996: 73), whereas the Newbolt Report had adopted a strong Arnoldian line of English education as being of national importance. An examination of New South Wales English syllabus documents of the past shows that they reflect both elements of stability and of change, and that marked philosophical, political and bureaucratic shifts have occurred. A brief overview of these documents follows.

5.3.1 *English curriculum for the nineteenth century in the colony of New South Wales*

[F]ew can read with intelligence (Griffiths 1957: 94).

The history of Australian primary education, not surprisingly, largely mirrors that of Britain in its theories of reading and learning, curriculum and texts, and has been influenced by British recommendations and reports. Yet, the differing social context necessitated unique developments. Education in the colony of New South Wales took two discrete paths. The middle and upper classes established private venture schools with a classical-modern curriculum, where Greek, Roman, French, Italian and English Classics, English Grammar and Composition made up the English offerings. This study, however, focuses on the development of public education, beginning with the education of the working class and convict population of the colony. Colonial governments saw the value of making schools agents of political socialisation, where the masses were controlled by learning cultural and moral values and so established elementary schools (later called primary schools) early in the colony of New South Wales.

Schools in the colony for the large population of children who, by 1810, made up a quarter of the population, were intended to develop 'religious beliefs, political loyalty, moral values, and basic vocational abilities' (Barcan 1988: 14). This period saw English as 'schooling', which was to be a disciplining and moralising force. Literature was closely bound with a narrow definition of literacy and was seen as a tool used in this process. Early teaching aimed at minimal literacy education drawing on two English models: 'dame schools' (the first established in 1789), which were little more than places that cared for young children, and 'Sunday Schools' (1819), whose movement not only taught literacy and moral development but were responsible for the distribution of spelling and reading books. Reading, taught with the purpose of reading the Scriptures and assisting with a vocation, was based on learning letters, words, phrases before the child was allowed to read from school readers (Christie 1990: 198).

Textbooks, as many letters of the time suggested, were in short supply. As the Anglican Church initially had the monopoly on education, the main texts required were for religious edification. A letter from Missionary Crook to the London Missionary Society 1 March 1804 illustrates the emphasis: 'Books are much wanted here—spelling books, Watt's catechisms, especially the second, pleasing as well as edifying reading books, Scott's Dictionary, arts, grammars, Bibles, etc.' (Griffiths 1957: 16). While from 1848, five systems of state funded elementary school existed in New South Wales—Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and National organised under two boards, Denominational and National—all suffered from a scarcity of books and used those readers that were available as decoding tools and sources of moral edification. In response to criticism by William Wilkins and public unrest, a Commission established in 1854 to report on standards of education in the colony, found that:

'the books supplied to the Denominational schools are chiefly portions of three different series, though there appears to be no hindrance to the teachers admitting any others they may think proper. National schools are permitted to use such books only for the ordinary instruction of the children as are supplied or sanctioned by the Commissioners. The National Series is by far the best for general purposes, though it is defective in several points' (Griffiths 1957: 93).

Most widespread was the use of the *Royal Readers*, which drilled children 'with ideological content which stressed colonial allegiance to Empire and "Mother Country"' (Luke 1989: 5). 'In Reading...attention seems to be chiefly paid to the mechanical part of the art of reading, the sense of the passage being commonly neglected. Emphasis was on decoding and it was lamented that 'few can read with intelligence' (Griffiths 1957: 94). Reading from readers tended to focus on elocution rather than comprehension.

5.3.2 Curriculum for the 1900s–1920s

[L]iterature is one main factor in the child's culture, bringing him into contact with the best that has been thought and said and so increasing his knowledge of human nature and adding to the stock of ideas about life gained from his personal social experience (Department of Education, New South Wales 1922).

Redefining the boundaries

With Australian Federation came an optimistic mood of national pride and, in turn, the need to develop general education. Yet, the emphasis on 'schooling' rather than 'education' persisted, where the task of the teacher was seen as overcoming illiteracy. The definition of literacy remained narrow, as it was still seen as the ability to read selected graded school readers, to write neatly and to parse and analyse, and to write a modelled piece such as a letter. This view ensured the maintenance of literature for moral lessons of appropriate behaviour, building on the assumption that such models will improve the values and enhance the literacy levels of the masses. What Shayer (1972: 27) called 'the Revised Code mentality' of the nineteenth century was preserved into the twentieth century in English Schedules provided for schools, which divided English into reading, writing and English (that is, grammar) and set specific tasks for each age level.

However, the new century also saw interesting developments where curriculum was formed and (re)formed as political, academic and literary boundaries were redefined. In New South Wales, the appointment of Peter Board as Director of Education gave a new focus to primary schooling. Board began to implement changes to primary education based on ideas gleaned from overseas, where the curriculum emphasised the importance of English which was allocated between 10 and 7 hours per week, according to the grade. Board, as the quote that prefaced 5.3 suggested, saw that more than literacy was needed to build a nation and, with his perceptions of English, provided the foundations for the English agenda for much of the twentieth century. Most importantly, class libraries were established. Educators were becoming more interested in the mental and emotional growth of the child which was reflected in the changes in attitudes to reading. With a greater emphasis on silent reading (in place of oral reading), a sense of the individual emerged. In the UK, the Board of Education issued *A Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers* (1905), which encouraged wider reading and a development of 'literary taste' with the reading of fairy tales, myths and legends and adventure stories.

Australian-produced reading material for children such as *The Australian School Paper* (1898), and later *The Commonwealth School Paper* (1904–15), offered not only more relevant reading material but was valuable in introducing Australian books and, as Saxby (1969: 74) pointed out, provided a market for aspiring authors and publicised new books

by Australian writers. However, school readers, made up of excerpts, fables, useful information and abridged versions of novels such as *Gulliver's Travels*, continued to be the main form of literature within schools until the 1930s.

Forming the curriculum: NSW Course of Instruction for Primary Schools 1904, 1916 and 1922.

The first new primary syllabus for New South Wales, published in 1904 (republished in 1916 and 1922), established two significant guiding principles, 'curriculum cohesion and child-centred instruction' (Patterson 2000: 243). In writing the first syllabus in New South Wales, Board gave importance to English, arguing that English was the 'cornerstone' or 'hub' around which the other subjects clustered. He emphasised that English could be based on literature rather than language where texts should be studied for their ideas rather than for grammatical constructions. Literature, as the 1922 syllabus saw it, offered 'nutritive material' (NSW Department of Education 1922: 1). As the quote above suggests, English, taught through literature, reflected something of Arnold's aesthetic discourse but, as Patterson (2000a: 245) also argues, served a more mundane purpose, 'a ready-made pastoral pedagogy'. Lists of prose literature, 'suitable supplementary readers' and lists of poems for each grade were suggested. The lists included many tales of adventure but also included books such as *Little Women* and *Girls Together*, rather surprising additions given that the syllabus spoke only of male pupils (for example, 'The boy's schooling as a part of life, should be linked up as fully as possible with the life of the community' [Department of Education, NSW 1921]). A sense of Australian cultural identity was also to be addressed in that Australian literary texts such as *Dot and the Kangaroo* were to be included. Yet, the impact of Board's ideas and the full implementation of his syllabuses were not immediately evident in classrooms, though they gradually became more significant in the syllabuses through to the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1920s the Newbolt Report (1921: 58), commented on the fact that British primary school children were not given opportunities to read enough literature, stating that 'it is on the literary side that children from the Elementary Schools are apt to be found most deficient'. The words applied equally to the Australian site.

5.3.3 Curriculum for 1930s–1950s

'Weeds of culture' v. 'temples of the human spirit'

Redefining the boundaries

Three publications were to influence the next three decades in NSW English education: two British publications in 1921, Sampson's *English for the English* and *The Teaching of English in England* (known as the Newbolt Report) and an Australian publication, Percival

Cole's *The Method and Technique of Teaching* (1933). Although published in the previous decade, the impact of the two English documents was to be felt during the 1930s to 1950s as they were seen as important milestones. They revised the concept of the grammar paradigm in favour of the literary paradigm, while introducing the concept of child development where the interests of the child were central. Both documents were strongly influenced by Arnold's concept of the power of literature to develop 'a cultural heritage' and the view that ultimately a sense of patriotism should be central to a national education constructed of a national language and a national culture. In the absence of a new syllabus in New South Wales's primary schools, Cole's text was also to be influential. The absoluteness of the text is reflected in the singularity of the title.

Sampson's publication was probably influential in that it gave English a new sense of purpose, offering suggestions as to how Arnold's views that education was a preparation for living, not for *a* living, could best be implemented through literature.

The Newbolt Report (1921: 4), a government publication that reported on 'the position of English in the educational system of the country' offered 105 recommendations across the whole hierarchy of English teaching and saw English as the centre of 'a liberal education for all English children, whatever their position or occupation in life' (Newbolt Report 1921: 14). While the Newbolt Report's significance is often noted as reinforcing Arnoldian views, quoting him throughout the document (for example, on pages 6; 55; 86; 259) and establishing English as the centrepiece of the curriculum, its importance was even more lasting. It emphasised the distinction between knowledge subjects such as Mathematics and Science and character-developing subjects such as English, in which literature was seen as 'the most direct and lasting communication of experience by man to men' (Newbolt Report 1921: 9). It made further distinctions between two studies of English: a 'scientific study' of language and the study of the 'literary art' (Newbolt Report 1921: 11).

The Report was significant in that it acknowledged the importance of all levels of English education, including elementary education and the responsibility of the elementary classroom teacher to recognise the centrality of English to the curriculum. The elementary school, the Report (1921: 57) believed, needed to begin the 'humanising effect' where English would be seen 'not so much a subject as the body and vital principle of all school activity'.

The report criticised the mechanical way in which reading was taught. It saw this as the reason that students, not having been exposed to quality literature, resorted to popular culture in the forms of film and cheap fiction ('the penny dreadful'). 'The weeds of

literature have never been so prolific as in our day' (Newbolt Report 1921: 257), it lamented, a view graphically pictured by D.H. Lawrence in a poem titled *What Have They Done To You?*

goggling eyes to goggle at the film and a board-school brain, stuffed with the
ha'penny press (Lawrence 1964)

Reading, the report argued, should not be based on a series of rules but should be seen as 'a social and humane accomplishment, and a method of interpreting literature' (Newbolt Report 1921: 81). It noted the literary deficit in elementary schools and recommended 'making ample provision for the study of literature' (Newbolt Report 1921: 63). Once the technique of reading is mastered, the lesson, it suggested, should be called 'literature'. Literature offered knowledge and provided the opportunity 'of contact with great minds' (Newbolt Report 1921: 15) but it also allowed for the interaction of reader with text to provide enjoyment (Newbolt Report 1921: 82–4). The report criticised industrialism, where the young were reduced to machines in factories and communication was fragmented. It saw a solution to this problem in literature, which 'is not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the human spirit, in which all should worship' (Newbolt Report 1921: 259). Literature lessons, the report noted, should have at least three objectives: to increase student command of the language; the acquisition of knowledge; and the appreciation and enjoyment of literature.

The report (1921: 25) saw teachers in Arnold's terms, referring to them as 'itinerant preachers' of English literature where the teaching of literature was seen as 'missionary work' to 'humanise' the children in elementary schools (1921: 57–60). Chapter 4 in this thesis demonstrated the ongoing impact of this thinking, where several teachers (Gloria, Helena, Ellen and Sandy) cast themselves in such roles. Arnold had elevated English teaching to a privileged task: the Newbolt Report had reinforced this perception. Any notion of status enjoyed by contemporary teachers may be traced to these perceptions of the importance of the role of the English teacher. As King (1988: 42) notes, 'the Report is a major moment in that generalising of a pedagogic-moral training which still continues in schools and universities'.

The Newbolt Report established the links between literature and life, where the former had the power to develop a cohesive society and to help the individual develop a sense of self. Such theoretical views challenged the existing pedagogy. As King (1988: 42) points out, 'the Report sets up a student-text-teacher-relation within a larger system of moral training, a system from which, in many ways, we have not yet escaped'. It was more than a response to post World War I social and political crises with ethical and moral solutions. Many commentators (Shayer 1972, Mathieson 1975, Ball 1985) have positioned the

Newbolt Report as the link between the work of Arnold and that of Leavis, and reaching forward to the present to establish a particular way of talking about literature (King 1988: 39).

Closely following the recommendations of the Newbolt Report, Cole's (1933: ix) book was intended 'to help teachers to achieve a degree of practical skill that shall be worthy of their craft' and 'to subordinate the wealth of illustrative detail to an ordered array of pedagogic principles'. In Cole's (1933: 262) recommendations, English should give strong emphasis to oral language, 'at first a matter of speech training', dramatisation, a quaint subject called 'courteous address', together with instruction in the elements of the written word and the development of reading through both oral and silent forms.

Cole (1933: 229) suggested that children aged seven years were ready to read simple primers and by eight should be able to read 'fairy tales, fables, folk stories, legends, poetry, tales of adventure at home and abroad, together with an occasional homely story of domestic life'. Cole (1933: 263–4) stressed the importance of the need to have a wide choice of books. In classrooms of younger children, there should be plenty of 'easy continuous stories, imaginative, romantic or amusing' and in the senior classes 'books should be used as a source of enjoyment, as a means of gaining information, and for the purpose of language study'. Novels of proved worth, and others with which the teacher thought fit to make experiments, were also included. Cole (1933: 229) made clear distinctions between the purpose of oral and silent reading, in that subject matter was to be mastered through silent reading while oral reading was used to identify 'formal difficulties of reading'.

This period also saw the emergence of three major ideas: individualism, central to the Progressive Movement, which emphasised the individual child; behaviourism; and culturalism, based on a transmission model of learning. Reflecting the influences of individualism, the 1931 British Board of Education *Report on the Primary School* saw reading as diverse. It should, it believed, include oral, individual, group and silent reading activities, and should offer both information and enjoyment. It stressed genuine literary studies and wider reading to include contemporary authors such as Walter de la Mare and Arthur Ransome. A sense of reading for pleasure developed. Yet, behaviourism also largely influenced two major approaches to reading: *the Look and Say* method, which involved remembering words by rote focusing on repetition, drill and practice, and *phonics*, involving the teaching of individual sounds using a 'part to whole' approach, encompassing an analytical view of language. In the behaviourist tradition, reading was considered only as an external behaviour and ignored the meaning-making cues of syntax and semantics. The effects of this scientification of reading closed out the literary in

reading. A third perspective on reading came from a 'cultural heritage' perspective, which drew on Leavisite methods or those of New Criticism where meaning was in the text itself. Here literature was seen as a reflection of the real world. Elements of some of these influences were to be found in some measure in the 1952 Syllabus.

(Re)forming the curriculum: NSW Curriculum for Primary Schools, 1952.

The first curriculum since 1925 (which was a reissue of the 1922 document) appeared in 1941, emphasising 'the education of the individual' (Department of Education NSW, 1941: p.v), preparing the way for the 1952 Syllabus which reflected the notion of individualism and a liberal education where English was seen 'as the instrument of thought and means of communication' (Department of Education NSW, 1952: 61). To this end, reflective silent reading through the study of literature was encouraged. Influenced by 'cultural heritage', the Syllabus saw that 'the study of literature brings the child into contact with great minds and new forms of experience', so that s/he leaves primary school a 'mind stored, with fitting examples from the prose and poetry of his own country, and from literature as a whole' (Department of Education NSW, 1952: 61). Literature was to be offered by the teacher as well as the children reading selected books, readers and *The School Magazine*. Great value was placed in *The School Magazine* as a means of stimulating interest in literature. *The School Magazine*, the Syllabus said, 'was a storehouse of literature and general reading'. 'It must,' it recommended, 'be interpreted as a road to, and through, the school library, a positive link between the supplementary reader and such library, and a highroad to English literature' (Department of Education NSW, 1952: 97). The heading of the earlier syllabuses of 'Reading and Literature' had been replaced by 'Reading'.

In spite of the Syllabus' claims to encouraging the individual, there was little evidence of the Progressives' emphasis on the *development* of the child. All forms of literature were prescriptive and controlled, as were the teaching of reading skills based on behaviourist *look and say* methods. No guidance was given to the teacher as to what skills were needed to be developed in the learner to develop 'the natural spirit of inquiry' (1952: 97) that the Syllabus claimed as important. In this syllabus, contrary to Sampson's (1921) argument that timetabled subjects stifled English, specific English subjects including spelling, handwriting, composition, reading comprehension, grammar, 'appreciation' (of prose and poetry) and the reading of scripted plays, were each timetabled separately and expressed in minutes per week. As Murray (1988: 3) points out, the formula for the 1952 Syllabus with its emphasis on a prescriptive syllabus and the *correct* form of English modelled by teacher and text came into question in the 60s and 70s.

5.3.4 Curriculum for the 1960s

[T]hese skills of speaking and writing in their most highly developed forms become literature (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: 2).

Redefining the boundaries

The sense of certainty that the 1952 Syllabus had offered was challenged in the 60s by changing thinking—related to child-centred learning and the increasing significance of individual differences, together with emerging research-based theoretical positions on language and literature. English came to be seen as a single language expressed through different modes, and labelled ‘language arts’.

Initiated by the work of Britton and the London School, the ‘English-as-language’ paradigm gained strength against changing attitudes to education, where there was an emphasis on comprehensive schooling in which a child-centred focus broke down traditional hierarchical relationships and elitism. Language, rather than literature, was seen as the basis of experience and the child’s own experience was the starting point. Language, Britton argued, allows us to turn experiences into symbolic form. He emphasised the importance of psychological processes in reading, where the reader constantly evaluated experiences. Literature, he saw, was one such experience. In *Reflections*, the ‘English-as-language’ view was further developed by Clements, Dixon and Stratta (1963) who emphasised a transactional approach beginning with the perception of the pupil, creating meaningful tasks and stressing the importance of discussion. While aimed at the comprehensive secondary school, the book’s impact filtered down to the primary school. This was because ‘*Reflections* drew together many of the new ideas which were then in circulation in English teaching, and demonstrated how these ideas could be put into practical effect’ (West 1998: 41). This was to set the scene for the work of Margaret Meek (1977) and Aidan Chambers (1985) on children’s talk about literature.

The English-as-language paradigm became the basis for two developments, seemingly unrelated to primary school English, but which were to influence the primary syllabus for the 1960s. These included the implementation of the Wyndham Scheme (1962) in secondary schools in New South Wales and the Anglo-American Dartmouth Seminar (1966).

The Wyndham Scheme, a comprehensive system, emerged in response to changing attitudes towards secondary schooling. It offered mass compulsory education of large numbers of children, many for whom English was not their first language, and focused attention on *difference*, so shifting the balance from the previous focus of teaching on universal mastery of content to mastery of a hierarchy of skills (Murray 1988). The

changes were felt in the primary school: in ideological and pedagogical notions and in the development of a new syllabus. Such a system, which again drew on behavioural psychology (for example, Bloom 1956), stressed the systematic, explicit teaching of each skill, with diagnostic tools developed to identify difference and remediate the skill. This skills-based approach replaced literature by basal readers and graded skill-building exercises. Yet, probably through teachers' own continued interest in literature and a desire to develop a 'cultural heritage', literature managed to maintain a place in classrooms.

With increased interest in Britton's English-as-language paradigm, urgent questions were being raised as to 'What constitutes English?', 'Why should literature be at the centre?' and 'What is the relationship between language and literature?' These were to be discussed at the historic Anglo-American Dartmouth Seminar (1966). Seen as the beginning of a transatlantic dialogue, the Seminar was significant in that, in the search for cohesion, both the grammarian (skills) model and 'cultural heritage' model whose merits had continued to be debated, were now challenged by the 'language and personal growth' model. Whilst primary education was not part of the agenda at this seminar, the impact of the seminar was felt in a pedagogy of children's literature. In an attempt to unify aspects of language, rather than to compartmentalise them, literature was seen as valuable in two main ways. Firstly, literature could be used as a stimulus for discussion, and secondly, literature could be selected to support exploration of themes. In the search for unified structures, thematic and integrated studies were seen as solutions. Ironically, the 'personal growth' model, so much espoused by the Dartmouth seminar, soon faced the danger of collapsing, as teachers designed their thematic and integrated studies, foregrounding their own values in the selection of materials and strategies and subverting opportunity for student choices. The dangers of such practice led to the submersion of 'literature's own demands' (Allen 1980: 46) to more sociologically driven aims, where literature was chosen on the basis of theme or issue rather than on its literary worth. A further problem identified by Whitehead (1977) in a report on the teaching of children's literature was that the selection of short texts and extracts was preferred by many teachers to reading full length texts—an observation to be echoed in the Bullock Report (1975). Such criteria for selection is still evident as this study showed in the interviews of John, Kirsty and Kay in Chapter 4 where selection of literature was strongly influenced by demands of thematic studies, especially driven by the Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) Key Learning Area. Discussion in Chapter 3 showed that many respondents to the questionnaire chose literature on the basis of issue. For them, *moralism* was an appropriate criterion for selecting 'good' children's literature. Such participants chose literature 'that creates messages of the positive' or 'leaves you with a message for your own life' (see Appendix E, Figure 1).

(Re)forming the curriculum: Curriculum for Primary Schools. English, 1967.

The introduction of the Wyndham Scheme in secondary schools in 1962 had raised questions about the academic standards in primary schools, which led to the setting up of a Primary Curriculum Reviewing Committee and, subsequently, the publication of a new syllabus in 1967.

The title was 'English' and referred to English studies as forming 'a single pattern of inter-related skills' (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: 1). Yet, the Syllabus acknowledged the term 'language arts' where language-literature studies existed as a single area of experience. 'The term is appropriate,' the document assured the reader, 'because it implies in the adjective *language* a sound teaching in the basic communication skills of listening, speaking and writing, and in the noun *arts* that these skills of speaking and writing in their most highly developed forms become literature, to be appreciated as *arts* through the developed skills of listening and reading' (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: 2). While the Syllabus was prescriptive in terms of content, teaching strategies and suggested time allocation, the emphasis was beginning to shift away from mastery of knowledge to levels of ability of the child.

The roles of both the child and teacher were clearly articulated. The child-centred pedagogies of the time were reflected in both the principles underlying the selection of content and in the suggested activities. The teacher was portrayed as 'free' and 'responsible' and would 'believe in education and what it can do to promote the welfare of children' (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: xiv). S/he was charged with the responsibility of knowledge, not only of the English, but also equally of the learner. The teacher was no longer the transmitter of correct form but was an exemplary model, a provider of pleasure, a facilitator of learning and a diagnostician—a view still echoed in the interviews of John, Sandy and Kirsty, in particular.

English was considered the most significant, with 43% of daily time dedicated to it in 1st and 2nd grades (reduced to 38% of time in 5th and 6th grades). The document justified this weighting by demonstrating the Saussurean notion (de Saussure 1974) of the link between language and thought: 'The purposes of language teaching are to ensure that the child learns to order his own thoughts, to listen with discrimination, to achieve simplicity, directness, accuracy and grace in his use of words both in speaking and writing, and to read with understanding, imagination and insight' (Department of Education, NSW 1967: 1).

The two aspects of English identified were language and literature. The content of English was divided into 'technical' aspects and 'the world of literature', where the child 'comes to a better understanding of his own culture' (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: 1).

Enjoyment of literature was seen as the reward for mastery of skills. Literature was central to English teaching where 'English teaching finds its culmination in the reading and discussion of literature' and 'literature becomes a spiritual experience' (Department of Education, NSW, 1967: 112). The teacher was seen as a model of 'informed literary judgement' who shared in the pleasure of literature.

More extensive reference lists than had previously been offered in earlier documents directed teachers to professional reading such as Arbuthnot's (1964) *Children and Books* and Hazard's (1944) *Books, Children and Men*, together with journals (*The Horn Book*, *The Junior Bookshelf*) and book lists. Included for infants' grades were collections of fairy tales and other prose fiction which, with the exception of two Australian texts of legendary tales, were entirely British publications. The picture books recommended were the Caldecott (USA) and Kate Greenaway Medal (UK) winners. No Australian texts were included! For primary grades, this oversight was remediated by listing the Australian Children's Book Council book of the year choices. Some 15% of the recommended poetry anthologies were Australian. This suggests, perhaps, that the notion of literature as cultural heritage was still firmly rooted in the notions of British Empire and Commonwealth.

The division of English into skills curriculum and child-centred creativity led to an uneasy eclecticism. The pedagogies applied to these areas were equally diverse, with the teacher reverting to the prescriptive role of previous years to teach technical aspects and yet becoming a provider of pleasure in his/her role of encouraging creativity. The teaching of the technical aspects was founded on a skills-based curriculum, which acknowledged individual differences, offering graded levels, while child-centred activities encouraged creativity. This dichotomy is still evidenced in the findings of this study's 'lab' and 'field' research reported earlier—for example, in the findings from 'lab' research of eight individual cases (3.4) and the interview responses of John, Sandy and Kirsty. On the one hand, reading skills were taught through reading schemes of graded readers, to ensure accurate diagnosis of individual differences and, on the other, literature provided opportunities for creative development.

5.3.5 Curriculum for 1970s

[L]anguage in context can contribute to the development of literate and articulate adults (Saxby and Turney 1974: 7)

Redefining the boundaries

By the end of the 1960s, English was no longer viewed as a preparation of children for approved values and preplanned roles, based largely on class and status. English-as-

literature was no longer acceptable. Now the emphasis was on identity and a revamped version of Progressive Education, where child-centred learning, based on individual discovery, was important. Yet, the primary classroom had become a repository for what might be seen as opposing learning theories with teacher-based skills mastery and also child-centred 'discovery learning' coexisting.

The 1970s were important for Australian primary education. The then Commonwealth Government, under the Labor leadership of Gough Whitlam, saw education as a social investment and set about to reverse what it saw as the neglect of the past. Teachers were challenged directly by three main forces: the ideas generated from the Dartmouth conference; the national project on English teaching in Australia; and a radical new syllabus.

Whilst primary education had not been part of the Dartmouth discussions, it, nevertheless, felt its impact in the ideas of Holbrook, Britton and Shuy during their visits to Australia in the 1970s. Reporting on his 1970 visit, Holbrook (1973: 39) had found that 'while traditions and the syllabus in most places in Australia cling to the old drills in English, and many teachers are conservative and timid, the creative movement now seems irrepressible'. As part of a national project on English teaching, in 1972, the Australian UNESCO Committee issued a survey and organised a seminar. The survey offered interesting data, which, as Chapter 3 showed, had useful comparisons with the questionnaire of this study. The seminar was significant in that it spoke to primary as well as secondary teachers. It was seen as an important turning point, in that James Britton and Roger Shuy brought to the Australian teacher a clear basis on which to teach English, a language-based theory, founded on the notion that children learn to use language by using it. The notion of Britton's 'poetic' language allowed for the importance of the child's own expression and that of others (literature). Britton stressed that 'literature is in the picture on the same terms, and for the same reasons, as are the art-like uses of language by children' (Australian UNESCO Seminar 1973: 19).

To help cement the ideas of the seminar, a conference of primary and infants teachers, later the same year, examined the theme 'Exploring the New English'. According to Saxby and Turney (1974: 7), the New English meant that 'gone forever are the uniformly prescriptive classroom "principles and practices", and in their place are new insights into what the child can do with language if only given a chance, and how language in context can contribute to the development of literate and articulate adults'.

Here was an opportunity for teachers to shed the eclecticism of the 60s.

(Re)forming the curriculum: Curriculum for Primary Schools: Language. Curriculum for the Primary Schools: Reading and Literature, 1974.

Language was a new style syllabus, which rejected the 'skills approach' and adopted what Britton called an 'operational' approach to English which focused on the *use* of language as the title of one of the documents suggested, where language was seen as 'language arts'. It was at pains to make it clear that there was no requirement for the teaching of a system of grammar and it said, 'the whole approach to language learning emphasises the use of language in meaningful situations' (Department of Education NSW 1974: 5). There was a shift in emphasis from cultural transmission to individual development, 'the growth model'. The document was non-prescriptive, in terms of content, and based on a language experience approach to literacy development, addressing issues of talking, listening and writing. Accompanying this slim volume of 16 pages, was another document called *Reading and Literature* which had been extracted from the 1967 New South Wales primary Syllabus in English and was, as the introduction of that document stated, 'to be read in conjunction with the new statement on language' (Department of Education NSW 1974). A sense of incompleteness was suggested in the almost apologetic promise in the introduction: 'A comprehensive revision of the English Syllabus is planned' (Department of Education NSW 1974). This Syllabus differed from the previous one in that it offered a statement of broad principles which gave greater freedom to the teacher but ran the danger, as Saxby and Turney (1974: 2) warned, of 'haphazard experimentation with little achievement'. It was received with a mixed response by teachers, ranging from an opportunity to have freedom to develop meaningful language learning experiences to a do-as-you-like approach.

5.3.6 *Curriculum for the 1980s*

Literature provides opportunities for the development of an appreciation of language (Department of Education, NSW, 1985: 4).

Redefining the boundaries

Two major developments of the 1970s impacted on the curriculum for the 1980s: the Bullock Report and the financial support of \$8 million by the Australian government for a Whole Language program to be implemented over a five-year period. Whole Language was seen to be an approach that was a segment of New Literacy.

The Bullock Report (Bullock 1975), an outcome of the Thatcher inquiry into teaching the use of English in the United Kingdom, while it was published in the previous decade, had its greatest impact on Australian primary education in the 1980s. It allowed for the drawing together of the various schools of thought on the nature of English, including that

of Britton, thus giving those ideas, expressed in the Bullock Report, an official approval by an establishment voice. While the initial impetus for setting up the Bullock Committee was a concern for standards of reading, the committee treated reading in the broader context of language as a whole, so that reading, writing, talking and listening were treated as a unity. The publication of a comprehensive 600 page document, titled *A Language for Life*, reflected a language learning philosophy that drew from both psychological and educational theory. In his review of the Bullock Report, F.J.G. Poole (1978: 153) saw this approach as a way of overcoming a fragmented teaching of reading where meaning, he believed, was sacrificed to word recognition and a reading vocabulary. He welcomed the report's challenge to teachers to understand *how* children learn to read and the techniques of teaching reading.

The report considered both 'English as language' and 'English as literature' as important. The links were drawn thus: 'Literature brings the child into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms' (Bullock 1975: 125). The report stressed the 'tradition of literature teaching' which aimed at 'personal and moral growth', the development of 'imaginative insights', 'controlled experiences' and, above all, it saw literature 'as a source of pleasure' (1975: 137). Yet, this balancing of literature and language was not without its critics. Three years after the publication of the Bullock Report, Britton (1978: ix-x) in the foreword to *Teaching for Literacy: Reflections on The Bullock Report*, while praising the report as providing us 'with a running code of operational principles, a way of monitoring our own practice', lamented that compromise must 'militate against the production of a forthright and convincing document'. While the Bullock Report saw 'literature for all' as providing 'a language for life' that would remove cultural divisions, Rose (1985: 112) warned that 'it is the very innocence of the appeal which requires scrutiny'.

The Bullock Report (1975: 4) noted that teachers' views of English fell into three main categories: as 'an instrument of personal growth'; as the direct instruction of skills; and as an instrument of social change. Some of the findings in the 'field' research undertaken in the present study indicate that a similar set of categories is still in existence in teachers' views. For example, all teachers saw the second category of the development of functional literacy skills of reading and writing as foundational. The first category, the personal growth of the child, was considered important but how that was achieved was seen in different ways. For Ellen, it involved the child making sense of the world; for Sally, it was using language for a variety of purposes; for Gloria, it meant developing a love of learning and literature; and for Helena it meant developing 'a sense of how fulfilling it is to be literate'. Three teachers saw English as an instrument of social change: 'to gain meaning

and power' (Gloria); 'to develop skills to manipulate language' (Kay); and 'to understand one's own story' (Kirsty).

While diversity of views was acknowledged, the Bullock Report noted that: 'It is characteristic of English that it does not hold together as a body of knowledge. Literacy studies lead constantly outside themselves, as Leavis put it: so, for that matter, does every other aspect of English' (Bullock Report 1975: 5).

The New Literacy identified a new paradigm of language education, linking the work of psycholinguists, linguists and reader-response theorists where all challenged authority, especially the authority of grammar, which was seen to offer a mechanistic approach, and also questioned the authority of the text as espoused by the Cambridge School. The influence of cognitive psychology, especially the work of Bruner, replaced the earlier behavioural approach and impacted on reading (Smith 1978, Goodman 1986) and writing (Smith 1982, Graves 1983).

The New Literacy had enormous impact on primary English teaching. It challenged existing pedagogical approaches and gave the child new freedoms. As Green (1990) notes, reading theory, literature, literacy and reading were no longer polarised as common ground was identified. However, there were still clear distinctions between the literary views of reader-response theorists (for example, Rosenblatt, 1978, Langer 1986, Meek 1988) and the psycholinguists (Smith 1978, Goodman 1986). There were also marked differences between the language and learning theorists (for example, Britton 1972, Barnes 1975 and the London School) and the work of Graves (1983) and Holdaway (1972,1979) who explored 'the environmental processes that foster literacy'. Courses in a Whole Language Approach, such as Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) from 1984, explored pedagogies and offered teachers strategies which ensured authentic, purposeful approaches to teaching literacy founded firmly on children's experiences. The guidance offered teachers reflected the notion of the naturally developing child and the implementation of a Whole Language approach, reflecting Cambourne's (1988) seven conditions of learning. The ELIC courses stressed the importance of the teacher as a model and diagnostician who facilitates learning opportunities. The Australian government's financial support for such widespread training of teachers aided in the use and interpretation of the new Syllabus.

(Re)forming the curriculum: Reading K-12 Curriculum Policy Statement 1985.

While the generalisations and recommendations in the Bullock Report were based on British schools, the report had important implications for Australian schools in the eighties, and was quoted extensively in the *Reading K-12 Syllabus 1985*. This document

took the form of a policy statement and support documents, intended to be read in conjunction with the *Curriculum for Primary Schools—Language (1974)*. The 1985 document was different from the previous ones in two ways: firstly, it took a K-12 continuum which was non-prescriptive and aimed at offering valuable practical support; and secondly, it adopted a different curriculum approach to previous documents in that it drew on current practice to formulate policy.

Literature was seen as a tool for language development. 'Literature provides opportunities for the development of an appreciation of language forms which may be different from those encountered by the reader, while providing the intrinsic motivation necessary for further reading' (Department of Education, NSW, 1985: 4). The document combined theories of child psychology and language acquisition, quoting extensively from the Bullock Report in its perceptions of reading process, drawing on psycholinguistics and language experience approach (already developed in the 1974 document). It was assumed that the teacher was knowledgeable in all these areas. The document tried to bring together a number of ideological frameworks, each of which gave different emphases to language and literature. The result was that there was no clear rationale for the place of literature.

Recommended lists of children's literature were no longer included, suggesting that the 'cultural heritage' value was seen as less important. Recommended reference lists focused more on language development. Only two texts on literature, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (Huck, Hepler, Hickman 1979) and *The Cool Web*, (Meek, Warlow & Barton 1977) were included. In a section called *Language and Reading*, the role of literature was variously identified. It was seen as encompassing a personal growth model that 'helps children grow and develop'; it reflected English as language, where English 'sparks off a growth in awareness and love of language in its many forms' (Department of Education, NSW, 1985: 13); and a cultural heritage model where 'a variety of literature should be available so that pupils can appreciate and benefit from the heritage of literature that has spanned generations' (Department of Education, NSW, 1985: 14). Stages of child reading growth were seen as important, labelled *readiness*, *dependent* and *independent*, borrowed from Drummond and Wignell's (1975) stages.

The 1974 and 1985 Syllabuses, in Christie's (1990) view, whilst embracing the 'growth model', failed because they did not embrace the social nature of individuality. Christie's proposed model of language, where the nature of language is social semiotic (to borrow Halliday's term), was to foreshadow the syllabus directions of the 90s.

5.4 Conclusion

The history of curriculum theory and practice can be read as a series of repeated invasions of organising ideas that command attention for a while before they are turned out by the next invasion (Cherryholmes 1988: 141).

The changing ideologies of ‘What is English?’ that have been explored in this chapter are reflected in different attitudes towards literature and the roles it takes in the English program. The view that English is an ‘emancipatory subject’, offering opportunity for release from class or moral disadvantage, is overshadowed by a view that has persisted that literature is normative rather than expansive.

The story of English has been explored in terms of discourses of English that have emerged. Each discourse viewed the roles of literature in the English program in different ways. It highlights the fact that earlier influences do persist, as may be witnessed by the fact that Leavis’ notions of the transformative power of literature are still central to the views of many English teachers. In an *aesthetic* discourse literary studies were seen to be of great educational importance, as the basis of intelligence and sensibility. The lasting impact of Arnold and Leavis should not be undervalued. As Willinsky (1991: 184) argues, the Arnoldian model is still viable where students might ‘carve a critical place... out of their own cultural pleasures’. An important aspect of an *ethical* discourse, Reader-Response theory advocated a move from the textual authority of the aesthetic approach to reader authority, and an accompanying ‘negotiatory or hermeneutic or transactional view which has deep and direct implications for the conduct of education’ (Bruner 1986: 122). A *political* discourse of critical literacy challenged a cultural heritage model which it saw as maintaining inequities through its approach to literature. It explored how meaning is made and what powers are generated by such practice.

An exploration of the syllabus documents of English in New South Wales primary schools over almost a century reveals curriculum (re)form rather than reform. It has shown that there has been a shift from schooling to education as individuals have been given opportunity to explore ideas. Chapter 7 will consider how the current syllabus responds to this. The search for the answer to the question of ‘What should give coherence to English?’ raised at Dartmouth, still goes on and perhaps awaits ‘the next invasion’ predicted by Cherryholmes in the quote that prefaced this section. Since literature has been challenged as the organising force, English has been variously seen as based on the natural development of the child, on language as linguistics, and on the significance of meaning (Green 1997: 7). It is the question of meaning that is central to contemporary perspectives. Chapter 7 examines those factors which might be seen as key influences upon the teaching of primary English in today’s Australian schools and, in turn, upon questions of meaning.

CHAPTER 6

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: LITERARY PRACTICE AND PRIMARY ENGLISH

What is needed is a way of approaching children's literature which helps us to make informed choices from first principles (Hunt 1991: 7).

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 had shown that children's literature had been seen in different ways and had assumed diverse roles in the history of English in the primary school. This raises a number of questions:

- *What is children's literature?*
- *What is the 'literary' in the context of primary English teaching? What value has it?*
- *What is literary practice and primary English?*

This chapter offers a view of the present and possible future directions of children's literature and shows the place of the literary in linking subject English and the primary school curriculum. It explores two stories of children's literature: as a body of texts and as a critical literary study. The above questions are answered through historical explorations of children's literature and its perceived values, together with emerging critical discourses of children's literature. The development of criticism has the potential to give 'respectability' to children's literature and to challenge the interpretation of the literary in the primary English classroom. Of necessity, the study is partial in that it can select only a few of the influences that have helped create this specific body of literature. As Chapters 3 and 4 showed, both teacher education students and practising teachers had limited knowledge of the potential of children's literature and a minimal understanding of literary criticism. Such knowledge should develop what Hunt (1991: 7) calls 'informed choices from first principles' and enhance an understanding of the roles of children's literature in contemporary English teaching programs in the primary school.

6.2 The story of children's literature as a genre

Perhaps more than any other texts, [children's literature texts] reflect society as it wishes to be, as it wishes to be seen, and as it unconsciously reveals itself to be (Hunt 1990: 2).

A study of the history of children's literature reveals emerging patterns of functions that are intended to meet the sociological, political or economic pressures of the time. There are tensions between children's literature's functions of providing a child-centred exploratory experience of life and of being an adult-directed instrument of education (Rose 1984, Wall 1991) and there are also conflicts between its purposes of developing knowledge, morality and/or imagination. Children's literature has been seen variously as offering entertainment, instruction or 'enlightenment'. However, what *has* been considered children's literature has not always been so clear, nor *how* teachers have used this literature in the classroom. As Hunt reminds us in the quote above, the complexity of children's literature should never be underestimated, in that it creates an imagined society and, at the same time, reflects the truths of the real world.

Any study of children's literature is fraught with two problems: firstly, an attempt to define children's literature, and secondly, an attempt to understand the nature of the child reader.

6.2.1 Defining children's literature

Children's books are generally shorter; they tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear-cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores; children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; language is child-oriented; plots are of a distinctive order, probability is often discarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic, and fantasy, and simplicity, and adventure. (McDowell 1976: 141–2).

There is little consensus among authors of children's texts as to what qualities distinguish children's from adults' literature. Indeed, lists such as those compiled by McDowell (1976), of observable differences, which suggest that children's books are shorter texts, use a characteristic register and focus on child protagonists, are challenged by the changing subgenres of the present. Such a list offers a simplistic view of what children's literature is. Another approach is to consider that children's literature may be defined by its own function in how it forms 'the views of the child' (Hunt 1996: 8). Some define it by its enriching powers: others by its omissions. Most see it is a vehicle of knowledge—moreover, knowledge which is conveyed through the powerful authority of the adult author.

For some, the definitive emphasis should be on the literary. For Hazard (1983: 42), children's books should 'remain faithful to the very essence of art; namely, those that offer to children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge'. Nodelman (1987: 39), too, believes that children's literature is less significantly a literature for children but, rather, a literature which has 'peculiar delights' that appealed to the 'child within'.

Most critical texts of children's literature begin with an attempt to give some criteria for defining children's literature. They include simple definitions such as John Rowe Townsend's (1971: 10), in *A Sense of Story*, where a children's book is 'a book which appears in the children's list of a publisher'. They also offer more complex ideas as does Barbara Wall's (1991) search for a definition in *The Narrator's Voice*, where she focuses on the *quality* of the narrator's voice and the way that voice speaks to children, never avoiding the profound or complex. Ideologies and the perceptions of the child, Wall suggests, are reflected in the narrator's voice. Her model, adapted from Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* (1978), includes not only the real author and reader but also the implied author and reader, (what Booth 1961: 138 calls 'the second self') and the narrator and the narratee.

Saxby (1997: 20) ventures a framework based on 'quantitative experience' where the child sets the limits of the text according to his/her range and quantity of emotional experiences. This idea has merit but still contains patronising assumptions about the universality of childhood experiences. Another approach is to consider texts in terms of the implied reader, where the author uses particular textual devices to establish a relationship with the reader. Based on Iser's notion of the implied reader, Aidan Chambers (1985: 37) applied the concept to children's literature, where it helps us 'establish the author's relationship with the (child) reader implied in the story, to see how he creates that relationship and to discover the meaning(s) he seeks to negotiate.' This model of narratology, where the implied reader and the implied relationship between narrator and narratee become important, is helpful in trying to accurately determine the nature of the child reader, and the role the literary was intended to play. The difficulty remains for an adult author to establish clearly who the implied reader is.

6.2.2 *The nature of the child reader*

[T]he writer of today, if he has integrity, seeks to bring delight by meeting the child's present needs and interests, thus enriching his experience and deepening his perception and understanding of life (Saxby 1969: 5).

How children's literature is perceived, depends on the interpretation of what is meant by literature *for* children, and how readers are constructed. Children's literature is a unique form of literature in that it depends on difference: the difference between the writer and the

reader. The differences relate not only to age but to the roles an author might perceive him/herself to play. The image of childhood is based on a belief of the quintessential 'otherness' of the child. Adult and child are seen in binary opposition: experience v. innocence; complexity v. simplicity; rationality v. imagination. There is, perhaps, an underlying sense that the qualities that describe the child are seen as pejorative terms by the adult to be replaced by those associated with adulthood. Literature may be seen as the avenue to achieve this change. Literature has the power, as Rose (1984: 2) argues, to 'solicit' the child reader. As Saxby suggest in the quote above, it is the relationship between the writer and the reader, the image the writer creates of the child, that is important. This image, throughout history, has been variously influenced by psychological and philosophical writings. As Rose (1984: 18) expresses it, 'the discussion of children's fiction often takes the form of a re-run of the debate between Freud and Jung'.

The nature of childhood is elusive and contested. It is variously defined and constructed over time, within a homogenous culture, across maturity. Given that the perceptions and constructions of childhood are adult and primarily viewed from the limited perspective of a small sample of literate adults, any attempt to historicise childhood must of necessity be superficial and incomplete. The nature of the child has been variously conveyed along a continuum from the Romantic notion of the 'innocent' child to the Calvinist view of the 'inherently evil' child. Benton (1996) adds to this categorisation the 'authentic' and 'sanitized' child, where the 'authentic' portrays childhood experiences in a realistic way and the 'sanitized' removes all unwanted or negative aspects. The nostalgic view of the child that has persisted in much contemporary children's literature (such as the novels of Alan Garner, Susan Cooper, Carolyn McDonald and Isobel Carmody) is that the child and the world are knowable (Rose 1984: 9), where the innocent child is able to restore our world to an idealised state. As Bradford (1996: ix) suggests, childhood is seen 'as a place apart, a metaphorical secret garden'.

Most adult writers have felt a moral responsibility towards their child audience. There is an attempt by them to impose upon the child reader their 'knowledge' of what childhood is, through what Nodelman (1992: 31) has called the 'wielding of adult power'. As Rose (1984: 137) suggests, the question of children's literature is not 'what children want, or need, from literature', but what 'adults, through literature, want or demand of the child'. Yet, Meek (1991: 64) challenges this view of the significance of the writer, when she says 'important texts are those which are important to the reader'. All texts are ideological. It is a matter of determining the nature of that ideology, as Peter Hollindale (1988) pointed out in his seminal paper, *Ideology and the Children's Book*. It is important to look beyond the 'surface ideology' of the obvious beliefs of the author which s/he can write on the 'tabula

rasa' of the child and explore 'passive' and 'reflective' ideologies which involve the views of the reader and of the world.

6.2.2.1 Roles of children's literature: morality and imagination

Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it (Carroll 1865).

What is considered literary and how literature is used in the contemporary primary English classroom is the legacy of several centuries, driven by authors' constructions of the child and the particular ideological stances they take. Two major forces have always influenced children's literature: religion and education, each bound intricately with the other, and each at odds with the other. The history of children's literature has involved the battle either for the soul or for the imagination of the child.

During its history, the main purpose of children's literature has been seen by religious groups and reformers as a way to instil moral and religious values. The Puritan view of the child, as a small adult who was evil and needed to be rescued from sin through the reading of moral tales and religious works, dominated the seventeenth century. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the child's world challenged as the powerful adult took control. There was criticism of encouraging too much imagination and too much independence in reading realistic tales. Reform came in the guise of graded readers such as Mrs Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* and scriptural study such as Mrs Trimmer's *The Family Magazine* 1778–9 (Darton First published 1932, 3rd ed. 1982: 157–9). Not only did people like Mrs Trimmer censor books, but also used active propaganda to maintain that the 'proper order' of society was encouraged. As their work in the Sunday School movement testified, reformers such as Mrs Trimmer and Hannah More believed that the education of the lower classes should be encouraged but their reading should be controlled. Their writing of what they considered 'quality' texts was intended to replace the subversive secular texts (Darton 1982: 159).

In education, children's literature was also seen as a tool to stimulate moral growth. The writings of educational theorists, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, influenced the concepts of childhood and, in turn, the nature of literature for children. Locke's view of the child as *tabula rasa* who must be encouraged to develop a reasoned approach to the world was to influence the directions of children's literature. At much the same time, Rousseau's *Emile* championed the view that education should be a happy experience, an adventure, much like that developed in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the one book Emile was to read. The impact of Locke on children's literature had both a negative element, in that his condemnation of the popular Perrault fairy tales as 'useless trumpery' (Thwaite 1972: 32) aided the demise of the fairy tale in favour of reason, and a positive one in that his

ideas influenced Newbery's publishing. The works of Rousseau, Darton (1982: 140) claims, were to have a direct effect on books for children, especially in the development of imitations of *Robinson Crusoe*, the 'robinsonnade', a name that came to be used for boys' books of adventure, particularly popular in the first half of the twentieth century.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries such moralistic views were challenged. In the Romantic movement, where the child was considered a person in his/her own right, not just an ungrown man or woman, moral ideals were still important but were cloaked in imaginative and amusing writings. The Romantic Movement was to return an emphasis to *literature* where literature was seen as a source of meaning, a 'garden' in which ideas grow. The importance of imagination over reason and discipline was central to work such as Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789). The perception of the child as one whom the adult author had a responsibility to educate, inform and protect was challenged in the nineteenth century. The publication of Charles Dodgson's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) was recognised as a landmark in the development of modern children's literature in that it not only celebrated the importance of the imagination but also mocked the past emphasis on moral instruction. The child at last could break free of the oppressive world of the adult. *Alice in Wonderland* lampooned the 'dominant literary models, either through parody or through subtly reductive changes of scale and reference' (Briggs 1996: 22). The narrator-narratee relationship became a partnership of shared experiences (Wall 1991: 102) where Dodgson, using the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, found opportunities to venture into philosophical questions such as relation versus essence examined in discussions of size. He explored with the young reader the notion of the 'irrational' as portrayed in parental control, an idea with which the reader could empathise. The adult authoritative voice was at last challenged. Beatrix Potter, too, offered through fantasy to share with her audience a view of life that was both serious and fun. Using irony such as, 'It would have been a beautiful thing to hide in, if it had not had as much water in it' in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Potter (1902: 37) showed her audience the contradictions of life. Other authors began to unselfconsciously speak *to* the child audience, including Frances Hodgson Burnett and, later, in the twentieth century, Enid Blyton and Roald Dahl, who were to extend the notion of speaking directly to the young by establishing a relationship with the child narratee that excluded and even subverted the adult.

While the last decades of the nineteenth century have been called The Golden Age of children's literature (Green 1969: 16), where indeed the foundations for the major contemporary genres of children's literature were formed and literature's purposes were expanded, nonetheless there was relatively little writing that had lasting value, for there was much sacrificing of quality to meet the demand of the growing literate population. For the first half of the twentieth century, children's literature exhibited a sameness of view of

childhood where literature was for pleasure. Here childhood was a happy state where characters felt in control and were rarely drawn to introspection. As child-rearing practices, the independence of the individual and the role of women all became issues of the seventies, authoritarian attitudes and previously taboo topics were questioned in children's literature. Up to the 1970s, adopting a Jungian inward looking approach, the child protagonist was central to the action, undergoing a metamorphosis, moving from innocence to experience, valuing maturity. With the development of a specifically labelled 'Young Adult' literature, which emerged in the 1980s, came a new pessimism in 'apocalyptic' novels where the adult world was no longer a perfect model, but one fraught with economic unrest, emotional and moral instability and political control (for example, Gillian Rubenstein's *Beyond the Labyrinth* [1988]). To survive, the child protagonist needed to turn his/her back on the adult world. The 1990s saw a focus on novels of social realism. As the Children's Book Council of Australia Judges' Report (1992: 3) commented: 'The trend to deal with social and emotional problems including grief, incest, alcoholism, anorexia, peer pressure, mental illness and child abuse, and their impact on individuals, is a courageous move and has been accomplished this year with great sensitivity'.

The boundaries of 'acceptable subjects' continues to be tested across all reading interests, not just those of young adults. Yet, at its worst, extreme realism has masqueraded as social realism, suggesting that violence and immorality are the norm. This is what Rose (1984: 2) describes when she says that children's fiction 'sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child in'. The child is often seen as the one who must take up the 'correct' values, discarded by the adult, and try to deal with the world. Yet the child has neither the power nor the knowledge to fight the established nightmare and the resolutions tend to remain unsatisfactory. Contemporary Realistic Fiction has questioned many traditional values nurtured in the books of the first half of the century. The family, for instance, its function and structure and the roles of its members has reflected society's changes, as is demonstrated by beginning with Eleanor Spence's *The October Child* (1976) and exploring a range of family stories. In some novels, the family is absent (for example, Carolyn McDonald's *Speaking to Miranda*, [1991]) or dysfunctional (for example, Simon French's *Change the Locks* 1991): in others, the individual becomes subsumed into the family (for example, Victor Kelleher's *Del-Del* [1991]). However, in the closing years of the twentieth century, the pastoral of the 'Golden Age', where there had been a restoration of innocence in the protected world of the secret garden, was largely replaced. This paralleled the gradual fading of the view of the innocent child, the hope of the adult world. The pastoral (or counter-pastoral) of the new millenium is unrewarding, as either elusive like the Holy Grail or subservient to the

machinations of humanity. Rather than the certainties explored by earlier writers, contemporary writers approach moral issues that are complex and lacking in clear resolutions (for example, Nadia Wheatley's *The Blooding* [1989]).

The role that children's literature has played has been influenced not only by changing views of childhood but also by the book trade. The history of the book trade reveals its instrumentality in formulating what is considered literary and how moral and imaginative texts might be used. In the hands of the book trade, Puritan texts became secularised through the adaptation of moral tracts to entertainment and instruction for children—for example, emblem books such as John Bunyan's *Divine Emblems* (1701) and courtesy books. Concurrently, the secular influences of chap books, romances, histories and fairy tales expanded reading matter and, in turn a desire to read (Jackson 1989: 248). The most noted publisher and bookseller of the time, John Newbery, aimed at publishing books that would entertain the young reader. Newbery, influenced by philosopher Locke's *tabula rasa* and an optimism about human nature, argued that 'a good character, a sound mind, and the capacity for hard work', which were all teachable (Jackson 1989: 248), were the foundations of success. Such thoughts he translated into publications for children such as *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744, 1767), a literature meant for children that should be able to 'delight and instruct'. Conveying harsh facts of life under a cloak of irony or humour, Newbery gave the child reader a sense of responsibility for his/her own future. In particular, Newbery pushed the notion of learning one's Book as the door to wealth and success, and even to social mobility for the lower classes, a view that was to be echoed by the Newbolt Report in the twentieth century. However, the book trade was also influential in presenting the views of English romanticism of 'repatriation of the imagination' (Jackson 1989: 19), especially through the work of Charles Lamb, counterbalancing the thinking of the Age of Enlightenment, with its objectification of the world and its mimetic literature that emphasised mirroring that world.

From the mid 1800s, the library movement ensured that good literature became accessible to children and ensured the expansion of publishing for children. As publishers became aware that, while all children's books, it seemed, were ideologically motivated, and the ideologies could not be uniform as readers were not positioned in the same way, they began to publish more according to interest of age and sex. While children's books of the first half of the twentieth century focused largely on the development of imagination, the texts often lacked vitality due, in part, to the lack of financial incentive for writers as publishers offered only a single payout, and also due, in part, to a lack of serious reviewing. It was not until post-war years when a number of large publishing houses took up publishing children's books and children's authors could enjoy the same financial rewards as adult writers, that the purpose of children's literature was again addressed.

6.2.2.2 Cultural identity: national swagger or cultural cringe

Not one of the seven is really good, for the very excellent reason that Australian children never are (Turner 1894: 9).

As well as developing *personal* identity, another significant role of children's literature was to develop a sense of *cultural* identity. During the nineteenth century, the reading of English literature by Australian children was seen as essential to immerse them in the culture of their origins. Yet, there was also a growing interest in developing local literature that reflected the uniqueness of Australia. This literature was to range from that which established national identity, an opportunity for 'national swagger', to that which self-consciously saw itself as second rate, something that developed 'cultural cringe'.

The first Australian publication, *A Mother's Offering to her Children* (1841), like its contemporary British models, was designed to instruct and focused on natural history set in a framework of moral values. It contained many characteristics that were to become the essence of Australian children's literature for the next century. The family, for instance, representing solidarity against unknown odds, became important in the colony. As Saxby (1969: 35) pointed out, a strange new land provided an excellent background for the exploration of vicarious experiences. The development of 'robinsonnades', where the protagonists lived close to nature and gained moral strength from the experience, proliferated as emigration literature. The bush rather self-consciously dominated.

Ethel Pedley's *Dot and the Kangaroo* (1899) was an important milestone in Australian children's literature, in that while it sustained a didactic approach to nature, it was filtered through humour, echoing the style of *Alice in Wonderland*. Other fantasies, too, began to be recognisably Australian but aimed to provide delight rather than to instruct. Two books published in 1918, Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* and May Gibb's *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot*, created new worlds within which the characters resolved conflict with courage and humour. Such themes were continued into the twentieth century, but the treatment of them was to become more child-centred, reflecting the educational theories of the time. The quote from the first chapter of Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894) that began this section exemplifies how Australian children were challenged not to simply emulate a British model, but to be proud of their Australian world. Here, the setting was no longer a British colony but a new country wherein an element of naughtiness was acceptable.

The 1930s and 40s saw the completion of a post-colonial shift, where cultural identity was no longer influenced by the symbolic mother, England, but by the Australian landscape of Billabong, where the bush life was idealised and pleasure was to be found in everyday life,

where the outside world might intrude but the world remained secure. Adventure stories could be escapist. However, in the 60s and 70s Ivan Southall and Colin Thiele brought to these stories an element of stark reality. This period also saw the development of a new theme of city novels which dealt with contemporary social and political issues, generally conveying a negative view but occasionally celebrating the city (for example, L.H.Evers's *The Rackerty Street Gang* [1961]).

Children's literature, it has been shown, constructs certain images of the child and casts itself in roles according to its perception of childhood. It sees itself in many roles but most significantly as developing moral values or stimulating imagination. The past views of the nature of the child reader still apparently influence the roles that teachers see children's literature plays. As the survey in this study showed, the development of moral perspectives (Appendix E, Figure 1) and imagination (Appendix E, Figure 3) are still important reasons teachers give for selecting children's texts. Added to this is a strong interest in realistic texts which may or may not focus on moralism.

6.2.3 *Contemporary children's literature*

[The best of modern writers are concerned with] an investigation of those conundrums of life most evident in the psychological transition from childhood to adulthood (Egoff 1996: 393).

While Chapters 3 and 4 showed that most participants in the questionnaire and interviews seemed to value children's literature, few demonstrated an understanding of the complexities of style and the experimental nature of much contemporary children's literature. The teachers' book selection, for example, showed little knowledge of contemporary children's literature. Such literature is geared to the child market, as the quote above suggests, and challenges the reader in many and diverse ways. This section identifies and illustrates important features of contemporary children's literature and demonstrates its significance in the development of a competent child reader. It thus paints a picture of the possible impacts such texts might have on literary practice in the primary school.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it may be said that much has changed in literary practice, but much has remained the same. Child readers still receive the mixed messages that their forebears received a century ago, when, on the one hand, the nostalgic view celebrates the eternal child and, on the other, the child must undergo rites of passage to achieve the prize of adulthood. The most powerful ideas still persist in the work of great writers. Maurice Sendak, for instance, like William Blake, knows 'that reading a picture book is an experience where there can be no separation of means and ends; the reading *is* the experience' (Meek 1991: 121).

The boundaries of definition of what constitutes a children's book are being challenged, and consequently offer the reader new experiences. Contemporary children's literature adopts what Peter Hunt (1995: 42) has labelled 'a female-oriented view', which he sees as holistic (as opposed to the male-oriented hierarchical power structure represented by the Leavisite view), allowing for changing stylistic and ideological perspectives. Such literature experiments with structure and ideology. Some of this literature may be considered as 'postmodern' where the text explores ways of challenging existing literary forms and accepted ideologies.

This section explores some of these experiments, selecting texts largely from the *English K-6 Recommended Children's Texts* (Board of Studies, NSW, 1995), a support document to the current English K-6 Syllabus.

The contemporary picture book, traditionally thought to offer illustration to support text, especially reflects innovative devices and practices. The bifurcated nature of the picture book allows it to critique its own methods of construction, to address the metafictional, examining the fundamental structures of narrative fiction. For example, a picture book that self-consciously explores structure is *My Place* (1987), a tapestry of pictures and text woven to reveal, first, the present, focusing particularly on a small inner city area of Sydney, and then, the past. Initially, the reader approaches the book in an orthodox way, reading from the first page to the last page but reading backwards in time to arrive at the events of 1788. However, it is soon difficult to resist moving backwards and forwards through the book, searching for the clues that show the physical and social changes that have occurred in this microcosm of Australia during two hundred years. The social history of two hundred years, together with the milestones of Australia's history is carefully recorded in text, pictures and maps. Only the land is a central character and each of the multiple narrators show how 'man' interacts with it and upon it, thus allowing the reader to glimpse him/her self caught in historical time. 'This book is a Time machine' is the warning on the dustjacket of *My Place*. It can probably best be described as a type of Bayeux Tapestry with text. As it has been pointed out in another place, the book defies clear genre labelling (Croker 1988), demonstrating the difficulty of limiting the definitions of literary text types.

Innovative children's picture books experiment not only with structure but also with ideology, a particular point of view, a set of values, a way of dealing with what Egoff (1996: 393) calls the 'conundrums of life'. The picture book has become a medium to explore complex issues that challenge older readers as well as the young. It pushes the boundaries of the roles of text and illustration in the construction of meaning. Readers of picture books are challenged to interrogate a closed, ordered system and to rethink their

place in their society. In one sense, John Marsden and Shaun Tan's *The Rabbits* (1998) provides an historical account of the settling of Australia: in another, it sees colonisation as foreign invasion and subsequent domination. It is much more than a study of the conflict of cultures between the indigenous people and the colonisers, or a disputation over land ownership. It is also a collision of knowledge systems. The colonised, the indigenous species, invokes a sense of small, vulnerable native animals many of which have been threatened by extinction while the colonisers are shown as rabbits, a species introduced to Australia at the time of settlement. From the second opening page, binary opposites are established. Indigenous creatures naked, carrying spears, face the uniformed rabbits carrying guns and accompanied by machinery, already belching black smoke into the environment and making deep tracks on the landscape. This page preempts the strikingly different ideological perspectives that will ultimately lead to conflict: those for whom the land is a sacred trust taking only what they need from it and those who exploit it and mould its use for ends other than just what they require to live.

Anthony Browne, too, challenges existing perceptions, particularly of family and society through juxtaposing the verbal narrative and the visual narrative. He uses surrealistic visual elements, diverse perspectives, changing use of frames and recurring images to explore complex issues and challenge accepted perceptions. In *Piggybook* (1989), Browne explores the relationship between the male and female members of a family and the roles they are assumed to play. Drawing on an association of pigs and slovenliness, Browne develops a pig motif which allows for exploration of family relationships but also through the illustration of a flying pig conveys a more subtle message that while there might be superficial changes in the family roles, it is as easy for pigs to fly as for real structural changes to occur. In *The Tunnel* (1989) Browne also explores relationships, this time between a brother and sister. What might seem a simple ideological stance becomes powerful as the reader realises that their relationship must stand against the wasteland of the modern world (Stephens 1992: 176). The wasteland of traditional tales is here transferred to a modern pile of junk, part of the throwaway society, but each piece of junk is rich with semiotic implications. From the real world of the opening pages, the children enter the fantasy world symbolically represented through a tunnel, a world of another landscape, the landscape of the mind.

In 'New Times', as Chapter 1 had shown, the nature of communication has been extended to embrace what Kress (1996: 15) calls a 'new semiotic landscape'. The contemporary picture book is part of that landscape and requires readers to draw on sophisticated skills to address the elements of those picture books.

Fiction, too, offers innovative structural features, which are used to explore changing ideologies: genre eclecticism, narrative elements and complexities of style.

Genre eclecticism, common in picture books, also challenges the stability of qualities to be found in fiction. It involves the weaving of a number of genres together within one text, drawing from a range of traditional genres as well as borrowing from both 'high' and 'low' culture. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) argues that this multiform quality leads to an interweaving of voices, which he considers the hallmark of a great novel in adult literature. Perhaps it may be similarly viewed in children's literature. Margaret Mahy's *The Changeover* (1984), for example, challenges a self-contained categorisation. The title suggests an instability; the subtitle *A Supernatural Romance* challenges genre labelling. Traditionally, children's literature was pigeonholed into particular categories such as animal fantasy, adventure story, school story, etc. It is, however, no longer possible to make such clear-cut categories, as genres merge. Hoban's *The Mouse and His Child* (1967), for instance, masquerades as a toy fantasy but it is really a savage political and social satire. Authors combine features of 'high' and 'low' culture to create a new literary cocktail. They draw on newspaper articles, footnotes, reports, video and computer games to provide diverse narrative voices—for example, Nadia Wheatley's *The Blooding* (1987). They borrow cinematic techniques of rewind, slow motion and parallel action to develop the narrative, for example, Aidan Chambers' *Dance on My Grave* (1982).

Experimental narrative elements are challenging traditional narrative structures and, in turn, the romantic conceptualisation of childhood. One such element is the shift in emphasis from plot to character (for example, Robin Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley* [1984]), where the plot and setting blur and the character advances slowly across the pages. Other novels have even less recognisable structure, where the reader must work to assemble the parts of a jigsaw puzzle. In Robert Cormier's *I Am The Cheese* [1977]), for example, there is a Kafka-esque narrative technique which generates a sense of loneliness, helplessness and hopelessness. Even a very simple picture book such as Pat Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* (1981), of just some 32 words in one sentence, challenges the reader to respond to the dual stories of the fox and Rosie and offers the reader the opportunity to fill the 'narrative gaps'. The degree of narrativity in contemporary children's literature is challenged in two main ways: the choice of narrator(s) and the stylistic approach of the use of free indirect discourse. The contemporary writer becomes invisible, avoiding the didactic, third person narrative. Alternatively, writers may choose to use *multiple narrators*, to present multi-voiced novels, what Bakhtin (1981) calls 'polyphonic', where the reader gains perceptions of the degree of reliability of the narrators. There has also been a stylistic shift away from narration and description to develop plot. In many contemporary novels and picture books, *free indirect discourse* is used so that there is no

didactic voice and readers are left to make their own decisions. Another interesting experimental narrative element employed by contemporary writers is the use of multiple plots linked by character, spatiality or temporality. Alan Garner's *Red Shift* (1973) offers three seemingly separate stories, linked by space and character. More recently, Ruth Park's *Playing Beattie Bow* (1980) and Deborah Lisson's *The Devil's Own* (1990) use spatiality and temporality to link events in time-shift fantasies. Most importantly, these narrative elements challenge the notion that there is one ultimate authority for a book.

Much contemporary literature, influenced by the work of Freud and Jung, portrays main protagonists who are confronted by challenges that will enhance their personal and psychological development. Adolescent fiction abounds in tests that will lead to maturity, for example, Robert Westall's *The Scarecrows* (1981). The complexities of the issues are reflected in the adoption of *complex styles*. Two major motifs of contemporary literature that allow boundaries between worlds to be penetrated are metafiction and intertextuality. *Metafiction*, as Thomson (1992: 3) defines it, is the name given to fiction that self-consciously and overtly displays its own artifice, thereby examining the relationship between reality and fiction. Jon Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheese Man* (1993), for example, explores the nature of fiction, and the structure and format of text. *Intertextuality*, as Stephens (1992: 116) points out, can act as a critique of current social values. Intertextuality provides opportunity to build layers of meaning as the reader draws on his/her own literary experiences. Even very young readers can enjoy the literary allusions to fairy tales and nursery rhymes in such texts as Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *Each Peach Pear Plum* (1989), Eugene Trivizas' *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (1993) and Robert Munsch's *The Paperbag Princess* (1980). Writers of adolescent literature look to traditional literature. Margaret Mahy draws heavily on the device in *Memory* (1987), *The Haunting* (1982), *The Tricksters* (1986) and *The Changeover* (1984), where she takes traditional motifs and moral lessons and inverts what we have been culturally led to believe. For example, she takes the traditional quest, the quest for identity and individuality, but creates 'untypical' heroes and modern landscapes. *Memory*, for instance, might at first glance be seen as a novel of social realism and may be categorised as contemporary realistic fiction because it reflects many of the qualities we associate with that genre where it looks at events that might happen in life in a recognisable setting with credibility of characters and logic of plot. However, Mahy blends aspects of fantasy into this formula, so that the realism is not so harsh. Such texts allow the reader to understand literary artifice and ideology and 'they teach children how to read with textual control and consciousness of their own constructive reading processes' (Thomson 1992: 22).

The participants in this study have shown little awareness of or interest in such texts. Perhaps this is due to the texts' subversive nature which might be seen as problematic in that the texts might create controversy with parents and the community. They may also be seen as 'difficult' to teach whereas traditionally structured texts may be seen as giving more opportunity for 'explicit teaching' and 'curriculum relevance'.

Kress states that 'a curriculum is a design for the future' (1996: 1). The place of contemporary children's literature in this curriculum has the opportunity to draw on the rich textual practices available. It also raises questions about the possibilities in the literary for an expanded view of literacy, in that the reading of new, experimental texts can challenge the strategies of the reader. As Meek (1991: 36) argues, 'The test of modern literacy is to be able to read *new* texts, those writings that we see for the first time and of which we must make immediate sense'. Ironically, while the current NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* emphasises the importance of addressing these values, it does not highlight the literature that will most enhance them.

6.3 The story of children's literature as a critical study

6.3.1 Historical perspective

[T]he ultimate fantasy, perhaps, of children's book criticism that it should come of age and do what the adults (that is adult critics) have been doing all along (Rose 1984: 154).

As the questionnaire and interviews revealed in Chapters 3 and 4, many teachers appeared to have an unclear idea of what criticism is and how it might enhance their understanding and use of children's literature. Neither the questionnaire nor the interviews revealed that the participants were aware of literature that challenged elements of narrativity and style and that placed the reader and writer in new roles. Appendix E, Knowledge of Children's Texts (Figures 1, 2 and 3), shows little evidence of their knowledge or valuing of such literature.

An examination of existing approaches to critical study provides an introduction to ways of talking and thinking about text. What is seen as the literary in the primary classroom was recorded in the interviews and the survey. What literary practices might be developed relies on the teacher and critic joining together to form normative ideas of childhood and acknowledge the diverse nature of texts. The history of children's literature as a critical study is brief but important. The critical discourse of children's literature, it seems, is constantly evolving, as the significance of text is perceived in different ways. Texts may be viewed from points of readability, developmental psychology, stylistics, or bibliotherapy.

As children's literature has developed as a serious subject of study in its own right, attempts have been made to map on to it the critical approaches used to study adult literature. This, as Rose suggests in the quote above, is still far from meaningful, or appropriate.

The critical discourse of children's literature can be traced to nineteenth-century commentators, who viewed children's literature either as a way of *controlling* the child or, alternately, of *romancing* the child. A strong opponent of Rousseauist views, Mrs Trimmer became a self-appointed reviewer of children's literature, criticising 'unsound books' in her periodical *Guardian of Education*, 1802–6 (Townsend 1987: 29). While biased and moralistic, her critical analysis set a moral and literary standard: for example, she recommended *Robinson Crusoe* not be given to 'all boys without discrimination, as it might lead to an early taste for a rambling life and a desire for adventure' (Thwaite 1963: 103). Other early critical texts offered a romantic view of the child and included histories of children's literature: Field's *The Child and His Book* (1891) and White's *Children's Books and Their Illustrators* (1897–8).

The role that children's literature has played has been closely linked to the level of quality of text and level of criticism. The first half of the twentieth century offered little quality of either. As Blishen (1975: 9) pointed out in *The Thorny Paradise*: 'Not only were there no critical standards, but few books for children had roots in reality of any kind—either everyday reality or the many realities of the imagination'. Much reviewing took a 'good for you' approach, at worst offering bibliotherapy for dealing with moral issues. It adopted a patronising view, an assumption that it was in some way dealing with a lesser text for a lesser audience. This view failed to understand or address the complexities of children's literature.

Paul Hazard's (1983: 45) *Les Livres, les Enfants et les Hommes* (*Books, Children and Men*), first published in 1932 and translated into English in 1944, provided a survey of international children's literature which Hazard thought had both the power to enrich the imagination and 'the integrity to perpetuate their own faith in truth and justice'. One of the most influential liberal-humanist critics of the twentieth century, Hazard saw that 'the essential power of literature is to give wings to the imagination; and that the essence of childhood is to recognize and desire that freedom' (Egoff (1983: ix). His belief in the *cherishing of the imagination* and his attack on those who offered books 'that paralysed the spontaneous forces of (the reader's) soul' (Hazard 1983: 3) was most influential, in that it set the direction for modern children's literary criticism and challenged the 'whole battalion of fearsome women', referring in particular to Sarah Trimmer, Hannah More and

Maria Edgeworth (Hazard 1983: 37), not only on their moralistic stance but also on their boring writing style.

To give shape to a body of literature, to offer what Meek (1987) called 'symbolic outlining', much early criticism tended to borrow from academic literature, adopting *historical* or *literary-evaluative* stances. A number of texts offered an *historical perspective*. F.J.Harvey Darton's (1932: vii) *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* was a milestone in criticism, in that it 'was a record of what certain human beings meant to write, and of their reasons for writing, if they can be discovered'. Darton reflected the child-centred approach of Rousseau. While Darton's work was important, it looked to the past rather than the present or future of children's literature, and avoided the critical. The first significant critical text to see children's literature as art was Mary Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* (1947). Recent texts, which undertake an historical exploration of children's literature, have gone further to address the concerns of both the social and literary historian. Jackson's (1989: x) *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic* explores the connections between 'ideological and larger socio-political context'. The title of her text highlights the changes in the nature of criticism, as it is adopted from one of Trimmer's critical attacks on books such as Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. For Trimmer, such a book was 'an engine of mischief' (*Essay on Christian Education 1812* quoted from Darton 1932: 160). In Australia, Saxby's three volumes (1969, 1971, 1993) offer the most thorough documenting of Australian children's literature. A number of publications taking a *literary-evaluative stance* have also been significant in developing children's literature criticism. The first edition of *Only Connect*, edited by Sheila Egoff et al. (1969), gave status to children's literature, seeing it as part of a literary continuum, able to be discussed in the same terms and standards as adult literature. Influenced by the work of F.R.Leavis, together with Hazard's sense of the imaginative power of literature, Charlotte Huck (1961) and Sam Sebesta (1975) suggested guidelines for book selection and evaluation. Huck advocated the aesthetic use of children's literature in her publication of the now historic text *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (1961), where literature was viewed from both a personal growth perspective and a cultural heritage perspective, as sites that stimulate imagination and encourage response, a view echoed strongly by many of the participants in this study. The Piagetian model of staged progress to adult literariness was evident in the work of these critics, together with the work of Arthur Applebee (1978) and Nicholas Tucker (1981), who 'graded' texts according to levels of difficulty and 'appropriateness' of theme.

The link between critical literary theory and theories of reading have merged and separated over the past century, at times focusing on linguistic structures and skills approaches and

at other times on interpretive structures and reader response. Margaret Meek, Aidan Warlow and Griselda Barton had originally prepared *The Cool Web* (1977) to accompany the publication of *The Bullock Report* (1975) to reflect the notions of the place of literature in literacy. It offered the first major attempt to make narrative central to the study of children learning to read, and to see how studies of language and literature are inextricably linked. *The Cool Web* challenged teachers to focus on the reader and to consider the nature of his/her experience in the development of thinking and feeling (Meek, 1977: 11).

In the past fifty years, criticism of children's literature has celebrated a sense of 'nationality'. Such developments have included the formation of associations of librarians and teachers, such as the Children's Book Council of New South Wales established in 1945; the introduction of annual book awards such as the John Newbery Medal (1922), the Caldecott Medal in the USA (1938), the Carnegie Medal (1937) and the Greenaway Medal in the UK, Children's Book Council Awards in Australia (1946); the appointment of children's book editors to companies such as Angus and Robertson, Collins, Methuen, Oxford and Penguin, together with children's book publishing houses (Margaret Hamilton, Walter McVitty Books, Omnibus); and the production of books and journals that reviewed and criticised children's literature (in the UK *Signal*, in the USA *The Lion and the Unicorn* and *The Horn Book* and in Australia *Orana*, *Magpies*, *Reading Time* and *Papers*). This avenue of criticism teachers are familiar with, as was acknowledged in the responses to items 38 and 39 of the questionnaire, with 28% seeing that book awards and book reviews offered important criticism upon which to draw. The interviews revealed an even stronger reliance on such 'expert' criticism, together with support from journals.

6.3.2 *Children's literature as a critical study: contemporary perspective—towards 'respectability'?*

Literary theory acknowledges the importance of something that most of us secretly recognise anyway: the role of the reader (Hunt 1991: 9).

It may be argued that, concurrent with an understanding of contemporary children's literature, there should be an awareness of the role of literary criticism. With Peter Hunt's *Children's Literature: The Development of Criticism* (1990) came a formal argument for children's literature having genuine academic status, showing how children's literary criticism could evolve with all the rigour of adult literary criticism but that it should not adopt its models. Meek (1982: 285), like Hunt, challenged the approach of taking adult criticism and trying to apply it to children's literature, proposing that this was inadequate, in that it did not provide 'a way of talking about children's literature that matches their contemporary experience of it'. While the boundaries between adult and children's literature often blur, most would agree that children's literature is distinct from literature

and, as such, should be studied in its own right, and not as an offshoot of adult literature. For Meek (1987: 113), any new approach to the study of children's literature must involve observing children 'learning to *traffic in possibilities*'.

Critics who have simply tried to transfer their notions of critical theory to children's literature have ignored two very important factors. Firstly, it cannot be looked at in the abstract, as it must take in the fact that children are central to it, and children's literature is itself constantly being 'redefined' (Hunt 1995: 41). Secondly, the developing genres of the picture book and young adult fiction for instance, have created new challenges for critics, where they are unable to draw on the language of traditional literary criticism to describe these experimental forms. Rather there is a need to explore the fields of visual arts, technology and popular culture to address these challenges.

Current criticism appears to be emerging along three major lines of tensions: between notions of childhood and the child reader; between text and cultural context; and between constructed ideologies and cultural assumptions.

The first tension is between the notions of childhood and the child reader explored earlier in this chapter. The development of the theory of narratology in the last twenty years has shifted the emphasis to the relationship between narrator and narratee, where close textual analysis is invited, and the reader is not regarded as a passive recipient.

The second tension is between the text and cultural context. Children's texts 'form part of a broader cultural discourse' (Bradford 1996: ix). The 'discourse of texts' (that is, 'the ways in which language and visual images produce ideologies of various kinds' [Bradford 1996: ix]) is an important area of study. The debate between the so-called 'book' people, who make adult judgements on literary merit, and the so-called 'child people', who focus on the social or political values conveyed in literature that reflect their own views of contemporary society, offers binary oppositions that are fraught with danger for the future of children's literature. Firstly, two simplistic views emerge: that if one is interested in literary quality, then one must be indifferent to the reader: whereas, if one is concerned primarily with political values, one must be uninterested in literary standards. Secondly, a focus on social issues runs the risk of attending to *what* the child reads rather than *how*. Thirdly, great pressure is brought to bear on authors to conform to a predetermined ideology. Such pressure comes from diverse sources of academics, teachers, reviewers, awards, publishers and parents and perhaps sometimes children. Contemporary literary criticism, now established in academic institutions with its demands for textual analysis, runs the risk of prescribing a children's literature that authors emulate in order to offer a 'good children's book', as established by academic perceptions.

The last tension is between ideologies and cultural assumptions. The most dominant ideology is centred in the humanistic mode, where 'understanding others like ourselves helps us to understand ourselves' (Schwarz 1990: 3). As Saxby (1997: 44) points out, most criticism, for all its internal differences, shares a common assumption of 'liberal humanism', that there are 'enduring verities that provide human life with meaning' and the essential 'truth' can be provided through 'good' literature. Such a view has been challenged in recent times firstly, by structural and secondly, by poststructural views. Whereas, a liberal-humanist model with an evaluative focus grew out of 'cultural heritage', the structuralist view with an analytic focus grew out of applying linguistics to a study of literature. This view, as Chapter 7 demonstrates, is embedded in current curriculum changes. The structuralist view aims to demystify literature by exploring how it is structured. It addresses some of the enormous changes that children's literature of the last twenty years has undergone as it has moved from explorations of external conflict to issues of individual internal conflict played out against an alienating environment. The poststructuralist view suggests that 'truth' is not absolute but is interpreted by the individual and society, thus placing emphasis on the reader constructing meaning from text. With these shifts have come changes in writing style, with a self-conscious exploration of the author's role which has highlighted the need to adopt new approaches to criticism. Critics such as Aidan Chambers and Peter Hunt in the UK and Louise Rosenblatt and Perry Nodelman in North America have focused on how the text is constructed, the place of the reader in deconstructing text and the significance of critical perspectives, political and sociological, making the reader conscious of the 'constructedness' of the text.

A parallel binary opposition has occurred in that a conservative view considers that literature is selected on the basis that it is good and also good for young readers and a more radical view which believes that the young should have what ever they like. On the surface, the spirit of egalitarianism is commendable but in fact it runs the danger of becoming another form of control in the hands of adults with particular viewpoints on race, politics, sex, and so on. Disguised as responding to populist views, the adult can again pass over the child reader.

Critical standards have, most would agree, been raised in recent times and the genre of children's literature is on its way to achieving academic respectability. Yet this identifies a paradox that respectability may come at the price of excluding the 'child' in children's literature.

6.4 Conclusion

[M]eaning-makers capable of negotiating many kinds of texts (Morgan in Thomson 1992: 106)

An historical exploration of children's literature allows us not only to see the range of ideas that have shaped contemporary children's literature, but also highlights the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of approaches used in contemporary primary classrooms. It allows opportunity to question assumptions. Underlying the entire history of children's literature, for instance, is an assumption that children's literature shapes individuals and, in turn, cultures. Yet there is no clear evidence (aside from anecdotal and bibliographical reports from nostalgic adults) to show how powerful this literature really is. Watson (1990: 116), in a survey of the childhood reading habits of 300 adult Australians, found that only three readers remembered enjoying reading Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* (1918), a text that had been seen as a landmark text by teachers and critics at the time.

The child has been variously constructed as each wave of ideas has influenced education, from the Romantic notion of the naturally innocent child where, to borrow Wordsworth's phrase, 'the Child is father of the Man' (Baker 1962: 152), through notions of the inherently evil child who must be controlled and suppressed, to a child who must be joyous and free and be able to develop at his/her own pace through stages, and finally the child as a complicated psychological construct who has the potential for failure if the teacher is not ever vigilant. The resulting legacy is of a confused image of contemporary constructions of the Child.

The books that have been chosen to illustrate the characteristics of contemporary children's literature are not 'hothouse flowers' kept away from children to be discussed by academics and other professional adults. They are texts which are popular with young readers, including the very young. It seems that the needs and interests of the young reader have been underestimated. Children quickly learn there are conventions within books, but they also quickly learn that conventions can be broken.

If teachers are to be aware of what children's literature has to offer, knowledge of possible tools of measurement of critical approaches is valuable. If they are to understand how meaning is gained from reading, then they need to be familiar with contemporary *as well as* traditional literary forms.

The argument put forward by the systemic-functional linguists, and in turn the writers of the current Syllabus, is that there are certain privileged text types with specific structures that children must read if they are to be included in their cultural discourses. Yet,

ironically, these very people have short-changed the young reader by ignoring a large body of literature of the postmodern age. Such texts promote in readers an awareness of textual constructedness and the importance of the reader actively negotiating meaning. Readers, Morgan (1992: 106) argues, 'can develop a sense of their own competence as meaning-makers capable of negotiating many kinds of texts'. The ideological view of how meaning is gained, as the current NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* sees it, is structured. However, it is more complex than this, bound to the whole social process 'in accordance with the contemporary insights, investments and imperatives of critical pedagogy and postmodernism' (Green 1997: 25).

This chapter has explored what might be considered the literary and how literary education might be repositioned and perhaps reconceptualised in literacy education. Such knowledge has important implications for both the primary classroom and primary teacher education curriculum and challenges how teachers and teacher education students might consider both the literary and childhood itself.

CHAPTER 7

PRIMARY ENGLISH: CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS

Once we recognise that the ways in which people come to understand and practise reading and writing are strongly shaped by the exemplars, values, processes and requirements operating in the social contexts within which they engage print, it becomes clear that the curriculum is a most important site of literacy information (Lankshear 1993: 155).

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 explored what might shape the consciousness of teachers in terms of discourses of English and of literature and through changing pedagogies expressed in syllabuses. In this chapter, contemporary influences that are seen as having a possible impact on primary English in New South Wales are considered. This is part of the ‘library’ research in this project and aims to identify understandings which can help address the associated research question D, identified in 1.1 of this study. This section tries to identify what is the spirit of the age and to seek answers to the specific question: *How is primary English currently being espoused?*

7.2 The spirit of the age: current influences on primary English

[E]ducators need a discourse of curriculum theory that embodies both a language of critique and a language of possibility, a language that not only frees educators from certain ways of defining curriculum but also sheds light on some of the most pressing problems confronting schools and society, while simultaneously providing a vision capable of animating a democratic public culture (Giroux 1990: 50).

Three major forces have influenced the teaching of English in contemporary primary classrooms in New South Wales. The first involves ‘economic and corporate concerns’, where national imperatives, driven by a political desire for a unified national curriculum, together with industry challenges with an emphasis on ‘human capital’, have favoured a competency-based approach to learning. The second influence relates to ‘cultural imperatives’ where a changing ideological and pedagogical knowledge base, which celebrates language and culture (Thomson 1998), has challenged classroom practice.

The third influence considers educational policies and a new syllabus, which have meant radical reviewing of past English teaching practice. Such influences, it may be demonstrated, both develop and constrain subject English.

It may be asked why the English curriculum is so susceptible to change. The answer, perhaps, lies in the unique importance of subject English in dealing with living in a postmodern age. Kress (1996: 11) points out that English provides the means of 'representing ourselves, our meanings, values and ideals to ourselves and to others' and above all 'the means for designing our visions'. If this is so, there must be due caution in accepting unquestioningly the competing influences teachers face in the teaching of English. All of these influences are evidenced in documents that are central to primary school English teachers' work.

Giroux (1990: 50) argues that if teachers are not to be reduced to 'clerks and bad theorists', they must be conscious of the influences that have the potential to deskill them. To counter this danger, teachers must be empowered, firstly, by understanding the impact of these influences and by challenging them from the basis of a carefully articulated theoretical framework using 'a language of critique', and finally, by offering a 'new vision' through 'a language of possibility'.

As Chapter 4 showed, a number of constraints and influences were identified in the interviews in this study as affecting how primary English is currently being taught and how children's literature is used. Apart from temporal, fiscal and collegiate influences, the most immediate impacts came from teaching resources, testing and assessment, and educational policies and the New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus (1998). The first step in empowerment is the critique of such documents.

7.2.1 Teaching resources

The basal readers of the 1950s may have acted to close down interpretive possibilities for the reader. Lacking allusion, connotation, and nonliteral inference, missing temporal and spatial deixis, omitting a critical narratorial voice, they preclude the reader from expanding/testing his or her schematic repertoire, of constructing and overlaying multiple possible worlds (Luke 1988: 119).

The Children's Choice project (Bunbury [ed] 1995) found that 67.6% of Year 5 teachers used programmed materials, 65.7% used sequential readers and 26.5% used class sets of thematic fiction. The present study of teachers interviewed revealed that these three resources are still in use. Sandy, for example, found sequential readers valuable for reluctant readers 'who need a structure or sequential reading scheme such as *Story Box*,

Sunshine Readers or *Young Australia Readers*'. For John, school policy dictated that he use the SRA reading program. Kay, Kirsty and John all commented that school reading programs were based on the use of class sets of fiction, which related to unit studies, usually in HSIE. John, for example, used *The 27th Annual Hippopotamus Race* to coincide with a HSIE unit on animals. A glance at Table 3.24 in Chapter 3 of the eight individual cases (Cases number 222, 226, 227, 245, 250, 254, 275, 249) selected from the survey further reinforces that commercially produced resources of programmed readers and activity sheets still seem to influence teaching pedagogy.

The basal reader, a derivative of nineteenth century reading pedagogy, ensures a controlled, cycled approach to reading and a sense of social and moral control. It offers, as McHoul (1991) suggests, a form of benchmarking, a sort of filing system of reading. Its major outcome is to encourage (re) production. The basal reader has changed little since the nineteen fifties. Its lexical patterns still rely on repetition, a limited vocabulary and a synthetic language that does not reflect the natural language children are accustomed to hearing. Each text presents a linear structure and is, indeed, an example of Eco's (1979) closed text. The text tends to have barely identifiable themes or at most reflects a blatant didacticism where ideologically, it focuses on acceptable social behaviour. The characters, drawn against a neutral landscape, tend to be flat, unchanging over time. Programmed materials tend to be driven by similar narrow outcomes-based pedagogy of readily identifiable skills and have the added limitation of offering texts that are removed from their original context.

This raises questions about what these readers and programmed materials teach. In fact, the comments Luke directed at the *Dick and Jane* series of the 50s, quoted above, it could be argued, apply equally well to the present readers and programmed materials. Because of the nature of the text, it offers little opportunity for reflection, interpretation or critical response. There is little that challenges an emotive or intellectual response. It might be argued that such texts cannot provide the necessary qualities to develop the outcomes suggested as desirable in the current New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus (1998).

7.2.2 *Testing and assessment*

[The tests focus] on textual comprehension at a relatively low level of understanding... The power of literature to capture the imagination of the reader remains unexplained (Purves 1990: 83).

Statewide testing has the potential to influence what and how English is taught in the primary school. Purves (1990: 79), for instance, believes that tests that focus on literal comprehension discourage teachers from developing students' knowledge and appreciation of literature. A census of United States assessment programs to explore each

state's policy towards literature learning and testing, conducted by Brody, De Milo and Purves (1989), found that the nation's testing programs focused their attention on low levels of comprehension.

In New South Wales, testing of literacy skills has become policy; the Basic Skills Tests of literacy being conducted annually with Years 3 and 5, and the English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) Tests with Year 7. The testing programs focus on reading and writing. The questions are based on a variety of text types and reflect a cognitive, transactional view of reading, as Britton would see it. Purves (1990: 85) reminds us that '[s]uch a view allows reading to become a monolith in a curriculum in which any teacher can teach reading because the view of the text never changes'.

The lack of support for item 23 in the questionnaire in this study (*Children will become good readers if they are given comprehension tests on material they have read*) flagged participants' distaste for testing of texts, a point that was echoed in the interviews. While they saw that the Basic Skills Tests offered an overview of levels of reading, three of the teachers interviewed, Sally, Kay and Ellen, all believed that the tests imposed policy and political constraints. Ellen summed up the general views:

'The Basic Skills Tests are becoming more and more important in schools and teachers are being required to teach to the curriculum outcomes that are covered in the Basic Skills Tests and it's very difficult to match any kind of a curriculum outcome about children's literature with any kind of a test item that's found in the Basic Skills Test'.

The pressure of the skills' tests comes through in Helena's interview, where she comments: 'I also fear at times that we are forcing children into *acquiring* skills'. The Basic Skills Tests, it would seem, drives teachers in certain directions so that their attitudes to children's literature are affected by issues of accountability.

It is sensible to ask to what extent can Purves' criticisms be levelled at the New South Wales tests? To answer this question, a critical analysis of the 1998 Years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Tests was undertaken, together with follow-up programs published by the Department of Education and Training (see 7.3.3).

7.2.3 Educational policies and the development of the 1998 English K-6 Syllabus

A policy document that includes or implies a model of language is likely to reveal as much about prevailing political priorities as about the nature of language (Sealey 1998: 70).

An examination of policy documents of the last decade (see Appendix G) certainly appears to indicate that they reflect 'prevailing political priorities', as Sealey suggests. At a

Federal level, following the 1991 Green Paper on Australian Literacy and Language Policy, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) in 1992 commissioned the Children's Literacy National Projects program, administered under the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP), to find ways to 'stimulate strategic national and innovative developments in children's literacy' (DEET 1996: 1). Each project team investigated issues related to literacy including literacy and technology, literacy needs of bilingual students and literacy at a distance.

Two National Profile documents, *English—a curriculum for Australian Schools* (Australian Education Council 1994), and the accompanying document, *A Statement on English for Australian Schools* (Australian Education Council 1994a) were published to establish a national framework for curriculum development. Schooling was divided into four bands: lower and upper primary and junior secondary and post compulsory. The compulsory years of schooling were further divided into eight levels. For all levels, outcomes were suggested under content strands of 'text' and 'language'. Of the six goals suggested for English, five focused on English as functional. One goal acknowledged literature, stressing the importance of 'a broad knowledge of a range of literature' and 'a capacity to relate this literature to aspects of contemporary society and personal experience' (1994a: 3). The documents established a model of English as associated with literacy, where literature was seen as an additional element that promises a sense of enjoyment, education and the development of readers' perceptions.

Under a conservative government, the findings from the National Projects, together with the National Profile, became the basis for literacy reforms of the late nineties. The National Literacy Agenda for 1997 focused on strategies to measure and compare literacy performances of students throughout Australia. The Department of Employment, Education and Youth Affairs' discussion paper, *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (Commonwealth of Australia 1998: 9), outlined the Commonwealth's literacy policy for Australian Schools where the goals stated: *That every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level* with a sub goal expanding on this: *That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.*

The policy's 'foundational' concern seemed to be to respond to a basic need to achieve elementary literacy skills (defined as being able to read, write and spell at appropriate levels), offering a functional literacy and a focus on benchmarks. The policy offered something of a paradox of restrictive benchmarks, on the one hand, and the embracing of the future on the other. The government's application of benchmarking to assess literacy

raised a number of concerns at the forefront of which was a concern about how government funding of schools might be tied to testing. Yet, the major concern was with the restrictive nature of the tests that selected a number of skills of literacy which were to be 'translated into a single-shot standardised achievement test' (Luke & van Kraayenoord 1998). Such testing ran the risk of the tests driving the curriculum and narrowing the focus of what is considered literacy. The worst scenario would be an acceptance of a number of quantitative items as representative of literacy—a minimalist literacy.

The impact of Federal policy was to be felt at State level in all Australian States. The implications for the States were to establish explicit and systematic teaching of literacy skills and to provide support for students with difficulties. At the primary level, the nineties saw reviews of subject syllabuses into Key Learning Areas (KLAs), incorporating nationally recommended outcomes. In New South Wales, the Education Reform Act (1990) established six Key Learning Areas for which the Board of Studies was the body responsible. So, 1990 saw the handing over of primary curriculum from the New South Wales Department of Education to the Board of Studies and the establishment of a new Syllabus committee. This event, in itself, created tension between the Board and the newly named Department of School Education (DSE) who had previously cast itself in the role of curriculum developer. In English, the draft of a new syllabus, (known as the 'Grey draft'), begun in 1988, under the direction of the then Department of Education, was about to be released when the Board took over. The Board sought responses to the Draft Syllabus. These tended to be negative and the Board subsequently abandoned it. It then had to develop a new syllabus.

To attempt to find an ideological foundation for the new Syllabus, Literacy Round Tables were organised at which various perspectives on English were explored. Beverley Derewianka's *A Functional Model of Language* (1991) was adopted by the Syllabus committee and a functional approach became the basis for the new Syllabus. Based on Halliday's (1985) theory of systemic-functional linguistics, together with Martin and Rothery's (1980, 1981) and the Sydney School's theory of genre, the model emphasised the importance of social and cultural contexts. It is difficult to conjecture why this model was chosen over all the papers presented. Educationally, it was probably seen as a compromise between Britton's New English, a Whole Language approach, and the emerging genre movement. Thus, it would seem to better meet the needs of a changing world where definitions of texts had broadened far beyond the traditional canon. Socially, it would address issues of equity, which a Whole Language approach did not seem to be able to embrace, at least explicitly. Politically, it would satisfy the concerns for accountability of the economic rationalists, who saw an outcomes-based Syllabus as offering standardisation, structure and measurable components.

The 1994 and 1998 Syllabuses need to be viewed together, as one is a direct outcome of the other. The politicization of the NSW English K-6 Syllabus with the incorporation of national outcomes reflected a global trend of government intervention. The National Statement and Profile in English markedly influenced curriculum document structures. The structure of 'the Grey draft' had identified five components of teaching and learning in English—*listening, talking, reading, writing* and *literature*: the National Statement and Profile's organisational structure was 'superimposed' on the 1994 Syllabus so that it was organised under three strands—*talking and listening; reading; and writing*. The component, *literature*, had disappeared and perhaps been absorbed in a new organisation of sub-strands divided into *contextual understandings, texts, linguistic structures and features* and *strategies*. This represented an important shift in the focus of the English subjects. As Gibbs (1998: 188) suggests, political intervention and an over-emphasis on consultation led to a draft that 'suffered from excessive piecemeal tinkering carried out to accommodate different viewpoints'. Examples of this 'tinkering' came from both political and academic sources. Firstly, the insistence by the then State Minister for Education, Virginia Chadwick, urged by the Department of School Education (DSE), to include national outcomes in the new English Syllabus, had cemented the powers of State and Federal control over curriculum. Further pressure from the Minister to ensure that a Syllabus offered a 'back to basics' focus meant the inclusion of complex functional grammar. Secondly, the consultative process, while meritorious in itself, became bogged down through extensive delays and stakeholders' ignorance of the functional linguistic model.

With a change of State government and increasing community dissatisfaction with the Draft Syllabus released to schools late in 1994, the new Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. John Aquilina announced a 'pause' in the implementation of profiles and outcomes, and the premier Bob Carr, in 1995, directed a Review Panel (chaired by Professor Ken Eltis, Dean of Education at the University of Sydney) to review the value of outcomes and profiles. In response to the Eltis Report, Carr directly intervened to abandon the national outcomes and functional grammar, restore traditional grammar, and call for a review of the Syllabus, leading consequently to the development of the 1998 Syllabus.

A memorandum to school principals which launched the State Literacy Strategy in 1997 aimed to offer teachers 'the knowledge and skills to address students' literacy needs within mainstream classrooms' (Department of School Education, NSW, 1997b: 1). Initially, the school community was invited to read and discuss the position paper on the teaching of literacy, *Literacy Strategy '97: Focus on Literacy* (Department of School Education, NSW, 1997a). The skill of 'reading' was to be targeted through the training of teachers, support materials and increased Reading Recovery programs. Two important

documents related to reading were issued to schools. A Department of School Education (DSE) document, *Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework* (1997), offered key strategies for teaching reading. Concurrently with the DSE's initiatives, the Board of Studies was developing a new English K-6 syllabus which was finally published as the New South Wales *English K-6 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, NSW, 1998). Its development has been viewed, to borrow O'Neill's (1995: 157) phrase, as one of 'trade-offs and compromises'.

Thus, three key documents that have impacted on the English classroom emerged from changing policy.

7.3 Response to the spirit of the age: the documents

[C]urrent times and political processes of national decision-making also make it impossible to produce policy texts that are completely coherent (Thomson 1998).

This section considers to what extent policy texts have responded to the spirit of the age and examines the truth of Thomson's statement in relation to three current English documents—*Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework* (NSW Department of School Education, NSW, 1997); the NSW *English K-6 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, NSW 1998) and Support Documents; and the Basic Skills Tests for Years 3 and 5.

7.3.1 *Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework (1997) and support materials*

[L]earning to read and reading to learn (Department of School Education, NSW, 1997).

The Framework document answers the question *What is reading?* by quoting Clay's (1991: 6) definition of reading 'as a message-getting, problem solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised'. The document then goes on to explore how each aspect of this definition might be explicated. If it is assumed that reading competence develops constantly, learning to read and reading to learn are viewed as complementary rather than as sequential processes. The document stresses the need for the 'reading program to reflect a balance between learning to read and reading to learn at all stages' (DSE, NSW, 1997: 16). This suggests that reading competence can be continually refined.

The document supports the notions of the multiple roles of the reader. Based on the work of Freebody and Luke (1990), it identifies four elements of reading as social practice. These elements include not only *coding practices* and *text-meaning practices*, but also *pragmatic practices* and *critical practices* (Luke & Freebody 1997). Such a model provides a useful framework for teachers to construct learning events that allow for the

concurrent development of all four practices, which are seen as central to learning to read. It is significant that these practices are not seen as sequential or independent but rather offering a holistic view of reading. While some guidelines are given in the Framework for developing all four roles, much emphasis has been placed on the code-breaker's role in the examples for both modelled and guided reading. It would seem to be important to consider the reader as an active constructor of meaning through participation, use and analysis. How effectively a reader responds to text is influenced by the reader's epistemic view, an ability to control associations and an ability to make inferences.

Implicit in the Framework document is the suggestion that the learner reader is an 'apprentice' gaining experience from modelled and guided reading. This emphasises the significance of social interaction and collaborative learning in establishing meaning. It draws on Vygotskyian pedagogy, where the interaction between child and adult offers a child the opportunity to complete tasks that would be otherwise difficult. The zone of proximal development, the gap that exists between what a child can do alone and what can be achieved with another's assistance, allows a child opportunity for increased knowledge. A further outcome of Vygotsky's theory, reciprocal teaching, which offers greater opportunities to learn from texts in a collaborative group, has been explored in Palincsar and Brown's (1984) studies. Their work adapted the concept of scaffolding in 'reciprocal teaching' to discussion of a text, where students construct meaning using four strategies—'predicting, summarising, questioning and clarifying', a technique that allows the readers first to observe the modelling of strategies and then to have opportunity to evaluate their own performances against that of the teacher. The Framework document acknowledges the importance of modelling so that students can see that the reader has to be actively engaged in the process using the four strategies. However, guided reading, as described by the Framework document, is teacher-centred and makes no use of reciprocal teaching. This aspect of reciprocal reading would allow the reader to be both performer and evaluator, taking more responsibility for learning than allowed for in the guided reading model in the Framework—in Collins' (1989: 464) view, 'a crucial aspect of [the reader's] metacognitive skills'.

For an apprenticeship model to be truly successful, it needs to move beyond a simple conveying of skills. Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on situated learning introduces a process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) where learners interact with practitioners in a social setting. The Framework document acknowledges that 'literacy is learnt in social contexts as people use literacy practices to interact with each other to achieve social purposes' (DSE, NSW, 1997: 10). It notes that 'students' views of what literacy involves and its purposes are shaped by the kinds of reading experiences they encounter at home, at school and in the broader community'. However, aside from

identifying the importance of a partnership with parents, it offers little guidance on the practical application of this notion.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 150) believe that learning takes place not in an individual mind but in a 'participation framework'. They suggest that while there is an 'apprentice' and 'master', and that while one might expect the apprentice to learn extensively, increased participation in the learning process may change both participants. In contrast, the Framework document stresses the importance of explicit instruction, keeping the control of learning firmly in the hands of the teacher. Such information is easy to monitor and evaluate. The Framework document fails to develop the notion of a participant framework, which offers opportunities for both explicit and implicit understanding. Such a limitation has important implications for the treatment of literature, as the document's approach appears to provide little scope for the development of 'book talk'. It also is likely to have the outcome of influencing the type of texts dealt with in the classroom, giving imprimatur (probably unconsciously) to those texts emphasising narrativity.

The Framework document, it would seem, had privileged discussions of literacy but had given little attention to literature. However, the medium of video, produced to accompany the Framework document, provides the necessary link and conveys a message of support for the literary. The first video, *Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework: An Introduction* (Department of School Education, NSW, 1997c), deconstructs the Framework document using literary texts. For example, the four roles of the reader are illustrated through young readers interacting with texts, six of the seven of which are literary. The second video, a training program, *School Based Training and Development Program* (Department of School Education 1997d) again foregrounds the literary to demonstrate 'modelled', 'guided' and 'independent' reading. The models of teaching strongly reflect Whole Language techniques, based on a pedagogy that the answers are to be found within the child. Both videos endorsed a model based upon a literary approach, a notion not obvious in the document itself. In the teachers' analysis of text, a literary education is implied. This suggests that if the models are based upon a literary approach to teaching English as well as literacy, literature is still seen as a vehicle of knowledge. In his discussion of literature, one of the teachers in the video identified some of its values where he saw literature as offering more than the literal and as providing opportunities to teach subliminal themes. He added that quality literature was a springboard to other reading.

In the videos, literature has a stated presence: in both the Framework document and the Syllabus it has an 'unstated' presence.

7.3.2 *New South Wales English K-6 Syllabus (1998) and support documents*

Literature is a way of reading, not a function of the text (Hunt 1995a: 233).

The victory for the Halliday-based Sydney School of the inclusion of functional grammar into the 1994 Syllabus was short-lived. The 1998 document still claims to have adopted a functional linguistic approach but, with the removal of functional grammar, its ideology is less clear and it has yet to prove that it can be successfully adapted to the primary classroom and can enhance literacy. Initially, the Syllabus appears to focus on minimalist literacy, using a pedagogy of explicit, systematic teaching and, while the notion of English-as-literature has not been in place in the primary school since the 1920s, this Syllabus has withdrawn further from that view. The diversity of ways of looking at the reader and the text creates enormous problems for the development of a meaningful English Syllabus. To meet the changing contexts of the teaching of reading, any new Syllabus must address two aspects: firstly, the nature of the text, and secondly, the roles of the reader. The Syllabus challenges the privileging of literary text and revalues the nonliterary text. However, it may be argued that it fails to adequately address how to consider the wide range of interpretive reading practices that must accompany such diverse texts.

Two support documents, *English K-6: Work Samples* (Board of Studies, NSW 1998a) and *English K-6: Modules* (Board of Studies, NSW 1998b) offer outcomes and how students achieve them and suggest a variety of learning experiences that might develop these outcomes. The *Work Samples* demonstrate the link between student activity and outcomes. The *Modules* categorise English learning experiences in terms of ten text types, three (narrative, description and poetry) of which might be said to have a literary focus.

The Syllabus and the support documents appear reductive in three major ways: in terms of reading and the reader, the text, and the approach to the interpretation of text.

Reading and the reader

Unlike the Framework document, the Syllabus does not give due acknowledgement to the diverse purposes of reading nor does it explicitly address all the roles or practices of the reader. It divides reading instruction into two broad strands: *Learning to Read* and *Learning about Reading*, both of which occur concurrently from early stage 1 of reading programs. The outcomes related to Learning About Reading, the document says, 'will be used to plan and assess the development of explicit knowledge of how written language works in context and of how to talk about the structures and features of written language' (Board of Studies, NSW 1998: 18). It is commendable that instruction is now seen as twofold in that, whilst learning how to break the code, the reader also explores the tools

that manipulate meaning, the language and structure which distinguishes one text from another. While these outcomes are important, they do not focus significantly on a third strand, that is, *Reading to Learn*, which involves the reader in critical pedagogy (Giroux 1996, Hooks 1994, Freire & Macedo 1987). The Syllabus acknowledges the importance of the distinction between critical and uncritical reading but fails to suggest how the reader might develop his/her skills fully. As Stephens (1996: 165) reminds us, 'Specific reading practices require different forms of orientation and different levels of attention'. The reader needs to move beyond uncritical reading, hopefully learning to question that which society deems valuable and acceptable. Children, Meek (1992: 15) suggests, need to discover that reading is a particular kind of experience that offers a 'verbal way of encountering feelings, understandings, thinking, knowing and imagining'.

The texts

The Syllabus, influenced by Martin and Rothery's (1980, 1981) schematic analysis of text, explores social purposes, structural and grammatical features of each. The nine text types of the 1994 Syllabus (three literary and six factual) have been expanded to six literary and eight factual text types in the 1998 Syllabus. The text types, both oral and written, are categorised in Table 7.1.

The advantage of such an approach allows teachers to offer models whose features can be identified and copied in students' own writing. The problems, however, are many. Firstly, as Watkins (1999: 120) points out, the original genrist pedagogy involved the link between grammar and textual form, but the removal of functional grammar from the 1998 Syllabus has left a partial structuralist pedagogy of questionable value. Secondly, the categorisation of text types seems somewhat arbitrary. The broad classification of narrative, drama and poetry of the earlier document (BOS, NSW, 1994: 101) was replaced with classifications such as 'literary description' (BOS, NSW, 1998: 66) which are more likely to be embedded in a larger work than as a discrete form—a matter that is somewhat confusing. The deletion of any mention of drama in the 1998 document as a text type is curious. There is also no clear distinction between literary text as primary reaction to experience and literary text as reader response to text. Thirdly, while the Syllabus focuses on diversity of texts, it fails to acknowledge the complexity of texts available to the young reader. As was discussed in 6.2.3, there are many contemporary children's literary texts, which challenge traditional form, narrative structures and themes.

Table 7.1: Identified text types, 1998 syllabus

Literary texts	Factual texts
Narrative	Factual description
Literary recount	Information report
Observation	Procedure
Literary description	Procedural recount
Personal response	Factual recount
Review	Explanation
	Exposition
	Discussion

Interpretation of text

The Syllabus offers a linguistic interpretation of text but does not, it would seem, address adequately narratological process. The choice of functional-linguistic terminology to describe literary texts can be reductive, and leaves the reader with inappropriate vocabulary to explain text. This formulaic approach to analysis of text has the potential to restrict a reader's understanding and critical interpretation of literary texts. It also offers an incomplete view of the subtleties of literary devices used. If children are to *read to learn*, there should be opportunity for the exploration of a wide range of experimental as well as traditional literature. Yet, there is little evidence in this study to suggest that teachers are aware of this.

In the 1991 Patrick Hardy Lecture, Margaret Meek (1991a: 16) attacked the United Kingdom's National Curriculum as a 'ziggurat of levels of attainment' where the reading activities far from being rich, were in fact, reductive. She went on to point out that nowhere in the official document was there mention that 'what children *feel* about reading plays a significant part in their gaining confidence and thus in their successful mastery of the task of learning' (1992: 17). Meek's criticisms of the National Curriculum of 1989 might be applied to the current New South Wales Syllabus, which also appears to fail to recognise the emotive power of reading and the challenge of its complexity.

The Syllabus outcomes present a rather simplistic view of what a reader needs to learn *about* reading. An examination of the *Work Samples* reveals a relatively limited list of anticipated roles children's literature is expected to play. Table 7.2 shows that while there is a shift in emphasis from Early Stage 1 to Stage 3 of valued roles, there are significant omissions.

Table 7.2: Work samples of roles of literature across stages

Stage	Reading	Plot	Structure	Text Feature	Voice	Author study	Theme	Character	Technique
ES 1	***	*** **	**						
S 1	**	**	*	*					
S 2			***		*	*	*	**	
S 3					*		*	****	***

* represents work sample

While the Syllabus acknowledges the importance of audience and how that audience might respond to text, it does not consider the significance of ideology and the changing cultural context in which the young reader operates. It focuses on identifying language structures and features but does not go a step further to explain the impact of literary features and structures. To express it in Stephens' (1992: 6) terms, 'narrative discourse must be read as a linguistic and a narratological process and for both its story and its significance'. The narratological process involves the *cultural context*, *the text* and *the ideology*.

The Syllabus acknowledges the diverse nature of the reader in social terms, but does little to consider the changing nature of childhood itself. As was explained in Chapter 6, in the past two decades our notions of childhood have changed and, with them, has come a shift in ideology. Childhood is a construct of what adults recreate of their own childhood experiences and plant in a modern setting, sanitising and idealising where necessary. For many adults, the role of children's literature is to celebrate this view of childhood.

The Syllabus fails to recognise that contemporary children's literature has broken traditional barriers and adopts and adapts features of contemporary adult literature of the postmodern age. Children's literature, as the Syllabus views it, is a construct of socialisation. The selection of literary text types fails to acknowledge the complexity of many picture books, junior fiction and adolescent novels. It also offers templates of features, which many texts do not reflect. Contemporary children's literature texts need to be examined within a broader framework than has previously been available. Postmodernism challenges existing literary forms and existing ideologies through what Umberto Eco calls 'the game of irony' (Hutcheon 1988: 39), where traditional genres become blurred and at times meaning eludes the reader. Texts are exploring a wider range of narrative structures, avoiding the linear plots of the past and creating narrative gaps, which demand more of the reader. A review of both the Syllabus and the support

document, *Modules*, suggests that more could be done on what ‘fiction does’. For instance, a review of the suggested learning experiences of a narrative genre (Reading) for Stage 3 in the support document, *Modules*, reveals that, while most activities relate to structure, they fail to acknowledge its complexities and ignore the use of *multiple plots*, and the degree of *narrativity* and *focality* to be found in contemporary children’s literature. It suggests that texts are simple (that is, have simple plots, flat characters, and a clearly recognisable genre), but it does not account for *metafiction*, *intertextuality*, *diverse narrative voices* or *complex plots and characters*, all features of much contemporary children’s literature. It would seem that there is a disjunction between the Syllabus and notions of contemporary children’s literature. Given this observation, it is not surprising that the participants in this study use little contemporary children’s literature.

The Syllabus stresses the importance of developing skills to interpret text across a number of types in a range of cultures, but it does not give emphasis to recognising how *ideologies* ‘organise not only the ideas and images people make of reality, they also enable people to form an image of themselves and thus to occupy a position in the world’ (Ang 1993: 410). Whether narratives are didactic examples of bibliotherapy or offer implicit ideologies, all impose particular socio-political attitudes. To understand the ideology of a text is to know *how* to read it. As Peter Hollindale (1988: 3) points out, the didactic text relies on passive ideology. It does not begin where the reader is but where the writer would like him/her to be. The most effective ideology, Hollindale (1988: 20) says, ‘is a living thing and something we need to know as we need to know ourselves’ and a reader needs to be aware that ideologies are embedded in certain representations. Many of the outcomes in the Syllabus focus on activities which distract from what Meek (1992: 27) calls ‘fictive actuality’ of the reading experience. The reader needs to discover the reading act before ‘doing’ the exercise. If it is to provide contemporary insights, the English curriculum must identify the strong link between meaning and ideology (Green 1997: 18). Meaning cannot be found entirely in structure, as the Syllabus suggests. The ‘meaning’ of a text does not merely lie in its textuality but in ‘its presence and effect within culture’ (Stephens 1996: 165). It ‘involves a paradoxical oscillation between the moment and perspective of structure, on the one hand, and on the other, those of agency and individual action’ (Green 1997: 25). Giroux (1987: 175) suggests that meaningful learning is the essential formulation of a sequence of *critical* and finally *emancipatory* learning. The Syllabus does not make these distinctions clear.

If ‘making meaning’ is important, whose meaning is important? Do young readers view texts in the same way as adults? Hunt believes that while children make meanings in different ways to adults, their meanings are no less complex. He further argues that what may be considered simple text can in fact generate complex meanings. Hunt (1995a: 233)

expresses these ideas thus: 'Literature is a way of reading, not a function of the text, just as a pile of bricks is a work of art in an art gallery, and merely a pile of bricks on a building site. The old truism, what you get out of it depends on what you put into it, is devastatingly true'.

There is a paradox that, while the Syllabus ostensibly and avowedly supports critical literacy, its benchmarks and assessment-driven approach run counter to this and do not fully embrace context and new textual practices such as critical literacy and visual and media literacies. The Syllabus clearly values critical literacy, acknowledging its importance in three outcomes, RS3.7, WS3.13, WS3.14. Critical literacy, it states, 'enables students to perceive how texts position readers to take a particular view of people and events' (BOS NSW 1998: 5). Yet, aside from a general idea of empowering the language learner and arming him/her against naivety, there is little understanding of what its value is or how it might best be translated into classroom pedagogy. Critical literacy, as the Syllabus sees it, is an awareness of 'how texts position the reader' but the Syllabus does not embrace the notion of transformation, as Freire would see it.

What then does the current Syllabus offer? In a positive light, the new document focuses on some previously ignored aspects of English teaching and addresses many concerns. Negatively viewed, it is a hastily written document developed to respond to the Eltis Report and to meet the pressures of the Federal government push for improved literacy levels, supposedly to be gained through explicit, systematic teaching of skills to achieve staged outcomes. In spite of its claims to address the needs of all children, it may be seen as inhibiting independent, competent readers. With its emphasis on 'competence', it has little interest in the moral, ethical or aesthetic growth of the child. The *English K-6 Syllabus*, 1998 appears to be an example of compromise of a number of discourses. The result is a weakened, confused document. As Thomson reminds us in the quote that began this section, the contemporary setting makes it difficult to produce meaningful texts.

Two Syllabus support documents recommended by the Board of Studies as useful reading lists are *English K-6: Recommended Children's Texts* (Board of Studies, NSW 1995) and *English K-6: References for Teachers* (Board of Studies, NSW 1997). Both, it may be noted, were published before the Syllabus, and both suggest a stronger awareness of the literary and of literary studies than the Syllabus itself reveals.

The texts suggested in the *English K-6: Recommended Children's Texts* (1995) offer a wide range across literary genres categorised according to stages but warn the teacher that this grouping should not be seen as prescriptive or definitive. The list includes a representation of Australian, British and American texts, drawing from a wide range of

periods including Classic children's books. It offers some important contemporary texts which experiment with literary form and challenge the reader, ranging across CD-ROMs, computer software packages, audio cassettes, videos and films and television series as well as print texts. However, the accompanying annotations tend to focus on content and do not give an indication of the texts' unique qualities or literary values. It might be argued that while the importance of these texts is acknowledged, their value is not fully demonstrated.

Whilst the list is valuable in offering teachers guidance, it is limited in a number of ways. Firstly, the list is already six years old and needs to be updated to keep abreast of the rapidly expanding genre of children's literature. The introduction to the List acknowledges the 'staggering expansion' (Board of Studies, NSW, 1995: 1) but does not take steps to keep abreast of it by updating lists annually. Secondly, the lists include few award-winning texts and seem to avoid texts on controversial issues. Thirdly, the Stage Three list tends to offer few books that would challenge proficient readers.

In Chapter 6 of this study, examples of the complexities of style and the experimental nature of contemporary texts was discussed, drawing largely on the texts suggested in the *English K-6: Recommended Children's Texts*. It demonstrated that such texts have a great deal to offer beyond being simple tools for reading or bibliotherapy and provide teachers with an excellent resource for exploring the roles of children's literature.

The *English K-6: References for Teachers* (1997) offers limited guidance to teachers on how literature might be included in the reading program. In a list of thirty-nine references under the heading of READING, there are two texts which list authors, two that name poems, five that list children's texts, one that relates to the history of children's literature and seventeen that offer classroom activities related to texts, and finally, one that is an example of a children's text. Such a list appears a hastily constructed document that is in no way grouped into meaningful sections. Whilst most of the texts relating to classroom activity offer teachers guidance, no texts are suggested to enhance teachers' understanding of literary theory or to offer them in-depth support for critical exploration of text.

7.3.3 Basic Skills Tests and follow-up documents

Too refined evaluation winds us down into smaller and smaller categories of what I still think of as marks for good conduct. Instead let me admire craftsmanship and honest making (Meek 1982: 289).

For this study, the year 1998 was the year selected to review the Basic Skills Tests of literacy for Years 3 (Department of Education and Training 1998) and 5 (Department of Education and Training 1998a). The following critical analysis explores three aspects: the

sample texts, the nature of the test items, and the literary knowledge that was tested. Also considered are two follow-up documents.

The number of test items for each text provided in the test is few (average of four questions per text) but there are a large number of texts (9 for Year 3 and 11 for Year 5). This structure in itself cannot encourage anything but superficial reading. For the Year 3 test, three of the nine texts can be considered literary, 33.3% of the total number of texts. For the Year 5 test, the number of literary texts is also three, representing 27.2% of the total number of texts. (Incidentally, the 1999 tests revealed less emphasis on literary texts where for Year 3, 22.2% of texts were literary and for Year 5, 27.2%). For Year 3, the excerpts of literary texts include *Flying Fish*, a traditional story from Papua New Guinea: *Captain Johnno* (1991) by Rob George; and a poem *The Beach* by William Hart-Smith. For Year 5, the literary texts selected are *Captain Johnno*, *Magpie Island* (1974) by Colin Thiele; *The Old Man and The Sea* (1952) by Ernest Hemingway; *Between the Flags* (1988) by Jane Hyde; and *Mermaid Singing* (1989) by Charmian Clift. One literary text, *Captain Johnno*, has been produced in tests for both Years 3 and 5, with the same questions. Speculation on the significance of this suggests that either it is a device for value-added reporting to compare significance of gained knowledge or an expectation that students would *not* gain further literary skills by Year 5. The texts selected do not reflect the changes in children's literature in the last decade, nor do they offer readers the opportunity to explore the elements of contemporary literature.

All the test items are multiple choice. As Appendix H, Tables 1 and 2 show, most of the test items focus on literal comprehension of content, especially of specific parts of the text and ask for responses that recall or apply knowledge found in the text. The tests measure what they purport to measure—basic skills. Yet questions may be asked as to whether more than basic skills should be tested, whether more complex questions of analysis, interpretation and generalisation should be included? Some of the items questioning the literary texts do not test literary skills or knowledge. There is no recognition of what Purves (1990: 80) calls the 'aesthetic transaction', where the readers' responses are valued for their imagination. The 'efferent' view only is tested.

For the Year 5 test, literary knowledge is tested in thirteen out of the forty-seven test items. Of these, three items relate to vocabulary. The remaining ten involved:

- consideration of questions of characterisation
- distinction between real and imagined events
- prediction of events

- consideration of themes
- exploration of the narrator's voice
- consideration of the use of figurative language.

According to *The Basic Skills Testing Program: School Report Year 5 1998*, (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998b), of the questions related to the literary items, the ones that are most poorly answered throughout New South Wales are those that relate to drawing inferences, distinguishing between real and imagined events, recognising figurative description and accurately identifying theme (Appendix H, Table 3). No distinction is made between ways of approaching literary text to a nonliterary one so that any text is considered from the point of view of its content and theme. There is little or no testing of student knowledge of authors' works, literature as language, the significance of structure, nor the importance of point of view.

Two follow-up documents to the Basic Skills Tests offer superficial assistance to teachers to remedy the omissions identified above. The first document, *Linking Basic Skills Tests to the Curriculum Year 5 1998* (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998c), was prepared to illustrate the value of Basic Skills Testing (BST) across the curriculum. In the section with the rather curious title of 'Linking Literacy and English' (somehow suggesting that literacy is not necessarily linked to English), it states that 'English as a KLA includes reading and interpreting literary texts' (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998c: 4). It suggests that, to do this, the teacher should teach 'a range of literary, figurative and poetic language' (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998c: 4) and choose books that contain 'a range of poetic and descriptive devices'. Under a heading 'Literacy Strategies' (should that read Literary Strategies?), a discussion of theme, identification of narrative voice and figurative language are considered important in literary studies. Beyond this, the document suggests that the reader should be able to 'critically analyse techniques used by writers' (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998c: 5). On how to do this, it is silent. A second follow-up document of the BST, *Focused Individual Assessment 1998*, (Department of Education and Training, NSW, 1998d), issued to assist students needing additional support, takes the same text, *Captain Johnno*, as appeared in the Years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Tests. While this program is to be offered orally on a one-to-one basis, the questions again are of a contextual and semantic nature and do not offer opportunities for the reader to transact aesthetically with text.

While these documents highlight problems of reading, they also reveal the narrowness of the evaluation, what Meek (1982) calls 'too refined evaluation', and raise questions about the significance of the Basic Skills Tests as true measures of reading competency.

7.4 Conclusion

[Reciprocal rather than antagonistic (Thomson 1992: 1)]

All those who wield power over education are anxious to show that education is cognisant of and responds to the enormous changes in the contemporary world. They are anxious to show that they are aware of the various discourses and technological developments. Yet in doing so, there is the danger of sidelining that which has been successful in the past. The ‘exemplars, values, processes and requirements’ that Lankshear (1993: 155) suggested in the quote that prefaced this chapter all help shape curriculum and are constantly being repositioned or perhaps disempowered. The challenge is to develop a meaningful curriculum that weighs up all the influences and situates them within specific discourses.

The National English Profile had raised concern (Fehring 1995; Grundy 1994), that it had the potential to erode teachers’ professional judgement. While the Framework document has the same potential, in that there is a danger that teachers might use the strategy as a set of instructions without exploring the theoretical foundation on which it is based, it does highlight the diversity of the roles of the reader and the importance of reading as problem solving. It is the link between reader and text that still has to be made.

The Syllabus acknowledges some critical approaches overtly but covertly does little to identify them clearly or explain their significance. While it is clear that the Syllabus is based on a functional linguistic model, it is less clear what theories of learning, of reading and of literature inform its thinking. This makes it difficult for teachers to question the underpinning ideologies. Even in its adoption of structuralism, there is a sense of incompleteness in that it does little to acknowledge poststructural criticism, which considers the unstable and indeterminant nature of linguistic and textual signs. If the Syllabus is to maintain its credibility, it must be possible to identify those critical approaches that form its foundation.

There should be clear, identifiable links between theory and practice. As Thomson (1992: 1) notes, ‘the relationship between theory and practice is necessarily reciprocal rather than antagonistic’. Not only is this reciprocity difficult to distinguish, but frequently incomplete views of a critical approach are put forward as a sound foundation for practice. Is this because it is too difficult to apply to New South Wales primary education or, as Morgan (1997: 24) suggests, is it that the State would not endorse a pedagogy that undermines ‘the economic status quo and the legitimacy of the present practice of government’?