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The Use of Dialogue Journals in Senior High English Class

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Faculty of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study was concerned with the use of dialogue journals in senior high school as a central feature of literature studies. The teacher-researcher gathered information from a Grade 10 English course in which the students used dialogue journals as a part of their course in literature studies. All students were asked to volunteer their journals for the study, and nine students' journals were purposefully selected for study. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the nature of secondary students' responses to literary texts as revealed through their dialogue journals?
- (2) Do dialogue journals reveal development in secondary students' responses to literary texts, and, if so, along what dimensions can that development be revealed?

The teacher-researcher developed a handbook to provide students with a structure for their responses. The purpose of the handbook was to give students guidelines or directions to examine literary text, without prescribing to the students what they ought to be looking for in the literature. Each guideline suggested in the handbook had been researched to determine if it had a theoretical basis for inclusion..

All students in the Grade 10 English course, including the nine selected, completed the study of a variety of literary genres, including short stories, essays, poetry, drama, novels, and Shakespeare. Students were required to write about the literature in their journals three to four times a week, with the handbook used as a resource for possible responses. These guidelines also provided the readers with lessons on strategies readers

which they may use to explore and examine literary text.

The study was conducted over a fourteen week period. During this period the teacher-researcher divided the study of students' journals into "Early entries" and "Later entries". These responses to the literary texts, both early and later, were separated into thematic units and analyzed in terms of the guidelines outlined in the resource handbook. Each of the response units were placed on a chart and labeled. Coding procedures began with the idea that students would attempt to follow the handbook, with provision made for students whose responses were diverse. Coding procedures were designed to find patterns in students' responses.

The findings for Question 1 were: (1) students' responses generally followed the categories outlined in the handbook, as they were encouraged to use the handbook as a guide for their responses. (2) Personal reaction was by far the most common and the most diverse of all the responses. Uncertainty and resistance to making meaning of literary text were more common in earlier responses, but lessened as students gained more strategies for making meaning. (3) Students rarely used categories of response such as using quotes or asking questions of the text. Only one student attempted a graphic representation [drawing] of a literary text.

The findings for Question 2 were: (1) The average length, in words, of students' responses increased over the period of the study. (2) Students did not appear to judge the merits of a literary selection until they had had an opportunity to interpret their meaning of the literary work. (3) Students appeared to become more accustomed to using literary terminology as an integral part of their responses.

The conclusion drawn from the study is that, while the dialogue journal may be of

use in Senior High School English studies, there should be principles established to determine the value of journals. Further research will be needed to code variation of students' responses to the literature. An examination of teachers' comments in students' response journals will be necessary.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Bob, because he grows beauty in our garden, and in our lives. Also, I dedicate this work to my son, Daniel, because of the “entertainment value” he supplies.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I love men who dive. -Herman Melville

Interpretation impels readers' engagement with text. When readers ask "What does it all mean?" they are defining significance of text for themselves. This is central to interpretation of text. Too often we make the assumption that, as readers decode text, they will inevitably arrive at "an understanding" of the text and, thus, be able to enjoy the pleasures of literature. The ability to read and the ability to interpret what has been read varies. As a consequence, experienced readers may interpret text differently from less experienced readers. What are these differences and how might they be explained? Bartholomae (1986) states that interpretation "begins with an act of aggression, a displacement, an attempt to speak before one is authorized to speak, and it begins with a misreading--a recomposition of a text that can never be the text itself speaking" (p. 93).

It is the notion of displacement and recomposition that begins this study. To be able to capture some of students' attempts "to speak before authorized," is perhaps to begin to gain insight into the ways in which interpretive abilities begin and develop. As students recompose the reading they do in dialogue journals, they learn to speak about literature, and their struggles eventually lead them to create meaning for themselves about the text.

One of the reasons interpreting text appears complex is because the reader should acquire more than just the skill of reading words on the page; expert readers who have the ability to interpret use observation and visualization, inference, argument, preference, and

personal feelings to comprehend the subtleties of the text--none of which is easily determined (Berthoff, 1981). The novice interpreter--usually a novice reader but not necessarily so--needs to master explicative skills, and needs to have strategies that will strengthen interpretive abilities. Probst (1994) notes that "We have tended to deceive students about those processes by hiding from them our own struggles with texts" (p. 41). Many students may believe that the ability to interpret text is a gift which blesses a few; the rest simply accept what the gifted tell us about textual "meaning." There may be no intentional deceit here; teachers hide their struggles because they, too, do not understand much about the processes by which readers acquire interpretive abilities. Many English teachers, also, are quite willing to defer to authorities on textual meaning. Because teachers have focussed predominantly on products of students' interpretation, conversations about how students arrived at those interpretations have been virtually excluded from the professional conversation. Students need direct instruction on using strategies to help them interpret literary text (Smith, 1989; Langer, 1990b; 1994) while at the same time allowing for them to recompose a literary text for themselves. In addition, we need to discern what both expert and novice readers do when they interpret literary text and what can account for the variation in "meaning" that readers may derive from text (Kantz, 1987). What does it mean to interpret a text "well" and what qualities determine whether students have developed interpretive capabilities? Finally, can interpretation strategies be taught and learned? If, for instance, the task of learning to interpret literary work is to "evaluate the artistic character of the work of art" (Selden, 1995, p. 323) teaching and learning about interpretation should include individual impressions as well as

more formal considerations of the text.

If we believe that the ability to interpret, or make meaning of text, enables readers to gain pleasure as well as information from text, this ability cannot be taken for granted as a next-natural step in learning to read; nor should it be assumed that instruction on how to interpret literature cannot be described. Therefore, it is imperative that English teachers find methods that enable students to interpret text for themselves, and understand instructional strategies that foster students' learning of interpretation. From English teachers' initiatives, students may be able to employ such strategies in order that they are not reliant on externally imposed interpretations. Further, students may then be able to continually develop and enhance their meaning-making (interpreting) abilities as texts of various sorts become increasingly challenging.

For a variety of reasons, educators have come to understand the complexity involved in learning to interpret text. Current, expanded, and restructured concepts of what constitutes "interpretation," "meaning," "text," and "literacy" have all contributed to new perspectives about the sophisticated abilities readers employ when they interpret text. For instance, the conceptualization of what it means to be "literate" has changed considerably (Venezky, 1991). One of the reasons it is much harder to find a neat definition of "literacy" is because we understand how it is bound to social contexts (Minter, Gere & Keller-Cohen, 1995; Meek, 1986). However, no matter how elusive it may be to define what it means to be "literate," the facility to interpret text still figures prominently as a part of that definition. As a result, teaching and learning in terms of helping students become literate has never been so challenging; nor has understanding the

complexities of interpretation and judging the validity of students' interpretive abilities been so difficult.

Reader-response literary theories offer some promise of guidance in this area; reader-oriented literary theories consider the ways in which readers behave as they encounter text. Among other things, reader-response theories attempt to account for the variability in reading by elucidating the effects of the readers' backgrounds and the contexts in which reading occurs. By attempting to account for these variables, reader-response offers a more complete picture of how readers' interpretive skills may develop. But promises of new insights are not enough; if English teachers are serious about providing reader-response experiences that clearly benefit students by cultivating their interpretive capabilities, investigation of reader-response theories as they apply to classroom practices are needed. Therefore, there ought to be extensive inquiry into the ways in which reader-response theories are enacted in classroom situations in order to understand the circumstances within which theories are manifested in practice, and the outcomes they produce. "To make meaning of printed text" is abstract and, while it may indicate great aspirations for our students, it often clouds issues about what interpretation is and what is expected of students when they do "make meaning." When teachers ask students to interpret text, they are required to be very exact about the task requirements with themselves and their students (Bogdan, 1990), which are not always apparent. To make expectations more discernible, two questions need to be addressed: Where does "meaning" reside in text and how do we help students develop their abilities to penetrate textual meaning?

How teachers perceive the answer to where meaning resides impacts considerably on the nature, purpose, and discipline of textual interpretation; how teachers perceive the development of students' capabilities, affects the nature of assessment practices--to demarcate when reading and writing competencies have been attained. Competing ideologies and pedagogies regarding instruction of these reading and writing competencies and how they are assessed further complicate accountability of English teachers. To say that the teaching of English has undergone radical changes in the past century would be both understated and misleading; significant transformations in theory have taken place, but classrooms still maintain many traditional practices (Applebee, 1993; 1981). This is not to suggest that English instruction has not evolved; it continues to envision change, no matter how slow it may appear. But the turbulence resulting from the shifting and metamorphosing of English instruction trying to mesh with traditional English instruction has resulted in the inability to achieve a principal metaphor upon which English instruction can be founded (Newell & Durst, 1993; McEwan, 1992). Accordingly, this has led to a "patchwork" metaphor where English teachers use bits and pieces from various instructional theories that are indiscriminately stitched together into various classroom practices (McEwan, 1992). On the one hand, English teachers are continually encouraged to become more aware of their assumptions about the nature of text, what it means to "read" or interpret a text, and how readers ought to marshal support for those readings (Grossman & Shulman, 1994); on the other hand, many English teachers focus on lessons and lectures, activities and topics for formal essays that are best described as "traditional" practices, passed on through generations of English teaching. Teachers and professors of

English can remain unaware of the assumptions upon which those practices are based (Bishop, 1996).

Where and how readers locate "meaning," whether it is thought to reside in text, reader, or author, has been examined and argued extensively, and Rosenblatt's "transactional" theories have been prominent in those discussions (Rosenblatt, 1994b; 1978; 1991). In classroom practice, when literature is taught, the issue of where meaning resides is largely contingent upon theoretical underpinnings of the teacher, whether or not the teacher is aware of them. For example, if the importance of literature is largely derived from understanding literary terms, or critics' perceptions of what "great" literature is, then the importance of literature can be thought of as a body of knowledge to be transmitted and tested. If students are required to show competence in literal content revealed through short answer or multiple-choice questions, meaning is most likely thought to reside in the text. If, on the other hand, studying literature is important for more abstract, long-range goals, such as encouraging students' aesthetic experiences with literary text, understanding how literary text enables readers to have those experiences, the "meaning" ought to be connected to the encounter with the text. The value and appreciation of literature, intangible as it may be to define and measure, guides this view of the importance of literature. Literature is a vital part of all students' education.

Importance of Literature

The importance of studying literature has been the subject of much discussion, long before the study was established as a discipline, and its place in contemporary school

curricula is still deliberated (Scholes, 1998; Yagelski, 1994). Purves (1991) noted that "the subject literature is seen through one of three main sets of lenses. One sees it primarily as a body of knowledge to be acquired, the second sees it as a vehicle for training in the skills of analysis and interpretation, and the third sees it as the vehicle for social and moral development" (p. 674). To those three lenses, we will add the development of "critical thinking skills." In Alberta, where this study took place, the Senior High School Language Arts Curriculum Guide (1987) characterizes the objectives of literature instruction as "personal response, sharing of responses with other orally or in writing, and personal, social or critical evaluation, where appropriate" (Gambell, 1986, p. 155).

Langer (1990a) has noted that literature has "too often [been] considered a way to indoctrinate students into the cultural knowledge, good taste, and elitist traditions of our society, neglecting the role of literature in the development of the sharp and critical mind" (p. 812,). Elsewhere, Langer (1990b) has declared that literature instruction has taken on renewed importance "marked by calls for increased attention to students' thinking and reasoning about what they are reading in all of their subjects, across the curriculum" (p. 229). Langer (1992; 1993; 1989) suggests that students need to be encouraged to discuss initial impressions of works, to raise questions, and to explore their understandings of literature (Langer 1992; 1993; 1989; Spear, 1988). This renewed emphasis on the study of literature as a means of critical inquiry has revitalised contentions about precisely why this investigation is important. In this century, according to Poznar (1992), literature study "is largely the history of warring factions and competing ideologies" (p. 517). According to Berlin (1996), debate on materials and methods centred on how English studies served--

and preserved--larger economic, social, and political objectives of a predominantly Anglo-Saxon society. Moreover, Poznar (1992) goes on to say that

What was implicit and often explicit in the heat of controversy was the assumption by most critics that the outcome of these skirmishes was of vital importance to the preservation of civilized values. The contest was not about literature alone, but about the fate of man in the modern world. The combatants had no doubt that the future of civilization was at stake, that what was involved was not the aesthetic character of literature but fundamental questions about man and his destiny, that the dangers man faced in the twentieth century are somehow inextricably interwoven with the place of literature in a humane society. (p. 518)

The value of teaching and "learning" literature has had an interesting history. In the eighteenth century, the notion of literature included all writing that was socially valued, such as philosophy, history, and essays. Literature was used to inculcate "moral values" in readers (Brandt, 1995); literature was thought to "embody certain social values" and to disseminate "habits of 'correct' taste and common cultural standards" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 17). Scholes (1998) has pointed to the close relationship between Christianity and literature--texts considered quasi-sacred--as study of English literature emerged in the universities. He indicated that "The first professor of English language and literature in England, it should be noted--Thomas Dale, appointed at University College, London, in 1828--was a practicing minister who saw his role as using literary texts to inculcate Christian virtues" (p. 15). The accumulated uses of literature have resulted in diversity, from abiding beliefs in literature that still ought to teach morals and ethics--values education (Morgan, 1993)--to religious precepts, to a means of understanding oneself and

one's place in the world.

Currently, there is an ideology, as E.D. Hirsch (1987) and others suggest, that literature be used to "introduce students to the cultural knowledge, the great thoughts, and the high culture of our society" (Langer, 1990a, p. 229) in order to ensure its strength through cohesiveness of a particular group of people. "Cultural Literacy," as Hirsch (1987) has termed it, is not necessarily meant to delimit the boundaries of the culture; Hirsch insists cultural literacy can be flexible in its common usage, but its goal is to ensure the cohesiveness of a particular cultural group in order to secure economic development of that group (Hirsch, 1987). Hirsch (1987) argues that without a core of common literacy, communication is impeded, and members of a social or cultural group cannot achieve common goals of literacy.

In terms of the reading process, Hirsch (1987; 1993) claims that cultural literacy enables the user to read and write because there is a context within which comprehension can occur. Thus, "core" knowledge is necessary for readers to develop "schema" that are requisite for attaining reading skills; this core knowledge is in turn dependent upon acquiring information about historical events, stories and poems, people, and places familiar to a particular culture. Hirsch (1987; 1993) defines "literacy" in terms of the accumulation of bits of information--often through rote memory--common to large cultural groups. He notes that

Professor Chall is one of several reading specialists who have observed that "world knowledge" is essential to the development of reading and writing skills. What she calls world knowledge I call cultural literacy, namely, the network of information that all competent readers possess. It is the

background information, stored in their minds, that enables them to take up a newspaper and read it with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implications, relating what they read to the unstated context which alone gives meaning to what they read (p. 2).

Hirsch (1987) would have students accumulate information, such as are on lists he and colleagues have devised, so that there is commonality in what students “know.” And it is this “knowing” that has caused some to criticize Hirsch’s views. There is, some charge, a tendency for the lists to become “inert information” because, according to Purves (1993), “Hirsch’s knowledge is specific and perhaps superficial” (p. 3), without guarantees that students really comprehend the meaning of what they “know.” Hirsch (1987) declares that information memorized and learned can be used successfully to build students’ store of prior knowledge, which is strongly suggested as a crucial aspect of students’ ability to perform reading tasks. However, beyond assembling lists of facts and data, Hirsch supplies little evidence that students have been able to transfer the knowledge from such lists to reading activities.

There are also those who have linked education, and the knowledge of literature, with development of democratic principles, such as John Dewey. Some theorists who have studied the works of John Dewey argue that literature is necessary for the advancement of democratic principles (Rosenblatt, 1976; 1978; 1982). Personal beliefs and philosophies ultimately are embedded in the literature we read, as well as the ways in which groups of people arrive at agreement concerning those beliefs and philosophies. Rosenblatt (1994) suggested that while “the literary work could have aesthetic value in itself yet necessarily had social origins, implications, and effects” (p. 291). Moreover, Rosenblatt (1976) has

stated that "Literature treats the whole range of choices and aspirations and values out of which the individual must weave his own personal philosophy" (p. 20). Then, from personal choices and a developed personal philosophy, arrived at presumably from reading literature, one can make democratic decisions. Through discussion about literature, Rosenblatt (1994) "observed the value of interchange among students as a stimulant to the development of personally critical reading, which is essential to citizens of a democracy" (p. 292). Berlin (1996) emphasized that democracy is primarily participatory and that students, through English studies, become aware of disparate positions arising from differences in age, gender, race, religion, culture, etc. and learn to enunciate and examine those positions. Only then, according to Berlin (1996), could democratic decisions be formulated. Of the many purposes of English studies, Berlin declared that "The most significant of these is developing a measure of facility in reading and writing practices so as to prepare students for public discourse in a democratic political community" (p. 110). Pradl (1991) reminded us that "It's never just reader/text/poem, but readers testing readings in a public arena and then modifying accordingly--the essence of the democratic process" (p. 36).

Clifford (1991) made clear that "the purpose of a literary education is to reform our flawed society, to make it more democratic, more sensitive to injustice, more equitable" (p. 101). Similarly, Probst (1994) believed that, through literature, "Students will learn about cultures and societies, their varying concepts of the good life, of love and hate, justice and revenge, and the other significant issues of human experience" (p. 40). Probst (1986a) also suggested that "If literature is a collection of moral lessons, then we

use it to indoctrinate students in good and upright thinking” (p. 60). “Great themes” of human experience are captured in literature, and understanding those themes ought to, ultimately, bring us to a greater moral awareness. In addition to moral awareness, we strengthen our intellect. Thomson (1987) claimed that “Not only can reading literature help us to better understand our emotional selves and our identities, but it can help us to become aware of our own intellectual processes if we focus on them reflexively” (p. 128).

Probst (1994) contended that as students learn about literature, they learned “how texts operate, how they shape our thought and emotion” (p. 40). Literature balances the intellect and the emotional. There is an emphasis on the ability of individuals to find their own voice in making critical judgments of the texts they encounter in an attempt to “prepare students for genuine intellectual activity” (Ritchie, 1989, p. 153). Presumably, the notion of enabling students to make critical judgments, and to permit students to join the intellectual conversations that would arise from making judgments, are common principles underlying any concept of democracy. To live and participate fully in a democracy, readers ought to be able to study literature within an environment that accepts and encourages critical analysis of various texts and voices, to explore ideas and to draw conclusions about those ideas. Moreover, this ideal approach to studying literature does not flinch from asking controversial questions, nor from challenging the authority of the text. Clifford (1991) explained that he intentionally directed students' meaning-making so that they attended to issues that they might not ordinarily consider.

Charles Suhor (1991) spoke of literature (and other arts) as a transcending experience. He suggested that as we experience aesthetically, we are led out of literature,

"and indeed out of the arts, into a more general and more thrilling quest for spiritually wonderful things" (p. 23). Suhor (1991) also stressed that response theory, because of the emphasis on the aesthetic, ultimately enables us to ask the inherently larger philosophical questions, "cultivating and understanding the experiences that elevate us in literature and life" (p. 24).

Whether the objective is to learn to live within a democratic community, or to transcend spiritually, students need to learn that there is much beyond the mere ability to decode text; "critical thinking" about text is most important, or, as Yagelski (1994) suggested, there ought to be further emphasis on "critical literacy." He noted that the focus of study of literary texts should be replaced by a study of "the social, rhetorical, situated nature of all language use" (p. 34). That is, to use literary texts, among other types of texts, to teach students about the "complicated connections among different forms of language, including literary language, and the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts out of which it grows" (p. 35). The ability of students to learn these critical approaches to reading texts is crucial, mostly because I believe that the strategies readers use to interpret literary text can be applied to any other "text." Even if text is viewed in its broadest sense, the strategies for interpretation may remain constant. With so much information available, it is imperative that people know how to critique and estimate the worth of many different texts. Learning to discover strategies that enable readers to analyze, assess, and evaluate "texts" of many varieties, may be of great consequence for our survival as a species in a diverse and literate society. Mike Rose (1989) noticed this as he observed his own students' quest for literacy: "It's not just a few bucks more a week

that's at stake; literacy, here, is intimately connected with respect, with a sense that they are not beaten, the mastery of print revealing the deepest impulse to survive" (p. 216).

It is even more significant in times of overwhelming information, where individuals are responsible for selecting information that is vital. Literature, for me, can be used to establish the "habits of mind" principles that are suggested as requirements for critical thinking.

My interest in literature and the teaching of literature combines the "critical thinking" about texts--who creates them and how are they created--with decidedly humanist interests of connecting with humankind. I am both fascinated by the ways and means of crafting and manipulating texts that evoke responses from audience and readers, and passionate about literature as a means to connect me to other people in situations, times, and places both similar and different to mine. I am intensely interested in other people's stories that tell of their experiences and world views. In brief, literature is a means for me to understand the human spirit, both at its best and worst, in fiction or non-fictional writing. For me, literature is the embodiment of all the complexity that makes us human, and helps us to understand the commonalities among our species, as well as deal with the differences that divide us. Without art and literature, we are bereft of all that is vital in us. The narratives may differ, but the underlying "human qualities" of story, as well as the fundamental knowledge of our world is contained in the literary texts we read.

I have assigned a role to literature instruction that encompasses many of the ideals previously described. This assigned role governs the way I define literature, select the texts for class study, and the methods I use to teach students to interpret literary text. It is

one of the reasons I feel very strongly about the use of dialogue journals to study literary texts. Probst (1990, p. 174) has stated that

If we accept the idea that literature ought to be significant, that readers have to assimilate it and work with it, that transforming it into knowledge is more significant than memorizing the definitions of technical terms, then we need to find some ways of bringing readers and texts together, and of forcing upon readers the responsibility for making meaning of text. (p. 174)

"Bringing readers and texts together" needs to be emphasized here. This should be the goal of every English teacher. The question of what texts and how they should be brought to readers, evokes discussion.

The dialogue journal should be a central feature in bringing students and texts together. With an intersecting of reading and writing through sustained critical thinking, the dialogue journal is worth attention and study.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate what happens when students engage with specific texts, and how they engage with those texts as they write about them.

The questions that I wish to examine closely refer particularly to students interactions with literary text:

1. What is the nature of secondary students' response to literary texts as revealed in their dialogue journals?
2. Do dialogue journals reveal development in secondary students' response to literary texts, and, if so, along what lines is that development revealed?

I am interested particularly in what happens as students use dialogue journals as a means to gain access to literary texts. What meaning do students create as they work through the literature they read by writing about their thoughts and ideas?

One possible instructional practice is to establish a handbook containing structures that students could use to help them find their own way . It would offer teachers a new way of “planning” lessons so that students could still follow their own directions, yet giving teachers specific concepts that they need to “instruct.” The development of this handbook or guideline is of crucial importance.

Despite the many articles written about the use of journals and testimonials regarding their effectiveness as a teaching technique (Fulwiler, 1987a; 1987b; 1990; 1989; Kooy & Wells, 1996; Sullivan, 1989; Belanoff, 1987), journals remain largely unstudied in a systematic way. Anson and Beach (1995) have stated that “In spite of the voluminous anecdotal writings about journals, in spite of the constant discussions and sharing of journal techniques at conferences and in-service workshops, we still need to form a coherent approach to using journals in the classroom” (p. 3).

In order to study journals in a systematic way, guidelines may reveal whether or not they aid or hinder students’ responses to literary text. Guides that are supposed to give students structures from which to build responses are largely uninvestigated. We ought to question whether guidelines serve students as they learn to read literary text, and, if so, how? How do students who use the suggested guidelines become better interpreters of literary text?

Bringing texts and readers together, ideally, should result in student readers

learning more about the interpretation of literary text; however, there are many views as to what "interpreting" means and what occurs when "interpretation" happens. Purves and Rippere (1968) wrote that, "Interpretation is the drawing of inference from a formal aspect of the work, which is to say that the formal aspect has significance beyond itself, or that it is a symbolic counter of some referent that may or may not be hinted at in the work" (p.8). Scholes (1985) views interpretation as a reader creating "text upon text" (p. 31). That is, when inferencing is not enough, readers use the text as a template, with the aim of constructing new texts that are meaningful for them. Scholes (1985) states that "we need to equip our students with the accepted strategies for moving from following narrative ('within') to thematizing one ('upon')" (p. 31). Some questions follow: what are accepted strategies, how do we equip students with these strategies, and how do we recognize, if students who employ such strategies, improve their abilities to interpret literary text? In short, a seemingly straightforward objective becomes very complicated upon closer examination.

Squire (1990) believes that "We need greater insight into the ways in which response develops during the complex process of reading a work of literature" (p. 22). It is possible that the dialogue journal is a means of studying the complexity of this process. Zwaan (1996) notes that we do not have enough information concerning how readers process literary texts, which differ from experimenter-generated texts in the sense that they are "deliberately constructed to be inconsiderate" of readers (p. 241). Langer (1990b) writes that "although there have been many specific studies of 'response' to literature, these have focused primarily on content analyses of expressed responses rather than the

knowledge and strategies that contribute to students' understandings (p. 233). A number of studies have indicated the need for study of the ways in which expert readers differ from novices (Kantz, 1987); it seems clear that further understanding of readers' responses to literature is essential if we are to understand the processes by which we understand literary texts (Thomson, 1987; Marshall, 1987; Thury & Friedlander, 1993; Kantz, 1987). Moreover, Nardocchio (1992) has insisted that in addition to qualitative inquiry, empirical research be conducted so that reader-response theories can be sustained and enhanced as classroom practice. Petrosky (1985) has appealed to researchers to find a clearer direction for future studies. "Do we continue to do more research to achieve a sophisticated understanding of response for the sake of understanding, or do we want to direct some of our efforts into translating our research into pedagogy" (p. 73)? It is important to do both, for effective pedagogy is tied to erudite research. We accept that further research is needed to attain a sophisticated level of understanding of students' response to literature, yet at the same time, we should keep in mind that research ought to have pedagogical implications. We will continue to investigate the means and ways students have to articulate those processes, while attending to the instructional practices that have encouraged those responses to exist and time that will foster student response.

It is my assertion that dialogue journals will provide us with useful information regarding students' strategies and development of responses to literary text, as well as insight into whether or not the dialogue journal, as an instructional tool, should be valorized. Does the dialogue journal have any significant effect on students' ability to interpret literary text when we authorize students to make their personal meaning of

literary text; furthermore, does the dialogue journal provide useful information that may help teachers evaluate students' understanding of literary text?

While some research has been done, examining students' written responses to literary text (Marshall, 1987; Thury & Friedlander, 1996), there should be continuing exploration of students' extended, informal, written responses to literary text. Miall and Kuiken (1994) stated that

without major modification, text theories (as we will call them) cannot be extended to the study of literary texts, such as short story or poetry.

Although some features of literary texts, their special style suggests that they inhabit a universe whose laws are distinctive. Despite two millennia of what those laws might be, from Aristotle to the present day, we are still a long way from grasping what actually happens when a reader understands a literary text, or whether literary texts perform specific functions that set them apart from other texts. (p. 338)

These investigations need to be on-going in order to understand the nature of the processes students use to examine literature. Reader response offers one of the best ways of understanding students' processes of interpreting literary text. But, if we are serious about providing students with the best that reader response has to offer, then we need to know more about reader response and the best instructional practices that support and reinforce reader response theories. Thomson (1987) said that

In matching what students actually do with what theory tells us are the productive strategies of ideal or expert readers, we might be better able to develop appropriate programmes to help students to read and respond with greater autonomy, power and control. Until now we have had insufficient knowledge of these processes and have been forced to rely too much on

intuition in our teaching. (p. 87)

Thomson (1987) identified one of the ongoing concerns for English teachers. That is, how to know how theory can inform practice to the best advantage of the student. If, for example, we realize that certain theories have little or even detrimental effects on students' ability to interpret literature, such theories ought not be fundamental in the way in which our English curricula and practices develop. We owe it to our students to become better informed of theory--in this case, reader-response theory--and how it shapes what literature we teach and how that literature is taught. This is also a plea for teachers who need to understand reader-response more fully if they are serious about using reader-response theories in the classroom; to do reader-response as it is established in the literature.

It has seemed to me that the use of journals is one of the best ways to help students achieve better interpretive skills, and for them to keep records of their thinking (Fulwiler, 1987; Berthoff, 1981; Parsons, 1990; Britton, 1988). Journals provide some insight into what students think as they read through a literary text. Salvatori (1996) suggested that

First, insofar as reading is a form of thinking (Gadamer calls it "an analogue for thinking"), written accounts of it, however approximate, can provide us with valuable insights into the ways we think. Second, learning to recapture in one's writing that imperceptible moment when our reading of a text began to attribute to it--began to produce--a particular "meaning" makes it possible to consider what leads us to adopt and to deploy certain interpretive practices. In other words, although the processes that constitute our reading and writing are essentially invisible, those processes are, in principle, accessible to analysis, scrutiny, and reflection. (p. 445)

Dialogue journals provide a place for representations that allows students to assemble meaning and, at the same time, permits them--and others--to see how that meaning is constructed (Lees, 1983). Written entries, such as are found in journals, are helpful for both students and teachers to follow how interpretive thinking unfolds, amplifies, and alters.

The dialogue journal is a place where longer written responses are required from students as they read a literary text. One of the arguments posited by theorists investigating reading-writing connections is that longer written assignments--ones which demand complex thinking from students--can help them learn material better (Applebee, 1993; Spivey & King, 1989).

Longer response statements demand that students sustain their thinking alone in a reflective state, without support and questioning of other students or the teacher. This is often difficult for students who are unaccustomed to working for a longer period of time by themselves. Yet, students need opportunity for uninterrupted thought, at length, on their own perceptions about a literary text, to speculate on possible meanings and to pose questions of the text.

It is important that part of the teacher's role is to provide such opportunities for students, to assure them that they will have sufficient time for reflection, to encourage students in this reflection, and to participate with the students in a meaning-making instruction, rather than a knowledge-transmission type of role. If teachers want to find effective means by which students can gain control over their learning to interpret literary texts, the dialogue journal could be one of the best means possible for students to achieve

these ends. In addition, for information about the ways in which students' responses to literature develop in their dialogue journals, teachers who use journals will need to know in greater detail how they are to be used for maximum benefit (Anson & Beach, 1995; Rivard, 1994).

Organization of Dissertation and Definition of Terms

The first chapter of this dissertation begins with a broad discussion of the significance of literature in the English curriculum and why the ability to interpret literary text is important. This chapter deals with the idea that constructing the classroom in such a way that students are afforded the opportunity to locate for themselves "meaning," and how meaning is constructed, not given, in the engagement between readers and texts. The first chapter is meant to clarify my stance on where "meaning" resides--in an engagement between readers and texts. The first chapter also outlines why dialogue journals are promising as vehicles through which students' responses to literature can develop. While the literature is replete with exhortations of the journal as a method of instruction, few studies have yet to examine precisely what happens when secondary students use these dialogue journals. Are they as beneficial and promising as reported? If so, why do they work, and under what classroom circumstances can they be said to work most effectively? Such concerns are addressed by theorists such as Rivard (1994) and Nardocchio (1992). It seems clear that much is yet needed to be understood about journals if they are to be an instructional tool.

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the roles of English teachers and students

in a response-centred curriculum. Since dialogue journals require adjustment from a traditional transmission-receiver model of learning to one in which teachers provide frameworks within which students explore aspects of literary texts, roles of teachers and students should be clear. Next, there is an outline of two literary theories--New Criticism and reader response--that have had formidable impact and continue to influence classroom practices of English teachers. As such, these two theoretical stances have impacted how dialogue journals are used. The term "reader response" is very broad, and there is a discussion concerning where, theoretically, the dialogue journal is to be placed. Responses to literature cannot become mere excursions which probe students' lives, suggestive of Bleich (1975) or Holland (1975). McCormick (1985) has alerted educators to a possible critique of journals when she indicates that "One of the major criticisms directed at response statements has been that they are simply associative, 'touchy-feely' reactions, and rather than opening up students' responses to texts, they restrict them to what students already know" (p. 837). There is a great danger when using dialogue journals that teachers and students see them only as opportunities to respond in terms of personal experiences rather than studying the text. Rather, the dialogue journal could follow reader oriented theories of Rosenblatt (1976; 1978; 1989) and with Iser (1974; 1978; 1980) that include the text as a significant part of the reading act. Dialogue journals would be a way of examining literary text. They would be, as suggested by Miall and Kuiken (1998), somewhat like Formalism, but with regard to the students' individual responses. It would, however, mean an entire return to New Criticism. The reasons outlined will show that students' development of responses to literature through dialogue journals are, in large

part, dependent upon the students' attention to the text. Iser (1978) continued to emphasize the idea that while there is interaction between the reader and the text, it is the text that provides the indeterminacies which the reader is compelled to reduce.

In some spheres, this has led to criticism of Iser's work by such theorists as Mailloux (1982) who viewed Iser's work as very New Critical, and not entirely reader-response. However, as I will argue, if the dialogue journal is to fulfill the promise of becoming an important practice in a transactional reading process, the contributions of the New Critics must be accounted for and cannot be entirely rejected in literature instruction (Miall & Kuiken, 1998). This is especially true in light of the influence the text continues to exert on the reader in the interpretive process. At the same time, however, the reader's contribution cannot be diminished, for those contributions keep the study of literature lively and fascinating.

In addition, the chapter parallels the changes in composition instruction with the emergence of reader response. Understanding more about the composing process will serve to argue the point that written responses to literature, rather than reliance solely on oral responses, can do more to foster students' abilities to interpret literary text, than other forms of response. It is my contention that Rosenblatt's theory of readers' transaction with text, and the creation of the "poem" is best served as students have time to reflect and read recursively, and write about those reflections in dialogue journals. Students then have time to consider the many ways in which "blanks" may be filled in, according to Iser's literary theories (1978). This, too, adds an important element to my thesis--that the various ways of filling blanks and spaces are explored best through writing, when students can see the

various ways in which they can explain and explore the spaces, without feeling overly-constrained by the text. The dissertation will also touch on issues regarding reading-writing connections, suggesting that reading and writing processes have commonalities that need continued exploration, and the journal offers a unique opportunity to probe those common processes.

In addition, I wish to explore the dialogue journal in a relationship to Bakhtin's (1981) ideas of dialogism. In particular, the dialogue journal opens to written record all the heteroglossia in that the reading of any literary text involves the forces that try to unify the work (centripetal forces) as well as forces that pull the work apart (centrifugal forces). These forces operate on the reader simultaneously. Dialogism in terms of the act of reading suggests that while reading might occur at a particular time, within a special context, it nonetheless should consider that the act occurs within a particular time and place, but that an historical account of all the readings that have ever taken place ought to be considered. Thus, the dialogue journal might be important in that it provides tangible records of those centripetal and centrifugal forces that operate on students' engagement with a text.

If there is development in students' abilities to interpret text, research needs to provide specifics about what "development" looks like, and to know how to instruct students so that they might replicate such "development" in many other types of reading. In other words, how do we define "development" for students, particularly students who may be disengaged from school, in order that they might replicate it in other learning situations. The question of evaluation of development in students' interpretive abilities

needs to be discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the rationale for the methodology employed, a description of the methodology, the depiction of the context in which the participants engaged in studying literary texts and wrote in their dialogue journals, as well as a characterization of the students who participated in this study. Finally, a description of the methods used to analyze the data and an outline of the ways in which those collection methods attempted to ensure the accuracy of the observations made. Using students' written protocols, rather than oral ones, demands a complete framework to appreciate the complexity of the assignment of writing about literature.

In Chapter 4, excerpts from students' dialogue journals will be used to delineate the kinds of responses Grade 10 English students give as they respond to literature, and are used to answer the two questions set out by the study. In addition, the study will outline the various strategies students have been taught in lessons, which may or may not be employed later on by students as they read literature and respond in their dialogue journals. Moreover, students' entries in their dialogue journals over time may demonstrate development of their abilities to interpret literary text.

Chapter 5 will attempt to answer the question, "What implications for English literature instruction, particularly with respect to using dialogue journals, are suggested by this study?" If journal writing is a viable avenue for having students come to understand and interpret the literature they read, what kinds of activities ought to be fostered in journal writing that may promote development of understanding literary texts? In this chapter, a discussion of the results is needed to explore the principles and practices that

may lead educators to validate the use of dialogue journals as an exceptional means for students to understand literary text. Chapter 5 will also outline several possibilities for future research regarding the use of dialogue journals.

Terms

Text - will be defined as printed, visual, or oral expression of thought and ideas. Iser (1978) has suggested that "the truly literary text will set off reactions in the reader, and the rhythm will be both constituted and performed within him" (p. 47).

English - This is the study of literature and composition, as a part of the curriculum in secondary schools.

Dialogue Journal - This is a notebook that English students keep in which they record their feelings, thoughts, ideas, and questions about the literature they read. "It is intended as a process response" which involves "a written dialogue between two readers responding to a text, perhaps two students or a student and a teacher" (Karolidis, 1992, p. 232). They are notebooks that are concerned with the content of an English literature course, and are about issues that concern the writer (Anson & Beach, 1995; Fulwiler, 1987; Parsons, 1990). This is also a notebook similar to the double-entry notebooks suggested by Berthoff (1981), in which students write specifics from the text on one side, and commentary on those observations on the other side.

English Teacher - Any person who is currently teaching at least one class of literature and composition (Language Arts) in a senior secondary (Grades 10, 11, 12) school.

Reader-response - Any number of reception theories of literature that focuses on the

individual reader, the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the reader that impacts the ways in which literary selections are read. Its aim is not so much to teach what texts mean as what texts and readers do together (Watson & Ducharme, 1990).

Limitations of the Study

The present study is limited to the examination of secondary students' written responses to literature--found in their dialogue journals--over the period of one semester of Grade 10 English. Thus, the study will be limited to the eight students who volunteered to be a part of this study. While generalizations may not be applied beyond the selected students' responses to literature, teachers and researchers may find that their responses bear some similarities in the ways and strategies that students interpret literary text in a classroom.

A second limitation reviewed the type of literature studied in the classroom. All schools in Alberta are required to follow a set program of studies, which had to include a variety of genres, such as poems, short stories, novel, essays, Shakespeare, and modern drama. All the materials were selected from Alberta Education Department's approved curriculum, and what was available at the school. It is recognized that the selection of texts could have profoundly affected the types and quality of the responses given by the students (Hancock, 1993), but guidelines had been established provincially, within which I was required to work.

Finally, a third limitation was the categories used to describe the kinds of responses written by the participants for this study. It should be noted that patterns of

student response to literature can be found if one looks hard enough (Langer, 1990): moreover, Robert Scholes (1982) pointed out that the "interpretive skills shown by the best students of artistic texts involve tacit and intuitive procedures which have proved highly resistant to systematization and hence difficult to transmit in any direct and formal way" (p. 1). Yet, some description of the eight participants' responses should allow for clear description of their results, and how one might interpret those particular data.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Leavis did to Blackadder what he did to serious students; he showed him the terrible, the magnificent importance and urgency of English literature and simultaneously deprived him of any confidence in his own capacity to contribute to, or change it.

- A.S. Byatt

Introduction

As argued in Chapter I, an important goal of literature instruction is to have students do more than decode text; they must learn to understand beyond what is on the printed page--beyond the literal--and make meaning of what they read. If students are to acquire the ability to think, talk, and write about the texts they read as a lifelong activity, then they will need to spend a good deal of time in classes which provide numerous opportunities for them to practice these abilities. Waller (1996) underlined the importance of developing the "skills and confidence (and some understanding of the epistemological underpinnings) to become strong readers of texts" (p. 195). It is the goal of every English teacher that students become strong readers of literary text. But there is still a great deal of controversy regarding theoretical premises and pedagogical practices about how readers become masterful; further investigation is required into how students can become effectual readers of texts, and how we determine whether or not they have become so. There needs to be an understanding of how texts are "constructed and construed" (Berthoff, 1981); at the same time, there needs to be an awareness that "readers are not isolated entities, but are, rather, deeply embedded in broad social contexts that provide

them with prior knowledge” (McCormick, 1994, p. 23). Students needed to understand how texts are fashioned and shaped in order to comprehend their meaning, and know that their own experiences and background shape the texts they read. The main argument of this study is that dialogue journals may be significant vehicles through which students can become better readers of literary text as they write about the shape of the texts they read, and connect with experiences that determine various perspectives of students’ reading.

In this chapter, the review of relevant literature will discuss the idea that dialogue journals may not be understood as important conveyances by which students learn to interpret literary text; or, dialogue journals may be understood but not well received or poorly implemented as a significant class activity. In order to comprehend and do justice to dialogue journals, roles of teachers and students in a response-centred environment must be delineated. The review of the literature will also situate the use of dialogue journals within several disciplines of study. First, as the journals are designed to aid students’ study of literature, there is a framework of literary theory to which the dialogue journal pertains (Anson & Beach, 1995). Simple lists of classroom activities that teachers might employ, like the journal, cannot effect the kind of cognitive growth hoped for in students if they are independent of theory. Classroom practice must have convincing theoretical underpinnings in order for practices to benefit students; teachers need to comprehend the theoretical underpinnings upon which those classroom strategies have been based. In the English classroom, there must be a body of research evidence which suggests that such strategies will lead to improved student understanding of the literature they read.

Second, because journals are comprised of students' written responses to literary texts, composition theory will be examined, discussing the relationship between certain literary theories and composition theories, establishing a relationship between reading and writing. Finally, the tying together of current thinking in reading research with both literary theory and composition theory, forms the web which points to the use of dialogue journals as an effective technique for learning and teaching literary text.

On the practical side, there also needs to be a guidebook constructed to help students know how to respond to literature, to aid students' development of responses to literary text, and to give students clear indications of how to assess progress in their written responses to literary text (Sebesta, Monson, & Senn, 1995; Beach & Appleman, 1984; Thomson, 1987). This guidebook must be based on sound theoretical principles. Therefore, the last part of this chapter will be devoted to examining closely each aspect of the Guidebook that has been developed for this study. We need to know that what we ask our students to do as they construct their dialogue journals has value.

Purpose and Nature of Interpretation

No matter what students do after completing their formal schooling, they must learn how to interpret texts of many sorts, and literary texts are one of those. The use of student dialogue journals could provide English teachers with excellent opportunities for students to learn how to interpret literary text as they respond to what they read. The dialogue journal, as it has been conceived by Berthoff (1981, 1986) is a site where students can begin "to think about their thinking and to interpret their interpretations" (p.

127); to change from wondering "What do I have to do to fulfill the requirements of this assignment?" to "What do I think about the meaning of this text?" Similarly, Fulwiler (1987, 1982) has acknowledged the student journal as an avenue by which students could move from "reading" to "interpretation" of textual material. Scholes (1985) distinguishes "reading" from "interpretation" as the "move from a summary of events to a discussion of the meaning or theme of a work of fiction" and that "we feel that interpretation is a higher skill than reading, and we tend to privilege texts that require and reward interpretive activity" (p. 22). Scholes (1983) sees the process of meaning-making, or interpretation, in three stages. First, he suggests we need to process texts, or decode; second, we need to interpret, or make sense of the texts that are before us; third, and most significantly, we need to learn how to critically evaluate those texts.

According to Thomson (1987) writing in journals "not only helps the student inspect and discover their own thinking, reading processes and problems, but it also helps the teacher to find out what their students' individual strengths and weaknesses as readers are so s/he can help them" (p. 254).

Scholes (1985) has stated that "the process of interpretation is not complete until the student has produced an interpretive text of his or her own" (p. 4) which is a predominant theme throughout much of his work. Scholes (1998; 1995) emphasized the significance of student text production to establish a new relationship between reading and writing, "to rethink the goal of writing in English studies with few preconceptions beyond the goal of producing the most literate students possible" (Scholes, 1998, p. 162). Berlin (1996) also asserts that all students should be "involved in text production. They should

keep journals, prepare position papers...even imitate and parody the materials" (p. 136) in order that they might better construe and appreciate the codes of literary text.

Central to this study is the idea that students' dialogue journals are significant texts which students can produce; therefore, they should be elevated to one of the most instrumental texts that students can create in pursuit of literary studies. Journals are entire texts that students can generate, and this text can be a permanent record of their literary interpretive peregrinations. It has been suggested on numerous occasions that journals ought to become an essential instrument for teaching and learning of emergent exploration of text (Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1995; Fulwiler, 1987; Parsons, 1990; Britton, 1988; Nelms & Zancanella, 1990). It seems that journals have garnered support from a variety of English and Language Arts specialists.

Nevertheless, reading student journals has evoked many questions regarding the nature of literary interpretation, its possible connection to journal writing, and the conditions under which the dialogue journal is likely to prove a valuable tool for literature instruction. Bogdan (1990) has argued that

The kind of literary knowing these journals disclose freely explores the relationship between intuited knowledge and the continual testing of that knowledge within an intellectual framework or theoretical construct at the same time that the knower authenticates knowledge by taking responsibility for the very process of coming to know. Reader-response journals, a widely used device in junior and senior high schools, are an equally appropriate vehicle at the graduate level. Through them, readers can 'come to know', reflecting on literary texts and theory together in an especially fertile discourse, both honouring and interrogating their knowledge. (p. 70)

Similarly, Berthoff (1986) has asserted that a dialectical notebook--another form of dialogue journal--can be a method by which "we can make writing represent the process of perception and dialogue" (p.127, emphasis in the original) because it "serves to enable students to record dialogic action and to represent the inner dialogue which is thought" (p. 128).

It is, however, unknown as to whether or not the journal is widely used, or even if many teachers think journals are appropriate vehicles for literary instruction. What some individual English teachers might endorse intuitively does not necessarily provide a sound theoretical foundation concerning the use of student journals. If journals were to become more extensively accepted and used, within which contexts do they become vehicles through which students "come to know"? And, more importantly, what exactly is the "fertile discourse" in which readers engage, and how do we know when the discourse is fertile? Apart from testimonials concerning the use of journals in various disciplines (Fulwiler, 1987; Parsons, 1990; Anson & Beach, 1995; Atwell, 1987), relatively little is known about the specific results from students' writing about literary text in journals. There has not yet been careful observation or rigorous research about student journal writing and its effect, if any, on students' ability to interpret literary text (Anson & Beach, 1995; Marshall, 1987).

Others hold opinions which are at variance with Bogdan's (1990), relevant to the acceptance and prevailing use of journals. For instance, Fulwiler (1989) stated that, while journals "are the most comprehensive writing assignments available," he expressed concern that "the informal, subjective, self-expressive nature of this rhetorical form makes

it the most undervalued, misunderstood, and seldom used of the major modes of academic discourse, in virtually all areas of the curriculum" (p. 149). Journals are often perceived as less rigorous than, say, formal essay writing or testing. In a survey by Applebee (1993), it was thought that personal writing, such as found in journals, "had little place in the high school curriculum, occupying less than one half of one percent of the time" (p. 30).

Reasons vary, but writers like Purves (1993) summarized concerns over using journals when he concluded that "The reader should not remain in a solipsistic world of response, nor the writer in a solipsistic world of expression" (p. 17) Purves (1993) expressed his, and others', concern that journals were not designed for rigorous academic work. Journals would only hold students to what they already knew, not demanding much of them beyond the personal. Similarly, Corcoran (1990) expressed the controversy in this way:

Reading logs or response journals, for example, have been used as an opportunity for students to engage in a range of cumulative annotations, imaginings, speculations, anticipations, interrogations, revisitings, and simple relishings of the process of reading. At the same time, the journal has run the risk of becoming a loosely disguised form of confessional writing or even as an exercise in faking something called personal voice for the teacher. (p. 144)

A discrepancy appears to exist between the potential of the journal to be a useful instructional instrument and its (unclear) present status in the classroom. If journals are to be valorized in the English curriculum, we must demonstrate that journals are effective in fostering and cultivating students' abilities to interpret literary texts. Moffett (1990) noted that a number of valuable teaching methods have not penetrated the schools because they

require the student to have a greater role in selection of texts, and greater say in how they respond to those texts. Journals are among the techniques that Moffett (1990) mentioned. He maintained that the reading journal "leaves an ongoing record of reading experience that students often enjoy rereading later and sharing in various ways" (p. 311).

We acknowledge that we still have a long way to go before we grasp what actually happens when a reader comprehends and interprets literary text, and just how literary texts perform specific functions for readers that set them apart from other texts (Harker, 1996; Zwaan, 1996; Miall & Kuiken, 1994). One might argue that if teachers and students made more pervasive and intensive use of dialogue journals, we might gain insight into the ways in which readers comprehend literary texts.

Role of the Teacher

Students' attitudes and motivations towards reading and literature study are frequently attributable to the manner in which teachers organize and facilitate English instruction (Smagorinsky & Gevinson, 1989). English teachers often feel caught between a responsibility for preparing a few students for high-profile post-secondary institutions' requirement of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the diverse needs for "basic" reading instruction of many of their students. In part, the role of the English teacher is uncertain because the nature of English studies is not as clearly delineated as perhaps was once the case. Language, literature, and composition still comprise the majority of the English curriculum (McEwan, 1992), yet each of these three areas has since burgeoned with vast amounts of materials and instructional methods from which a teacher must

construct a specific syllabus for her class. This alone has made English teachers' jobs increasingly inexact and arduous. Literary theories, coupled with proliferation of composition theories, can be perplexing when trying to decide what is most important to be taught; wading through literary materials and deciding which selections ought to comprise the curriculum is burdensome.

Nevertheless, teachers' philosophies and beliefs about teaching and learning do drive practice. Miall and Kuiken (1995) have suggested that "readers of literary texts undertake only those activities that coincide with tenets of the theorist's viewpoint" (p. 37). Therefore, while English teachers contend with numerous philosophical stances--which can prove divisive among groups of English teachers--they struggle to define their professional selves, and their convictions and judgments regarding teaching and learning. Thus, compounding the problems of what to teach and how to teach, it is consequential that English teachers seek to understand the theoretical principles upon which their practice is founded, so they can best explain to their students the reasons they structure their literature instructional activities as they do. Applebee (1977) stated that "the approach to literature adopted by the individual teacher does affect the content of the response from the teacher's pupils" (p. 256). It is important that teachers are aware of just how students' responses can be influenced by teachers' stances towards teaching and learning literature. Applebee (1992) reiterated that "Teachers' approaches to particular texts--the questions they ask and the responses they expect to receive--can have a profound influence on what students learn" (p. 8).

David Bleich (1991) remarked that "it is essential for teachers of all students,

including those in middle and secondary schools, to find ways of 'introducing' themselves while they introduce their subjects, to show how the subject 'lives' in them" (p. 22). According to Bleich (1991; 1995) English teachers should be encouraged to make themselves aware of why they consider English studies valuable, what philosophical beliefs they support so that students can know them. Presumably, higher student achievement will result from such disclosures.

Students, too, need to have a greater understanding of the value of English studies if they are to be more engaged in learning the discipline. They, too, should have occasion to construct, for themselves, an English curriculum that suits their needs and is compatible with their beliefs concerning the values of the discipline. Willinsky (1990) explored the concept of what he expressed as "The New Literacy" as an attempt to shift more control of literacy from teacher to student. In this shift, students develop literacy that is most useful to them, and may or may not coincide with a literacy that teachers envision. The dialogue journal seemed to be a legitimate vehicle for students to make such discoveries about what they study and the value of those studies. The role of the teacher in a response-centred curriculum should account for a better understanding of the professional self and should facilitate students' roles as well.

In the literature classroom, the role of any literature teacher is largely determined philosophically where the teacher believes "meaning" is located. There are some who argue that meaning is located externally; that is, that meaning exists "outside" of oneself, in an independent state. In this state, knowledge can be found in the content (such as the text) of specific disciplines, as well as criteria for judging a performer's competency in that

content (Barnes, 1992/1976). This means that the function of schools and teachers is to provide students with the means of "learning" the information that is translated for them, correcting students' demonstrations of their learning to an acceptable level. Teachers generally provide translated information for their students (Applebee, 1984). Teachers had "learned" this knowledge themselves and were certified as having possession of it. Teachers were formally authorized through certification to disseminate knowledge to their students, and evaluate whether or not, and to what extent, their students learned what teachers propagated as "truth." This is still a predominant view of teaching and learning literature (Langer, 1992).

This view of teaching and learning assumes that the students will share the values and objectives set out by the teacher, but students may not always share. Teachers who "impart" knowledge may tolerate students' differing interpretations in a limited way, but teachers whose students "learn what teachers teach them" do not require nor encourage students' active participation in creating "meaning." Strickland (1990) refers to this judgment of teaching as "the conventional notion of teaching as the transmission of knowledge from an authoritative, 'knowing' teacher to an 'ignorant' student who desires to know" (p. 292).

According to theorists like Fish (1980) and Holland (1975) "meaning" does not reside in the text, but in the reader, and the context in which the reader is situated. For example, Fish's (1980) contention that readers develop meaning through "interpretive communities" rather than from the text, underscores the primary function of the reader, and diminishes the role of the text. The result of locating meaning in the reader is a

subsequent lessened view of the teacher as the transmitter of information; rather, it is the reader, and the context of any reading, that determines what "meaning" can be constituted of literary studies. In the classroom where teachers think of meaning as created collaboratively, teachers act in different kinds of roles, co-ordinating students' reading selections and activities, encouraging varied student interests and responses, assessing student performances, and serving as a vital resource for students (Harris, 1990). Scholes (1985) maintains that

The teacher's role is not to settle the rightness or wrongness of these individual acts of criticism, but to interact, to negotiate, and to make available the critical positions already on record, where and when they will be useful. It is also the teacher's job to provide the analytical tools that will help students penetrate the clever surface of texts like these so that criticism may begin. (p. 56)

Teachers' objectives are to create environments that will permit students to shape "meaning" for themselves, as teachers act as facilitators and not as arbiters of knowledge (Watson, 1989). On the surface, it may appear as if the teacher's role has not changed to any great extent. However, as careful examination reveals, the change in attitude concerning "knowledge making" within a social context of a classroom, shifts the teacher into a mode of challenging and pushing students to accept for themselves where meaning resides.

This second way of thinking about teaching and learning has led to some interesting changes in how teachers view their roles in the classroom. Strickland (1990) sees the role of teacher as "divided among three functions: convener, archivist, and

adversary" (p. 294). The first role acknowledges that teachers write a curriculum that is institutionally sanctioned; that is, teachers select the literature that is to be studied. In Alberta, for instance, the provincial government has set a required number of genres of study (e.g., six short stories, twelve poems) and has printed a list of "approved texts," for which the schools receive provincial government subsidies when they purchase those texts. While there are few restrictions placed on teachers regarding which English texts to use, for budgetary concerns, approved texts which offer substantial discounts are more likely to be selected. Moreover, government-approved texts offer protection to schools and teachers from community censorship issues. Thus, community members who take issue with the texts studied in English classrooms need to deal with Alberta Education, rather than individual teachers or schools.

As archivist, the teachers presumably have had the benefit of study of literature themselves, and can therefore act as a resource of information for students. For instance, teachers can make choices of literature that they believe will be of interest to students, they can supply background information about authors and contexts in which the selection was written, all of which aids students in studying literature. Finally, the teacher act as adversary, in which they deliberately initiate a provocation with students. The provocation is meant to foster challenges to students in order to set them against the text. As adversary, teachers make students aware of opposing or conflicting perspectives in the text so that students create problems/solutions in reading.

John Clifford (1991) wrote that "Aside from trying to rewrite our cultural values, one of my less utopian goals is to problematize reading, to encourage students to look

self-consciously at this seemingly natural process with a jaundiced eye, to make them suspicious of the commonsensical, ordinary ease with which they read texts" (p. 101). The teachers' role as facilitator provides a forum in which students can critically examine texts for themselves, and do not focus as much on themselves as authorities of the text. As Elbow (1986) stated:

The teacher must relinquish the role of "expert" or "professional." At most he can profess to bring special skills and experience to the basic process of wondering about something and deciding to do something about it. He must take the role of collaborator. He can only do this honestly and well to the extent that he sets an example to the students of demanding that the course serve his own self-interested curiosity. (p. 10)

This is a role in which teachers, as well as students "play" or "fool around" with the text (Elbow, 1986). The real job of learning is allowing for experimentation and exploration (Barnes, 1976). Teacher participation in the learning along with the students, has provided many teachers, myself included, with a distinctly different view of what it is teachers do in the classroom. This kind of teacher participation in the learning environments of our schools is complex, and not always clearly defined. As John Mayher pointed out, in the foreword of Judith Newman's (1990) book Finding our own way, "Nothing is harder than to put on new theoretical lenses that may help us see that the tried was not always true and that may also allow us to embark on a new journey without a well-planned route or a particularly clear map" (p. xv). It is without a known route or definable map with a destination in mind that I study dialogue journals. I want to know more about how students engage with literary texts, and the strategies they use to make meaning for

themselves. It is a tentative yet exhilarating step towards freeing the teacher as well as the student.

Teachers who use dialogue journals with their students are providing that opportunity for students to explore literary interpretations. By employing the dialogue journal with my students, I am underscoring the role I wish to assume--that of co-participant in their meaning-making in an English class. Using dialogue journals, the students engage in conversations with themselves, peers, and teachers, about the text. They are meant to be collaborative efforts (Spear, 1988; Bruffee, 1984; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989). Dialogue journals provide the teacher with a means for letting students experiment with interpretations, explore with language the very limits of the intellectual and emotional capacity. Dialogue journals can be the conveyances through which we clarify and articulate our understandings of literary text. It is necessary for English teachers to understand more about the journal as a way of fulfilling the opportunities for students to recognize and validate students' abilities to clarify and articulate.

Role of the Student

As English teachers re-examine the roles they play in the classroom, the bearing those roles will have on student roles is considerable. McCarthy and Raphael (1992) have noted that "the role of the student is inversely related to the role of the teacher" (p. 23); the more the teacher's role is central to the selection, design, and assessment of the English curriculum, the more passive the students' roles will be. On the other hand, the less obvious the teacher's role in directing students reading, writing, and talk, the more

responsibility placed on students increases. In classes where the teacher creates a forum in which participation from students is compulsory, students have little opportunity to remain passive. This can create fear in some students.

Emphasizing the function of the student in any interaction or transaction between reader, text, and context of the reading, necessitates a re-examination of the function of the student in the interpretive process. Meaning of text becomes activated or realised ("concretized") only as readers take an active part in the reading process (Iser, 1978, 1980, 1974). Students can no longer think of themselves as recipients of ready-made knowledge from authority figures. They must assume a stance that requires them to create knowledge structures for themselves, and to create texts of their own as they interpret (Scholes, 1982; 1985; Berlin 1996; Berthoff, 1981). For students who have not had either the opportunity or the instructional support in how to participate, this can be difficult, since students are frequently given "accepted" responses to literature. These accepted responses are then "tested" as if to verify the knowledge students have acquired about literature.

Yielding control in favour of students when studying literary texts is unsettling for all concerned. Some teachers view relinquishing control as an abrogation of their professional duties and an invitation to classroom chaos, and are tentative at best at giving up control (Moffett, 1988). Students, too, are not always comfortable with a more active role in the classroom, particularly with regards to reader response (Henneberg, 1996). For many years, students have been taught to defer to the authority of the teacher. Berlin (1996) has noted that students do not always appreciate the responsibility.

Their years of enduring the banking model of education, the model of teacher as giver of knowledge and student as passive receiver, have taken their toll. Many would rather sit quietly and take notes that they will later gladly reproduce for an exam. When pressed into active dialogue, they may deny the obvious social and political conflicts they enact and witness daily.
(p. 102)

The nature of learning in school situations has, until quite recently, rarely challenged the concept that governance by the teacher may not be the way that learning best occurs. Requiring students to accept less direction is not easy. In this new classroom, teachers create opportunities for learning, where responses to literature are not extracted, but evoked; where the students are architects of a work, with the collaboration of their peers and teachers acting as facilitators. Some students feel as if they have been abandoned by their teachers, left to their own devices to attain vague goals without maps or supplies (Weir, 1991). Some students almost feel betrayed in the sense that teachers, in their new roles, appear to have renounced the guise of "expert," the voices of authority from whom those students expected answers. Some students, when they encounter these unconventional teachers, can feel cheated if they feel that teachers have deliberately withheld answers from them (Brooke, 1991). The new roles for students takes time to explain, with modelling from the teacher. As students' confidence builds to the point where they feel that they are, indeed capable of creating new knowledge, different things begin to occur in the classroom (Williams, 1994).

Journals have been visible means by which teachers' and students' new roles have manifested in classroom practice. They unmask the way in which we read texts, and reveal

our struggles to make meaning from those texts (Newkirk, 1990). Dialogue journals can be useful as a teaching tool at any level, from elementary to university. What makes literary (or dialogue) journals so appropriate is that the new roles for teachers and students as constructors of knowledge requires distinct methods for conversations that foster such construction.

Sensitive Issues and Journals

Apart from the idea of the classroom becoming student-centred and losing control, English teachers may be hesitant to use journals for a number of other reasons. One is the issue of censorship and undermining the teacher's authority; another may be that teachers do not want to become involved when students reveal private information in their dialogue journals. Bruno Manno (1995) underlines the problem of students' new roles when he commented on the opposition in the U.S. to Outcomes Based Education, and, in particular, criticisms levelled by one Robert Simonds:

[Simonds] charges that, to the supporters of OBE, among whom he includes Theodore Sizer and John Goodlad, "'critical thinking' means teaching children to empty themselves of their own values (transmitted from parents, church, and culture) and accept a set of suggested values." For Simonds and many others, critical thinking is an assault on religious faith and family values. To those whose world is bounded and defined by religious faith, it would be sacrilegious to oblige their children to become critical thinkers and independent questioners of authority. (p. 723)

The use of journals as vehicles for development of students' critical thinking cannot be undertaken without understanding the implications. Underlying principles of journal

writing are freedom of expression and representation which may cause discomfort if students raise controversial issues or appear to threaten the conventional position of the teacher. Neither the teacher nor the student can afford to misunderstand that journals may resist authority and question accepted views, raising the spectre of censorship. Indeed, there are critics of journal writing who, because they submit that journals undermine teachers' authority, feel journals ought to be banished from the classroom. It was noted in an article on U.S. censorship by Simmons (1990) that "Phyllis Schlafly made a public statement that the major goal of the Eagle Forum for 1989 was to purge all journal writing activity from US public school classrooms" (p. 121). Schlafly, and others, believe that by permitting students' self-expression, the concept of "authority" would be seriously undermined. Students who were encouraged to constantly question and challenge would have little respect for any kind of authority, potentially damaging the structure of the classroom, and eventually harming societal and political structures.

Morgan (1998) has raised the issue of privacy concerning journals. Even though journals are meant to be documents open to public scrutiny, students often use them as places in which they reveal personal difficulties. As rewarding as teachers might believe journals to be as opportunities to enhance students' critical thinking about literature, teachers ought to be aware that journals are not universally accepted, and may present teachers with problems in dealing with students' personal lives.

We can never be "empty of values." It simply means that varying perspectives can be explored and differing views examined. The question is: To what extent may teachers allow students to tackle difficult and often controversial issues of their choosing? I

maintain that in the classroom care must be given to where to draw the line, as all teachers must have defined boundaries. For instance, subjects that are disturbing or graphic might not be suitable for school-related activities, and might cause the teachers to become uncomfortable; teachers should not hesitate, under any circumstances that cause them uneasiness, to make personal boundaries clear. There are plenty of issues that students can choose to deal with, without having community sensibilities upset. Yet, as Moffett has argued, thoughts regarding censorship must be explained by the teacher to the students.

Definition of Journals as Expressive Response

D'Arcy (1989) noted that one of the difficulties in discussing journals is the confusion about terms used to describe them, and the divergent purposes for which teachers employ them:

what some refer to as think-books, others refer to as journals or learning logs; under any of these names pupils may be writing to express their feelings, to sort out their ideas or ask questions about their work. Some regard journals as essentially sacrosanct to the writer and only to be shared (even with the teacher), if the writer wishes; others regard them as a useful basis for small group and possibly class discussion--others again as a useful form of self-assessment and personal profiling. (p. 107)

The confusion regarding terms often results in an inability to conclusively delineate the purpose of student journals and journal writing. And the purpose of journals depends a great deal on how useful they are perceived. Teachers and students may harbour negative stereotypes of journals as "diaries" in which personal utterances, but little substantive

work is achieved--merely "busy work" that teachers may not monitor or even read (Anson & Beach, 1995).

Andrasick (1990) has divided journals into "types" according to their primary function. For example, she used the term "dialogue journal" in the same way that Berthoff (1981; 1986) referred to a "double-entry notebook." The idea is that students write their observations about a text on one side of the page, while on the other the student can write commentary and reflection on the observations written on the opposite page. Other researchers (Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988) have defined "dialogue journals" as written conversations between two people--generally the teacher and student--to develop a personal rapport. In these notebooks, students initiate (at a teacher's request) "a written conversation between two persons on a functional continuous basis, about topics of individual (and eventually mutual) interest" (Staton, et al. 1988). They do not necessarily relate to a specified curriculum of study (Staton, et al., 1988; Staton, 1987).

"Process logs," according to Andrasick (1990), are notebooks that permit students to "move from an initial, personal engagement with a text to the less personal but more self-aware distance required for skilled critical abstraction" (p. 59). To do this, students are to progress through a series of questions about the text, leading to problem-posing and question generating that "lead students through several important phases of critical inquiry" (Andrasick, 1990, p. 61). Finally, Andrasick (1990) identified reading response notebooks as places where students freewrite for ten to twenty minutes about the reading they have just completed (p. 69), which in turn are used to begin discussion about the literature. In this way, the students further their understanding of the multiplicity of

interpretations of literary texts. Similarly, Atwell (1987) has used dialogue journals to invoke "dining-room conversations" with students regarding the material they read. Conversations among friends about books they have read, elicit pleasurable and lively discussions that enrich everyone's understanding of reading experiences.

For the purposes of this study, journals are defined more closely as notebooks in which students record their expressed responses to literature studied in English class. They are asked to construct their understanding of literary texts in their dialogue journals. D'Arcy (1989) remarks that "Specialist English teachers most commonly encourage students to use think-writing as a means of speculating about or interpreting a literary text...because, just as shaping meaning into writing takes time, so does reading understanding of someone else's writing" (p. 116).

Response journals also function as support for discussion, as well as further writing. It is a place not only of exploration of readers' emotions and feelings about texts, but also a place which profiles students' development in their abilities to interpret literary text. In short, journals are promoted as a cognitive activity through which students can become more perceptive and interpretive readers, better able to critically evaluate texts, as Scholes (1982; 1985; 1998) has suggested. It is, therefore, a notebook where "students focus attention both on the content of a text and on their observation of that content" (Andrasick, 1990, p. 50). The observations that students make can be either affective or cognitive, "relaxed and alert" at the same time (Salvatori, 1983).

Literary Theory and Dialogue Journals

MacEwan (1992) outlined a number of influences which have affected the nature of literature instruction in the English classroom during the past century--influences that continue to shape modern practices in the English classroom and, for the purposes of this study, the use of dialogue journals. Most of the influences mentioned by MacEwan (1992) maintained power and control in teachers' hands and students passive in learning. Such influences had the power to dominate certain methods of instruction in literature (Moffett, 1990). For example, Dias and Hayhoe (1988) have noted that New Criticism is one of three major trends in literary criticism that has affected and endures in the teaching of poetry.

It is questionable, however, whether English teachers themselves have clear sense of which literary theories impact on their teaching (Dias & Hayhoe, 1988); nor do English teachers appear to have a clear sense of what they expect students to do in terms of activities that have direct connection with those literary theories. As a result, teachers have adopted a "whatever works" approach, without necessarily understanding the attending learning theories that might suggest why certain approaches or methods work (Farnham-Diggory, 1994). Moreover, this mosaic of literary instruction may seem disconnected, without forming any cohesive whole. Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) argued that "Too many teachers proceed unreflectively from recollections of how they were taught and from heresay about what "everybody does," supported by the outmoded premises, illusory distinctions, false claims, regimented methods and prescriptivist emphases" (p. 5). Teachers need to determine how literary theories affect teaching methods, and whether or

not those theories are congruent with superior English classroom practices.

In 1993, when Applebee reported on teachers' perceptions of theories that guided the ways in which they taught literature, researchers involved in the study found that both New Criticism and reader response theories were mentioned most frequently. Teachers perceived New Critical and reader response literary theories to have had a significant effect on their instructional practices of literature.

The critical approaches that the teachers cited as influencing their teaching of a representative class were New Criticism (50 percent of the teachers in the random sample of public schools) and reader response (67 percent). As in the case study schools, teachers reported that recent alternative approaches, including feminist criticism, had had little influence on their instruction. (p. 122)

In many respects, Applebee's survey (1993) indicated that teachers' goals for literature instruction, as well as their approaches to literature instruction, had reached an "eclectic compromise" (p. 122). In the study, 38.5 percent of the teachers surveyed "gave high ratings to the influence of reader-response and New Criticism approaches on their teaching with a specific class, and another 41.1 percent at least moderate influence of both approaches" (p. 122). Since New Criticism and reader-response literary theories appear, according to teachers, to have had a consequential effect on English teaching practices, it follows that it is appropriate that those two theories be profiled in particular.

According to some researchers, there are teachers who believe they are creating reader-response environments in their English classrooms, but who, in fact, have not developed such practices at all (Thomson, 1987). As compelling as reader-response

theories may be, there is little evidence that the reader is emphasized in many English classrooms. Far more disturbing, according to Thomson (1987), is that literary theory, even reader-response, can turn into rigidly mechanical and routine exercises, as he claimed happened with reading strategies developed by I.A. Richards and the New Critics. If this is the case, the ultimate purpose of any reading strategy, including the journal, is to avoid having students learn about literary text through mechanistic means. Better that students learn to adopt the approaches of superior and more experienced readers in order to illuminate literary text.

This study is focused on gaining an insight into ways to foster interpretive skills. Flower (1987) has asked, "If it is true that all our knowledge is mediated knowledge--a construction of our own making--then what power outside of us contributes to, accounts for, predicts, influences, drives, or (in the strongest scenario), determines our 'reading'?" (p. 8).

There needs to be a more complete discussion as to how journals fit with current literary theory and composition theory. In addition, there needs to be more study of how journals secure together prevailing concerns of reading and writing ability. Fulwiler (1987b) has noted that he began using journals sparingly in his classroom, not requiring students to keep them, and not grading them. However, as student journals revealed to him that they appeared to increase students' learning powers he stated:

I no longer trust to chance; journals work now for most of my students because I use them actively every day to write in, read from, and talk about--in addition to whatever private writing the students do on their own...Journal writing in class stimulates classroom discussion, starts small

group activity, clarifies hazy issues, reinforces learning, and stimulates imaginations. (p. 15)

If the use of journals is to enjoy wider acceptance and support, they need to occupy a central position in the classroom, not just as one activity among many. Further, journal writing must be sustained from sound conceptual premises that are clearly delineated, consciously sustained, and continually modified in light of new information concerning the ways in which students learn to interpret literary text by writing about their engagement with the texts. Journals must be placed within a theoretical context of literary theory as well as composition theory. Both fields of study have a bearing on the nature, purpose, and consequences of applying journal writing as English pedagogy. Journal writing comes from discernment that readers and texts interact, condition, and are conditioned by the other (Rosenblatt, 1978). Journals continue to evolve as a vehicle through which the voice of the reader can be heard as those interactions and conditionings take place. It is significant to note that the influence of writing to learn theories have also impacted the purposes for which journal writing is used. Therefore, it is important that the impact of reader-oriented literary theory on the development of journals as a means of interpreting literary text be grasped.

The New Criticism

The objective of any English program is to teach students how to read, interpret, and evaluate increasingly difficult and syntactically more complex texts. To do this, students need to grasp meaning from text, and to know the strategies by which they are

able to do this. Scholes (1985) pointed out that the aim of "teaching interpretation is not to usurp the interpreter's role but to explain the rules of the interpretive game" (p. 30). For some time, New Critical literary theories were thought to be key in this development. To the proponents of New Criticism, as it emerged in the United States and to a lesser extent in Britain, meaning was derived from text; therefore, readers were thought to be able to study texts objectively, bracketing out concerns of authorial intent and contexts in which texts are written and read. Even if a writer's intentions could be recovered (which they could not) those intentions were of no relevance. An example of this can be found in an essay concerning Andrew Marvell's "Horatian Ode", in which Cleanth Brooks (1963) asserted that a study of poem as a study of "the particular stage of Marvell's developing opinion of Cromwell...is at best a relatively coarse method which can hope to give no more than a rough estimation of the poem" (p. 100). Brooks (1963) maintained that within the study of a literary work in order to ascertain the mind of an author, there lurked perils. Instead, Brooks (1963) held that "There is surely a sense in which any one must agree that a poem has a life of its own, and a sense in which it provides in itself the only criterion by which what it says can be judged" (p. 100). Similarly, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) argued that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (p. 3). The literary work meant what it meant, its meaning public, and this public meaning had nothing to do with any emotional reactions a reader, individually, might have for the work.

The other strand of the argument posited by Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) was that of the Affective Fallacy: "a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and

what it does...[which] begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism" (p. 21). Readers ought to be able to make a clear distinction between the meaning of the work, and how they felt about it. This could be achieved, in part through clear delineation between "symbolic and emotive use of language", and the incapacity to do this resulted in "clear but confused, sensuous ideas" (p. 28). But art, as a cold sphere, they claimed, ought to be judged more objectively in order that critical intelligence might be employed, instead of vague notions of affect. "We have psychological theories of aesthetic distance, detachment, or disinterestedness. A criticism on these principles has already taken steps toward objectivity" (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954, p. 33).

Objectivity, or neutrality of the critic, was of utmost importance to New Critics, as they examined the coherence and orderliness of parts, as they pertained to the whole of the literary work. Wimsatt (1963/1951) argued that the "success of explication in persuading us of literary value is a kind of practical test of how well aesthetic theories of order and wholeness do apply to literary works" (p. 2). Sufficiently informed readers were those who could read the different elements of a text, then pull together the "meaning" of a text by accounting for all those various elements. Wimsatt (1963/1951) acknowledged that this was a difficult task, especially in light of longer literary works.

For one of the most persistent implications of holism and explicationism is that the parts do have value only as interacting and making the whole. And this is an article of the philosophy which is bound to impose some hard work here and there on the explicator--even when he working on very exquisitely finished poems. Perhaps the difficulty of eliciting the

significance of every detail will be the greater in proportion to the largeness and greatness of the poem. Extreme holism is obviously contrary to our experience of literature...The value of the whole poem, while undoubtedly reflecting something back to the parts, has to grow out of parts which are themselves valuable. (p. 5)

The elite who claimed to have an expertise in interpreting literary text, were thus said to have cultivated this proficiency through "close reading" of a text. In this manner, the literary text could be read, standing apart from all "subjective" aspects and could be "objectively" examined. Differences in interpretation of text were believed to be resolved through readers' ability to distance themselves from the text in order to study the work. Nystrand, Greene, and Wiemelt (1993) expressed the function of the literary critic, as defined by Formalism, or New Criticism, in this way:

For any given text, readers sought a stable, singular, and universal core meaning--a public and objective truth--inscribed, as it were, in the text itself. Such an understanding could be revealed only through analysis, or "explication," of formal text elements, including images, figures of speech, rhythm, and rhyme, as well as "tensions" among the various elements. (p. 275)

Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) wrote that "Whether or not one believes in universals, one may see the persistence in literary criticism of a theory that poetry presents the concrete and the universal, or the individual and the universal, or an object which in a mysterious and special way is both highly general and highly particular" (p. 71). Readers were apparently able to divorce themselves from the text in order to achieve this "close reading" which would reveal universals located in the literary work. Objectivity was supposed to permit the text to reveal its truths to the reader, and these truths were

undeviating. Griffiths (1987) pointed out that for New Critics, the notion that meaning could not be held consistently was threatening. He wrote that "For them, if meaning cannot be held constant across time, it then becomes impossible to ascribe permanent moral or aesthetic value to a particular text. How can a work of literature contribute to human well-being if at one time it casts a chivalric glamour over warfare, and at another it debunks and savages the whole process?" (p. 25). Griffiths underscored one of the problems that New Critics faced in terms of trying to determine, once and for all, what that stable meaning could be. According to Eagleton (1983) New Criticism was studying literature in terms of applied linguistics. Formalists sought underlying structures or "laws" that were supposed to govern literary structures; "universal laws" were believed to exist and that "content was merely the 'motivation' of form" (p. 3). Thus the study of those underlying structures and forms were of more interest to formalists' examination of literary works. In addition, this "universal core meaning," was believed to be timeless, and that the truth that was revealed was unintrospective, enduring in a determinable state throughout the ages. This suggested to New Critics that strategies used to discover textual meanings could be as unchanging as the underlying meaning itself. Such strategies for helping students discern meaning were believed to happen if students were directed in their reading to examine parts of the literary text.

New Criticism sought to establish the benefits of meticulous scrutiny of texts so that students would be guided to "correct" interpretations of literary works. Much has been discussed concerning the "Affective Fallacy," which attempted to distinguish between what the poem is and what it does, in effect, isolating the literary text from both writer and

reader (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954). It was this attempt to separate text from reader that later united opposition in the form of reader response theories. New Critics wanted to assure readers of literature that the essences of meaning in texts could be discovered, and that unity and coherence could be determined as close reading of texts continued.

New Criticism and Transmission Model of Knowledge Acquisition

This view of New Criticism is based on a traditional conceptualization of knowledge that is extrinsic, existing independently of any knower. Moreover, knowledge acquisition was based on one's ability to reveal universal "laws" or features, describe them with accuracy that would enable the laws to stand the test of time. In terms of learning theory, teachers transmit knowledge to learners; learners accrue extrinsic knowledge through incrementation (Farnham-Diggory, 1994) wherein "a novice gets to be an expert by accumulating something, getting better, getting faster, getting more, and so forth" (Farnham-Diggory, 1994, p. 464). If one assumes this stance, "Readers and writers, therefore, must acquire or 'unearth' knowledge as being 'out' in the world by using the 'correct,' 'objective,' 'scientific' methods" (Beach, Green, Kamil & Shanahan, 1992) in order to achieve that which is necessary to become expert. Further, if readers were able to employ such scientific methods in the search for meaning in literary texts, differences in interpretation could be resolved eventually.

In terms of pedagogy, New Criticism was attractive to teachers who believed in an "empty vessel" or "banking" metaphor of teaching, wherein teachers deposited bits of information into student "receptacles" (Cahalan & Downing, 1991). In this metaphor,

however, the teacher as the "full" vessel of knowledge, always had the students at a disadvantage, for they could only attempt to emulate the ways in which the teachers interpreted works of literature. Moreover, New Criticism appealed on the grounds that if Truth in texts were "discoverable," then meaning could be clearly delineated and conveyed, again supporting a transmission model of learning. Ultimately, these transmitted, accepted interpretations of literary texts could be measured and tested. Langer (1992) has noted, with discouragement, that

we have ample evidence that across United States, literature is all too often taught and tested in a nonliterary manner. In a series of studies of the questions asked in anthologies as well as on a range of tests, Brody, DeMilo, and Purves (1989) report that literature is usually treated as content (a point of reference), with a particular right answer as a goal of testing. (p. 38)

As the result of these goals of literature instruction and testing, students were rarely asked to make meaning for themselves, or to create strategies for themselves in order to read literary text more effectively. Students were to mirror those accepted interpretations offered by the "expert" teacher. Responding to New Criticism in a stronger tone, Poznar (1992) wrote:

Reacting against those who employ the content of a literary work for polemical or propagandistic reasons, the New Critics flatly rejected the heresy of paraphrase. They rejected impressionism in all its manifestations-- the pathetic fallacy, the historical fallacy, all of the heresies that subordinated the literary text to other concerns...Literature was thus effectively removed from the hands of amateurs and entrusted to professional literary critics. Literature was the province of a literate elite

whose explications were at times so arcane and so subtle that no literate layperson could hope to comprehend them. (p. 520)

New Criticism evaluated textual interpretations in terms of how "close" a reading--generally performed by professional literary critics--was rendered, and how persuasively that interpretation was asserted. But the idea of "close reading" of a text generated controversy, specifically because "interpretation" was highly dependent upon the rhetorical power of the critic. Often, critics were accused of presenting interpretations and theories that obfuscated meaning rather than clarified it. Scholes (1985) noted that the New Critical approach "allowed the instructor but not the students to tune in on the interpretive tradition, increasing the instructor's mysterious powers and the student's sense of powerlessness" (p. 31). Thus, the interpretive traditions could be used as a mechanism of teacher control in the classroom. In addition, such esoteric treatment of literary text effectually left out ordinary readers who might have brought imagination, joy and passion to the work. Students were obliged to "learn" from teachers, but as a consequence of the mystery and control surrounding literary study, only a few students could enjoy literature. Probst (1992) stated that

If there is a norm, a best reading, then the correctness of other readings can be judged by how closely they approximate that best reading. Thus the most persuasive critics become preeminent, their interpretations become the touchstone by which other readings are judged, and students are subtly encouraged to submit to and imitate the thinking of their critical betters. A student's experience with a text is always subject to someone else's evaluation, and it is always, more or less, wrong. (p. 59)

While New Criticism did not ignore the reader entirely, the reader was relegated to passive

recipient of meaning, subservient to the text, or to other authorities on the reading.

Perhaps New Criticism would work if there were a belief in "textual fundamentalism"; that is, principles "based on the belief that texts always say just what they mean, so that any honest or decent person ought to be able to understand this perfectly clear meaning without making any fuss about it. The problem with this position is that it requires an infallible author, a perfect language, and a timeless context in order to work" (Scholes, 1989, p. 52). And this, precisely, is why reader oriented literary theories have become so influential--they exercise the right to explore the possibilities of these other variables.

According to Rosenblatt (1971) "the New Critics' concern with 'the work itself' led, unfortunately, to disregard of the reader's contribution" (p. 160). It is Rosenblatt's consideration of the readers' contribution, coupled with scepticism about textual fundamentalism, that lead to a change in the many English classroom practices, including the use of dialogue journals. Unlike other classroom activities that engage the thoughts and ideas of the literature teacher, the dialogue journal spotlights students' impressions and beliefs, their reactions and reflections of literary text. Effectively, journals place the authority of interpretation back in the hands of student readers.

It should be noted, however, that some New Critics have contended that the role of the reader, even if subservient to the text, is not passive, and they affirm the readers' vital function as literary critic. Atkins and Morrow (1989) argued, for example, that a text such as Understanding Poetry by Brooks and Warren (Third Edition, 1971) is "unremittingly student-centered" (p. 32). They posit that "Such responsible, sometimes rigorous study of a poem gives students (and teachers!) more insight into its formal

dynamics than can any other approach" (p. 31). This was especially evident in the way in which New Critics were able to develop literary analyses that permitted readers to "make sense" of literary works through examination of their parts. Brooks, Purser, and Warren in their fifth edition of An Approach to Literature (1975) emphasized that

every successful example is an expressive unity, that the structural elements that can be distinguished and analyzed are, in actuality, parts of an organic unity, just as hands, feet, liver and lights, circulatory system, brain cells, and so forth are parts of the organic unity we call the body, intimately related in the ongoing life process...for we are, ultimately, concerned with the elements of fictional structure only insofar as they function in the vital unity of an individual story or novel (p. 4, emphasis in the original).

Martin (1989) asserted that close analysis of text did not mean an abandonment of reader response. He considered that Wayne Booth's (1961) point that humans love of abstract forms and seeking of patterns in literary works did not necessarily mean that readers had to passively submit to others' authority.

This ability to analyse literary works in a detailed, technical manner is significant to the way in which students learn how to interpret literary text. Moreover, as Suleiman (1980) advised, "it would be a pity if the current fashion of using the New Criticism as a whipping boy--or as a discredited father--made us forget the very significant contributions of both the New Critics and their predecessors, the Russian Formalists, to modern literary theory and criticism" (p. 5).

The idea that readers could find the Truth of a text through close examination of the text had, and still has, enormous appeal. In recent times, for instance, there have been

proposals for a mastery curriculum in literature, in which students were to have read the major classics and have understood a few basic concepts (Hirsch, 1993; Glatthorn, 1988). Although Glatthorn (1988) did not state exactly what those few basic concepts are, Hirsch (1993) argued that they would be flexible to accommodate the needs of different learners. "Meaningful experience" with literature involved close readings and analysis, according to Glatthorn (1988); therefore it is imperative that students learn how to follow others' close readings and analyses, since the subtle message is that students, novices to close reading and analysis, need others' expertise in the area.

It is posited by writers such as Roemer (1987) that the text does have "meaning," and that "more often than not our classrooms communicate a set of dominant values and manners which students transgress at their own peril" (p. 912). It is critical that students understand the language of the academic world if they are to function successfully within it. Moreover, Roemer (1987) has suggested that there were a variety of formalist methods that could help students unlock meaning, and, at the same time, not marginalize or silence their voices. While literary texts might not be as "open" as they might seem, and have boundaries which emerge through continual testing, there need not be one "method" for construing textual meaning. Students continually test those emerging boundaries as a process studying literary text. They must learn the kinds of opinions and styles of speech that are privileged, against which their own opinions and styles of speech may conflict (Roemer, 1987). Intimating to students that their own interpretations could or would be as privileged as all others, is possibly unfair, and can lead to self-deception about openness and inclusiveness of literary interpretation. However, even Rosenblatt (1993) argues that

“If we agree on criteria for validity of interpretation...we can decide on the most defensible interpretation or interpretations” (p. 382).

It can be argued that New Critical methods are still widely acclaimed, and with good reason. Students who wish to enter the world of academe must master the ways in which thought is generated, and the current language used to generate such thought must be central to instructional practice (Bizzell, 1986). These methods of instruction are currently practiced, particularly in academically oriented schools which serve a majority of students who are university-bound (Applebee, 1993; Dias & Hayhoe, 1988; Thomson, 1987). Such practices give the impression that the study of literature is a problem-solving activity that encourages students to think logically and critically about the texts they read. Further, there is a satisfaction in a belief that meaning was there, in the text, waiting to be located. There were answers; they could be taught and learned, and, most importantly, they could be tested. Current teaching practices of learning to interpret literary text still adhere to many New Critical philosophies. For example, students who answer the kind of editor or teacher-generated questions requiring oral or written responses, accompanying literary passages or works, is one such New Critical strategy customarily used in classrooms--to such an extent that end-of-selection questions are ubiquitous procedures in the study of literature. Similarly, teacher generated topics that students were to use in formal essays about literature have been privileged activities in the English classroom. These sorts of activities imply that students need continual direction from authorities to point the way, to tell students on which aspects of the texts they ought to focus their attention, even implying the kinds of reactions they ought to have to the literature.

Applebee (1984a) reported that when students wrote about literature, they most frequently used scripted questions, often written by editors of textbooks, as well as activities and essay topics. These forms of writing are designed to elicit from students responses that are in keeping with sanctioned interpretations as determined by authorities on the subject--either the teacher or the professional literary critic. Again, in 1990, Applebee noted that this form of helping students learn to interpret literature was pervasive in many secondary schools.

The teaching of literature as it emerges...is a relatively traditional enterprise. The typical literature classroom is organized around whole group discussion of a text everyone reads, with the teacher in front of the class guiding the students toward a common agreed-upon interpretation.
(p. 119)

Disagreement about a text's meaning was, for New Critics, an untenable proposition, as it negated the concept of stability of meaning in text and suggested that the study of literature, as a discipline, was weakly conceived. Multivariate meanings could threaten, for New Critics, the respectable study of literature by throwing the discipline into relativistic chaos. There could be no validity in literary "meaning" if it could not be clearly circumscribed and evaluated. Above all, New Critics eschewed approaches to the study of literature that appeared to be unsystematic in conduct and which could not achieve definitive results, in order to avoid criticisms that might undermine the hard-won authority of literature as a serious discipline. This authority had not been easily attained, pitted against the likes of "hard" sciences that had powerful influence within a culture of efficiency, based to a large degree on quantitative data. As Tompkins (1980) stated:

Literary studies, consequently, whose subject matter is not quantifiable, whose methods are not formalized, and whose results are not able to be objectively verified, cannot compete with science for an equal share of prestige and economic support in a society where positivist values prevail. (p. 222)

Similarly, Eagleton (1983) wrote: "New Criticism...evolved in the years when literary criticism in North America was struggling to become 'professionalized', acceptable as a respectable academic discipline" (p. 49).

Rise of Reader Response

Proponents of New Critical theories met resistance on numerous philosophical grounds: the first concerned the perception of a text as an independent object, something which could be studied impartially. Texts were bound to human writers and readers, and to contexts of various kinds, including linguistic, experiential, situational, and task contexts. As such, texts could be continually in a state of change, dependent upon the contexts described. For example, Roland Barthes (1981) wrote that he could not consider works as

mere 'messages', or even as 'statements' (that is, finished products, whose destiny would be sealed as soon as they were uttered), but as perpetual productions, enunciations, through which the subject continues to struggle; this subject is no doubt that of the author, but also that of the reader...Not only does the theory of the text extend to infinity the freedoms of reading (authorising us to read works of the past with an entirely modern gaze)...but it also insists strongly on the (productive) equivalence of reading and writing. (p. 42)

In addition, criticism was levelled against New Critics because of a perceived failure to understand the connectedness among all types of texts. Students had been advised by New Critics to study literary works as separate entities, detached from associations with other works, authors, as well as contexts. It was argued that this perception of literary text severed from all other types of "text" presented a piecemeal and therefore incoherent study of the discipline. Thomas (1991) commented that

because each work students read in a literature course is an organic whole that stands on its own, there is really no reason why they should relate one work to another taught in the same course. As they read one work, then another, then another, each separate and unique, each reading can too easily contribute to their sense of education as a fragmented, unrelated experiences, in which wholeness and unity are to be found only in temporary, self-enclosed moments. (p. 89)

Reader response theorists were literary theorists who rejected the view that the text as something separate and apart from the writer and reader. Especially during the 60's and into the 70's, they reacted strongly against the New Critical disregard for the social and psychological aspects of reading.

Rosenblatt (1971) believed that what was missing from New Critical perspective was a "thoroughly developed theory of the relationship between the reader and the text" (p. 160), in which the role of readers was investigated. What dismayed many reader response theorists was the apparent deficient outline of New Critical philosophy concerning the discipline of literature study. Similarly, Iser (1974) wrote that

books only take on their full existence in the reader. It is true that they consist of ideas thought out by someone else, but in reading the reader

becomes the subject that does the thinking. Thus there disappears the subject-object division that otherwise is a prerequisite for all knowledge and all observation, and the removal of this division puts reading in an apparent unique position as regards the possible absorption of new experiences. (p. 66)

Opposition against more positivist views of literary study formed in what some refer to as audience-oriented criticism (Sulieman and Crosman, 1980), or reader-oriented criticism (Mailloux, 1982; Tompkins, 1980; Selden, 1995). This reaction suggested that a re-examination of the role of reader was needed, for, although the New Critics had not entirely discounted the reader, neither had they discussed the readers' role to any extent. There were strong condemnations levelled against New Critical literary theorists resulting from this omission (Holland, 1975; Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1978; Fish, 1980). They sought to redress the neglect of the readers' role as well as the relevance of textual context, "whether the latter be defined in terms of historical, cultural, ideological, or psychological categories" (Suleiman, 1980, p. 5). Consequently, discussion was generated concerning the translation of reader-response theory into classroom practice (Corcoran, Hayhoe, & Pradl, 1995; Corcoran and Evans, 1987; Probst, 1988; Protherough, 1983; Karolides, 1992). Readers had been required, these theorists and practitioners impugned, to replicate accepted interpretations from authorities, and not expected to participate to any significant extent in a journey of interpretation. As a result, they charged, they could not contribute, and therefore master the art of interpretation. Dias and Hayhoe (1988) continued an analogy in this way:

There is a price pupils pay for the convenience of 'packaged' tours: because

they are not expected to make sense of a poem themselves, they are unlikely to learn to 'travel' on their own. If we continue along the lines of this analogy, tour operators and guides soon lose sight of why people wish to travel. The packaging becomes a virtue and a tour's sole selling point.

(p. 7)

In another instance, Probst (1992) argued against New Criticism when he noted that it meant: "to teach the right and proper interpretation, the correct reading, [and] to ignore the limitless variability of the human experience" (p. 59). In order to account for variability in interpretation of literary text, reader response theorists postulated that meaning did not reside in the text, and that meaning was created as the reader "transacted" (Rosenblatt, 1978) or "interacted" (Iser, 1978) with the text. Most significantly, however, reader-response asserted the place of the reader in the making of textual meaning and the interpretive process was vital, and declared that individual readers could contribute literary criticism. Rosenblatt (1978) claimed that

the social and intellectual atmosphere that sets up "good literature" as almost by definition works accessible only to the elitist critic or literary historian...leads the average reader to assume that he simply is not capable of participating in them. Our whole literary culture tends to produce this defeatist attitude. (p. 142)

There were repercussions in literary criticisms that averred the power of the reader to shape texts, with all the "variability of the human experience." This did not mean, however, that this reaction against New Criticism was unified. In fact, despite the singular term "reader response," there is great diversity in the approaches of how theorists believe readers respond to text. For example, Sulieman (1980) identified "six varieties of (or

approaches to) audience-oriented criticism: rhetorical; semiotic and structuralist; phenomenological; subjective and psychoanalytic; sociological and historical; and hermeneutic" (p. 7). But, in spite of divergence, audience-oriented criticism opened the door for consideration of individual readers' unique perspectives and variations on interpretation. In particular reader response criticism focused its interest on the reader, or audience, as well. While there is great diversity among reader response theorists (Tompkins, 1980; Beach, 1993; Mailloux, 1982), there are two aspects that provide some unity to reader response: the first is the focus on the reader in the reading and interpretive process; and the second is a rejection of the text as an isolated object of study.

Reader response theories are polysemous in nature and operate along a continuum depending upon where theorists believe meaning is located. There are theorists who posit that the text is a mere prompt to the reader's activated memory and imagination (Bleich, 1975; Holland, 1975). In this instance, the entire emphasis would be on the reader's personal identity that would determine how a text would be read, revealing what Holland would call "identity themes" (Holland, 1975). Bleich (1975) perceived the text as a means to one's own private experiences, that may only have been awakened by the text. There are those who argue that, because nothing is accorded by a text, meaning is derived from interpretive communities, situated in specific historical and cultural settings (Fish, 1980). Within "interpretive communities," it is possible to perceive interpretation, not as a random act, in which groups of readers can respond in similar ways "not due to monolithic properties of the text, but to the beliefs and assumptions shared by identifiable communities of readers" (Dorfman, 1996, p. 457). Strong reader-oriented theories, such

as the ones mentioned above, counterbalanced the extreme views of New Critics. However, there were more moderate views that offered congruity between meaning embedded in the text, and meaning situated in the reader. Both Rosenblatt's (1976; 1978; 1994) "transactional" theories on the relationship among reader, text, and poem and Iser's (1978; 1980) "interactive" theories hold import for this study. Theorists like Rosenblatt and Iser attempted to strike symmetry between the reader who construes and constructs meaning, and the texts which provide the conditions for that construing and constructing (Berthoff, 1981). Earthman (1992) has stated that

In Iser and Rosenblatt we find descriptions of how the process of creating meaning from a literary text is in theory carried out (including consideration of the background and experience that a reader brings to the task and of the ways that the text serves as a guide or blueprint for the activation of the reader's resources). Neither Iser nor Rosenblatt believes in the objectivity or determinacy of the text, nor do they accept that any meaning can be legitimately created from the literary transaction. Theirs represents a middle way between the two extremes of objectivity and subjectivity which adequately accounts for both reader and text. (p. 353)

Reader-response can be, at its best, a gesture toward alleviating some of the uncertainty students feel when they face "literary" texts on their own. They can gain confidence in their abilities to interpret literary texts, and contribute to the critical aspects of studying literary texts. By opening up exploratory dialogue among students, texts, and teachers, students can understand variations of others' constructed meanings, re-reading and continually returning to the text for further modification, refinement, or revision of their initial thoughts and ideas.

Rosenblatt and Iser

Because of the unique contribution Rosenblatt and Iser have made to reader response theory, they have had a vital impact on the nature of this study, particularly with respect to the possible use of journals and how journals may be situated within a theoretical framework. Teachers who determine that dialogue journals may have a central role in helping students learn to interpret literary text may understand the principles that Rosenblatt and Iser articulated.

Both Rosenblatt and Iser underscore the contribution made by readers in the act of reading--quite simply, there was no act of reading without the participation and engagement of the reader. For example, Rosenblatt (1976) noted that "A novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols...the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into a pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings" (p. 25).

Rosenblatt (1978) has stated that the poem--the whole category of 'literary work of art'--"must be thought of as an event in time...during a coming together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text" (p. 12). She argued that in the "transaction" between reader and text, there are no distinct, separable entities, but that this was a "relationship in which each element, instead of being fixed and predefined, conditions and is conditioned by the other" (p. 380). The text, for example, can evoke memory, thought, and feeling in the reader who, in turn, perceives the text in a certain manner. While distinctions can be made between reader and text, "no sharp separation between perceiver and the perception can be made, since the observer is a part of the observation" (1993, p.

380). This view of reading is seamless, where the reader and text can be demarcated but not dissociated one from another, so inextricably are they woven together. Rosenblatt's conviction is that reading literary text not only invites, but requires participation on the part of the reader as a partner in creating the literary work, or the "poem."

Similarly, Iser (1974) affirmed that the reader was a critical part of the act of reading, and could neither be ignored nor considered less than the text itself. He felt that reader and text converged into a dynamic process of meaning-making, with both text and reader in equal balance. Moreover, as he considered the nature of readers, Iser advanced the idea of how readers' unique characteristics determined much of the process of comprehending literary text. He asserted that

The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader--though this in turn is acted upon by the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. (p. 275)

While both Rosenblatt and Iser focused more attention of the role of the reader in the act of understanding literary text, they also upheld the influence and function of the text in any reading encounter. Despite criticisms levelled against reader-oriented theories which claim them to leave the door open to arbitrary interpretation of text, both Rosenblatt and Iser emphasized the substance of the text. Iser (1978) answered concerns regarding reduction of the role of text in this way:

One of the main objections, then, to a theory of aesthetic response is that is

sacrifices the text to the subjective arbitrariness of comprehension by examining it in the reflection of its actualization and so denying it an identity of its own. On the other hand, it is obvious that the text as the objective embodiment of an ideal standard incorporates a number of premises that can by no means be taken for granted. (p. 23)

Iser (1978) further declared that “acts of comprehension are guided by the structures of the text” (p. 24), as did Rosenblatt (1978). The reader, Rosenblatt suggested, must use the text as a “blueprint,” not to unearth meaning from the printed page, but to construct meaning from the indicators and cues provided by the text. She stated that “the finding of meanings involves both the author’s text and what the reader brings to it” (1978, p. 14). Rosenblatt (1978) used the analogy that the text “patterns and delimits, but it ultimately functions like a chemical element” which, when merged with other elements such as the unique characteristics of a given reader in a given context, produce the “poem” or work of literature (p. 15). Therefore, the reader is neither the sole measure of all interpretations; nor is the text a poor bargainer as readers engage in reading experiences (Chabot, 1989). It seems clear that both Rosenblatt and Iser viewed textual constraints as pivotal in the growth and development of students' abilities to interpret literary text and the fact that both Rosenblatt and Iser consigned a measure of authority to the text sets their work apart from many other reader response literary theorists.

This kind of view of how "interpretation" happens has led critics like Tompkins (1980) and Fish (1980) to suggest that this form of reader-response is merely another shape of New Criticism, only with the reader, in addition to the text, acknowledged. Cox (1992) argued that this was an “elusive tie to Formalism,” which failed to challenge

Formalists' position on the neutrality of language. As a result, according to Tompkins (1980), Rosenblatt, Iser, and other reader-response theorists remain tied to textual considerations. But, if textual ties were not a significant factor, it may be impossible to pinpoint any particular growth in readers. Rosenblatt (1978) wrote that

The text as a set of verbal symbols becomes, we have said, not only the stimulus but also the public control by which we check the relevance of what we have conceived. The “close reading” of the New Critics centred on the text. The transactional view also assumes close attention to the words of the text. But it assumes an equal closeness of attention to what that particular juxtaposition of words stirs up within each reader. We cannot look simply at the text and predict what a reader will make of it; but he and we can turn to the text to judge whether his reported evocation, that is, his interpretation, either ignores elements in the text or projects on it experiences for which there is no basis in the text. (p. 137)

Rosenblatt pointed out that it is by attending to readers' consideration of the text, assessments may be made about their validity of interpretation, and because of her concern with textual cues, had strong reservations regarding others' perceptions of her as a “reader-response theorist” (1985). However, her concern that no reader of literary text, including literary critics, could be repudiated from the interpretive process, does suggest that she is primarily concerned with readers' responses to literature and how those responses are achieved. It is not incompatible with Rosenblatt and Iser's tenets to account for individual reader's response to a text and to value those unique responses, while at the same time validating the text as a provider of some common ground for discussion of a work of literature. To do both, however, one must uphold the text together as a point of

departure and as a force which can allow collective agreement about interpretation.

Rosenblatt's central arguments regarding interpretation of literary text involved discussion about the "stances" that readers may take as they engage with text that seem to permit readers to both interpret from a particular perspective and appreciate the perspectives that others may bring to the text. Moreover, she posited that "literariness" or "poeticity" do not reside in the words of the text, but on the stance the reader takes when engaged with any text (1993; 1994). "The fact is that any text, even if it contains such elements, can be the occasion for either a "literary" or a "nonliterary" reading" (1991, p. 444). Rosenblatt used the terms "efferent" to refer to the nonliterary "stance"--one that seeks to gather information--and "aesthetic"--one that endeavours to "feel" the emotions evoked--to refer to a poetic "stance" that readers may assume as they engage with any text (1982; 1989). Moreover, Rosenblatt (1994b) argued that too little attention has been paid to the difference that reading "stance" makes to the evocation of any text, regardless of the nature of the textual material. She stated that, "Neither contemporary reading theory nor literary theory has done justice to such readings, nor to the fact that they are to be understood as representing a continuum rather than an opposition. The tendency generally has been to assume that such a distinction depends entirely on the texts involved" (p. 1065). Instead of reporting on differences believed to be in texts, reading theorists and literary theorists ought to examine the role of reader stance more closely, since they are actually reporting "their interpretation of the writer's intention as to what kind of reading the text should be given" (1994b, p. 1067).

The reader selects a stance based on the cues given by a particular text and/or the

context of the reading situation. Rosenblatt (1991) advanced the idea that

Instead of thinking of the text as either literary or informational, efferent or aesthetic, we should think of it as written for a particular predominant attitude or stance, efferent or aesthetic, on the part of the reader. We have ignored the fact that our reading is not all-of-one-piece. We read for information, but we are also conscious of emotions about it and feel pleasure when the words we call up arouse images and rhythmic to the inner ear. Or we experience a poem but are conscious of acquiring some information about, say, Greek warfare. To confuse matters even further, we can switch stances while reading. (p. 445)

All readers, nevertheless, must select a stance whenever they engage with a text--either predominantly “aesthetic” or “efferent.” Adopting a stance is a part of an advance organizer that prepares readers to experience the reading event from a particular framework (Cox & Many, 1992). If, for example, a reader chooses an “aesthetic” stance, the reading experience will be from a Feeling perspective while an “efferent” stance will encourage readers to seek information from the text to “carry away.” The “stance” is not fixed nor determined, but operates along a continuum, and the readers may change their stance if textual cues or reading context changes (Rosenblatt, 1978; 1991; 1985).

Rosenblatt (1980) was concerned that both efferent and aesthetic stances be stressed as readers engaged in the study of literature. She felt that too often in school situations, the efferent stance was emphasized at the expense of the aesthetic, or that teachers, in an effort to redress the lack of emphasis on the aesthetic, may lose sight of the fact that different purposes for reading require different stances. Rosenblatt (1991) cautioned that

It is teachers who need to be clear theoretically about efferent and aesthetic

reading. As they commendably seek to present more “literature” in their language arts curricula, they need to be careful not to “use the appeal of such texts simply or mainly for the efferent purposes of teaching grammar or “skills.” Also, as teachers plan to include aesthetic elements in the work in social or natural science or to utilize the interest of story in the teaching of mathematics, they need to realize that they have a responsibility not to create confusion about primary stances appropriate to different purposes.

(p. 447)

In short, Rosenblatt called for a balance of instruction in literature that accounted for various stances of reading, with equal emphasis on aesthetic stances for reading as with efferent. But, introducing literary texts with the purpose of teaching students, say, sentence fragments, defeated the significance of textual meaning. Most importantly, Rosenblatt stressed that there be greater understanding that these two stances would produce an entirely different reading event, and teachers should not confuse the two.

Iser (1978; 1974) was also concerned with the role of the reader in the reading experience. As part of his theory of reading, Iser (1978) claimed that the literary work had two poles: the first was the artistic work as achieved by the author and second was an aesthetic realization accomplished by the reader. Both were necessary to complete the reading process. Accordingly, the text provided “conventions common to speaker and recipient, procedures accepted by both, and the willingness of both to participate in the speech action” (Iser, 1978, p. 69). Both are equally underscored as essential to the entire reading process.

Iser (1978) also advanced a somewhat similar notion through the concept of the indeterminacy of the text and that of the implied reader. This concept suggested that the

author created “signifiers”, consciously or unconsciously, in a text that contained “gaps” or “blanks” which required the reader’s participation in order to construct meaning. Iser (1978) suggested that “It is generally recognized that literary texts take on their reality by being read, and this in turn means that texts must already contain certain conditions of actualization that will allow their meaning to be assembled in the responsive mind of the recipient” (p. 34). Iser (1980) stated that “the literary text needs the reader’s imagination, which gives shape to the interaction of correlatives foreshadowed in structure by the sequence of the sentences” (p. 53).

But, Iser (1978) also noted that, while the reader could not be ignored, re-envisioning the role of the reader could not be at the expense of the text. Despite the subjectivity of readers’ responses to any text, he cautioned that “this does not mean that the text disappears into the private world of its individual reader” (p. 49).

Thus, while meaning does not lie inert within the pages of a text, there are guides that point a general direction for readers. Indeed, for Iser (1978), the text revealed much for readers, though it cannot operate independently of readers.

The literary text acts like a sort of living organism, which is linked to the reader, and also instructs him, by means of a feedback system. If we view the relation between text and reader as a kind of self-regulating system, we can define the text itself as an array of sign impulses (signifiers) which are received by the reader. As he reads, there is a constant ‘feedback’ of ‘information’ already received, so that he himself is bound to insert his own ideas into the process of communication. (p. 67)

Iser argued that readers developing interpretations about literary texts did not occur in any kind of rigid way. Readers learned to attune themselves to recognize different types of

“gaps” that come with wider familiarity with literary genres and techniques. The nature of the text, where authors have left gaps purposefully, lead to variability in the way in which the gaps could be filled. Each reader must make decisions about how those gaps can be filled, which leads to variability in textual interpretation. Iser (1974) stated that “it is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections--for filling in the gaps left by the text itself” (p. 280). Iser (1974) added that modern texts deliberately exploited the possibilities of textual gaps so that readers could toy with variety of interpretations.

In order for readers to attend to the possible gaps created in the text, they must learn how texts have been constructed. Iser (1978; 1980) noted that literary texts contained “Every literary text inevitably contains a selection from a variety of social, historical, cultural, and literary systems that exist as referential fields outside the text” The reader must learn as much as possible about these referential fields, to move them into focus, to recreate the work of art, through observation. Moreover, the reader must continually “organize and reorganize the various data offered us by the text” which is never a smooth or continuous process. Iser suggested that

We look forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we are shocked by nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is the dynamic process of recreation. This process is steered by two main structural components within the text: first, a repertoire of familiar literary patterns and recurrent literary themes, together with allusions to familiar social and historical contexts; second, techniques or strategies used to set the familiar with the unfamiliar.

Elements of the repertoire are continually backgrounded or foregrounded with a resultant strategic overmagnification, trivialization, or even annihilation of the allusion. (p. 288)

This suggests that readers must become increasingly acquainted with literary motifs, conventions, stylistic devices, and references which make up the patterns of literary text. Readers who accept the indeterminacy of text, must then continually build their repertoire that will enable them to fill in gaps and blanks so that their interpretations are valid. Iser (1974) underlined the significance textual elements when he noted that "Once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken, so that the text becomes his 'present' while his own ideas fade into the 'past;' as soon as this happens he is open to the immediate experience of the text, which was impossible so long as his preconceptions were his 'present'" (p. 290).

The on-going discussion and debate over where "meaning" resides continues. From the time that I.A. Richards (1929) had originally studied the effects of reading a number of poems on college readers, and Rosenblatt had published her work Literature as Exploration in 1938, active interest in the role of text and reader in creating "meaning" has not subsided.

According to certain reader-response theorists, students who had learned literary interpretation by way of formal analysis were being urged to renounce it (Martin, 1989). It seems apparent that no renunciation of the sort has resulted. Langer (1994) submitted that teachers may be convinced of reader-response principles, but are ambivalent about whether they can put them into practice. Langer (1994) stated that "On the one hand they are attracted to the notions underlying a pedagogy of student thoughtfulness because they

think it provides students with ownership for their own learning...On the other hand, they are uncertain how to carry through such lessons" (p. 203). Reader response theorists may have embraced the ideals of individual engagement in making sense of literary text, and opportunities for negotiation and refinement of meaning in interaction with others, but the persistent problem of how and what to instruct continued for many teachers. English teachers were left with puzzling questions, on the one hand, of how to foster such individual thinking of literary text, while, on the other, of how to instruct students. What was to be taught, if anything? How was instruction to take place? How was students' work to be evaluated?

Journals as Reader Response Practice

There may be several reasons why reader response literary theory has not easily been transcribed into the English classroom procedures, not the least of which may be that it is difficult to envision precisely what reader-response looks like in practice. It is clear that many teachers still apply New Critical methods when studying literature, and require "accepted" answers which result from such studies (Applebee, 1993). Teachers may subscribe to the reader-response, student-centred ideals, but studies indicate that putting them into practice is not easily achieved (Applebee, 1984; 1993). Another reason is that students' development in interpreting literary text may be difficult--if not impossible--to evaluate and measure. How, for instance, can a determination be made of a student's "defensible" interpretation if reader-response activities are employed? Although Rosenblatt and Iser provided reasoned arguments that readers respond to literary text in certain ways,

neither Rosenblatt nor Iser offered specific suggestions as to the methods to implement their theories with students. Perhaps this was because their interests were more theoretical than pedagogical. For some of the writers who have attempted to provide suggestions for reader-response types of activities, many end up looking very New Critical in their prescriptive nature (Karolidis, 1992; Smagorinsky & Gevinson, 1989; Kahn, Walter, & Johannessen, 1984). As an example, students are asked to focus their attention on specific elements of text, such as character development, or rhetorical artifices, in order that readers could come to understand “deep structures” or “codes” of meaning (Scholes, 1985). In many respects, even Rosenblatt (1978), who was often associated with reader response axioms, would endorse direct instruction using the text as guideposts to heightened awareness. Never does Rosenblatt diminish the importance of the text; and as long as the text remains a significant part of the equation, New Critical “close readings” will help students gain access to deeper understanding of the text--even on a personal, subjective level. Rosenblatt (1976) argued that some readings are more tenable than others, owing to a close following of the text as blueprint.

Nevertheless, the student should be led to discover that some interpretations are more defensible than others. A complex work such as Hamlet offers the basis for various interpretations; yet their acceptability will depend, first, on whether they take into account as many as possible of the elements present in the text, and second, on whether they do not imply elements that are not present in it. (p. 115)

Interpretations, which may not be infinite in nature are still subject to continual change, revision and refinement. These constant changes are perhaps more likely to produce an interpretation that is more justifiable. It will be noted, however, that Rosenblatt was rather

vague in specifically designating instructional practices that would be best suited to leading the student to the discovery of a defensible interpretation. It might mean that New Critical methods might be employed to assure the reader that "elements in the text" are used to guide the reading.

The pedagogical question is to how to maintain a balance between the desire to have readers gain a sense of authority, self-confidence, and "voice" and the conviction that readers must simultaneously submit to the limitations of the text. We do not, for example, understand the many ways in which students can respond to a text, and to what extent their responses make use of the textual constraints that writers like Karolides (1992) claim are so important.

What makes response journals interesting is that, apart from oral discussion--which rarely allows for more than a few students' voices to be heard--dialogue journals are founded on the premise that the writer of the journal is the central person in the enterprise. Students can explore texts for long periods of time, without distraction or interruption from others. This is particularly important for students who feel intimidated by teachers who are ceaselessly pre-empting students' reading. Students find that, when writing in response journals, their private voices regarding the literature they read count. More specifically, Protherough (1986) advocated that writing can help students express their reading encounters accurately and that

students should be developing the ability to articulate their responses more precisely...finding words to describe adequately what the experience of reading has been like, what it has done to the reader. Selecting words of one's own to describe the effect of an author's words, especially in writing, is a difficult task, and the ability to cope with it develops slowly. (p. 33)

Dialogue journals are used to heighten students' awareness that their contribution to the study of literature is valuable, and heighten students' awareness and control over the interpretive process as they practice responses to literary text.

But there is also the idea that reading literature is not only a private act, but a social one as well. Reading literary text enables us to make contact with one another. Reither and Vipond (1989), for example, argued the literary understanding is a cooperative activity in which we share ideas about the literature we read. They point out that

The students function within a community of "knowledgeable peers" who, given the nature of the project, want and need what the others have to offer. When the students report to one another (both orally or in writing) on what they have found out, they are functioning as knowing scholars, as literate persons who can contribute to what others know and believe. That is, they are functioning as teachers. (p. 865)

Thus, journals can be the basis for the reporting that students can do as they share their explorations of literature. In terms of long term goals, journals allow students to have permanent records of their literary conversation with others, "to find out who's talking about what, how they're talking about it, why they're talking about it" (Reither & Vipond, 1989, p. 865).

Brown (1982) has stated that effective readers focus on major content and monitor activities to help them determine if comprehension is occurring, alert to comprehension failure. As readers mature, Brown (1982) claimed that readers need to develop self-regulatory mechanisms to focus on their goals for reading, engaging in self-questioning to know how to take corrective action when they lose understanding. Written responses to

literary text may provide some insight into how to help students cultivate and extend those self-regulatory strategies. The journal would enable students make those mechanisms visible, to know if they are in place, and if they are effective.

Stotsky (1995) raised some interesting concerns about the over-use of personal writing as it appears in students' journals. She questioned the use of predominantly personal writing as a means of enhancing students' reading abilities. Stotsky (1995) was concerned that "results of the research studies suggest that an excessive emphasis on this kind of writing, at least as it has been taught or used, is not warranted" (p. 762). Stotsky (1995) has a legitimate concern. Writing about literature, only in such a way to demonstrate its connection with the reader's personal experiences, does not foster any kind of development in terms of understanding "codes" of literary works; exclusive attention to personal evocations of feelings and thoughts may not extend knowledge of the text at all. With this in mind, I propose that journals keep the reader central, but maintain close reliance on the text for support. "Close reading" of text does not have to deny the reader in the reading experience in any way.

Composition Theory and Dialogue Journals

Because dialogue journals involve written responses to literary text, it seems clear that an understanding of the composing process is necessary. In addition, there needs to be discernment of the types of writing assigned to students, and the purposes of those different types of writing. For instance, when writing in their dialogue journals, students use writing as a means of exploration, not written responses for examination purposes.

Two purposes for which writing is done--knowledge telling and knowledge transformation--are explained by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) where the first is generally used to transmit information; the second is to shape and mould thinking in order to reconstruct knowledge. This second process occurs through selection of "inchoate entities ('driblets') and gradually, by dint of much rethinking and restating, taking the form of fully developed thoughts" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 10). According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), knowledge transforming writing processes require a different model than do knowledge telling writing processes. In his study of writing in secondary schools, Applebee (1981) suggested that

a large number of separate attitudes and teaching practices could be interpreted in terms of two sharply polarized views of the writing process. Some teachers saw writing primarily as a way to encode and repeat a traditional body of knowledge; Barnes and Shemilt called this the transmission view of the writing process. Other teachers took an interpretation view of writing, seeing it as a way for students to explore a subject area and gain understanding of new concepts in the process of writing about them. These views shaped diverse views of instruction, including the types of writing requested, the help provided while students were writing, marking and assessment of the completed writing, and the nature and extent of the follow up work. (p. 59)

The dialogue journal seeks to transform students' knowledge about literature studied through personal exploration. It attempts to shape students' thinking about literary concepts through writing. By reflecting upon those concepts and clarifying them through the writing process, possible meanings of the text take shape, and form a visible record of those meanings. It is clear that the dialogue journal is supported by a knowledge

transformation paradigm.

On the other hand, in order to achieve a "standard" to the product of writing, Formalist rules and pronouncements specified what the final product of writing ought to look like, even before the writing was begun. At the time of interest in reader response, however, there was concurrently a new envisionment of the discipline of composition theory, which closely paralleled the divisions between New Criticism and reader response. Issues that were raised by reader response theorists corresponded to concerns of composition theorists as well. What, for example, was the relationship between writer and text; what, in effect, could account for the creation of text? What role did the writer play, as opposed to "rules" that supposedly governed the composing process? In other words, where was the locus of meaning? What were the writing processes that involved the interaction between writers and their texts? These problems posed a new discipline for those involved in the study of writing.

Until recently, writing was a means by which students could construct a product through which inferences could be formulated concerning their reading abilities. Written work was viewed primarily as a means of testing what students knew (Moffett, 1979; Britton, 1988). Much writing that was (and is) done in school situations requires knowledge telling--displays of knowledge of content, not necessarily of the comprehension that the composer has gained from the writing (Applebee, 1984a). More specifically, Moffett (1979) contended that writing routinely done in school settings was chiefly to test reading. He claimed that "We have always been far more interested in reading than in writing, so much so that writing in schools has hardly existed except as a

means to demonstrate either reading comprehension or the comprehensiveness of one's reading" (p. 277). In writing assignments, Moffett claimed that the five-paragraph theme was believed to enable students to test their skills at arguing a thesis, leaving little space in the curriculum for authentic writing. The net result, according to Moffett, were programs that impoverished both writing and literature.

In writing-as-testing experiences, as in reading-as-testing experiences, teachers functioned primarily as purveyors of information, then as examiners. The role of the teacher was, once again, to determine if information had been transmitted to students. As a consequence, Applebee (1984a) noted that the teacher was effectual in holding students' essays together, constructing the argument the students "meant to say." All students' work was measured against what the teacher knew and believed. In addition, the teaching of writing focused on "correct" form of text; that is, text without mechanical errors, concentrating on form over substance. For example, Warriner's (1958/1973) English Grammar and Composition, first published in 1951, devoted itself almost exclusively to "correct" use and form of language. At the beginning of the book, Warriner (1958/1973) stated, without apology, that the series taught "traditional grammar" even if grammar were not a popular subject at the time. The focus of grammar as a part of composition was founded by an unwavering belief that cultivating students' knowledge of grammatical rules would inevitably result in improved students' written products. Moreover, Warriner (1958/1973) asserted that, "The English profession is beginning to feel the impact of linguistic research and to ponder the relative values of different grammars of English" but that they are "not yet clearly enough defined for general use in schools" and maintained

this traditional grammar still has its preeminent place in the English classroom.

Until the 1970's, students were taught elements of text such as topic and clincher sentences, usage and syntax. By manipulating these elements, they were able to "fix the meaning" of their written work (Nystrand, et. al., 1993). It was assumed that, if students were taught the elements of grammar, style, and mechanics, they would be able to fashion their own expository writing or reasoned arguments. These assertions can be likened to the New Critical views in reading that suggest that close examination of written language, learning about comma splices and split infinitives, would give students the necessary skills to piece together their own compositions. Writing teachers found, however, that the assumptions about the need for "skill and drill" exercises in the composing process were seriously flawed. Bizzell (1986) noted the comparison between New Criticism and reader-oriented theories: "Literary critics, too, were dissatisfied with the New Criticism's focus on style and began the theoretical debates over a replacement paradigm that have continued to the present" (p. 51). Current writing theory argues that composing cannot be taught by an objective examination of language details, independent of any context. Further, assertions that rule-governed language could lead students to become capable and persuasive users of written language, were inadequate.

There are current views about writing which hold that "close reading" of students' written texts, like New Criticism, need not be discarded entirely. For instance, teaching students specific forms of written discourse might permit students to enter the language of academic discourse (Bartholomae, 1986; Bizzell, 1986). To do well in specialized forms of discourse, such as argumentation or persuasion, students have to have rigorous training in

those forms. In addition, they insist that students cannot afford to indulge themselves in expressivist language that will disadvantage them in an academic world, and prevent them from experiencing the kind of thinking associated with academic language (Trimbur, 1989).

Traditional grammar was thought to have given students the ability to spot "poorly written passages" or correct "improperly written passages" in order to make written work "clearer and smoother" (Warriner, 1958/1973). Texts like this offer to students information about mechanical correctness, formulaic advice on topic sentences, and five-paragraph themes, but little about the process of composing (Gere, 1986; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1983). Applebee (1986) cautioned that if this kind of instruction, is too different from what students encountered in real writing experiences outside the classroom, "students will quickly decide that what they learn in English is irrelevant to the rest of their writing" and that "the good approaches we teach them will quickly be forgotten" (p. 98). Giacobbe (1986) summarized the writing process familiar to most school settings in this way:

When they were assigned a report, students were most often assigned topics they knew little about, and it was expected that they would do it right the first time--with no time for experimenting, considering options, taking risks, and eventually being responsible for their own writing. When students finished their reports, the only audience was the teacher, and the teacher read the reports as though they were tests, looking only to see if they followed the given outline and if the words were spelled correctly. (p. 146)

What resulted, according to Emig (1977), was an reductionist approach to the writing

process. There was dissonance or discrepancy between rhetoric texts' prescriptions and students' actual experiences when writing, and concentration on the surface features of students' final written products. Evaluation centred primarily on the "correctness" of mechanics, rather than the development of the content.

But changes in models of writing began to appear as researchers and theorists of composition examined the composing process. There were questions about what happened as writers actually began to compose, and rethinking about what the results of composing were supposed to achieve. Theorists and practitioners of composition (Murray, 1989, 1991, 1985; Macrorie, 1970; Newkirk, 1987, 1989) challenged the notion of a formalist approach to composing, much in the same manner as transmission models of literature instruction has been challenged. One of the most formidable challenges concerning writing, especially in schools, has been to determine the purpose of learning to write.

Emig (1977) perceived writing foremost as a means of learning--a dynamic and recursive process of coming to "know." She maintained that emphasis had to be placed on those processes of how writers begin to understand this knowing, and less emphasis on texts produced. Murray (1989) stated that "Writing must have a purpose for us to take it seriously, and the universal purpose that writing may serve is our fundamental need to understand our world" (P. 109) and writing had to accomplish more than error-free products. Thus, it became apparent to many composition teachers that writing had a purpose diametrically opposed to that of examination of student "competencies." Composing had to be defined in terms of writers' intentions. Many teachers of composition (Elbow 1973, 1981; Macrorie, 1970; Emig, 1977; Newkirk, 1989) offered a different

perception of writing as procedures of discovery, linked to critical thinking, and resisting school writing that vitiates against "student writers' authentic purposes by inhibiting 'reflexive' (self-sponsored or personal) writing focusing on the writers' thoughts and feelings concerning their experience" (Nystrand, Green, & Wiemelt, 1993, p. 281). In the same way, reader response theorists envisioned reading as a reflexive process to discover meaning in text (Nystrand, Greene, & Wiemelt, 1993). This view of composing in order to understand and learn contested other perceptions of writing as a means of displaying knowledge. The notion that writing was a means by which one could create knowledge paralleled the idea that reading and interpreting text was a creative act (Tierney and Pearson, 1983). Studies of what people actually did as they composed radically changed the ideas of composition previously held. In Perl's (1979) study of unskilled writers, she explored the idea of recursiveness in composing, that composing was not linear, that writers frequently sought to edit and revise as they wrote. Also, Perl (1979) indicated that the more the writer was distanced from familiarity with the topic, the more the writer seemed to need editing and revision. Studies such as Perl's (1979) strongly indicated that teacher's lectures, worksheets, and exercises--all meant to help students think of composing in a linear fashion--could not help because the nature of the composing process was recursive.

Texts such as Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers (1973) and Writing with Power (1981) became prominent in discussions concerning the teaching of writing, promoting methods to allow students to take control of their own writing, free from controls of teachers, free from controls of institutional structures. Students were urged to

concentrate on shaping the content of what they wanted to say, on topics that concerned or mattered to them; students were permitted to take advantage of the recursiveness of composing rather than worrying about form and correctness from the first draft. Elbow (1973) and others challenged traditional thinking that writing was the ability to put onto paper--in correct form--what was already in the writer's head. He suggested that writers needed to be aware that thought is shaped through the very act of writing, and that thought did not come ready-made. Therefore, Elbow (1973) proposed that exercises like free-writing gave writers strategies for heightening an awareness of what they wanted to say. Elbow's (1973; 1986) metaphor of composing as "cooking and growing," shifted meaning as residing (pre-made) in the text, to the individual. Using this metaphor, the form of a written work would evolve and change as the content evolved and became more precise.

Changes in perspectives about composing represented a radical shift from previous views. The concept that composing was initiated by the writer, that the direction of the work took shape as the writer explored, and that testing ideas through "free writing" was not universally accepted because it suggested that "composing" was not a skill that could be learned through transmission. Rosenblatt (1989a) argued that free writing ought not to be treated as a prescriptive "stage," or requisite, but "should be seen as a technique for tapping the linguistic reservoir without being hampered by anxieties about acceptability of subject, sequence, or mechanics" (p. 164).

Similar to reader-response theory of literary studies, composition studies focused on the act of writing as a constructivist act. Meaning is not ready-made before the

composing actually begins; rather, it emerges as the writer progresses. The view of writing as one that unfolds has also changed the role of the writing teacher. Murray (1985) advocated the need for the production of written text, before writing instruction from the teacher. He wrote that "Until there is that evolving text, the teacher's materials are abstract, unrelated to the student's knowledge or experience. When there is a text, however, the instructor and class can begin to discover what each writer knows and needs to know" (p. 83). These changes have dramatically altered conceptualizations about the entire process of writing, since they place the teacher in the role of mentor and collaborator, rather than dispenser of correctness of form. According to Murray (1985), the teacher's instructions, assignments, and judgements are no longer central in the composition class. More of the content of composition, form of composition, and evaluation of composition, rests in the hands of the student writer. Murray (1985) did not negate the essential function of teachers, but, similar to literature instruction, teachers are superseded by students who have become the focus in the writing process.

Some students and teachers have come to accept the primary purpose of composing further in terms of knowledge transformation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) instead of just knowledge telling. As well as a means of communicating ideas, or a means of assessing what students know, writing is perceived as an means of self-discovery and learning (Emig, 1977). Examination of composing as a means of understanding the self in relation to the world was also becoming significant (Brooke, 1992; Emig, 1971). Just as reading has stretched beyond the limitations of the text through reader response, the writing process has begun to centre itself upon the writer and the context within which

each writer works.

From Langer and Applebee's (1987) study, the researchers concluded that writing had profound implications for student learning. In effect, writing has a positive effect on learning. As part of their conclusions, Langer and Applebee (1987) noted that

From the series of studies of learning and writing, we gained a more complete sense of the ways that writing works in support of learning. Across the studies, there is clear evidence that activities involving writing (any of the many sorts of writing we studied) lead to better learning than activities involving reading and studying only. Writing assists learning. Beyond that, we learned that writing is not writing; different kinds of writing activities lead students to focus on different kinds of information, to think about that information in different ways, and in turn to take quantitatively and qualitatively different kinds of knowledge away from their writing experiences. (p. 135)

There is, however, evidence that "in spite of the widely held belief that writing aids understanding of the topic, teachers tend to stress surface features and downplay writing as learning" (Newell, 1986, p. 291). Thus, one could argue that much work needs to be done in terms of demonstrating the ways in which journal writing could become a locus of writing to learn. Specifically, dialogue journals could assist students who are engaged in learning processes of interpreting and critiquing literary texts.

Both reader response and writing to learn have had significant influences upon educational theory regarding literature instruction. Meaning-making processes, especially involving literary text have become areas of interest for teachers and researchers who seek to understand more about this type of learning process. It is within this context that the study of journals is to take place. With the literature suggesting that students, either as

readers or writers, who must come to understand what they know, and to understand the strategies they use to come to know, that journals takes a predominant role.

Reading and Writing Connections to Journals

As reading and writing paradigms become less positivistic in nature, and the importance of a naturalistic study of reading and writing become more accepted as practice, we need to be aware of the types of instructional activities which promote genuine naturalistic, student-centred classrooms. Acts of reading and writing have been recently investigated as constructivist acts (Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Spivey & King, 1989), which emerge within contexts of social environments. But, according to Newell (1986) "there have been only sporadic efforts to study the effects of writing on learning" (p. 293). More specifically, Applebee (1984b) suggested that no process studies have provided any useful evidence of how--or even whether--writing helped learning in terms of generating new ideas, making connections among old ones, or of aiding the monitoring of consistency of argument. In effect, Applebee (1984b) noted that we still have not developed a convincing research base that writing activities made a significant contribution to the development of higher reasoning skills.

The study of the journal is of consequence, since it is a place where reading and writing intersect, and results of students' reasoning about their reading is made visible. As students write about the literary texts they read, they are forced to shape vague responses to text, to consider their thoughts carefully, and bring their thoughts to conscious awareness (Blatt & Rosen, 1984). The students have a discernible record of their

engagement with the literary text at any given time. They can check back on earlier responses as they continue to explore new texts; new connections among varieties of literary texts can be forged.

Salvatori (1983, 1996) has stressed that students in literature classrooms be taught that writing leads to new understanding and exploring of texts, and they be taught strategies by which they can generate meanings during the act of reading. She notes that "the work is 'indeterminate' and 'dynamic,' or better, indeterminate because continuously dynamic" (1983, p. 660). However, Salvatori recognized that, under some current instruction in literature

it is mostly against the indeterminacy and the dynamism of a literary work that students defend themselves by reducing it either to the assumed reality of the text (i.e., the message, the information, the main idea, all conceived as stable, finite units), or to their own subjectivity (i.e., "I can relate to this," "I cannot relate to this," which are often spurious judgments based on ephemeral associations or pre-established perspectives). In either case reading becomes a one-way activity rather than a process by which, as Iser suggests, a reader passes through the various perspectives offered by the text, relates the different patterns and views to one another. (p. 660)

Writing, according to Salvatori (1996), fosters reading in an entirely different way, because the two activities of reading and writing are so closely related. Journals can bring together the best of reader response and the best of current composition theory. Journals are the connecting between the act of reading and writing. And the reading/writing connection is one possible way of understanding thinking. One of the reasons I am choosing to observe written protocols, is that writing is visible, manifestations of thought.

As Gage (1986) has commented

Writing is thinking-made-tangible, thinking that can be examined because it is "on the page" and not all "in the head," invisibly floating around.

Writing is thinking that can be stopped and tinkered with. It is a way of making thought hold still long enough to examine its structures, its possibilities, its flaws. The road to clearer understanding one's own thoughts is travelled on paper. It is through the attempt to find words for ourselves, and to find patterns for ourselves in which to express related ideas, that we often come to discover exactly what we think. (p. 24)

One of the obstacles facing educators, however, is evidence from research that indicates the extent to which learning happens through writing (Newell, 1986). Applebee (1986) was quick to note that the "writing to learn," process approach to writing instruction has been embraced with enthusiasm and naivete, but without much thought to the changes to writing instruction that must accompany theoretical change. "Across subjects and grades, the typical writing assignment in American schools is a page or less, first-and-final draft, completed within a day...and serving an examining function" (p. 99). Applebee (1986) added that with student compositions, "Few papers went beyond a first draft, and even on the first drafts 60 percent showed no revisions of any kind" (p. 100). It is during the revision process, according to Murray (1989) where "learning" occurs. It is at the point of revision where re-envisioning the work takes place and the writer is often surprised by what happens on the page. What this suggested, according to Applebee (1986) is that the composing process does not yet incorporate an approach that allots time enough for students to generate ideas of their own rather than appropriating those of others'. Applebee (1986) has concluded that students need "room to make their own contribution

to the activity as it evolves, giving them a sense of ownership” over the writing event (p. 110). There is, Applebee has suggested, a requirement that teachers, in effect, transfer control of the writing experiences to the student, while sharing responsibility for solving problems that might arise.

It seems that if literature teachers were to examine the nature of journal writing, especially as it applies to interpretation of literature, they would understand its great potential to provide student-readers and teachers with valuable information about strategies readers use to interpret literary text. Moreover, student journals should provide teachers with information regarding their development of those strategies. Further, if composing is understood as a process of constructing information, then journals would help to determine what kinds of construing and constructing occurs as students read and interpret literary texts. Evidence of constructivity, what is constructed, and how it is constructed, is the focus of current reading research (Spivey, 1987). Journals represent an entire body of work produced by students. As they write, they learn through the constructions they make. It is interesting that dialogue journals are not routinely a central part of pedagogy, particularly in English classrooms (Anson & Beach, 1995). Perhaps it is because they are not yet understood in terms of the potential they might serve in producing students' learning (Fulwiler, 1989; Rivard, 1994; Nardoccio, 1992). In addition, we need to investigate the results from students' dialogue journals to discern development in their abilities to interpret literary text. Much of standard curriculum is directed and prescribed such that controls can be kept on what students learn; to permit students to have greater authority over texts they study would certainly loosen those controls, and we

need to know the results of that loosening.

Bakhtin, Dialogism, and Journals

Dialogue journals are founded on the premise that thinking and understanding develops as a result of dialogue, specifically, in this case, written dialogue, which is the focus of this study. The dialogues that are established between text and reader(s) ultimately results in textual interpretation. This conceptualization of the importance of dialogue has its source in philosophies held by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981).

According to Bakhtin's philosophy of language (1981), existence is mediated by dialogue. This kind of dialogue is not conversational interaction nor idle chit-chat, but is a site of fundamental knowledge, and a key to understanding of one's world. "Dialogism"--one of the terms Bakhtin uses--is discourse that occurs within many contexts, without time limitations; it is dialogue that is continuous because it is inconclusive. That is, there is no definitive beginning nor end to "dialogues"; rather they are perceived as responses to "past and present discourses" (Ewald, 1993, p. 332). Dialogues, whether they are internal or external, are responses that seek to comprehend, and to make sense of the universe which we inhabit. As such, dialogues are not restricted to discourse between two people, within a specified period of time, but can extend beyond two people's conversation of a given moment. It can also be internal discourse of a person which anticipates external discourse. It is not "a dyadic, much less a binary, phenomenon. Dialogue is a manifold phenomenon" (Holquist, 1990, p. 30). This phenomenon is, according to Bakhtin, particularly evident in the writing and reading of novels.

This manifold phenomenon involves intertextuality (the many voices of writers of text), heteroglossia, the many voices of the writers of text, the readers of texts, as well as the situations in which texts were written and are read. Ewald (1993) has suggested that dialogism can be compared to "intertextuality" in the sense that no text--oral, visual, or written--can be an isolated entity, but is inextricably linked to all other texts that have existed. All texts are combinations of what has been uttered before and that which will be uttered in the future. "Heteroglossia," on the other hand, refers to the numerous "voices" that with which one engages in many types of discourse. It is "many voicedness."

According to Bakhtin, both intertextuality and heteroglossia have fostered openness and diversity, which are present in the conceptualization of dialogism. Openness and diversity in reading and writing of texts undergird the concept of dialogue journals. In addition, language lacking determinant meaning becomes meaningful only in particular social contexts when people use it to interact (Ewald, 1993, p. 333). Therefore, in acknowledging dialogism, the language of literary text must also be considered when the contexts in which the texts are written, and the contexts in which they are read, are understood. Although dialogism is not confined exclusively to "literary applications," or composition studies, it is useful to understand it in terms of relationships among text, reader, and author, and, the constant alterations of those relationships. It is from the term dialogism that connections can be made between Bakhtin's use of the word. "Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 354).

According to Holquist (1990) "Dialogism argues that all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space, where bodies may be thought of as ranging from the immediacy of our physical bodies, to political bodies and to bodies of ideas in general (ideologies)." (p. 21). Holquist (1990) explained that in dialogism "everything is perceived from a unique position in existence; its corollary is that meaning of whatever is observed is shaped by the place from which it is perceived" (p. 21). Meaning is derived from an interaction of competing positions, perspectives, and contexts. Thus, when readers begin to interpret what they read, they do so within a certain context and with any number of relationships with others and their contexts.

One of the notable postulates of the student dialogue journal is that students make meaning of literary text in a specific context, and have a written record of that context. Students and teachers who engage in social interaction through the journal must know the ways in which their responses are shaped. Any response to a text, particularly a literary text, must grasp that their perspective is unique to that time and place, molded within the historical, cultural, and political ideologies of that particular time and space. Bakhtin (1981) stated that

Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying "languages." (p. 291)

Students and teachers must capitalize on “the languages of heteroglossia” when writing in journals recognizing, promoting, and fostering co-existence and contradiction of such languages. Davidson (1993) pointed out that "Dialogism, the posing of one voice against another, and the tensions, resolutions, and reformations of language and ideas under these conditions are the mechanisms Bakhtin proposes as central to representation and to interpretation" (p. 5). As students learn to interpret literary text, they learn how to pose their voice against the texts they read, to pose their voices against those voices in the classroom. Interpretation becomes, like language, constantly in motion.

Bakhtin's theories of language have influenced the augmentation of reader-response theory. Bakhtin (1981) wrote that "discourse is moreover dialogized in the belief system of the reader...as well as in the object" (p. 283). Similar to the theories of Rosenblatt and Iser, Bakhtin's emphasis on the forces of reader and text exerted on one another are considerable. In addition to this emphasis on various forces, Holquist (1990) stated that "In Bakhtin there is no one meaning to be striven for: the world is a vast congeries of contesting meanings" (p. 24). Thus, for a number of reasons, the definitions of dialogism underlie the principles this particular approach to journal writing, which attempts to capitalize on those principles. Student journals provide an environment wherein students may deal with ambiguity and uncertainty of response to literature, while simultaneously arriving at an ordered sense from those same responses. Bakhtin (1981) wrote

In the actual life of speech, every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged

with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement. To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the engaged understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. (p. 282)

Dialogue journals could be thought of as a point at which all manner of reading, writing, and thinking abilities intersect and are revealed concerning literary texts. For instance, students reveal the relationship among reader, text, discussion about the text, as well as the classroom context in which all these take place. Written responses are significant in that they can be reread and reviewed, which allow students to be aware of the changes in perception that occur as change in perspective takes place. Thury and Friedlander (1996) recognized that "response journals would be less immediate than concurrent oral response protocols or even immediately retrospective protocols" but used them irrespective of the problems because they wanted to "study the mechanisms students use[d] to develop their own meaning, reacting to and incorporating their teachers' views, the classroom discussion, and the sociocultural contexts they bring with them into the literature class" (p. 3).

The goal of teachers is to introduce dialogism to the classroom (Ewald, 1993). The dialogue journal could emerge as one of the best ways to do this. First, students need to learn how to begin a dialogue with themselves about the literary text. They need to know how to extend that dialogue to include teachers and peers, which should result in the understanding that interpretations are multiple and rich in meaning. Moreover, students need to realize that one's "dialogue" is a product of a history of dialogue, centred within a

milieu of dialogue. Davidson (1993) wrote that

Discourse is constantly in motion, and the mechanism of that motion is dialogism, the active process of weaving together different kinds of texts against various axiological backgrounds, moving in and out of those perspectives, constantly creating new forms. This is how meaning is constructed; this is how interpretation is achieved. (p. 5)

According to Bakhtin, there are forces which work to unify language and those that work, at the same time, to pull language apart--referred to by Bakhtin as centrifugal (diversifying) and centripetal (unifying) forces. As readers engage with text, they encounter these forces; centrifugal forces of the individual experiences and thoughts of the reader and the unifying forces of textual elements. Scholes (1989) has suggested that

we will probably do better to think of reading in terms of centripetal and centrifugal postures. Centripetal reading conceives of a text in terms of an original intention located at the center of that text. Reading done under this rubric will try to reduce the text to this pure core of unmixed intentionality. Centrifugal reading, on the other hand, sees the life of a text as occurring along its circumference, which is constantly expanding, encompassing new possibilities of meaning (p. 8).

If reading were considered in this way, the dialogue journal would be the place for students to view these two forces as they work together. Rarely do students have the opportunity to work in a way that allows these two forces to be made visible.

"Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward" (Bakhtin, p. 272). This, I think, is what the student reader must constantly deal with--the pulling apart

of their ideas of literature, and their interpretations, making their distinctive mark as they create the event of Rosenblatt's "poem." Yet, at the same time, they search in the text for those ideas, the themes and characterizations, symbols and metaphors, that unify and bring together the heteroglossia.

The advantage of the journal is that it permits students to discover, as they write, that any reading of literary text is embedded in a particular time and place, and this place is "saturated with values--social, political, economic, and historical" (Davidson, 1993, p. 11). As they record their readings, they can ascertain that interpretations are dependent upon whatever unique setting the literature is experienced. Students also understand that their reading of literature brings both their individual perspective on the text, and a reading that is socially conforming, dependent upon culturally accepted views of a particular time.

Bakhtin wrote that "we must deal with the life and behavior of discourse in a contradictory and multi-linguaged world" (p. 275). Rather than trying to seek unity in language, we need to embrace the contradictory, dynamic, and polysemous nature of language. Thus, we must provide activities such as the journal that not only illustrate its nature, but celebrate it. To do so, the dialogue, in all its multi-faceted forms, must be central to the journal. Further, it must be understood that teaching and learning can occur in spite of apparent conflicts.

Although the journal is written at first as a private enterprise, the student can take into consideration all the multitude of conversations and discourse that attends interpretation of text--reflecting on, continually revising, modifying, and generally altering the interpretations that one first held. Journals provide the starting place for such private

enterprise, before the student learns to share and make public, to explore the many facets of discourse in literature.

Journals as Instructional Tool

Journals may be the place in which reading-writing connections are made. They build on the literary theories of Rosenblatt and Iser, and on Bahktin's theories of meaning. If journals are well-placed theoretically, they may be valuable instructional tools in the English classroom.

Students rarely, if ever, observe other readers' efforts as they are in the process of interpreting literary text. Certainly very few students ever see the struggles teachers have when they attempt to make sense of the literature they are to teach. Students often feel that they are not a part of the arcane ritual of literary conversations (Newkirk, 1984). Therefore, the dialogic nature of the journal needs to become one of its central features. This is why I call these journals "dialogue" journals.

The advantage of having written records of thoughts and ideas is that they may be shared, reviewed again, and built upon for revisions or additional ideas. Records that can be reviewed again and again can also be used to make important connections that are considered a fundamental of learning. Dialogue journals allow the connection system to be visible, a system that can be revisited and further connections made. With these perceptible connections, learning is not viewed as disconnected and fragmentary.

Iser (1980) noted that "what ever we have read sinks into our memory and is foreshortened. It may later be evoked again and set against a different background with

the result that the reader may develop hitherto unforeseeable connections" (p. 54). The journal can provide data from literary text that can influence purpose for further reading, deeper exploration into the text, and subsequent inquiry (Hillocks, 1995). The advantage of having written documentation is that, upon re-reading the writer's journal, thematic patterns can emerge, allowing the reader/writer to understand intertextual connections among various texts (Beach, 1998).

As a tool in the study of literature, the intent of the dialogue journal is to permit the students to enhance their reading experiences as they learn how to explore the depths of the literary text. Tierney (1983) suggested that "the quality of these reading experiences seems closely tied to successful and less successful writing products" (p. 147). Writing in journals becomes a central feature of those writing products that readers/writers produce.

Students may find that two advantages they have as they write about literature is that they have time to think about their reading in an unhurried way, and that their voices are most important in the conversations they have with the text. First, as students write in their journals, they are afforded the time needed to understand the "lived-through" experience that Rosenblatt (1978) discusses. Encountering literary texts in a hurry, students cannot fully appreciate many nuances of the work; according to Rosenblatt (1976) a reader "returns to the text to make sure that he has done justice to the particular words in their particular order--sound and rhythm, image and metaphor, structure and point of view, indications of tone, clues to character" (p. 114). This cannot happen if students are not given time to work with the text, or are pre-empted by curricular agendas. Writing necessarily slows down the process, permitting time for thought and

reflection so that the experiences with literature stay with the student readers. As

Rosenblatt (1971) noted

Out of the best intentions in the world, out of misguided zeal, the student is hurried as quickly as possible into some kind of thinking and discussion or writing that removes him abruptly--and often definitively--from what he himself lived through in relation to the text (p. 156).

This often happens when teachers are anxious about covering content and concerned that students have all the information that they "have to" understand as they read through the text.

Second, journals could provide students with a privileged voice in the English classroom; that is, teachers can construct an environment where students' voices, with teachers' guidance, become increasingly sanctioned. In dialogue journals, the student writer, as a reader of literary texts, can find that they become the authoritative voice as they interpret, and later on, evaluate, texts. As students write in their journals, there are no competing voices to interrupt; students concern themselves only with their personal reactions, thoughts, questions, and frustrations. Students of literature can explore literary texts in a risk-free place.

In light of interest in journals, there have been a number of studies on student written response to texts, mostly literary texts, but not all. Some studies have specifically examined the use of student journals and the effect of writing on reading comprehension. Marshall (1987) believed that "If both writing and reading are viewed as constructive processes, then writing about reading should provide students with an opportunity to 'enrich and embellish' the meanings they have tentatively constructed, coming to a fuller

possession of whatever the text may hold” (p. 31). In his study, Marshall (1987) examined high school students' testing ideas through their writing, and judged that students who wrote about the literature they studied achieved a higher level of interpretation than students who wrote responses to short-answer questions, or who did no writing at all. He concluded that writing did have a positive effect on students' abilities to interpret literature, primarily because they were encouraged to continually revise their thinking about what they had read.

In summary, several educators have verified for themselves that journals have generated results which have suggested that the students have benefited from learning more about their disciplines through writing. Students have been able to make constructive connections which have permitted them to see beyond "bits" of inert information to a whole. Students found journals as a means of establishing a one-on-one relationship with their instructors that permitted them to identify specific areas of mastery and those of weakness.

Reading and Evaluating Student Dialogue Journals

There are concerns among some educators as to the matter of privacy of students' journals (Morgan 1998). Should they be read at all, and, if they are read, how are readers, particularly teachers, supposed to respond to these journals? Finally, should journals be evaluated, and, if evaluated, by what criteria ought they to be judged? These are some of the more serious questions addressed, on occasion, in the literature, and always with contradictory messages concerning the issue of privacy and evaluation.

Some teachers hold that when journals are employed in the classroom, they are private thoughts of students, and their rights to keep those thoughts private must be respected. These teachers consider that any reading of students' journal writing violates their rights of privacy. Others simply use journals as a required but ungraded part of coursework (Thury & Friedlander, 1996). Journals are perceived as places where students may freely put their thoughts on paper anything that they wish, about the literature or class discussions, without having to weigh any possible consequences about those ideas. On this basis, there are solid arguments for the case that teachers ought not to intrude on students' private readings by assessing formative thinking. However, as the dialogue journal is meant to be primarily an instructional tool, helping students develop mental structures that will hopefully foster students' abilities to interpret literary text, teachers need to understand that while grading may be optional, reading and commenting on students' journal writing is not. It is imperative that students view journal writing as an important part of development of thinking, no matter how formative it may appear. Teachers must not assign journal writing as an activity to keep students occupied for no apparent reason. Students, on the other hand, need to understand from the outset that their journals will be read and commented on, possibly by peers as well as teachers; as such, the dialogue journal is a public document, as is any other academic work, open for assessment and evaluation if required. Parsons (1990) suggests that journals be graded. "Formative and summative evaluation are integral components of this approach. Evaluation actually directs and supports the learning" (Parsons, 1990, p.2).

Evaluation of this sort, however, is different from evaluating more traditional

students' assignments. Journals are to be read in a different way from knowledge telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In fact, it should be stressed to students that thinking, and the conversation about literature is the primary concern of journals, and that the objective of those conversations is knowledge transformation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Extending and expanding ideas about the literature through a dialectic is important (Sperling, 1994). As teachers engage students in conversations about the literature they read, the comments teachers make are more likely to be effective if they are nonjudgmental feedback, rather than evaluative prescriptions (Beach & Anson, 1993). This does not mean, however, that teachers cannot nudge students to consider alternative viewpoints, or ask questions about aspects students overlooked or ignored. In this way, students benefit from having teachers' personal attention to what they think and write.

It is, nevertheless, important to note that evaluation is still consequential. Summary statements about how engaged students are, the nature of the insights students have about the literature they read, and whether or not the students are emerging as critical readers of literary text must be comprehensive. An example of the contrast in thinking of evaluation, Langer and Applebee (1987) have noted that

when students assumed that an assignment would be evaluated, they were likely to treat it as a display of what they had already learned: they would present their ideas carefully and fully, but were likely to stay close to the known and familiar. On the other hand, when they assumed that the writing was part of an ongoing instructional dialogue, they were more likely to use it to explore new ideas--taking more risks and accepting more failures. (p. 71)

And so, this is the way in which the dialogue journal must be perceived by the

students. Beach and Anson (1993) have argued that "rather than simply responding for themselves as in a solo journal, in exchanging entries with each other, students have a social purpose and motivation to explore and extend their responses" (p. 191). Students need to know that their journal entries are passages to dialogues with wider audiences. Macrorie (1970) stated that "all good journals observe one fundamental: they do not speak privately. They can be read with profit by persons other than the writer" (p. 123). In addition, readers, as well as writers, who profit from the conversations about literature, make the journal into something other than just a receptacle for "inchoate thoughts and ideas." Summerfield (1987) wrote

Let's recognize that a journal that is initiated, required, and overseen by someone other than the writer is no longer sui generis a journal, as we generally understand it. It is, in fact, possibly something better--a displaced serial conversation; the drafting of a possible meeting of minds; the premeditation or blueprint of a social act; a representation to be presented, shared. But, if this is possibly so, then its raison d'être, its point, will lie not so much inherently in itself, as in the uses to which it is to be put, its aftermath. (p. 34)

What this emphasizes is that, to be useful to the writer of the journal, as well as to the teacher, is not whether a grade may be assigned, but a consideration as to how it will be used within the context of a reader-response classroom environment. It can be a useful tool for students as a means of exploring text through written discourse; in addition, it can be useful for the teacher as a means of monitoring students' reading strategies. There have been those who caution against overuse of journals, believing that it would leave students in a rut, much the same way that overuse of personal narratives or five-paragraph themes

may do (Purves, 1993).

It is true that "journalizing" can become just another disconnected English assignment or trivial language arts activity: the journal can be interpreted as an end in itself, a receptacle for traditional assignments like end-of-chapter questions issued by the teacher. There must be clear expectations that journals will serve both the writer and the reader in extended ways that will provide ideas, insights, and questions to explore in further writing and discussion. Students, instead of teachers, learn to direct their own learning of literary text as they re-read journal entries for questions to ask and explore. In this manner, the journal facilitates other language arts activities, and does not allow students to be mired in "ruts."

Again, the importance of the journal as dialectic instrument becomes key to a perception of the journal as a centerpiece rather than a disconnected activity. It is to be exploratory and speculative, to help them understand not only the meaning of the text, but the strategies that they have found most useful in developing interpretive skills. To achieve this objective, however, the journal cannot be entirely personal or private. The kind of journal advocated here is encouraging students to be aware of an aesthetic as well as efferent stance when studying literary text, but not (necessarily) revealing intimate details that may connect them with the literature. There are times when students may be compelled to include such details that they associate with works of literature, but this is rarely the case.

The right of privacy where writing is concerned is ambiguous. It seems natural to assume that when one writes, it will be there for others to read, either immediately or at

some indeterminate time in the future. For instance, William Gass (1993) wrote that

All three--diary, notebook, journal-- are predicated on privacy. They are not meant to be read by anyone else, for here one is emotionally naked and in formal disarray. Unlike the letter, they have no addressee; they do not expect publication, and therefore, presumably, they are more truthful. However, if I already have my eye on history; if I know when I'm gone, my jottings will be looked over, wondered at, commented on, I may begin to plant redemptive items, rearrange pages, slant stories, plot small revenges, revise, lie, and look good. Then, like Shakespearean soliloquies, they are spoken to the world. (p. 45)

The journals students write as works of academic discourse are those "soliloquies spoken to the world." Students are to understand with assurance that their journals are works of academic discourse, rigorous in the sense that they are the repositories for ideas that lead to meaning making. Students must know clearly that they should not feel their privacy compromised if asked to read parts aloud or to share excerpts from their entries with others.

If reading students' journals causes teachers difficulties, such difficulties are minor compared to teachers' conflicts when evaluating journals. There are those who believe, for example, that evaluation of personal response is inappropriate. In some cases, grades for journals are given on a completion basis or simply for the number of entries written. Yet, students need to know that their work is read and considered. Students do not express the same concern for privacy, if the journal is a classroom activity. Students are interested in teachers' reactions to their written work. It is a fundamental principle of entering into the conversation with students that one must read carefully the entries students write in their

journals.

Evaluation of journals is nevertheless problematic. If students' journals are to be read--and they must be read thoughtfully--the issue of whether or not they should be evaluated must also be addressed. If journals are to be perceived as academically rigorous, if students' voices are to be appreciated, then evaluation must be built in to the process of writing journals. The evaluation is not focused on displays of knowledge but rather on insightful commentary and evidence of thought concerning what they have read. For example, Langer and Applebee (1987) have noted that the type of evaluation that was given to an assignment shaped how that assignment turned out. If the journals were evaluated on the basis of students' exploratory dialogue with text, instead of evaluation based on pre-conceived notions of what students ought to have gained from reading a text, students were more likely to risk tentative interpretations, or raise questions about the text. In evaluating students' dialogue journals, an objective must be to maintain a dialogue among students, texts, peers, and teachers. Evaluation must not be based on an imparted body of knowledge. Evaluation must be based on the degree of personal student involvement, the extent to which students consider textual elements and the impact of those elements on the reader, as well as reconsideration of areas of confusion and varying interpretations (Stiles, 1992). But, Rosenblatt (1985) reminds us that no matter how incomplete or inadequate students' responses may seem, in comparison with the teacher's, that response must be respected, and perhaps used as a inaugural point.

Reader Response Enacted in the Classroom

Understanding theoretical frameworks in which the journal is situated is a first step; patterning a classroom environment, however, employing those theories requires praxis that is often difficult to construct. If journals are to be the medium through which reader oriented theories begin to take shape, there must be some practical guide to help teachers and students begin. If writing in dialogue journals is to ultimately permit students to learn to interpret literary text on their own, what do teachers teach? Is instruction necessary, if students are responding to literary texts “on their own?” The handbook is to prepare teachers for a new kind of instruction, and provide students with a secure framework so that they have some direction for their responses. Therefore, all students will need to have a handbook about journals--a detailed explanation of what journals are, the purposes of journal writing activities, and strategies that students can use to begin their own dialogue journal.

Before introducing actual journal writing to a group of students, they must read and follow some procedures that will help them get started. Students must be supplied with their own copy of a handbook “About Journals” (see Appendix A, Form I) for reference at any time.

A question that might be asked is: why have a handbook at all? If students are invited to respond to literature, then there should be nothing to prevent them from responding in any way they feel. Most students, however, need to have guidelines to help them begin and sustain keeping a dialogue journal that will enable them to create a text of their own.

In any number of texts there are lists of suggestions as to how to give students “structure” to their journal responses, or how students can “ignite” thoughts about their reading (Anson & Beach, 1995; Kooy & Wells, 1996; Parsons, 1990; Fulwiler, 1987). Unfortunately, few of these kinds of texts offer any theoretical background as to whether such recommendations are founded on good teaching practices. As of yet, the directions offered by journal-practicing teachers exist in the realm of “teaching folklore” rather than demonstrable practice. The more vigorously the guidelines are tied to theory, the more convincing journal writing might warrant extensive journal use in English classrooms. If the dialogue journal is to become a central feature of the English classroom, its use must be principled. Nothing can be lost in making students self-conscious of the forms of literary texts. Hence, there is a need for the kind of guideline to help students become more self-conscious of those forms through journal writing, which also has theory necessary to support its practice.

Pearson (1993) stated that "Students of all ages and abilities benefit from conscious attempts by teachers to focus attention either on the structure of the text to be read or the structure of the knowledge domain to which the text is related" (p. 506). The handbook ought to be able to provide students with a conscious attempt to focus students on domain-specific aspects of the text (e.g. concepts related specifically to literary texts) or specific literary concepts without restricting their perceptions of the literature. Any instructional practice that purports to be student centred needs to allow for the uncertainty of response (Probst, 1991). Bergstrom (1983) claimed that students failure to understand much beyond thinly disguised plot summaries and character descriptions is "not from a

lack of intelligence or inexperience but because they lacked the mental structures" demanded of successful readers (p. 748). Therefore, put simply, the handbook is to provide a foundation upon which interpretive strategies and mental structures can be developed, cues that will perhaps direct students' attention to specific features of the literary text, to extend their thinking about the text. In addition to placing students in situations where discoveries about literature can be made, they need guidelines and instruction to understand how to respond to literary text, particularly to make informed literary judgments. As the literature becomes more open to scrutiny, students need to know how to handle the possibilities of interpretation, and how to judge for themselves the rightness of their interpretations. While theorists may argue the extent to which readers make meaning, there is agreement that appropriate instruments and instruction is needed.

Students must learn that the text has boundaries within which interpretation is permitted, and to learn how those boundaries emerge as students make meaning. Miall and Kuiken (1998) and Bizzell (1986) were convinced that New Critical methods of "close reading" in a Formalist sense, can be useful. Miall and Kuiken (1998) accepted that "the formalist hypothesis that literariness is a quality of texts, perceived independently of context or literary training. Recognition of poetic features appears to be based on understanding of the language" (p. 335). The study of literary texts, then, should have some formalist features, including "close reading" of textual details. There should also be training in understanding literary language and concepts that authors use to write literary texts. As Selden (1995) noted

the fact that readers make meaning does not necessarily mean that they control it. The question is therefore more profitably posed differently: what are the constraints on legitimate interpretation? On what standards and on what grounds does one grade a student essay or accept a professional article? Where does the authority for judgement reside? (p. 392)

English teachers who engage in reader-response type instruction still wish their students to learn to control meaning-making when reading literature, and to gain confidence in their ability to control interpretation of literary text (Perl, 1994). In particular, students need to know how to forge "the consistency of a specific reading without guaranteeing its validity in any absolute sense" (Suleiman, 1980).

Many of the cues in the handbook are offered to students as means of helping them become more competent and confident interpreters of literary text. Langer (1992; 1998) avers that literature is too often taught in an "informational manner, as if there is a point to be gotten or a correct interpretation the reader must move toward" (p. 38). Too often, even today, many teachers use literature as a means by which students gain information, much like reading a textbook. Similarly, Rosenblatt (1980; 1978) has stressed that too much literature instruction asks students to read literary text to obtain "factual information" without allotting time for students to contemplate aesthetic interests of the reading selections. The guidelines provided in the handbook are designed to be as open-ended as possible, even as the students read the literature with an evaluative and judgmental eye. There are no prescriptions as to how students ought to read literature. Probst (1988) explained that

the teacher must keep in mind that any restriction on student response sacrifices something. The virtue of the free response is that it identifies the

student's most vivid connection with the text. It may be a memory, an interpretation, an image, or even a digression that seems entirely unrelated, but it is the immediate consequence of the encounter of reader and text, and is thus material from which meaning might be made. Constraints on the response diminish the chances that it will be so intimate a part of the reader. (p. 46)

Probst (1988) then suggested that unconstrained responses would be better for students, founded on the premise that only free responses could enable students to understand literature as more than academic exercises that "pass" or "fail." This handbook, however, does not encourage unconstrained responses.

Development of Students' Responses in Journals

If students' dialogue journals are open-ended, how can students, teachers, and parents tell if there has been progress made in students' ability to interpret literary text? Along what lines is development revealed in student journals regarding their engagement with literature? If there can be development in students' responses to literary text, what role, if any, does instruction play in that development? There are theorists who argue that there are "stages" of cognitive development which will either prevent or permit students to respond to literature in particular ways (Thomson, 1987). For example, some researchers investigating readers' responses to literature have posited that students go through specific developmental phases, and their responses to literature will be in accord with such phases. Applebee (1978), for one, suggested that children will move from simple retelling and summarizing of stories, to generalizing about themes in adolescence.

The shift from simple retelling and summarizing by the younger children

toward analysis and generalization by the adolescent has at its heart the recognition that a story may operate at more than one level of meaning. Young children's concern with the action suggests that for them a story remains primarily a patterning of events; the early adolescent's ability to analyze reflects the recognition that this pattern has a purpose and conscious ordering; while the generalizations of the older student take the work as implying a broader theme or message. (p. 114)

Similarly, writers such as Appleyard (1990) have discussed the various ages and stages of reader response to literature. Drawing on psychological profiles detailed in the work of Jean Piaget and Jung, Appleyard asserted that there were developmental stages that readers passed through--stages which follow one another. He summarized them into five roles: (1) the reader as player (2) the reader as hero and heroine (3) the reader as thinker (4) the reader as interpreter and finally (5) the pragmatic reader. He posited that readers appeared "to learn in a fairly predictable sequence" (p. 14). If this were true, perhaps students' dialogue journals could reveal the nature of that sequence, to track students' responses through periods of time, and written responses would allow researchers to better understand the patterns that emerge as students pass through stages.

Kooy and Wells (1996) set forth three stages that they believe students exhibit as they write in their journals. The first is a "literal surface encounter with the text" in which students simply retell or summarize events with unreflective interest in the literature. In this first stage, students are not likely to ask questions, hypothesize or speculate, and their entries are most likely short. The second stage, "evidence of understanding and appreciation of text," students move beyond simple retelling to connecting the literature to their personal lives, making some plausible predictions, or asking questions. The entries in

this second stage, however, are most likely underdeveloped and unsophisticated. The third stage moves students to a higher level of evaluative engagement with text, where students display active participation with the text. Students write entries that make predictions, ask pertinent questions, demonstrate strong empathy with characters. Moreover, students begin to be aware of the techniques authors use to create specific effects, especially in terms of deliberate word choices. Finally, students begin to be aware that their personal values and beliefs may conflict with those of the author, and begin to assess the author's credibility.

If we subscribe to the idea of stages of development, planning for the wide range of student responses is even more complex, and the need for open-endedness more critical. Beach (1993) pointed out that other psychologists have questioned the assumptions upon which stage theories are founded, and especially the ways in which the stages have been used to categorize students. Beach noted that "they argue that other factors--the nature of the task, the student's interest or motivation, and the social context--also influence responses" (p. 77). This limitation is readily recognized by Appleyard (1990):

Though cognitive development may be a necessary mechanism for significant change in the way we read as we mature, there are other kinds of development; in addition, cultural influences, as well as social functions of reading and, especially, the kind of education we get, would also seem to be crucial ingredients of any adequate account of how we respond to stories. (p. 10)

Teachers need not only consider the ages and stages of development of students' ability to respond to literary text, but they should also consider the wide range of interests,

cognitive ability, and reading experiences of those students. Therefore, the structure of the journal assignment must be very open-ended, to accommodate the diversity of students; nevertheless, teachers also need to help students, at whatever stage of their development, to become more mature and sensitive in their reading responses. In addition, because many students express fear or uncertainty as they face "literary" texts (Perl, 1994), methods must be found to ensure that students have the ability to comprehend "interpretation" and to learn how to approach it. Blatt and Rosen (1984) have emphasized that, in structuring journals, there be provision for varieties of writing experiences, some writing for sharing and some writing for private use, as well as questions dealing with themes, meaning, characterization, tone and mood.

Rosenblatt (1976) was concerned with two aspects of readers' development. She suggested that readers be free to respond to the literature as they are so inclined, but she did not stop at free responses. She was concerned that the responses increase and enhance readers' responses through guided practice. Development in students' responses to literature had to include both declarative knowledge (of what is known) and procedural knowledge (of how to put that knowledge to use). As Rosenblatt (1976) pointed out: "The reader...must be helped to develop flexibility of mind, a freedom from rigid emotional habits, if he is to enter into the aesthetic experiences the artist has made possible" (p. 104). The student reader must be shown how to develop responses, and to be sensitive to the text and return to it in order to shape responses. In addition, Iser (1978) argued that readers needed to acquire an ability to use the text as a "feedback" system, into which they inserted their own ideas.

The question--and subsequent problem--that results from statements like these is: How must readers be helped to develop flexibility of mind in such a way that they are as attuned to the text as they are to their own personal insertions? What exactly do teachers provide for their students as opportunities to attain "freedom of emotional habits?" At the same time, and in an almost paradoxical situation, the student, presumably with the help of the teacher, must identify and follow the textual "blueprint" that is provided by the author, in order to provide a full response to literature.

Students must have freedom, but this does not preclude instruction; for without instruction, students wallow in responses that are superficial and do not increase their abilities to handle complex literary material (Purves, 1993). Gaining access to literary interpretation does not just happen and therefore cannot be left to chance. The process of making sense of a text needs to be learned, and this learning must involve formal instruction and practice (Miall & Kuiken, 1998; Purves, 1989; Khan, Walter, & Johannessen, 1984; Smagorinsky and Gevinson, 1989; Harker, 1987). The problem is to identify what kind of formal practice must occur, and how to offer formal practice which is most effective for the student.

Mosenthal and Na (1982) researched children's ability to write relative to the "function of the type of response register they maintained with their teacher" (p. 115). They noted that there are several stances that students can assume when asked to compose--noncontingent, imitative, and contingent. They posited that children's compositions judged to be the most creative, as well as better interpretive pieces, were those that were contingent; that is, children who combined instruction given by their

teacher with their own creativity produced better written assignments. For instance, students who used the top-down information given by their teacher about an assigned written project, and used that information with bottom-up, self-initiated imagination, produced a narrative response to pictures which they were shown. In their estimation, Mosenthal and Na (1982) found that "Children who used a contingent response register tended to compose their recall using a top-down, interpretive strategy, drawing many text-based inferences, more so than the other two groups" (p. 108). In terms of journal writing, students need to have teacher directives of a top-down nature, combined with their personal bottom-up strategies engaging them with literary text, in such a way that they add new information or clarify issues with regards to the text. Mosenthal (1983) concluded that "contingent children view their interaction with their teacher as cooperative; they add new information in a manner that complies with the demands of the teacher's task structure" (p. 234). They are, according to Mosenthal (1983) more speculative, able to shape well-identified theme structures, and able to integrate meaning in the stimulus with prior knowledge.

The second purpose that the handbook must fulfill is to grant students adaptability to create responses that they feel are most relevant to the literature they are studying. In a sense, the handbook must prevent students from believing that they must accept, without question, authorities who might impose certain views on students' readings of literary text. Rosenblatt (1976) says that students "too frequently are encouraged to passively accept what the teacher wishes them to think and feel, without becoming aware of themselves as personalities with definite patterns of their own" (p. 173). In a study conducted by

VanDeWeghe (1987), findings revealed that readers, through their writing, sought to find meaningful problems in the text, and to pose possible solutions to those problems. This suggests, however, that students must be given opportunities to also find their own authority, to gain control over the text in such a way as to resist it.

On the other hand, formalist kinds of instruction can be useful if they permit students access to "codes" of the text (Scholes, 1985). For Martin (1989), the idea of renunciation of "analytical methods," could be "unsettling, and even painful and threatening" (p. 377). He went on to say that the benefits of rigorous and analytical method "nevertheless direct students to learn sensitive reading of literary texts, and further insists on examining the unifying principle of a literary text--that principle of inclusion and ordering that best explains what elements make up the text, how they are arranged, and to what ends" (p. 377). It seems as if researchers, caught up in the exploration of students' abilities to create multivariate meanings of literary text, do not necessarily want to eliminate formal instruction of literature. Thus, the construction of a handbook that is supported by learning theory may help readers understand more about the reading and interpretive experience.

Developing Guiding Strategies for the Handbook

Researchers who have studied the processes by which readers make sense of literary text, have begun to put together a composite picture of the variety of ways readers interpret those texts (Thury & Friedlander, 1996). It may be argued that students' ability to achieve some kind of literary expertise may be based on native intelligence, language

skill, and motivation (Bortolussi & Dixon, 1996); there is also evidence that expertise develops as a result of training in reading and interpreting literary text (Dorfman, 1996). If there is evidence that training can actually promote and foster attributes of language skill and motivation, it is important that more effort must be given to promote those strategies which have solid theoretical foundations. Each of the guidelines suggested in the handbook, therefore, must provide teachers with theoretical reasons for their inclusion. General characteristics of good journals have been observed by theorists such as Fulwiler (1987) who have regarded frequent entries, long entries, self-sponsored entries, and a chronology of entries, to be benchmarks of superior journal writing. But, it bears repeating, that if journals are to be used in principled ways as a central feature of the study of literary text, training students to use the guidelines seems an appropriate place to begin.

The following guidelines (see Appendix A, Form 1) were developed by English teachers to ensure that students had a reference for writing about literature in their journal. Each student was provided with a reference of aspects of literary text that they could examine and explore in order to create meaning. The literature has provided evidence that each of these items has a theoretical and philosophical foundation, and therefore ought to be included in this reference guide.

Item 1. [Personal reaction to the text]

People react to literary text. They have thoughts and feelings that are evoked by the work. The fundamental principle of reader-response is that knowledge of literary texts is not to be found in any fixed body of facts or rules (Watson & Ducharme, 1990); rather,

knowledge is created from the individual's dynamic experiences, motives, values, and emotions. The source of knowledge about literary text is in the personal response. For this reason, we positioned this suggestion for response to literary text at the beginning.

According to Rosenblatt (1976) and Bleich (1975), students begin the reading experience from a personal perspective, that permitted the reader to apprehend the work emotionally, and stressed the significance of this emotional bond. From that perspective, the student achieved a greater understanding of the critical judgement of the literary work. Bleich (1975), in particular, emphasized that "critical judgments are implicit in emotional reactions" (p.49) and that too often students are not taught to account for those emotional responses. Bleich (1975) has held that students are encouraged to be as impersonal as possible in their interpretations of literary works, which only give the illusion of objectivity. He stressed that honest emotions ought to be sought and held of great consequence when students engage with literary text. Bleich (1975) also believed that students' affective responses should be the teacher's eminent concern.

Rosenblatt (1976) strenuously argued against inattention to affective responses, insisting that art was primarily a sensuous experience, and that to deprive the student of either the "esthetic or the social elements of his experience is to cripple him for a fruitful understanding of what literature offers" (p. 30). Those who have studied emotional reactions of readers, and their abilities to recall text, have concluded that affective aspects of reading experiences have been neglected and must be considered. For example, Goetz, Sadoski, Olivarez, Calero-Breckheimer, Garner, and Fatemi (1992) suggested that "readers call on some common representations or background knowledge of emotional

experiences during reading" (p. 369). They further noted that emotional reactions appeared to have benefitted readers in reconstructing text, and their ability to recall salient passages from the text was enhanced. In addition, a study by Sadoski and Quast (1990) indicated that students who related imagery and emotional response to those images recalled certain parts of the text better. They noted that "a major finding was that most memorable parts of the three feature articles recalled after a 16-day delay were significantly related to imagery ratings, affect ratings, and paragraph length, but not to importance ratings" (p. 270). The implications of these studies suggest that students need to attend to the images used in the text, and the affect those images have on them. As a result of such studies, there have been arguments made that affective learning has not been given the attention it needs. Therefore, the first item asks students to pay close attention to their personal reactions (Rosenblatt, 1985; 1980).

It has been argued that personal reactions to literature can lead to greater critical thoughts (Bleich, 1975; Sebesta, Monson & Senn, 1995). Similarly, when Purves and Rippere (1968) developed their category of personal response, they emphasized that "much excellent criticism can come from the writer's attempt to discuss his involvement with the work or his private reaction to it" (p. 6). Accordingly, it seems significant that readers' "aesthetic" stance be enhanced.

However, it must also be posited that exclusive focus on personal or emotional reactions does not guarantee that students will attain higher-order reading abilities. Criticism has been levelled against Bleich's (1975) subjective reader-response theories because it is argued that students' responses are more about the students' lives than they

are explorations of literary text. McCormick (1985) stated that "One of the major criticisms directed at response statements has been that they are simply associative, 'touchy-feely' reactions, rather than opening up students' responses to texts, they restrict them to what they already know" (p. 837). McCormick noted that students can be assigned responses to bring them new awareness of text "that can make the students stronger, more informed, and self-conscious readers of literature" (1985, p. 837). "Aesthetic" stances must be balanced with attention to "efferent" reading stances. Readers need to feel personal affiliations with literary text, as much as they need to develop strategies for accessing underlying meaning. As Anderson and Rubano (1991) have suggested, "But even if we believe that at least half the task of reading literature is efferent, and that analysis and memory objectives are appropriate to much of the literature curriculum, we need to evoke creative and aesthetic responses to fulfill the rest of the objectives of the literature curriculum" (p. 3).

Scholes (1985) declared that beyond reading (text within text), there has to be interpretation (text upon text), and that development of interpretation has to deal more and more closely with text. Rosenblatt (1985) suggested that "personal experience provides the roots for growth in the capacity to transact more adequately with literary texts" (p. 72). Purves (1991) suggested that students learn how to meet new challenges, accept them and work with them. It is, in short, not enough to let students think that responses like "This story was boring" is sufficient for growth of meaning-making processes. Therefore, to foster growth in interpretation, the student has to be assisted, through direct instruction, not to stop with personal response statements. The other cues

in the handbook have to be considered.

Item 2.[Ask questions of the text.]

It has been traditionally accepted that teaching students about literature by having them answer questions about the text would lead them to “higher order thinking” about the content of the work (Hynds, 1992). Beneath the questions teachers ask students lie powerful messages about what students are supposed to think about the literature and not necessarily what students’ thinking actually may be. The ubiquitous technique of teachers questioning students to test their knowledge and to establish contexts for higher-level thinking is well documented but little understood (Dillon, 1984). Dillon (1984) separated questioning into “recitation,” wherein students display knowledge of content, and “discussion” where students examine and explore issues. “Recitation” has a similar goal of “knowledge telling” as defined by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) in which students simply display literal facts in response to teacher questioning. “Recitation” is still clearly the dominant mode of questioning techniques teachers use. Teachers may profess to engage students’ reader-centred processes through questioning, but the majority of questions teachers ask students concentrate on literal, factual responses (Hynds, 1992; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Dillon (1984) has noted that “Contrary to common sense, questioning is a complex skill. What is more, the skills of questioning in recitation are useless in discussion” (p. 53). Dillon (1984) claimed that too much emphasis has been placed on questioning as a technique to examine students’ knowledge, rather than a means of getting students to think critically. Nessel (1987) cautioned that questioning students

should not necessarily lead teachers to the conclusion that students have comprehended what they have read, nor that they have been conducted to careful thinking (p. 442). So while questioning might be a commonly used means, it is not necessarily producing the results that educators hoped or believed they were achieving in terms of helping students learn about reading literary text. Much is to be learned about the use of questions, how and why they are useful, especially since questions are so commonly used as a teaching technique. It is imperative that we learn more about the potential and the limitations of using questions.

Questions have been used by teachers and publishers to govern the kind of attention students give readings. Questions are intended to direct students to specific aspects of the text, to invite and provoke thought about the text. Fulwiler (1987b) suggested that, in journals, questions can be a method students can use to pose problems and articulate confusions. But the use of questions to solve problems or articulate confusions, especially pertaining to literary text, has not yet been studied to any great extent (Beach & Hynds, 1991). Therefore, it is not known whether or not those end-of-chapter questions are, in fact, helping students learn about the strategies for interpreting literary text.

Beach (1989) suggested that students who can formulate clear questions of what they want to study begin to develop procedures and techniques that help them understand why they are studying the work, and therefore are able to produce better responses to that work. Because readers appear to attend "selectively" to what they read (Reynolds and Anderson, 1982), teachers have frequently used questions as a device to direct the

selectivity of students to achieve reading objectives. Reynolds and Anderson (1982) have postulated that "It could be that questions lead readers to differentiate the questioned category of text information from the rest of the text, and that such differentiation is in itself a sufficient condition for improved learning" (p. 623). For instance, the end-of-chapter questions that are commonly used to focus students' attention on salient aspects of the text, are believed to promote students awareness of--and greater understanding of--specific aspects of text. Rosenblatt (1989) noted that "while language activity implies an intermingled kinesthetic, cognitive, affective, associational matrix, what is brought into awareness, what is pushed into the background, or what is suppressed depends on where the attention is focused" (p. 157). In his study concerning writing in Secondary Schools, Applebee (1981) categorized writing answers to questions as "writing without composing." He suggested that activities involving writing without composing "allow the student the bypass the problem of creating extended, coherent text. All tend to emphasize the accuracy of the specific information being supplied by the student, rather than the ability to organize and present that information coherently" (p. 28). In fact Applebee (1981, 1993) found that students were writing longer, coherent text less than 3 per cent of the time. Many students were asked to write short pieces that often did not require much thought, such as fill-in-the-blank exercises. The problem outlined by Applebee in his reports was that educators cannot expect that students will be able to devise written work of their own as long as they are dependent upon the questions developed for them; rather, students need to be taught how to ask questions of themselves about the texts they are studying, so that they can formulate extended texts, which necessarily require greater

thinking of them.

Although learning to ask questions has been thought of as a productive way of having students learn new material, the efficacy of teacher-developed or editor-made questions has been disputed. The idea of using questions to focus students attention on specific parts of the text is thought to eliminate the need for students to find important information on their own, and change the assignment of reading for understanding to scanning for facts (Thomas, Strage & Curley, 1988). This is generally viewed in a positive light, as pointed out by Reynolds & Anderson (1982) whose study suggested that more focussed attention on differentiated selections of the text improved learning of those parts. However, the range of questions teachers ask students, has narrowed the guide for students, presently limiting ways in which students could respond to literary text. Studies have shown that teachers need to evaluate the kinds of questions that they use with students, to learn better techniques to promote students' inferential thinking through higher-level questioning (Wedman & Moutray, 1991).

Learning to foster student thinking through questioning is important; teachers need to understand this importance in the learning process in order to develop effective questioning techniques with students. More importantly, however, teachers need to instruct students in the strategies by which they can generate their own questions which permits students to ask higher-level questions that lead to higher-level thinking. It stands to reason that if teachers can be taught how to structure and evaluate types of questions, so can students. Further, students learn to generate questions that lead to problem-solving activities (Wong, 1985). Questions are designed in order to direct students' attention to

specific features of text, and to elicit from students certain responses that are thought to be important to understanding the work. There has been much work done on the types of questions that might be asked, and the results of understanding text through questions. Although the use of end-of-text questions is used commonly and extensively, little work has been done to gain knowledge of student-generated questions can lead to in terms of understanding and interpreting text. The idea that students who understand the significance of questions, and can learn to generate their own questions has been the subject of a number of investigative studies, reviewed by Bernice Wong (1985). In her review, Wong (1985 p. 250) concluded that the ability of students to generate their own questions enhanced their ability to process prose text, and should be included as a part of reading theory. John Holt (1964) recognized the power of students' ability to generate their own questions to direct their own learning.

We must not fool ourselves, as for years I have fooled myself, into thinking that guiding children to answers by carefully chosen leading questions is in any important respect different from just telling them the answers in the first place. Children who have been led up to answers by teachers' questions are later helpless unless they can remember the questions, or ask themselves similar questions, and this exactly what they cannot do. The only answer that really sticks in a child's mind is the answer to a question that he asked or might ask himself. (p. 119)

Studies by Langer and Applebee (1987) have suggested that answering questions that have been developed in order to direct and guide students' questions have not been particularly effective. Study questions, as they termed them, produced the least amount of student writing and the least amount of topic knowledge. Lengthier writing, on the other

hand, such as essay writing, provided the "greatest variety of reasoning operations" suggesting that essay writing gave students opportunities to "think most flexibly as they developed their ideas" (p. 100).

It seems apparent that one of the important strategies students need to develop is the ability to ask questions. Students need to have instruction given in different types of questions, but most importantly, to be able to ask questions that will not only ask for factual information found in the text, but questions that will generate the kind of extended writing that demands consideration and reflection.

Item 3. [Making Connections]

Students need to be able to forge links among their personal experiences, their other reading and viewing, to the literature they read. Some learning theorists believe that to learn anything, there must be connections forged between what students currently know, believe, and have experienced, and that which is new (Blatt & Rosen, 1984). The importance of connecting current reading material with prior knowledge has been a method that has proven effective in helping students' comprehension of new text (Paris, Wasik & Turner, 1991; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pearson & Johnson, 1978) which, in turn, enables readers to interpret literary text. Shulman and Carey (1984) emphasized that students need to connect as crucial to the learning process, as they have declared that "all learning is connection" (Thorndike, 1931, quoted in Shulman and Carey, 1984). Spivey (1991) emphasized that when a reader understands or interprets a text, it has some kind of shape or form. "It is not just loose bits of information. Rather, the content in the

representation is organized into meaningful chunks composed of interrelated units of content--units that are held together by referential and logical links" (p. 3). When reading narrative, for instance, readers must be able to understand causal interconnections among states and events delineated in the text. van den Broek, Rohleder, and Narvaez (1996) have noted that "states and events in a literary text tend to be heavily interconnected by means of causal relations. An event or state may be the result of any number of antecedents and, in turn, may itself cause many other states and events" (p. 182). van den Broek et al. argued that causal statements form "anchor points" for the coherence of text, and that readers who can focus on such statements can recall the text in greater detail.

The predicted relationship between the causal connections and recall probability was observed. The more connections a statement had, the more likely it was to be recalled. The correlation between causal connections and recall probability was .71. Thus, 50% of the variance in recall for the story was explained by causal connectivity. These results provide strong support for the notion that the mental representation of literary texts incorporates aspects of the causal network structure of a text. Thus, the causal network theory captures important aspects of the mental representation of the text. (p. 185)

Students' ability to make connections not only increases their ability to recall specific details of a literary text, but helps them see the work as a coherent whole.

The concept of making links between and among textual material is only part of the story. Readers must make other connections as well. They must be able to connect among other "texts," not just between the text and their own lives. Cox and Many (1992) have suggested that "Teachers should not only invite but also encourage students to make personal and intertextual connections. Children who read aesthetically repeatedly make

associations with their own life experiences and the experiences of others in other stories such as books, stories, films, television shows, and media events” (p. 32). It seems as if students who engage most fully with text will make such connections (Cox & Many, 1992).

A number of authors suggest that students’ reading of literary text is founded upon the idea that students ought to be making links between literary text, and their own world (Thomson, 1987). Teachers who have designed and delivered literature that requires students to perceive thematic connections among literary works, have known intuitively why these assignment appeal to students. They are asking students to regard the literature they read and study not standing apart from them, but living with them. Newman (1988) put it this way:

I write whatever comes to mind and I don't revise when I get to the end. While my writing may not always appear exploratory, each journal is a serious attempt on my part to take a new stab at the issues being discussed and I am often surprised by the unexpected connections which appear. (p. 135)

Newman (1988) has recommended that freewriting in journals helps readers grasp what they didn’t understand, make connections with other readings and with their own learning experiences.

In terms of understanding literary text, Iser (1978) noted that "connectibility is fundamental to the construction of texts in general; it is to be strictly observed in expository texts where an argument is to be developed or information is to be conveyed about a particular object" (p. 183). Probst (1987) made this clear when he suggested that

students' responses to literature may come in the form of a connection to their own experiences--whether or not they appear digressions--or to connections to other texts, such as other literature, films, or other visuals.

In addition, students who learn to connect the literary text with the contexts in which they are written, as well as the contexts in which they are read, begin to understand more about the character and purposes of writing. Meek (1990) noted that "Response has to be part of that bigger pattern to connect. We cannot extract poems, plays, novels and other texts from their social context. By 'response' we can no longer mean a general or particular verbal sagacity in respect of certain chosen writings" (p. 3).

The concept of "intertextuality" has become an important part of connecting when reading. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) discussed this phenomenon of discourse as a significant in terms of the role of the reader in the interpretive process of texts. They concluded that "whatever intertextuality exists depends on the connections made by the reader" (p. 306). In addition, they continued that

The reader may make connections between one or more aspects of the text and other literary texts that she or he has read or heard, even connections to literary texts that postdate the text they are currently reading.

Intertextuality is not limited to literary texts, but includes any written conversational texts (indeed any semiotic text, e.g., television commercials) that the reader juxtaposes. (p. 306)

Intertextuality becomes an important strategy for readers who must learn how to interpret literary text. It is another way of connecting the unfamiliar with what is already known to the student, to build associations which further enable readers to interpret

literary text, with all its nuances of meaning in words, phrases, and accumulation of facts. It becomes a part of prior knowledge, at this point, that will help sustain readers' efforts, and therefore make understanding a pleasurable part of reading.

As students begin to use dialogue journals as vehicles for exploratory thinking, they can begin to connect and to see the many ways connections between the familiar and unfamiliar can help them learn. In journals, students may draw on their prior knowledge and experiences that may help them to understand how interaction or transaction with a text can occur.

Item 4 [Write quotes that are effective or memorable]

Students need to highlight textual passages that stand out for them in order to examine their meanings closely in terms of the whole literary work. Berthoff (1981; 1986) has suggested the importance of the "double-entry" journal, in which students are asked to use quoted passages from the text on one side of the page, and on the other, their commentary and interpretation of the selected. She has suggested that this method encourages students to look carefully at the details of the text, over and over. She stated: "We do not need to teach decoding, as the elementary teacher must, but that does not mean that we needn't teach our students to look and look again--not at bunny rabbits perhaps, but at natural forms and designs, at texts and the topography of their own lives" (p. 127). Yet, it is important to stress once more that, while the journal is an exploration of ideas, the interpretive process must be guided by the text (Rosenblatt, 1978; 1994b; Stotsky, 1995). This makes it significant also in terms of the instruction that is given to

students as they begin journal writing. "Lessons" that stress that the text guide the reading and "interpretation" of the text. One way to ensure that this happens is to request that students examine specific words, phrases, and lines found in the text. No specific quotes are given by the teacher, as suggested by Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen (1984). Students can select the quotes that they find important and meaningful. Bialostosky (1991) related this to Bakhtin.

This range of forms includes the journal that copies out a quotation on the left page and responds to it on the right, the marginal annotation, the admiring or parodic reformulation, the quoted passage preceded by the writer's point in quoting and followed by the writer's interpretation, and many others. These forms are of interest not just as conventions to be learned but as sites where productive verbal-ideological work goes on...When we interrupt the quoted text, interrogate it, clarify its point, or expose its ambiguities, we make an opening for our own utterances and give shape to our own roles in the conversation. (p. 18)

What students are required to do in their journals, as suggested in the handbook guidelines, is to search for the lines, phrases, expressions that strike them as important to the building of personal interpretations. Winkler and McCuen (1981) have claimed that using quotes "anchor you analysis to the text of the work and keep you from going adrift on the sea of speculation" (p. 298). But, equally important, they can open up discussion about the text. Once they begin to see that the handbook can provide the beginning "structure" of their dialogue journals, what they make of those journals as they move into the literature over the course of a semester becomes a personal odyssey that is full of unknown events and turns. Studies that have undertaken examination of the significance of

quotation use to enhance comprehension of literary text are few. Zollner (1990), one of the few, has noted that "Explorations about what we quote and what we do with these quotations...have only rarely been carried out" (p. 294). In his study of the use of quotations, Zollner (1990) focused on the "intertextual" aspects of quoting from primary and secondary sources, demonstrating how the use of quotes reassembles new meaning and new functions as they serve to "find the most relevant and most ambiguous (polyvalent) sections in texts and can teach children and adults to understand where exactly their (interpretations) and those of others will vary most" (p. 298). Zollner (1990) paralleled the use of quotations with one of van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) reader-strategies: "that readers do indeed 'delete' and abstract texts; especially longer and complicated texts are reduced according to van Dijk's macrorules of 'deletion', 'generalization', and 'construction'" (p. 302). This study demonstrated that scholarly writers use relevant passages--often the same passages as other writers--to construct individual, interpreted texts of their own. Brent (1992) argued that readers have to be persuaded by texts and that, to do so, select meaningful quotes or passages from those texts that integrate with our own thoughts. Brent (1992) suggested that often

we are no longer aware of the complex reasons why we select certain materials to include in a research paper and reject others; why we choose to quote here, paraphrase there, and, in still other cases, get the ideas from our reading so entangled with our own that extricating them is not only impossible but meaningless. (p. 108)

Nevertheless, in order for students to have a meaningful dialogue with a text, teachers need to show them how they can select specific passages from a text in order to develop a

conversation about and with the text. Therefore, it seems as if one of the strategies outlined by the handbook that ought to be considered more fully is the use of quotes in the dialogue journal.

Item 5 [Consider author's point of view]

Students who read literary text well need to understand the peculiarities of point of view and frame of reference. From whose perspective, for example, do readers view a particular literary work, and what effect does that perspective have on their understanding of the selection? If, as Rosenblatt (1978, 1985, 1994) continues to emphasize, the importance of the text, authorial intention--and therefore authorial point of view--still play a significant role in shaping the reading that we do.

Sizer (1996) suggested that one of the "Big Questions" ought to include the idea of point of view. "From whose viewpoint are we reading, or seeing, or hearing? How reliable is this viewpoint?" The issues that most engage us involve awareness of, and critique of, point of view.

Item 6. [Noting Author's Style]

This item suggests that students should become aware of underlying literary systems that permit students to gain access to some of the specific choices author's have made and to articulate the effect that those choices were intended to have on the reader. That is, students need to become better able to recognize stylistic or rhetorical devices (c.f. Margaret Ford, 1960; Winkler & McCuen, 1981) which authors use to express

themselves. This includes recognition of figurative language and irony. For example, Rosenblatt (1989) has noted that seeking texts that achieve some kind of link with the child's experience should not be thought of too narrowly. That is, she suggested that "We should study in greater depth the relationship, on the one hand, the range of experiences that the young readers bring to the page and, on the other, the types of imagery, social assumptions, and basic emotional structures, as well as linguistic patterns, offered by specific texts" (p. 43). In other words, while students need not explicate and translate figurative language, they need to be made aware of the effects of figurative language. So, too, did Applebee (1989) encourage students to "recognize these conventions and manipulate them to their own ends" (p. 91).

Ortony (1989) subscribed to the notion that perceiving textual experiences are shared by all of us, which includes the use of figurative language. In metaphors, he argued, one could view their comprehension as many of the same fundamental processes that were involved in the comprehension of any other piece of language. The comprehension of metaphors, and of texts in which they occur, very often manifested itself in the reader's recognition that he or she has achieved some kind of insight into the author's meaning or intention. "I have been arguing that metaphors (especially good ones) frequently resist translation into literal language. I have taken the position that metaphors are a principal means of expressing the literally inexpressible" (Ortony, 1989, p. 157).

It seems apparent, therefore, that students need to be taught very specific concepts, such as figurative language, so they can engage with the text on a different level. Langer (1998) has suggested that students who use literary language and concepts within

the context of developing meaning from literary text, are able to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings more effectively.

The theory of "foregrounding" known in literary theory suggests that students can learn how to become cognizant of certain features of literary text, and focus attention on specific details, much in the same manner that a photographer fixes attention on the subject being photographed. An awareness of specific features of text perhaps is important in helping students monitor how they make sense of a literary text.

The term "foregrounding" refers to the fact that literary texts, by making use of some special devices, direct the reader's attention to their own formal or semantic structure. Some parts of the text are thereby promoted into the "foreground." These textual locations are given more attention, and in the reader's perception they play a relatively more important role in the act of interpretation (van Peer, 1992, p. 139).

What this suggests is that students need to be instructed as to the kinds of devices that authors commonly use, acquiring knowledge of literary concepts to identify those artifices. This does not advocate teaching literature for efferent purposes of "skills", but rather developing conceptual understanding. In this way, these details are made "strange" or "unfamiliar" to the reader, and thus more likely that greater regard for them will occur. van Peer (1992) posited that the two mechanisms to achieving foregrounding is through deviation and parallelism. Deviations are created when "some kind of rule, maxim or convention is flouted by the text. This may involve the rules of language, literary conventions, the reader's expectation or a reference to some state the reader knows in reality to be false or improbable" (van Peer, 1992, p. 140). Parallelism, on the other hand,

is accomplished through repetitive structures on all levels: phonology, rhythm, morphology, syntax, lexis, semantics, or pragmatics (van Peer, 1992). Thus, students should be able to discern deviation and parallelism in order to grasp how they operate within literary texts. It should be emphasized that, even though terminology is significant, by itself it is not as important as understanding the context in which literary techniques are used. Explicating how those techniques evoke response from readers is far more relevant.

Item 7. [Create graphic representations]

Writing uses a symbol system to express thought and ideas, but it is not the only symbol system that students have available to them. Ackerman (1994) has questioned the privilege--and, in his estimation, too narrow--status of "writing to learn." Ackerman (1994) asked whether or not we know with any degree of certainty whether writing effects learning any more than oral discourse might effect learning. He also suggested that, while writing has done well giving voice to students personal reactions, the model has been "cognitively and institutionally myopic with its concern for personal development and discovery" (p. 361). Smagorinsky and Coppock (1994) suggested that if we value students' responses, we need to allow them to discover the many ways readers can respond to text, including means other than written responses. Smagorinsky and Coppock (1994) argued that interpretation of literary texts can be demonstrated in other forms of representation. For example, graphic representations, artwork, or mapping should also be encouraged as a means by which students can interpret literary text. Drawing can be equated with freewriting, prewriting, or any other exploration of expression, manipulating

symbol systems that “provide a cognitive economy in its metaphoric transformations, which make it possible for a seemingly limited symbol to spread its power over a range of experience” (Bruner, quoted in Carroll, 1991, p. 35). Carroll (1991) cautioned that “To withhold that power from middle- and high-school students--no matter how well intentioned--to permit only elementary students access to that symbolizing system ignores the importance of drawing as a powerful preliminary of writing” (p. 35).

Therefore, the inclusion of graphic representations as a possible means of responding to literature was developed. Students have to have a wide range of strategies available, as well as many possible ways of augmenting meaning through manipulation of different symbol systems.

Summary

If the dialogue journal is to be elevated as a significant endeavour in literature instruction, it will be necessary to understand the roles of teachers and students in terms of perspectives and responsibilities that each will have to assume. It is also increasingly apparent that journal use needs to have a clear link it to research in literary theory, reading theory, and composition theory. We require continuous observation and documentation of how journals are introduced into English classrooms, and the results of student interpretation of literary text that occur over time in classrooms that employ them.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to investigate grade ten students' written responses to literature in their dialogue journals. Specifically answers to following questions were sought to the following questions:

- (1) What is the nature of secondary students' responses to literary texts as revealed through their dialogue journals?
- (2) Do dialogue journals reveal development in secondary students' responses to literary texts, and, if so, along what dimensions can that development be revealed?

I wanted to engage in a study that might generate knowledge about the use of dialogue journals in the secondary English classroom. Specifically, I wanted to gain insight into the patterns of response as students develop their own meaning of literary text (Thury & Friedlander, 1996; Miall & Kuiken, 1998), and to "uncover changing and developing strategies readers use to create mental representations of literary texts" (Thury & Friedlander, 1996, p. 3). How, for example, might the dialogue journal be used to form a rich "data base" of interpretive skills that students could apply when studying literary text? There have been any number of testimonials regarding the benefits of using journals in various subjects (Fulwiler, 1987a; 1987b; Kooy & Wells, 1996; Anson & Beach, 1995). But testimonials, although convincing because they "feel right" in a commonsensical way, add only to a teaching "folklore" rather than "reflective teaching practices" (Hillocks, 1995). Much of what educators know and understand concerning dialogue journals exists

in the realm of folklore. According to Hillocks (1995) true reflective teaching practices are the result of desire to improve teaching instruction in a way that it is tied to theory. If, for example, journals ought to be used to help secondary students interpret literary text, they must be publically verifiable, and connected to theory. Teachers must be able to select wisely from the myriad of techniques and activities currently available, and know which ones have proven success and why these techniques have been successful. Teachers do not have enough instructional time to incorporate all the teaching techniques that have been endorsed, nor should they feel compelled to do so. Therefore, since there needs to be well defined activities used in English classrooms, and since I believe that the journal is a principal activity, we need to investigate the nature, purpose, and outcomes of using dialogue journals as a part of instruction of literature. In this chapter, the choice of written protocols is defended, the naturalistic mode is supported, and the development of the handbook is outlined. There are explanations of considerations that guided the selection of classroom materials and instructional methods included. Next, the phases of data collection are summarized, the techniques used to ensure trustworthiness are described, and the analysis procedures are delineated. Further, there is a detailed depiction of the participants and the context in which the study took place.

Use of Written Protocols

Students were required to keep a dialogue journal as part of their course requirements for their Grade 10 English program for one semester. In their journal, they were asked to write responses to the literature assigned, using the guidelines outlined in

the handbook designed by the researcher and colleagues. I chose to study written protocols, recognizing that written responses are less immediate than concurrent think-aloud protocols, and may not impart primary responses to the literature (Thury & Friedlander, 1996). Written responses may be quite far removed from primary responses, depending on the time elapse between the reading event and the reflective event of writing thoughts on paper. Kintgen (1989) cautions that "any written response--and especially an assigned paper--is produced at some temporal distance from the experience of reading, so it is at best a memorial reconstruction of the reading rather than a report of it, with all the blurring and loss of detail that entails" (1989, p. 135).

Nevertheless, there are valuable insights to be gained from these removed reflections on literary text. Students were encouraged to record their thoughts and reflections as soon after the reading as possible. In cases of longer works, such as novels or plays, that cannot be read at one sitting, students were encouraged to write responses during reading times as thoughts occurred to them. In fact, one advantage of written responses that are not given at the moment of reading is that students can look back at some of the details found in the literature, and reflect further on them (Anson & Beach, 1995; Salvatori, 1996). In many instances, students were able to connect details in more interesting ways with the benefit of time. According to Beach (1989) written responses to open-ended questions foster "more interpretive responses and a taped/oral format fosters more engagement/autobiographical responses" (p. 124). In addition, Rosenblatt (1991) suggested that "Textbooks' and teachers' questions too often hurry the student away from the lived-through experience. After the reading, the experience should be recaptured,

reflected on" (p. 447). The dialogue journal permits students a relatively unhurried time to relive the literary reading and can perhaps generate insights that are only available to students after further thought.

Since I am concerned mostly with the nature of interpretation of literary text, it seems likely that written responses would be the protocols that might best produce what I wanted to examine. Moreover, written protocols do have advantages in that they are permanent records, and can provide tangible chronicles of possible development of students' responses to literary text. Thury and Friedlander (1996) point to certain limitations of the oral protocol situation, in that surface features of understanding text could be probed. It was, however, my intention to study beyond those surface features, to see if written protocols revealed anything of "deep structure" understanding of literary text.

The Naturalistic Mode

The naturalistic method of inquiry seemed appropriate for this study because there appeared to be a fit between the nature of the questions asked for this report, and the nature the data collection techniques (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990; Howe, 1988). I was interested in describing the processes, not only evaluating a product, by which students interpreted literary texts as they wrote in their dialogue journals. I anticipated certain general outcomes from the dialogue journals, but I was also prepared to investigate informal patterns and unanticipated consequences, to follow wherever the investigation led me (Patton, 1987; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Beach and

Hynds (1991) have noted that "response researchers seek certain consistent patterns in readers' responses. On the other hand, they are sensitive to the uniqueness of individual readers' perspectives and the biases inherent in their own orientation" (p. 471).

Flexible naturalistic modes support a reader-response approach to studying literature. Specifically, there seemed to be a correspondence between what I was asking my students to do as they responded individually to literature in their dialogue journals, and the kinds of questions I wished to answer in the study. For example, a naturalistic paradigm assumes the existence of multiple, socially constructed realities, and gives weight to the descriptions of those realities (Peshkin, 1993). I was interested in investigating salient behaviours, attitudes, and structures (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) that students found appropriate in their study of literary text. It should be understood, however, that there are caveats to my stance of participant-observer. I recognize that there were constraints placed on the student respondents, given the nature of the texts they were assigned, and the task that they were required to accomplish to receive grades for this course, neither of which may have existed in the minds of the students. I had had experiences in previous years of teaching that suggested types of responses to literature were possible. Eisner (1993) noted that "experience is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed and that experience in significant degree depends on our ability to get in touch with the qualitative world we inhabit" (p. 5). Thus, I was able to draw on my years of experience in assigning, reading, and evaluating students' responses to literature. I felt I was on the right track.

Reader-response is established within that qualitative world of individual

interpretation of literary works, and it seems fitting that a naturalistic perspective ought to be adopted. Insofar as the dialogue journal might be used as a means to improve students' interpretive skills when studying literary text, I hope to provide cues, rather than prescriptions for such improvement (Eisner, 1988). Through observations of how students use dialogue journals, I hope to capture some description of the settings in which students find them useful (or not). In addition, according to Bereiter (1994), there is more to learning than mastering an organized body of materials or procedural skills. Some measure of enculturation that must occur in order to permit participation within the discipline, and the dialogue journal may permit students and teachers insight into a kind of enculturation that occurs when learning to read literary text.

Peshkin (1988) advised researchers to monitor systematically the subjectivity of one's research in order to create "an illuminating, empowering personal statement" that attunes the researcher to where "self and subject intertwine" (p. 20). It was apparent, for instance, that my expectations for students' responses in dialogue journals were implied in the assessment guidelines found in the handbook (see Appendix A, Form I); that is, I wanted students to attend to literary analysis, the language and style of the text, and the (perhaps) intentional choices made by authors as they crafted the text. I was involved in responding to literary texts in the same manner as I expected my students to respond. On occasion, I shared my own written responses to literature so that they could understand that all readers--novice and expert alike--had to use certain strategies to engage with a text. At the same time as I illustrated my personal strategies, there was a conscious effort on my part to accept whatever the students' responses entailed, and my dialogue with them

regarding their reactions to the text began with those responses, not my own.

While students' responses could follow some general patterns of predictability, responses to literature are, to some extent, constructions of the social reality of a particular classroom situation. There were always details picked up by certain readers, or unique ways of expressing ideas, and, at the same time, there were central ideas concerning the study of literature that I maintained. For example, I felt that there were general themes or literary concepts that were necessary to understanding the literary work. Yet, since this study was designed to investigate interpretation that could vary, it seemed logical to use a naturalistic mode of inquiry that would embrace unexpected student interpretations of those themes. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) wrote that "because all scientific investigation is inherently laden with theory, inherently an outgrowth of human purposes and theoretical constructions, it is, broadly speaking, inherently interpretive" (p. 3). And interpretation is the basis of this study.

The naturalistic mode of inquiry permitted me to examine students' interpretive strategies as in an everyday classroom situation. I could observe students as they responded to various literary texts over a long period of time. Borg and Gall (1989) have pointed out that "Qualitative research methods such as long-term observation (both participant and non-participant) are especially effective in the development of grounded theory and could make major contributions to many areas of educational theory" (p. 407).

Planning for Trustworthiness

Four criteria have been proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1981) to test the rigour of

naturalistic inquiry. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility seeks to establish a match between the constructed realities of the participants and the investigator's reconstruction of those realities. The techniques that I employed to increase the probability of credibility, as suggested by Borg and Gall (1989) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) were:

- 1) *Freedom of Access.* As a teacher within the classroom situation, I had free access to observe the students as they engaged with the literature, and wrote about the literature in their dialogue journals. I was able to respond to the content of student journals, held informal conferences and conversations with small groups and individual students about their written responses, and took part in small group discussions about the literature they studied. In this way, I was able to make observations that helped me construct the classroom situation, and how students used dialogue journals to assemble interpretations of literary text.
- 2) *Intensity of Observation.* I was able to spend many hours with the student participants as their teacher, and thus was able to observe them every day for 85 minutes for an entire semester. Borg and Gall (1989) have noted that, "As the amount of direct observation increases, the chances improve of obtaining a valid and credible picture of the phenomena being studied" (p. 392). I recorded my observations in my field notes, especially of behaviours and interactions of my students within the context of ordinary teaching events. The field notes served as a guide for further lessons that I believed would enhance the performance of students' written responses. Lesson plans were designed to

present students with a coherent structure of strategies that they could use when they encountered any new literary work.

3) *Prolonged Engagement.* My substantial involvement as the students' teacher over an entire semester facilitated my understanding of a reader-response environment. I used the entire semester to facilitate a reader-response atmosphere in the classroom. I used the entire semester to help students understand the nature and purpose of the dialogue journal, and to assist them as best I could to try a variety of response strategies in their dialogue journals.

4) *Member Checks.* Throughout the study, I continually revised and refined my observational techniques, asking probing questions of students to understand varying perceptions of the student participants regarding the purpose and nature of the dialogue journal. For example, if their perceptions were confused or frustrated, I altered my teaching techniques to account for those feelings towards response to literature. I permitted students to voice those thoughts and feelings, so that I could capture the many moods of reader-response, as it applied to literature instruction. Member checks is a crucial technique for establishing credibility (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) as it suggested verification of accurate representation and perceptions of the participants.

Transfer-ability refers to the degree to which salient conditions of different contexts overlap or match. Insofar as the use of dialogue journals in this study overlaps or matches specific salient aspects of using dialogue journals with other students in different contexts, some measure of transferability might be inferred. In any case, certain features of written protocols might be found in many student dialogue journals; certain strategies used

by participants to interpret literary text might be used among a number of other participants. In order to achieve accuracy in describing these salient features, thick descriptions were required to facilitate others' transferability judgements.

In order to address dependability and confirmability, I attempted, in the narrative of studying the participants' dialogue journals, to document the process, the decisions I made as the design unfolded, and the significant factors of employing dialogue journals that led to those decisions and to my interpretations. Several teachers with whom I developed the use of dialogue journals attested to the confirmability of the materials used in the study.

A Framework for Journal Responses: the Handbook

The written protocols found in students' dialogue journals were to be the main source of data. These were the written responses to assigned literature maintained by my students in a notebook over the period of one semester. In order to understand the importance of constructing a text of their own--the dialogue journal--students required a handbook that guided them through significant aspects of writing about literature. The handbook became the reference source upon which students could base their journal writing. It would be necessary to write material for all students that would contain vital information about journals, how to write in them and how their journals would be assessed. Moreover, the "General Guidelines" developed for students' benefit would also provide a basis for coding responses later on.

The journal handbook used in this study was first developed for classroom use in

1988, with the idea that if readers were to be central to the reading process, we would have to devise classroom practices which would allow students to become better interpreters of literary text. At that time, it seemed as if little existed to help teachers who wished to engage in a student-centred classroom (Langer, 1992). Students would need structures, frameworks, that could help establish them use their own language to engage with text (Hansson, 1992) and could help them write their own text. Anson and Beach (1995) noted that “Classrooms where journals are successful are almost always those in which teachers carefully assign, discuss, coordinate and oversee daily use of journal entries” (p. 53). With the help of four colleagues in the English department, we asked ourselves two questions: based on our professional experience as English teachers, what were the types of responses students were most inclined to give? and, based on our best professional judgment, what expectations did we have of students that would effectively demonstrate their understanding and knowledge of literary text?

We searched the literature on journal writing, and wrote what we thought would help students understand the purpose and nature of dialogue journals (Parsons, 1990; Fulwiler, 1987). In the handbook, we established our own definition of what a journal was (and was not); we provided students with some guidelines that might be strategic to helping students examine and explore certain aspects of literature and then write about those explorations (Purves & Rippere, 1968; Cooper & Odell, 1978; Protherough, 1983); we provided specific information about how their journals would be monitored and finally graded. We spent most of the time considering ways students could read the assigned literature so that they could respond to it in writing, without the teacher directing those

responses. We used a number of “starters” that became “General Guidelines” listed in the handbook (see Appendix A, Form I).

Each item written in the “General Guidelines” section was reviewed by three other English teachers, including the Department Head. Their revisions were based on objectives that they believed ought to serve as standards for student achievement as they studied literary text. But it was also assumed that our expectations, as well-intentioned as they might have been, were not enough on which to base a research project, because they were not informed by theory. Therefore, the researcher inquired further into the literature as to what previous research studies had concluded regarding each of the guidelines suggested in our handbook. This search resulted in a more rigorous attempt to have students use guidelines and suggestions that was firmly grounded in accepted theory and practice, and is outlined in detail in Chapter 2.

Development of Guidelines for the Handbook

Item #1 [Personal Reaction to Text] is defined as the students’ feelings towards the text. Rosenblatt (1978) emphasized that readers would formulate reactions to the text that would inevitably affect the stance they assume while reading. This is highly subjective. Purves and Rippere (1968) identified a category of response that they termed “engagement-involvement” which indicated a surrender to the literary work. This guideline suggests that students are free to offer their opinion of the literary work. Their thoughts may be about the work as a whole, or may be their thoughts and feelings regarding characters or themes found within the work. The guidelines encouraged

students to note their “reactions,” “feelings,” and “thoughts” concerning the assigned readings.

Item #2 [Ask Questions] permits students to enter--interrogate the text or author--in terms of the intention of the work, the plausibility, or credibility of the author. Students are required to make such challenges, or to identify within the literature, aspects that are not clear, or need raise concerns for the reader. This is a common comprehension strategy (Dillon, 1984) that needs to be examined more carefully (Nessel, 1987). This also permits students to wonder about the possible themes of the text, or to ask about possible outcomes that may not be clear for the reader, or to ask about ambiguities of text.

Item 3 [Make Connections] is defined as readers’ ability to use textual cues to call upon personal experiences and prior knowledge to help establish an understanding of the literary work. The ability of readers to make meaning from text is highly dependent upon their ability to call from memory those experiences and knowledge. In addition, students can relate aspects of the text to their own personal experiences (Clery & Smith, 1993) as they make connections.

Item 4 [Write quotes that are effective or memorable] is defined as the ability for readers to foreground salient information (van Peer, 1992), to highlight it in some manner, which in turn enables them to recall those details more readily. Interpretation of text is tied closely with the ability of readers to examine details that are of particular importance to the work as a whole. Students often use quotes to support their thoughts and feelings about the text, to reinforce their ideas.

Item 5 [Consider point of view and author’s frame of reference] is defined as

readers' ability to understand where authors' intention has an affect on the literature. This assumes that when authors compose, they do so with the aim of confining their experience within their art, and conceptualizing an audience that will share in those experiences (Harker, 1992). What, for instance, might have prompted the work? Under what conditions might the work have been composed? Is the author credible? What might lend support to that credibility?

Item 6 [Consider author's style] is a reader's awareness of particular techniques-- word choices, use of figurative language, for example--that strike the reader as particularly interesting or effective in evoking sensory impressions in the reader . As Harker (1992) noted that "the reader is presented with a highly intentional text carefully crafted to produce a determined result, a text that can only be interpreted in particular ways" (p. 265). If the text does operate in such a manner, it is therefore important that students be instructed in the ways literary texts are fabricated to achieve those determined results.

Item 7 [Create graphic representations] acknowledges that visuals can play an important part in readers' ability to represent comprehension and interpretation. Written or oral modes of communication are not the only methods of transforming knowledge into readers' engagement with text (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994). Other forms of representation such as artwork, diagrams, graphs, charts, or photography are also acceptable as a "response" to literature. For example, students are encouraged to compare and contrast characters in a chart form; students are encouraged to visualize a setting through a drawing or a map; students are encouraged to develop "webs" to represent elements of a short story.

The “Assessment Guidelines” were also scrutinized to ensure that objectives for achievement for the dialogue journal were clearly outlined for the students. As further revisions were made, the assessment rubrics became more specific to aid students’ understanding of what, precisely, was expected. Additions and deletions to these guidelines were made on the advice of the students as well as teachers so that the measures and expectations by which students’ journals were evaluated were reasonable and clear.

Assigned Readings and Instructional Methods

The selections used in the study were chosen on the basis of availability and government approval. That is, reading selections were chosen from the texts that were accessible in the school, and that those texts had been approved by Alberta Department of Education, Curriculum Branch. On these bases, a variety of short stories, poems, and essays were chosen to be a part of the curriculum for Grade 10 English. The selection of literature was assigned by me as the teacher-researcher because I believed in the potential of each to invoke interesting and insightful responses from the students. The reading selections were chosen on the basis that the text had something to offer students, thematically as well as stylistically. I had used all of the reading selections in years previous to this study, and they had proved generally successful in providing students with interesting and challenging material. Stotsky (1995) noted that

Students should be given a variety of reading experiences in strong developmental reading and literature programs--programs that provide

students with increasingly more challenging reading material, programs that ensure that students cannot choose to read only easy or short works.

Further, students should be asked to bring their reading experiences to their attempts to understand their literary and academic texts (p. 774).

Such theorists as James Squire (1985) have agreed that students need to have more mature literature "which speak most persuasively to young people today" (p. 20). This is also stated as a theme in work done by Carl Bereiter (1985) who asserted that "the study of good literature would seem to be one means by which certain ways of thinking could acquire affective loadings, through the emotional impact of the literature that embodied them" (p. 219). In other words, literature of substance, complexity, and sophistication needed to be used in this study in order for students to have responses of worth.

Particularly for students who have struggled with reading, literary text cannot be seen as "dumbed down" to their level. Instead of offering them "easy" or simplistic material, students need literature that deals with complex characters, concepts, and themes. Therefore, the criteria that most had to be met when selecting material was that of "complexity."

Each student was instructed to purchase a bound notebook to be used as a dialogue journal. It is emphasized that the journal should be a "special" purchase before which students must consider the ways in which they learn. For example, some students prefer notebooks containing blank pages if they wish to learn primarily through graphic representations. "Some students feel strongly about having lines to keep things straight. Others feel strongly about having the freedom of the unlined page" (Sullivan, 1989, p. 55). In any case, the outward appearance of the journal can say a great deal of the content

contained within its pages. For these reasons, I ask students to judge their purchases carefully.

The bound notebook prevents loss of notes, and discourages students from replacing pages with “better” responses after they have been told what the “correct” answer might be. I wanted to assure the students that they could learn to interpret literature and be confident in their interpretations, without having to rely on the teacher to tell them what to think about the literary texts studied in class. The use of written protocols has been studied by researchers (Thury & Friedlander, 1992; Marshall, 1987) and it has been noted that "Since the representation of meaning made from a text cannot be studied directly, one must make inferences about it by studying some kind of product, either written or oral, such as a recall, think-aloud protocol, or response to a prompt" (Spivey, 1991, p. 4). In addition, students who write in journals over a long period of time, allow tracking of processes as well as products, thought to be significant in terms of better assessment practices (Farr & Wolf, 1984).

Thus, it became a requirement of my English course that students produce written protocols that I could read at various intervals during the semester, to be included in reporting grades. On the first day of the new semester, students were given copies of the handout on journals (see Appendix A, Form I). Important points regarding the handouts were read orally to the entire class, and at the end of the first period, students were permitted to ask questions about the handout, and to ask for clarification. It was stressed that I was not looking for "correct" answers to interpretations of the literature, but that I wanted expressions of active involvement with the literature in terms of making

“meaning.” It was also emphasized that they could use any of the suggestions listed in the handbook to help them, including drawings and other graphic representations.

Most students were puzzled (or horrified) by the assignment of journal writing, and expressed concern that the journal appeared to be the central feature of this English class, especially over the length requirement of the written entries (1-2 pages, three to four times per week), which is a typical reaction (Anson & Beach, 1995). If they had had any experience with journals as classroom assignments (only two or three students had), it had been primarily as a personal diary. Some students who had had experiences with journals were skeptical, wondering if their writing would even be read by a teacher. Many indicated that they had never done this kind of work before, and were uneasy about the expectations (see Field Notes, September 4, 1995).

Because the dialogue journals were to be evaluated and would constitute a large percentage of their English final mark (anywhere from 50 - 70 per cent per term), assessment guidelines were provided in the handout (see Appendix A, Form I). These guidelines were read aloud and students were asked if they had any questions or concerns regarding these guidelines. Students were asked throughout the semester to contribute to the assessment guidelines, particularly if they felt that wording was unclear or easily misunderstood.

At the start of the new semester, students in my Grade 10 English class were introduced to a student-centred learning environment. In addition to the handouts regarding the purpose and character of dialogue journals, models of journals completed by other students from previous years were displayed, and instruction was given as to

different ways students could respond to literature. Overheads of responses done by other students from previous years were shown, so that many models demonstrating various ways to respond to literary text could be shared, examined, and discussed. As a class, we pointed out examples from the models shown that illustrated qualities of “good responses.” I stressed that these models represented diverse ways of responding to literary text, but that they were not bound to follow the models as “correct” models, and that they were not expected to mimic others’ responses (Beach & Hynds, 1991). In addition, I kept responses along with students for the first few literary selections, not so much to provide “the model” but to demonstrate the thought processes that I engage when I encounter a new literary selection. Smagorinsky (1997) in describing a teacher’s approach to helping high school students find meaning in literary text through writing, stated that

She [Ms. McDonald] began the year by teaching students how to keep response logs, explicitly scaffolding their learning by leading them through a series of activities designed to acquaint them with the genre and then give them guided practice in the processes...She first provided models of reading logs and then talked about how she kept them for herself, writing down key words and phrases on one side of a ledger and using the other side to record thoughts and feelings in response. (p. 72)

We began dialogue journals on the first day, using short selections of poetry. The reason for starting with short selections was to ensure that students could read the entire piece--several times, if necessary--and still have class time to write a response and get immediate feedback about that response. After the students had written their response in their notebooks, they were either asked to share their responses with a small group of students, or with the teacher. If they shared responses with me, I made both verbal and

written comments, pointing out what they had accomplished in terms of the Assessment Guidelines (See Appendix A, Form I). I would also make suggestions about how they could develop their responses, asked them questions about their understanding of the literary selection. This routine was repeated throughout the semester, especially for students who felt unsure of what responses to literature were all about.

Over the course of the first two weeks, students were able to see many models of student responses to literature completed by class members, attempting to show that responses could vary in form and content. Students were asked to respond to short selections, but were not restricted to the number of times they could re-read parts, or the entire, text. Beach and Hynds (1991) stated that while researchers "should not rely solely on primary readings, particularly with shorter texts...responses to extensive rereadings may not represent a valid measure of what readers normally do" (p. 474). Thus, students were encouraged to respond to the literary text within a given time, usually one class period, to allow them time to review the selections, but without the benefit of extraordinary instructional time available for any one selection.

The handout on journals was used extensively for the first two weeks. After the first three or four responses, students' journals were collected for a formal assessment which was entered as a letter grade on their report. I responded to their work, wrote comments on insights they had had about the literature, and wrote questions I wished them to consider further, asked them to extend ideas they had mentioned, but had not developed. I then discussed with the students formally what they could do to extend their understanding of literary text through the response journal, and thereby improve their

grade.

One student wondered if he had registered in the correct course because journal writing appeared to be a great deal of work; he thought he had registered in "dumb English" and felt the requirement of extensive writing was onerous. A number of students expressed their frustration because they felt they could not respond to literature adequately. One student said that previous Language Arts classes had only required him to "read the story and answer questions, not think about it" (see Field Notes, October 25, 1995). Despite my assurances that I felt all students should be able to think about what they read, and that they could respond to literature in a purposeful way, some remained unconvinced, and began seeking ways to vent their frustrations in negative behaviours designed to give a chaotic atmosphere to the classroom (see Field Notes, December, 1995). Some students voiced their opinion that I was not "teaching" and that they were learning nothing about the literature. I speculated that they had been used to teachers who would explicate a text for them, and then test their knowledge of that explication, although that was not how they articulated their perceptions.

Nevertheless, every day, my lesson plans tried to incorporate three important aspects of instruction: modelling, discussion of those models, and further writing journal responses. Modelling continued in some form almost every class period. I would select entries from students' journals and make overheads of those entries, which would provide the basis for discussion. What did they observe in the literature they read? In what ways did they express what they observed in their journals? For instance, some of my students from previous years have used their journal as a commonplace book, writing down

important lines, verses, or paragraphs that caught their attention; others have drawn pictures, or found pictures from magazines that students have felt related to the mental images the words created for them; they have also translated their observations and thoughts into diagrams, charts, graphs. In any case, the modelling is devised as a means to encourage students to experiment with, revise and rethink their ideas (Ritchie, 1989).

Every day, I instructed students in some aspect of literary terminology, and designed lessons around the guidelines in the handbook. We covered the concepts of theme, plot, character, setting, symbol, and figurative language. These lessons involved definitions of the concepts, followed by examples from various texts. Students were also asked to incorporate some of these concepts in their own compositions, which they kept separate from the dialogue journal in a writing folder.

The teacher plays an important part in helping students structure their journal responses by actually doing entries along with the students--known as guided practice. In this way, students can participate in the construction of journal entries. In this way, the least experienced readers can see how more able readers engage with the text, hypothesize feasible interpretations, and hear how sensitive readers articulate the reasonableness of those interpretations. Many students who have experienced difficulty with interpretation of literary text have indicated to me that they did not realize that the filling in blanks, as Iser (1978) would suggest, could mean that there were numerous ways of filling in blanks. Too many of them had come with the notion that interpretation was a matter for those with a "gift of insight," certainly beyond their reach. One of the most important things that modelling and guided practice does is to assure those students--no matter what their

reading ability--that they could grasp ideas conveyed by the literature.

Over a period of fifteen weeks, students were asked to respond to many genres of literature, including poetry, short stories, non-fiction, novels, and drama. Students were asked to write, or use graphic representations, two to four times per week, responding to the literature they read in their dialogue journals. Journals were collected approximately every three weeks, for the teacher to comment on their responses, and to evaluate them. Students were asked to write a final self-assessment of their work in response journals at the end of the semester.

Self-Reports From Students

Just prior to reporting periods, I asked my students to re-read their journals to make some kind of self-assessment about the entries they made. I found that students' comments about their journal work contributed to my understanding of how students work. In addition, as a teacher-researcher, I needed to triangulate my data, so that I was not relying exclusively on one source of data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Mathison, 1988; Patton, 1987). I also felt that students could give me an honest appraisal to the use of journals, and whether or not written responses had been helpful in developing their ability to interpret literary text. Moreover, I trusted that my students would give me as candid perspective of journal writing as I could wish. Dansereau (1985) has suggested that

Although one must certainly be cautious in interpreting self-report data of this type, it can be argued that the student is in the best position to evaluate the present level of his or her skills. Consequently, self-reports should be considered valuable supplements to more objective measures of text-

processing performance. Synthesizing the results from objective and self-report measures provides convergence on the effectiveness of the strategy treatments. (p. 218)

Although any assessment of student journals is highly subjective, I still believe that as long as students have the freedom to put in their journals what they wish, in the manner in which they wish, they must also have some say in how their work is evaluated.

Students' self-reports permit me further insight into how students feel about their contributions, as well as the various strategies they use as they read. I am aware that this is all retrospective reflection. Still, I am convinced that students try to be as honest and as enlightening as possible.

Phases of Data Collection

As well as student journals, I collected other types of data over the course of the semester which included:

Fieldnotes. These included descriptions of daily occurrences in the classroom, and interactions with students in the class which was designated as a part of the study. These interactions related to informal discussions I had with students regarding their work and progress during the course of the semester. Anecdotes regarding students' reactions to writing in dialogue journals--their revelations and their frustrations--were recorded as an on-going conversation concerning the atmosphere created in the classroom.

Teacher and classroom documents. These included lesson plans; a document detailing student school and classroom expectations, and documents relating to oral participation

and writing folders, which were not a part of this study. In addition, lists were kept of all the literature studied to which the students were required to respond.

School Documents. These documents included informational items published by the school that were sent home to keep parents informed about events that had taken place, or were about to take place, at the school. Items detailing dates for report cards, parent-teacher interviews, examination schedules, and professional days were included in these newsletters.

In addition, as part of the newsletter, the school was required to issue an annual report to parents and the Board regarding curriculum for each of the core subjects of Math, Science, Social Studies, and English. Each department provided information about department goals and objectives, how these objectives were to be met, and how each subject area engaged with students in helping them prepare for Grade 12 Departmental Examinations. Finally, each department issued results from Departmental Exams from the previous year, specifying the number of students who wrote exams, the percentage of students achieving “acceptable standards” (50% or above) and those obtaining “standards of excellence” (80% or above). Comparisons among schools within the city were made available, ranking schools according to Diploma exam results. Most importantly, schools’ test results were measured against Provincial test results.

Coding Procedures

Part of the coding of students’ responses was based on the “General Guidelines” provided in the handbook. It was believed that students, if given a set of suggestions as to

the kinds of strategies they could use as they worked their way through a literary text, would try to adopt those suggestions. Presumably, then, their responses would follow the set of suggestions given in the handbook. Coding procedures began with the idea of seeing how many students' responses would fit into the general categories outlined by the guidelines.

There was room, however, to examine other kinds of responses, should they happen to arise. At the end of the "General Guidelines" provision was made for students who felt they could respond in a different way. Students' responses were also examined and coded in terms of patterns that emerged.

In order to ensure some measure of reliability in terms of the coding, two other English teachers were asked to select statements from students' responses and place them within the categories suggested by the "General Guidelines." If there were responses that they felt did not appear to "fit" in any of the categories provided, they could place them in an "other" category. A correlation was done between the two teachers' categorization of students' responses to literary text and the researcher's. A coefficient of .71 resulted.

Participants

The participants of this study were drawn from a Grade 10 English class of a senior secondary school, located in a middle-class part of a large city in Western Canada. This school's population is multi-cultural as well as socio-economically diverse. A survey done in September of 1995 (see Appendix A, Form III) revealed a number of interesting points about the student population from which the participants were drawn. Of the

approximate 1550 students enrolled in the school, 1172 students responded to the survey. This response return represented 78.87% of the entire student population. Although 79% of the students are Canadian citizens--often Canadian born--students have great cultural diversity, when their parents' countries of origin are considered.

This student body represented 35 different language groups, with English being the number one group. The five dominant languages after English were, in order, Chinese -- Mandarin and Cantonese--Punjabi, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Gujarati; 229 students reported that they spoke no English at home, while 155 reported a bilingual atmosphere. Even communities in which many students live exist in linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, apart from English as the dominant language. These communities are quite a distance from the school, requiring the students to travel to and from the school for long periods of time, often over an hour each way.

This survey illustrates the backgrounds of students which attended this Senior Secondary School, and points to some of the linguistic and cultural differences that create unique educational concerns. For these reasons, as well as other problems concerning socio-economic distinctions, this school is designated as "high needs." That means that some students enrolled in this school may have had to deal with degrees of disadvantage and hardship of one type or another. English as a Second Language is a major factor in demarcating this school as high needs, but other aspects of this school are considered as well. For example, a good percentage of the student population is considered "at risk" of failure for any number of reasons: transience, poor skills, violence, pregnancy, substance abuse, or long but necessary work hours. Many of the students who attend this school

come from single-parent families. Some students have not had great success with traditional educational practices, have struggled to comply with the dictates of formal schooling, and may not have developed a sense that education can offer them a different and hopeful future. Henneberg (1996) expressed admiration for students who were struggling against seemingly insurmountable odds, and frustration with students whose “primary coping mechanism is passivity; obviously the less effort they exert, the less they will be disappointed if their efforts do not produce the highest rewards” (p. 21). The study involved some of these types of students, with the attending frustration.

In extreme cases, some students may have backgrounds that include a life on the streets, or prison. On the other hand, the school serves hundreds of students whose goals include university education, and who value a more "academic" life. Advance Placement courses are offered for those students, beside the technical programs that lead students to employment. In short, the diverse nature of the student body makes it problematic as to how to approach teaching English literature.

Consequently, school drop-out rates were considerably higher compared with other schools in the city, perhaps as high as 30% within a school year. Still, during the 1994-1995 school year, approximately 300 students wrote the Alberta Education English 30 and 33 Provincial Exam, 92 per cent of whom attained acceptable, or passing, standards (See field notes, November, 1995).

All the students in my Grade 10 English class were asked if they wished to volunteer to be a part of this study, and from a number of prospective volunteers who submitted their dialogue journals, eight students were selected--seven girls and one boy.

Since my intention was to discover the nature of students' responses to literary text, my sampling was purposeful. I selected dialogue journals from which the most information and insight could be derived (Hancock, 1993). Although other students had offered their journals to be a part of the study, they had too many missing or incomplete responses to be of any value for this study; each of the students I requested be a part of the study agreed to participate and was asked to sign a letter of Informed Consent, along with their parents (see Appendix A, Form II).

The Course

Grade 10 English is a school-designed course that is intended for students coming from Junior High School Language Arts, who were undecided as to whether or not they would follow an academic program (English 10-20-30) or a non-academic program (English 13-23-33). Their averages from Grade 9 were, for the most part, 60% or lower, and some of the students had not passed Grade 9 Language Arts, but, because they had passed other subjects, had permission to register in a Senior Secondary School. Many students in the "blended" class were uncertain whether to choose a non-academic program, even if their marks might have suggested they would find better placement in a non-academic stream. There may have been reluctance on their part to enter a course of study that is reputed to be designed for "slow" students, or to close any opportunity to apply to university after grade 12. The non-academic English courses do not lead to university entrance.

One of the difficulties I faced as a teacher-researcher was to try and understand the

nature of this student population. Many students in this school--and consequently in my classes--have come to question the value of formal schooling and/or find adults who are positions of authority at school, a challenge. For these reasons, often coupled with struggles in their personal lives, attendance is a continual dilemma for students. In addition, as a consequence of the students' ethnic diversity there is animosity among various student groups. Racial tensions have been high on occasions in the past at this school, necessitating frequent police involvement. These tensions impacted on the class activities. For instance, while I believe that a great deal of talk among students is necessary to extend and refine students' responses to literature, little productive discussion materialized. Near the end of October, after several racially motivated incidents, it became apparent that "discussion groups" could not be formed as a result of the numbers of students who refused to work together. (See Field Notes, November 3, 1995.) The dialogue journals could not be springboards to oral discussion within smalls groups.

It also became evident that many students felt that they were incapable of producing ideas about the literature that they read that were worthwhile. For example, as a class was establishing the negotiated criteria by which their journals would be judged, their descriptors for "C" and "D" categories came easily, while they struggled to find descriptors to fulfill the "A" and "B" categories. I pointed out to them that the categories for "A" work were very thin and I asked them if they could further delineate this category. One student replied, "How are we to know what an "A" looks like; we've never seen one."

I was struck by this statement, for in this particular class, few students had ever been able to produce superior work. If they had, it was likely to have been by chance, and

no one told them what they had done right so that they could reproduce excellent work on another assignment. The statement cut deep into the heart of the discouraged souls of many of these students, who often feel as if the teachers--possessors of knowledge--have not given them the "answers" that they so desperately seek. In general, a number of students in this class perceived themselves as incapable of dealing with literary text without the teacher telling them what they ought to think about the readings. Required to respond on their own to literary texts, with only guidance and encouragement from the teacher, many shrugged and said, "I never was good in English."

Thus, not all my students enthusiastically embraced the philosophies of reader-response (Henneberg, 1996). To some students, the philosophies, along with journal writing, appeared directionless, as if I were leaving students to their own devices, without instruction. More than once I have been accused of not "teaching" anything. For example, one of my students, in a note to her friend, left in her journal, wrote: "I swear I'm going to fail the diploma [exam]. My teacher doesn't teach us anything our whole mark is on journal writing" (see Field Notes, November, 1995). Clearly, this student was distressed at the type--or lack--of instruction that she felt she was getting.

It is easy to fall into the trap of believing that the teacher's role is to conduct students on a journey that they could not take without us (Holt, 1964), especially given certain students' expectations of us. Alfie Kohn (1993), however, reminds us that not all students will agree with self-directed studies, living under the impression that there is still knowledge "out there" from which they are deliberately kept. They still have the belief that the role of teacher should impart formulas, answers, explanations, and resolutions, while

students accept and memorize passively whatever they are told. It is a simpler view in many respects, and certainly requires less responsibility for them. Since this is not how I wish to deal with my students, I try to explain to them as best I can that they do have instruction, they have my support, and that they are capable of responding to literature insightfully. Explanations do not always work.

Analysis Procedures

The data collected are examined qualitatively. The analysis of the data was done in terms of the two questions outlined at the beginning of the study. Each student had completed a dialogue journal as a partial fulfillment for the requirements of this course. These journals were read and re-read, first counting the total number of words per entry. Then notes were made on the kinds of responses they devised as the reading went along. Student's entries were studied separately, and statements were divided into "themes." Themes were usually sentences that had a referred to a particular concept or idea, thought or feeling that students had with regard to the literature they were reading. Berg (1995) identifies themes as statements with subject and predicates that contain conceptualizations which are "meaningful to the producers of each message" (p. 180). Students presented ideas, thoughts, and feelings often through single statements. It was necessary, therefore, to examine each statement in each entry individually. Themes could be identified in a single sentence or by groups of sentences. For example, a student could write a comment on the title of the work such as "The title really fits this story" and leave it at that, without further elaboration. The student, nevertheless, likely believed that this statement covered

all that was needed to be said about titles. In this case, the single sentence would have been considered a single theme. However, some sentences grouped together in thematic sense. For example: "I think this poem is about a man who fought and may have won or lost but still held his head high in pride. What makes me feel he still has his pride is the line that says, 'my head is bloody, but unbowed.'" In this case, both sentences have a common theme of pride, and would be counted as one theme. On the other hand, a single sentence--as the participants wrote sentences--could also contain more than one theme. For example, one of the participants wrote this single sentence about one of the stories called "Bloodflowers": "when they seen the blood rose growing out of the rocks, Mrs. Poorwilly said that if you touched it, it is bad luck, Danny said that he would be alright, and he picked it up, in a way I think it is foreshadowing." In this instance, a single sentence contains both summary statements about the plot, and comments on how the text hints of events that are to come later on as the plot unfolds--conceptualizing the result of foreshadowing. Therefore, this single sentence would be considered to have two "themes."

After each student's response to assigned works of literature was divided into thematic statements, descriptors were applied to as many of the thematic statements as possible. Descriptors were used to indicate the purpose or nature of each theme. For instance, in the examples given above, the former thematic statement would have been "explanation of titles," while the latter would have been "summary of poem's theme." This was the "open coding" referred to by Strauss and Corbin (1990) which "fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional

locations” (p. 97). The details of each student’s response could then be recorded, according to the types of thematic statements made. Notes were made on each of the students’ responses in order to see if there were patterns or regularities to their responses. These notes were made and posted beside each of the responses. The total number of words and number of thematic groups were recorded for each response.

After the notes were completed, a chart was made for each student, to enter each of the statements, or groups of statements, under ten literary selections studied in class. The literary selections were listed along one axis of the chart. Along another axis of the chart there were broad categories of types of responses developed by the researcher and written for each student in their handbook. These categories changed--some added and others deleted--as each thematic statement was entered. This was the method for breaking apart the data, to see if there were any patterns or regularities in the responses offered by the students (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

From the groups of thematic statements and descriptors, patterns in students’ responses were identified and grouped into broader categories, along with sub-categories. For the written protocols broad categories were developed to catalogue the nature of students’ responses to literary text. Next, these student responses were examined in terms of the assessment guidelines established with the students as to achievement interpreting literary text. How many responses or “themes” were, for instance, related to personal reactions about the selection, or to asking questions about the text, or to considering point of view in the work.

Finally, interviews with students were conducted to ascertain whether or not a

description of development in students' responses could be completed. Students completed questions about whether or not they felt writing in a dialogue journal had helped them understand literature they had studied in class, and, if so, could they describe the ways it may have helped. If not, could they account for the reasons they felt it did not.

There can be no one description of the methodology used to obtain the data. Because the research was conducted in a classroom, over a period of one semester, it is important to note that a thick description must be used to highlight some of the significant aspects of instruction to students in the ways dialogue journals can be used to understand literary text. While it is impossible to detail all the interactions that occur within the confines of classroom walls, specific incidents can be used to exemplify the nature of those interactions, and the importance of those incidents that affect learning. In classroom situations where interactions cannot be carefully orchestrated or monitored, a variety of methods must be used to obtain data. This ensures that accurate accounts of how data are gathered, that will lend credibility to the analysis and conclusions drawn from the data.

Acting as both teacher and researcher in this study has had several advantages and disadvantages. One possible advantage was that I had taught literature for twelve years and had followed a reader-response approach for six, featuring dialogue journals as a centerpiece of this approach. I was familiar with how to introduce dialogue journals to a class, and could anticipate some of the struggles students might have had as they encountered dialogue journals for the first time. For example, I was aware of how important it was for students to begin with short literary selections, so that they could have immediate feedback from the teacher. I also knew that it was necessary to have

multiple examples and models which students could use as a prototype for their own responses. I was not concerned that students would copy these models slavishly, for most students accepted that they could make their journal their own. Still, I was aware of what I might be able to expect from students in terms of the kinds of responses I could receive. In other words, I was confident in students' abilities to respond thoughtfully and insightfully to literary text, given the opportunity to do so.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The study was designed to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is the nature of secondary students' responses to literary text as revealed through their dialogue journals?
- (2) Do secondary students' responses to literary text reveal development and, if so, along what lines can that development be revealed?

The participants, eight grade ten students from a Senior Secondary School in Western Canada, were part of a class that had been asked to complete a dialogue journal as part of their regular classroom study of English literature. From the journals collected, eight were purposefully selected for close examination.

Students' responses to the literature were divided into two sections: I examined their responses to five reading selections assigned at the beginning of the semester; I then examined their responses to five reading selections assigned later in the semester. I wanted to make comparisons between students' early responses and later responses in order to observe changes or differences that might help answer question two of this study.

Question One: Early Entries

The early entries focussed on one poem, "Invictus" by W.E. Henley; three short stories, "Bloodflowers" by W.D. Valgardson, "An Ounce of Cure" by A. Munro, and "Poison" by R. Dahl; one essay "The Uncertainty of Friendship" by S. Johnson. The

students' responses generally fell into categories outlined in the handbook because they were asked specifically to attend to the aspects mentioned in the handbook. They were, however, free to select only those guidelines that they felt applied to the literature they were reading. They were also encouraged to use any other methods of response that they felt were appropriate which allowed them to understand the work better.

Item 1 [Personal Reaction to Text]

There was more diversity in this first category than any other, and was the category students most widely used when responding to literature read at the beginning of the course. "Personal reaction" is an acknowledgment of readers' feelings about the literary selection they were asked to read. Many such personal reactions were to the work as a whole, and not to any particular segments. They responded in terms of their initial reactions after reading the literature, what they thought of the theme and characters. There appeared to be several common threads of emotional reaction throughout all eight participants' responses.

(A) Judgmental Commentary on the Work as a Whole

This reaction relates to the readers' initial response in terms of whether or not the literature caught and held their attention. Students expressed their ability to enjoy the selection or "get into" the narrative. At first, entertainment value was of primary concern. But, there were also comments that attempted to understand the ideas conveyed by the literature, apart from an entertainment value.

Especially at the beginning, students wrote about their feelings of whether or not

the content of the material was interesting enough to engage their attention. Many of the students began with comments such as:

I thought the poem ‘Invictus’ was a good and interesting poem...good poem, realistic, I quite enjoyed it. [Lindsey]

In some ways this poem [Invictus] is so stupid, but in some way’s it’s very true. [Crystal]

The story Bloodflowers was considered by many to be very stupid and pathetic. [April]

I thought the story Poison was an okay story. [April]

I found this story [Poison] rather stupid...I did not like this story because it is very weird...I don’t like the way it ends. [Veronica]

This [poem] gives me the creeps... [Jessica]

This story [An Ounce of Cure] was fairly interesting, this girl came from an overprotective family. [Rishi]

I guess it was a good story [Bloodflowers] but not really the kind of story I could totally get into. I’m more into the teenage love stories.” [Tammy]

Tammy also reveals, through her immediate reaction to “An Ounce of Cure” that part of her favourable reaction to this story was the readability of the text. “I liked this story because it was interesting and easy to read. What I mean by easy to read is when you read a part of the story, you don’t have to go back and read it again.” In this case, Tammy acknowledges that the reason she finds the story readable is the fact that she does not have to review any earlier passages.

What is apparent is that there was a visceral response in terms of the immediate appeal of the work. What the students seemed to comment most on was the interest level

and comprehension level of the work, and whether or not they could relate to the selection. Students revealed to the teacher their reading preferences. In many of the judgmental personal reactions, there was resistance to having to search for meaning much beyond the literal level of the literary selections. An entry in my fieldnotes illustrates the resistance students felt towards the assigned readings.

It seems as if every time I ask students to read a selection, all I hear are moans and groans from this class. I am not sure what it is they expect from an English class. They will ask, “Why do we have to read this?” “Is this another stupid story?” “Do we have to write about this story, too?” It is very disheartening to think that students appear to have no interest whatever in reading anything I suggest. On the other hand, they do not seem prepared yet to find reading materials of their own choosing. I am not sure what to do next, to help them become more engaged with the material. [September 15, 1995]

(B) Resistance

By making statements that the work was dull, pointless, stupid, or hard to understand, the students’ first attempts to dialogue with the text were blocked. Students who made such statements during the early phases of journal writing did not attempt to move beyond such utterances, typically declining any invitation to make sense of the text through journal writing. For example, in three out of the first five responses, Crystal begins each response with a statement of overall resistance: “In some ways this poem [Invictus] is so stupid”; “This story [Poison] is stupid big time. I don’t understand a thing”; “This essay [The Uncertainty of Friendship] is hard to understand”.

“I really didn’t know what to say about the poem ‘Bloodflowers.’ To tell you the truth I

didn't understand it very much," [Tammy] are typical responses that students make when they feel incapable of beginning examining literary text on their own. For example, April wrote about the poem "Invictus" suggesting that she was not capable of comprehending the poem. "I read the poem over and over and I still don't understand what the writer is writing about, but the poem does sound good." In another example, she comments on the essay, "The Uncertainty of Friendship" in which she asserts "I didn't understand one word of the essay but the title was okay." On the one hand, April is trying to be plain and honest about her lack of understanding of the poem, but she does not yet have any strategies that seem to allow her access into the poem's meaning. She does not elaborate on what "sounds good" to her in the poem, or why the title was "okay." In a similar kind of response to "Bloodflowers," Farhana wrote: "I thought it was stupid" but without elaboration as to why.

Sometimes, students' frustrations overwhelm them, as Veronica's statement illustrates: "I know I'll get a bad mark for this response but it [Poison] was a stupid story and I didn't get it. I don't understand the ending or anything else...I can't think of anything else to say except that all the storys in this book are pointless and stupid." This kind of response registers that she feels--along with other students--that she does not have meaning-making strategies that will enable her to get beyond her initial feelings about the literature. Even when students are encouraged to make guesses, or predictions, or tentative suggestions about the meaning of literary text, they express much doubt and uncertainty.

(C) Uncertainty

Students' responses that expressed doubt about their interpretations appeared to have a high degree of uncertainty about the meaning of the text. April's response to "Bloodflowers" demonstrates her doubt: "Most of us thought this piece was hard to understand and the ending really baffled us." She did not attempt to explain why she and her group were baffled, or whether or not they tried to sort out the odd ending. Farhana also wrote about "Bloodflowers": "When I read this book I didn't get it I thought it was stupid but my friend told me the story." Crystal also stated about this same short story, "It was hard to understand the first time you read but the more you read that more you understand it." It should be noted, however, that Crystal never does explain what it is she understands. In all of the expressions above, students are extremely tentative about making any suggestions as to meaning at all.

The students offer few conjectures about the meaning, nor do they attempt to ask specific questions of the text in the first two reading assignments. Rishi, on the other hand, when discussing the poem "Invictus" does allow that he will make some guesses as to the meaning. "I don't quite understand what he [Henley] is trying to say in this poem but i'll try, to me it looks like this person is dead, or something, he mentions how he hasn't winced or cried, he has probably gone some where far away from earth." Farhana wrote: "When I read this poem [Invictus] I don't think I really understand what it really means. I think it is a sad soul who is almost going to die he can't cry or wink." They make conjectures about what the poem conveys, but they are hesitant.

Uncertain of their abilities to comprehend the vocabulary or themes, students are

apprehensive about attempting to get at the meaning of the piece. For example, Sarah wrote the following about the essay “The Uncertainty of Friendship.”

The essay generally makes no sense. I don't even know anything else about the topic besides the fact that it says something about friendship, which I figured out by reading the title. Otherwise I basically have no idea what the context and author are saying, the overall response I have for this essay is that I don't understand and I think I need somebody who understands to help me. This is hard. I don't understand how I can relate to my own experience with the story if I don't understand what is going on.

Sarah's frustration is clear. She has been asked to read an essay that she feels is beyond her ability. Although cognizance of a work of literature comes through much more than knowing vocabulary, students perceive this knowledge as crucial to their ability to comprehend an entire work. April, also commenting on the “Uncertainty of Friendship” asked “Does the writer Samuel Johnson always write stuff that [is] hard to understand, if he writes anything I could understand with not so many big words I think I would like to read it.” Uncertainty and hesitation about reading literary text, and how students might develop strategies that could help them, are not easy to overcome, particularly for readers without a wide range of experiences with literary text. I wrote about this particular reading assignment in my fieldnotes.

Perhaps I should not have assigned this essay. It seems as if the students are having such a difficult time with it. But, I wanted them to understand that they can, with help, understand a more difficult text, especially if they can get past the vocabulary. I also want my students to know that themes that were significant in earlier times are still relevant today. Relationships with friends are difficult to keep and easy to lose. But, from the general

reaction, the class cannot get past the reading difficulty. Their frustration shows. Probably I should not have added this selection to the grade 10 course. I will, however, try this with the grade 12 class, since the essay is also in their anthology. [September 24, 1995]

Uncertainty leads students to try to summarize the work in an attempt to comprehend it at a basic level which is to retell the factual details or events of the work. When students cannot take ideas apart which are found in textual material, they rely on summary to at least demonstrate that they can handle reading the material. Rose (1989) has noted that “it is very hard to get [students] to see that summary is not adequate, for it has been adequate so many times before” (p. 176). Many of the students’ early responses consisted of such summaries. Rishi begins a number of his responses in a similar fashion, of summarizing the events, sometimes adding details that could be inferred from the story (e.g. the detail about not finding a doctor for months is inferred).

Mr. and Mrs. Poorwilly lived in a small town where there is a small population, in the winter you can’t find a doctor for months, in the winter the diet is very different all the lakes etc. are frozen. When they seen the blood rose growing out of the rocks, Mrs. Poorwilly said that if you touched it, it is bad luck, Danny said that he would be alright, and he picked it up...

This kind of summary is a type of uncertainty as to what to say about the literature, because very little commentary, if any, is offered. Nothing is stated about characters’ motivations, or themes; no attention is paid to the techniques that authors use to create the effects found in the narrative. Although a student may be doubtful as to any kind of underlying meaning of a literary text, they at least attend to the literal meaning through summary of events that comprise the plot. April writes that “I read the story Man are

different. I like the story. I think it was about a robot and he sees a man and he tries to turn the man [off] but kills him and opens him up and finds out that the man has a different inside than him.” It is a succinct synopsis of the story, and one that students use in place of a response. It is a replacement rather than a true response, because it does not disclose exactly what the student understands about the work, other than that the student has read it. And perhaps even this is, in itself, a valuable record to have of students’ reading. In some cases, such as Farhana’s response to the story “Poison,” even the plot is misconstrued.

When I read this book I see two parts of the story the first part is about a guy named Harry Pope and this story is about a girl named Timber. She went home around midnight when she went to her brother room and she found that he had a snake named a crate on Harry’s stomach. Timber found out from him and she called the doctor whose name was Ganderbai he help harry. He put this medicine so the snake would go away from harry. But it didn’t so they had a trick if they put the medicine on the bed, the bed would become wet and cold so the snake would move because snakes like warm place[s] or after ten minutes Harry would jump out...

Farhana’s reading of the story contains events that did not happen in the story, and she fills in details from prior knowledge as support for her suppositions.

Unlike the study done by Thury and Friedlander (1996), in which plot summary was actively discouraged, I did not suggest to these students that they not summarize the plot. Especially when they appeared so hesitant at the beginning, plot summary became a way of dealing with written responses. In some instances, this was the only way to have any kind of response for evaluation.

(D) Personal Reaction to Theme

As students begin to make sense of a piece through their dialogue journals, they begin to stand apart from the work in order to understand what the selection conveys. There seems to be a concern that the work means something, and that they must find the point of it. Lindsey, for example writes about “Invictus”: “I think that in this poem the author is explaining war because, for example, he explain’s the darkness and blackness and the guns [where] the author is saying that no matter what others did to him, he is the only one in control of his body and soul...”

Two things are apparent in Lindsey’s response to this poem. The first is that she begins immediately to examine the use of imagery, and how it has an affect on the theme. Her suggestion that there is a connection between the images of “darkness,” “blackness,” and “guns” and the ideas about being unvanquished is noteworthy. By using specific examples from the text, she is able to write an indirect comment on the mood and atmosphere established by the poet, but at the same time establishes her perception of the theme of the poem.

Sarah’s response to the same poem begins with a summary of “Invictus” and ends with a thematic statement. “He talks like someone who is dying and isn’t trying because he thinks he has nothing to live for so he’s going to end his life. In a sense he sounds like he is fighting for his freedom to do as he pleases and think what he wants to.” Sarah does not seem clear as to what the theme actually is. She begins with one idea, then appears to change her mind in the next sentence. She may realize that there is little textual evidence to suggest he is going to end his life, and amends her statement to say that the speaker of

the poem wants to be free.

(E) Personal Reaction to Character

Many students express some kind of reaction, evaluation, or judgment about the characters in literature. Often they express their feelings about the ethics of how characters behave, whether or not they should have made the choices they did. This, then, gives rise to how they feel towards these characters in evaluative statements.

Rishi, reacting to the protagonist of “An Ounce of Cure” describes the character as “non confident with herself, she was depressed because Martin Collingwood broke up with her...When she went to babysit I think she made a mistake she said that she didn’t want to get drunk...I think it was kind of the Berrymans fault for leaving the drinks out.” This is typical of responses to characters, where the student sympathizes with the protagonist for lacking good judgment and making a mistake. Rishi makes it clear that he holds the parents of the children the young narrator is babysitting responsible rather than the narrator herself. This personal reaction to character demonstrates empathy. Munro, the author, appears to want the reader to empathize with the character’s naivety.

Farhana, also discussing “An Ounce of Cure” says of the protagonist, “I think she felt a little scared but it was alright. I think the Berrymans were kind of scared about what happened to the girl. I guess they wanted to help...I think she probably thought she did a stupid thing in the past but she would put them behind and go on with her new life.” In this personal reaction, Farhana felt the fear and the shame of the protagonist, but allowed that things done in youth, despite embarrassment of having to remember them, would be “alright.” Again, there is a measure of sympathy for the narrator who has, because of her

naivete and not thinking of the consequences, made an embarrassing mistake.

Sympathy, as a personal reaction to character, does not hold true in every case. Sarah's reaction, for instance, finds the narrator's plight unrealistic and uninteresting. She is annoyed with the character's situation.

I truly don't understand what this story means. Some girl goes out with some jerk, gets dumped [and] is still hung up on him. It's like "Hello, there are other people in this world too you know!" I hate sappy "little-girl-and-their-boyfriend-broke-up-with-them" stories. They are sooo annoying. How many people seriously act this way? She is depressed 'cause her boyfriend broke up with her [and] then she has to go [and] drink while she's at work. Like yeah! And she's got problems, look at me.

While Sarah's reaction is, primarily, about the character, it is a reaction against a number of elements of the story. She reacts unsympathetically to the character "getting dumped" and then "getting depressed" because, in her estimation, the character overreacted to a rather common incident. She felt that there were many other people--she includes herself in this group--who were in far worse situations than the narrator, and this leads her to react against the entire idea of the story. Personal reactions towards character and situation carry a great deal of weight as students make judgments about the ideas presented in the literature.

Similar to Sarah's personal reaction to character, Jessica evaluates the protagonist's actions and wonders why the character misbehaved so badly, given that the situation did not seem to call for such behaviour. "Personally I think this girl is stupid for one she's [pathetic] and two why would she need to drink. I think it was smart of her to call her friends for help in that situation." She judges the protagonist because she cannot

understand the character's feelings. Jessica says the narrator is "pathetic" without offering any explanation as to why she felt the character was this way.

Item 2 [Ask Questions]

To ask questions of the text is not a strategy used frequently by many students in early responses. Questions were, however, used on several levels. Many of the questions were not about understanding the underlying structures, but wondering about specific details included--or omitted--in the literature. Some questions existed on a literal level, asking to clarify portions of the text that the readers' found puzzling or confusing. For example, Jessica asks about the short story "Bloodflowers," why, when characters die, "why they are buried at sea?" This kind of question does not have any bearing on the underlying meaning of the story, but readers pick up on oddities introduced through the literature that leaves them wondering about specific events. (In this case, people are buried at sea because, as has been described by the author at the beginning of the story, the setting is situated on an island made entirely of granite.) Farhana asked this question about "Invictus": "My question is the person who this poem is about a female or male?" These kinds of questions about the "holes" left in the text, seem to perplex some students, especially if they cannot recall prior knowledge to help them. Lindsey's series of questions, for example, may not have any bearing on the understanding of the story, they are still relevant questions to student readers, and there is a sense that more details would have permitted them to find the story somewhat more believable.

The thing I don't understand is what other purpose, besides teaching, did

Danny have to go to the island? Did he have relatives living there? How did he find out about the available [teaching] position? What happened to the last teacher, did they kill him to? Was he the king for the year? or did he just die? Know one really knows, the story should have provided more answers.

In cases such as Lindsey's response to "Bloodflowers," there is a sense that she is using questioning to ascertain the motivation of the protagonist for seeking a teaching post on this remote Island, and to interrogate the text about whether this killing of a "king" was an isolated incident, or a part of the Islanders' lifestyle. In asking these kinds of questions--for which there are no answers--Lindsey calls into the question the credibility of the narrative. Early on, Lindsey uses questioning strategies to help her understand aspects of the narrative that leave the reader to speculating. Even though she does not try to answer her own questions, she seems to want to try to identify the "blanks" that the author has left the reader to fill in. She asked a series of questions about "An Ounce of Cure": "What I don't understand is why she would go get drunk over a guy? Was it her first love? Was he really good to her? Why did he leave her? Who knows." At the end, Lindsey seems to come to the realization that, while the questions may be important, there are no definite answers forthcoming.

Tammy's critique of the entire story "Bloodflowers" was made clear by her question, "What was the point of the Bloodflowers? That would be a question to ask the author if I had a chance to meet this person." Her question indicates that she feels she has missed the major idea of the narrative, obviously because the author has not made it plain enough for her. This also indicates Tammy's frustration in trying to articulate a theme for

the selection.

Or, student's early questions may have dealt with vocabulary, such as Sarah's entry for "An Ounce of Cure" which begins: "What is with all the super long words? Is that really grade 10 writing or reading? 'Indoctrinated' like what's that supposed to mean?" These questions are also located on a very literal level, but the tone of the questioning suggests the reader's frustration with the text. This kind of literal-level question is qualitatively different from another question asked by Jessica. "Near the end when Danny's about to leave he sees the bloodflowers. Does that mean he's going to die next?" And indeed, this question has led Jessica to speculate about how the story does end. Although it is not stated, the reader must infer that Danny is to be killed at the end of the story. Unfortunately, Jessica does not pursue the answer to her own question, which might have produced further understanding of the selection. So, too, might Crystal, had she speculated about her question. Crystal wrote this question about "Poison": "What ever happened to the snake if there was one?"

The difference between students' questions is that one type offers speculation that, if followed, would open the text up to interpretation; the second type again is used to close the conversation about the text and prevent any further discussion. An example of the first type is found in Sarah's entry to the Roald Dahl's "Poison" when she speculated about aspects of the story that, unless understood, do not permit students to interpret the story as one which deals with the subtlety of racial prejudice. She wrote: "What I want to know is...where this story is located." Sarah, like Jessica, only put the question forward but made no attempt to bring forth any prior knowledge that might have helped her

answer it. Had Sarah known that the setting of the narrative was in India, and that one of the main characters, who was white, calls the Indian doctor, who had been trying to help him avoid potential death from a snake, a “dirty little sewer rat” may have helped Sarah understand more of the theme. Harry, who believes a venomous snake has crawled under the sheets with him while he is sleeping, may have just dreamed that it happened, and the reader is never sure. Again, Sarah speculated about this. “I still wonder whether Harry lied or not. It seems as if he believed that there was a snake...” Similarly, Rishi asked, “I didn’t quite understand the ending, was there or was there not a krait [snake] in the bed?” This kind of questioning of the text, and speculating about possibilities, is not done frequently. Moreover, had Sarah or Rishi considered their own questions, they may have been able to take their interpretation of the events one step further.

Very seldom used, but also a creditable kind of question, is one that Lindsey asked in her first entry, a response to the poem “Invictus.” While she had a sense of the theme of the piece, she also was insightfully arguing against the author’s premise. She asked: “but if someone has a gun pointed at your head who really is the one in control of your soul?” This kind of questioning demonstrates an active engagement with the text, an engagement that is not about to accept the theme of the selection at face value.

Item 3 [Making Connections]

For all readers it is important to have identification with the work in question. Many instances occur where students make reference to associations that, for them, make the selection meaningful. In addition to prior knowledge, these connections provide a

context within which the reader is able to frame the literary text, helping the meaning-making process easier. It also provides students with a motivation for reading the selection, “getting into the story,” if you will.

(A) Making Connections with the Situation

As a part of making connections, students often had a response in terms of whether or not they could relate the entire selection to their own lives. Many of the evaluative statements concerning the literature reflected a need to understand the story very quickly and that there was a desire for realistic situations to which they could connect was sometimes expressly asserted. For instance, in Veronica’s response to “An Ounce of Cure” she remarked that this story was one she liked because “it takes a real life situation and expands it.” On the other hand, students who may have found the story’s premise too far-fetched or implausible were very likely to reject the entire work out of hand. Again, using Veronica’s entry as illustration, she indicated a need for realism when she stated, “If I can’t picture it, it seems unrealistic, and I don’t like it. I probably wouldn’t read the whole book if I had a choice.” Moreover, such entries serve to underscore the need for some students to connect the literature to their lives or to authentic people that they know. Sarah also makes this clear when she says that “The person [speaker of “Invictus”] seems somewhat distanced from me because he is so different.” Such differences, Sarah implies, creates a barrier, not necessarily to understanding, but to her ability to appreciate the situation described in the narrative. Crystal, for instance, who cannot make a connection to the character’s situation in “An Ounce of Cure” writes that “any girl who gets drunk and cries all the time because she got dumped needs to go to the syco-ward.”

At the same time that students demand verisimilitude in the situation and character of the work, students do not want them to be too predictable, either. Situations and characters are expected to mirror their own experiences, and the participants of this study proclaimed their displeasure when they did not. For instance, Sarah said of the story “An Ounce of Cure” that she found the story “sappy,” in which the plot of “break-up” stories are “so annoying.” She writes that

She’s been ditched by her boyfriend, so what. She didn’t have to write a story about it and give how she dealt with it. It’s like who cares, he’s just some guy you were [infatuated] with, big deal. I’ve seen [and] heard worse! I’ve had friends who’ve had miscarriages, two-timed and so on.

This is no big thing.

To Sarah, the themes or ideas conveyed by Munro’s short story seem dull and trite compared to her own experiences. Her comments suggested that the situation described was not worthy of exploration. Moreover, she did not view this story as humorous, perceiving it only as a serious narrative. To readers like Sarah, it is important to be able to connect with the situations described in the literary work, to be able to view them as believable.

(B) Making Connections with the Author

In several instances, students were able to enjoy the work because it had been written by a familiar author. For example, Roald Dahl, who wrote the short story “Poison” was identified as the person who also wrote Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. This information seemed to have led April to view the story in a favourable light. “Isn’t the writer Roald Dahl I think he was the guy who wrote Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. I

think that Roald Dahl is a really good writer I loved Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.”

In another entry, April again mentioned the significance of identifying the author as a person, as she commented what she has learned about the background of Buffy Saint-Marie.

I read a little bit about the author her name is Buffy Saint-Marie she was born in 1941. She is of Cree Indian heritage. She was born in Craven Saskatchewan. She was adopted, she went to university. She is a poet, song writer and musician. I also found out from my own personal experience that she is very good poet.

April was the only student who was interested enough in authors' biographical sketches to include them as part of her response to the literature, but she included them whenever this information was available, so it was of obvious interest to her, and appeared to colour her reaction to the literary works. She deliberately sought out other poems by Leonard Cohen, for instance, on the basis of the connection she had made to him earlier as a poet. “I read another of Mr. Cohen's poems and he's a pretty good author.”

It is interesting that students can recognize certain authors, identify with their body of work, and actively seek other works by the same author. This is encouraging for students who may not have had pleasant experiences with literature in school situations.

Item 4 [Write quotes that are effective or memorable]

One of the most encouraging aspects of the participants' responses was their willingness to use textual references as support for observations that they made. From the beginning, students used textual references--albeit not frequently--to foster and advance

ideas and feelings regarding the literature. Lindsey, for instance, began her first entry, a response to “Invictus” in this way: “The last two lines, I think, are the strongest yet, the weakest lines in the poem... ‘I am the master of my fate’, ‘I am the captain of my soul.’” Lindsey was able to locate an important theme of the poem in these lines, as well as pinpoint a logical argument against the validity of this theme. Textual references help students explore the themes they perceive to be presented in the literature. Tammy wrote that, “I think that this poem [Invictus] is about a man who fought and may have won or lost but still held his head high in pride. What makes me feel like he still has pride is the line that says ‘my head is bloody but unbowed.’ I like this poem because it shows bravery and someone with a strong soul.”

When students use quotes, they employ them as means by which they can evoke meaning from the text. Words, phrases, or lines from literary text have powerful effects on readers’ abilities to grasp the subtle essence of text, or implied meaning, and to be able to react to that essence of meaning. Jessica, in her first entry to “Invictus” stated that “This poem gives me the creeps, especially when the writer says “My head is bloody but unbowed.” By using the line from the poem, she not only offered reasons for her initial reaction, but indirectly comments on the mood established by the poet. Jessica spoke of the image suggested by these words, and how she felt as she got this mental picture established in her imagination.

Farhana, also writing about “Invictus” used a quote as an entry into the thematic meaning of the text. “But I think even though [his] life is worst he is happy because he has control over life it say on the last line ‘I am the captain of my soul.’ I think this [is]

thanking god no matter what he went through for the good things that happened to him.”

Item 5 [Author’s Point of View or Frame of Reference]

No students made mention in any responses to the point of view used in the literature. Students tended to respond only in terms of the content of the story, and little on the techniques of constructing narratives.

Item 6 [Author’s style]

Only Rishi wrote anything about stylistic devices an author may have employed to evoke a certain response in the reader. In his response to the story “Bloodflowers,” Rishi wrote: “...when they seen the blood rose growing out of the rocks, Mrs. Poorwilly said that if you touched it, it is bad luck, Danny said that he would be alright, and he picked it up, in a way I think it is foreshadowing, it tells you that later in the story something will go wrong.” Rishi also was aware of the author’s technique of description that allowed readers to participate in the young narrator’s folly in “An Ounce of Cure”: “My favorite part was when she got drunk, they made you [think] that you were right there watching her, the story was really descriptive.” Rishi mentioned description again in his response to “Poison”: “It was so descriptive that it made me feel like I was right there watching the whole thing. It kind of made you have a picture of what things looked like.” In neither of the two entries did Rishi discuss what particular word choices made the description vivid for him, nor did he elaborate further on the images he may have imagined as he read.

Students were unaware of (or failed to mention in their responses) author’s

specific word choices, sentence constructions, or figurative language that may have affected readers' reactions.

Item 7 [Using Graphic Representations]

Students are made aware through the handbook that not all knowledge must be represented in written form. Carroll (1991) has suggested that this kind of symbolizing system has often been withheld from middle and high school students, and are not encouraged to find meaning through graphic conceptions. Although the students involved in this study were encouraged to use other forms of response, they did not. All of their responses to the early assigned readings were in written form.

Question One: Later Entries

The students were asked to respond to a number of literary selections throughout the semester, based on a study of genre. That is, studies of poetry, short story, essays, drama, and novel are classified and examined separately, as opposed to a thematic study. Later selections that the participants read and responded to included more poetry than earlier, as well as some non-fiction: "Four Generations" by R. Maynard (essay); "What makes us fall in love?" by M. Lasswell and N. Lobsenz" (essay); "After You, My Dear Alphonse" by S. Jackson (short story) "The Bull Moose" by A. Nowlan (poem); and "The Trap" by W. Byer (poem).

Item 1 [Personal Reaction to Text]

(A) Judgmental Commentary on the Work as a Whole

Students still responded to the literature with general reactions once they had read the work. They indicated clearly what their total impressions were concerning the selections, and seemed less hesitant at expressing these reactions. Although students' responses were varied, as examples of responses to "Four Generations" illustrate, there was more of an open-mindedness towards the literature than was found in responses to earlier readings.

"I didn't really like this story so I didn't have much to say." [Jessica]

"I think this story is very sad because a grandma is dying and her granddaughter and her great-granddaughter get to see her one last time and she hasn't seen her great-granddaughter till now." [Sarah]

"I thought the story 'Four Generations' was a good story because a lot of people could probably relate to it. It's so sad, it's like you want to be with the family, just so you can help them...I did quite enjoy this story" [Lindsey]

"I liked this story because I thought it was so sweet, caring and real. When I read the story, I pictured me telling the story when I'm older and have a daughter of my own. I really understood the story too!" [Tammy]

"I really liked this essay. I don't think that will ever forget this essay." [Veronica]

Students tended to write that they liked the poetry, stories, and essays assigned in the latter part of the semester.

"This poem ["Me As My Grandmother"] was okay. It's kinda sweet." [Tammy]

“I think this poem [“The Average”] is good because it makes you think.” [Tammy]

“I think that this story [After you, my dear Alphonse] is quite interesting. It deals with a lot of racial issues.” [Tammy]

“This poem [The Bull Moose] was a difficult one to understand.” [Rishi]

“I would not recommend this essay [What makes us fall in love?] to anyone it’s just a nine page essay that keeps mumbling on and on.” [April]

Most of the students began each of their responses with a general reaction to the selection as a whole. In their reactions, they indicated the extent to which they found the literature engaging. Students like Veronica, responding to “Me as my Grandmother” wrote her thoughts on poetry in general, perhaps indicating reasons why she found poetry engaging. “It’s a funny thing with poems. In order to understand them you have to live them, you have to feel what the writer feels. Otherwords you just can’t know what the writer means.”

In all of the personal reactions to literature later in the semester, there were some subtle changes from the earlier reactions. First, the students seemed to be able to indicate, however vaguely, why it was they liked or disliked a selection. Second, there appeared to be an understanding of the connection between their reaction to the literature and their ability to “relate” to the content of the material.

A good example of a student coming to understand what it is that she enjoys about specific works was found in Tammy’s response to “The Bull Moose.”

I liked this poem because it was about an animal. No matter what poems say in them if they are about an animal I’ll like it. I have a thing for wild

animals like lions and cougars etc. because they are so beautiful and free. I hate watching videos on how animals catch their prey because it looks so bad and hurtful...I like how this poem sets a good setting like in the beginning.

Tammy was able to identify both the subject of the poem and the description of the setting as reasons why the poem appealed to her. On the other hand, there were students who identified with particular parts of a literary work, and tended to focus on those parts.

Veronica wrote, "I like the part [of *The Bull Moose*] where he roared at the end, like to prove he wasn't afraid, that he wouldn't run...The moose seem[ed] to feel like it was time to die so he went where he knew he would."

(B) Resistance

There were fewer instances of resistance to be found in students' later responses. Students' responses did not generally have the same resistance to reading and interpreting as was expressed at the beginning of the semester. Now that they had an opportunity to practice their response skills, had seen a number of models upon which they could base their own responses, they appeared less anxious to write their thoughts and feelings about the literature studied. With a bit more confidence, and less uncertainty, they approached new reading selections. For example, many students began their responses with a statement summarizing the main points of the literature.

"This story [*Four Generations*] has a type of tradition going. It is kind of like a life story..." [Rishi]

"What I think the author is saying [*Me As My Grandmother*] is that this girls grandmother

has just passed [away] and [she] is starting to see herself as her grandmother when she looks in the mirror.” [Lindsey]

In most cases, students did not dispute that they must try to make sense of the literature, and therefore no longer avoided becoming involved.

(C) Uncertainty

Although uncertainty was disclosed much less frequently, and articulated with less negativity, there were times when students’ uncertainty about a piece was poignant. Farhana’s uncertainty manifested itself as an apology as she loses confidence in herself and her reading abilities. In response to the essay “What Makes us Fall in Love” she wrote: “I feel so bad writing this response I feel dum because I just can’t write anything about this essay. It is very hard.” Students that did feel uncertain, sometimes revealed their strategy for lessening their apprehensiveness. Lindsey, for instance, wrote about how she dealt with her doubt concerning the story “After you, my dear Alphonse,” “I think this story was really confusing but, after looking it over it came clearer to me.” She realized that re-reading a selection, or reviewing parts that were not understood well in the first place, could help alleviate misgivings.

(D) Reaction to Theme

As resistance and uncertainty decreased, the number of responses relating to theme and character increased. Summary theme statements were generally included in the response. Lindsey, for example, wrote about “Four Generations,” that “I think the author

is trying to tell people that mothers and daughters can have a good relationship without always having to get along.” This, along with her favourable statements regarding the work as a whole, was the extent of her response. There were no details about the essay, supporting why she felt this was the theme of the essay. Farhana, on the other hand, not only gave a statement of theme, but followed it with reasons why she chose this theme.

This story is trying to give us a message that it [is] important to have a mother and when you lose the mother you could only be a mother not a daughter. I think that the granddaughter didn't care about her grandmother because before she said to her mother that the grandmother was 87 and she lived all her life. The granddaughter was very cold about the death but after she realized that before she use to dance, sing, presented her with kisses and good report cards--stopped writing to her ceased to visit. Then when she heard she was dying, she wanted to see her one more time.

It may have appeared that this is somewhat of a summary, but because it follows her statement of theme, Farhana was trying to tie together the event of realization to the “message” that the author was suggesting in her essay.

Tammy wrote about “After you, my dear Alphonse”: “I think that race and color shouldn't matter in this world.” Her reaction to the theme was a general statement that had little to do with the story, but nevertheless covered what she felt--and captured the author's anti-racial tone--about the theme of racism in the narrative.

(E) Reaction to Characters

Students still reacted strongly to characters. Again, there seemed to be a greater inclination for the students to give reasons for their responses to the characters. Moreover,

students usually commented on the rightness or wrongness, the positive and negative attributes, of the characters' behaviours or attitudes. Sarah, for instance, wrote this of the narrator's grandmother in "Four Generations": "I believe the grandma is a very strong person because of what she's been through in the past and now facing death...I think it's very interesting how she says that all of a sudden she became the mother. That, to me, express[es] the bond that the mother and daughter have with each other." The reaction to the characters in this essay relate closely with the theme that Sarah perceived in the literature.

Tammy wrote of the main character in "After you, my dear Alphonse": "I don't like how the boys mom just assumed that the boy was poor because of his color." Once more, the reaction against the mother, whose prejudice led her to assume--falsely--that her son's black friend lived in poverty and was in need of handouts. The theme of this prejudice was tied closely with the way in which Tammy reacted to the character of the mother. Jessica reacted in much the same way to the character of the mother in the same story: "Johny's mom starts asuming that because Boyd's black it must mean that he's poor. I think that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. I liked the two boys in this story." As with Tammy's reaction to the character of the mother, the response tied character to theme. Veronica made this character/theme connection very clear in her response to "After you, my dear Alphonse." She wrote:

This story deals with the theme of racism. Both Jonny and Mrs. Wilson are racist against Boyd. I think my favorite character is Boyd, because he takes all this racism like it's [supposed] to be, yet doesn't take it. And Boyd should be insulted, not Mrs. Wilson, because all people have their pride and

don't want to take charity. Mrs. Wilson is a snob. She assumes Boyd's family is less well off because they are black. She thinks they can't get a job or good clothes. Jonny [Mrs. Wilson's son] is stupid. All he sees is a friend and is slightly influenced by the behaviour of his mother. He is not my favorite character but is better than Mrs. Wilson...Actually Mrs. Wilson is worse than a snob, she's ignorant.

In Veronica's estimation, there could be no separation of how she felt towards the characters, and what she understood regarding the theme of the story; they were one. She judged the theme of racism as she judged the characters.

Much of what students judge, too, is the behaviour of characters in terms of how real people behave. Rishi asked about character motivation and evaluated what the characters did, as illustrated by his response to "The Bull Moose."

When the people were lined up to see the Bull Moose, they teased it. I wonder why? They should leave the bull moose alone, it is old, so the people should be more sensitive or feel remorse for the Bull Moose. They did some cruel things to it like pouring beer down its throat. I think that the people in the town didn't want [the] bull to be there because when the warden came they were planning on shooting it but they finally came to their senses and realized it was wrong.

Rishi offered judgment of the characters--and of people in general--who were abusive and not understanding of animals. He made statements about how people should behave, that they should feel "remorse" for the animals. In a similar vein, April moralized about the people who were tormenting the bull moose that they found in a farmer's field. She, too, posed questions about why people mistreat and vex an animal that was suffering. "I thought the poem Bull Moose was sad because everyone was picking on him. For

example: the young men snickered and tried to pour beer down his throat, while girl friends took their pictures. I think no animal should be treated that way that's probably why the Bull Moose got mad."

Veronica, in responding to "After you, my dear Alphonse" also made a statement about what she saw as the stupidity of people. "There are so many stories about racism. Personally I think that people who are racist are stupid because if they read a few books they would learn racism is wrong." In this instance, Veronica assumed that if readers realize that characters in stories are behaving badly, they will be able to look to their own bad behaviour, and correct it. It is a perception of literature that suggests it has the power to instruct people in morality.

Item 2 [Ask Questions]

Students asked fewer questions about the literature in later entries. It was not a strategy students employed to any great extent. There were, however, occasions when students did ask questions about the literature. The kinds of questions they asked generally helped students think about the effects of the literature on readers. April, for instance, asked a series of questions about the poem "The Bull Moose" that posed conflict over certain ethical behaviours. She asked: "Why was everyone so mean to the bull moose? Did the people know that mooses are not very friendly? Why did they go near the moose in the first place? Why were the wardens going to [shoot] him?" April also asked similar kinds of questions about the ethical behaviour of the character in the poem "The trap." She wrote

Why didn't the farmer do anything when he saw the hurt little fox?

Why did the farmer set the trap in the first [place]?

Did the fox see the trap?

If the fox did see the trap why didn't he get away from it?

Did the fox do anything wrong? If so what did he do?

What did the farmer expect to accomplish by setting a trap?

It is certain that there are no answers to such questions, for the text does not provide any background information of the sort that April requires.

Lindsey, too, continued asking questions about information that she felt was omitted from the literature. "What I wonder each time I read this poem is, did this woman enjoy her life with her grandmother? Or did she dislike her grandmother so much that she could have killed her? did she kill her? Does she feel guilty now?" It is interesting that Lindsey does not use textual information to help her answer these questions. Lindsey concluded that there is "too little information, too many questions, so maybe the poem isn't that great."

Item 3 [Make Connections]

(A) Making Connections with the Situation

It is still important for students to relate well to the situation about which they are reading. After making her comment about the character's behaviour and the theme of racism in the story "After you, my dear Alphonse," Tammy related her experience with a friend who has been taught that interracial dating is wrong. She wrote that, "I have a friend who is totally against interracial dating because that is how her mom brought her up. My friend is not racist, she just said she thinks that she could never date a guy of a

different race than her!” This discussion of interracial dating led her away from the story, however, since the remainder of her response concentrated on her friend’s upbringing. She did not return to discuss the text any further.

Rishi tried to connect his ideas about love and marriage with those expressed by the author in the essay “What makes us fall in love.” Rishi is from a culture that encourages arranged marriages, and therefore he attempted to assess the author’s thoughts on love and marriage in terms of what he knows within his cultural group.

It seems to me like these people get married very quickly in the sense that they get married in a few months in some cases, but now a days people want to really get to know each other because if you get married and you don’t really know your partner that well it could screw up your life... In my opinion I think that arranged marriages are better just as long as you get to see your partner before you marry. It is statistically proven that...arranged marriages work out better.

Rishi used the literature to articulate his views on marriage in order to reconcile what he has learned within his cultural context to what is accepted by Western culture as common dating-marriage practices. Rishi claimed that this essay “was full of information on how people are attracted to one another” that permitted him a view to another cultural perception of such rituals.

In one instance, there was a connection between two pieces of literature studied in class. April made a link between the poem “Me as my Grandmother” and the essay “Four generations.”

The poem me as my Grandmother is kind of like this story we read it’s called four generations. The poem is about a girl who’s grandmother

died and the [speaker] thinks as she gets old she will look more like her grandmother. The reason why I think that this poem is like this story Four Generations is because the story is about a Grandmother, mother, daughter and the daughter's daughter and the grandmother is dieing and she's never seen her granddaughter then she gets to see her and the daughter says she's going to miss her grandmother and this poem is similar to the story.

While most of April's response seemed rambling and tied to a summary of the poem and the story, April was at least attempting to articulate that there are some thematic connections, beyond the similarity of subject matter. There is a suggestion in April's response that she understood that there is some kind of bond between the granddaughter and her grandmother, although April struggled to express her thoughts. In the end, she appeared to give up and simply made a statement that "this poem is similar to the story." Since the assigned literature was not studied within a thematic context, this was a strategy not used by many students in any of their responses.

(B) Making Connections with the Author

April was the only student who seemed to want to know more about authors. She looked up the thumbnail biographical sketches provided at the back of the poetry text to find a bit about the author, as if she might find clues to the literary selection from the sketch. For example, April found wrote this about the poet of "The bull moose": "The author is Alden Nowlan. He was born in Nova Scotia. He left school when he was twelve. That's all I found out about Alden Nowlan." She was diligent in copying biographical information, when it was available, at the end of each of her responses, such as the sketch

of biographical information about the poet William Byer [”The trap”]: “He was born in Indiana, the son of a bookseller. He has been involved with literature all his life, as a teacher, writer, critic and university professor.” I gained the impression from April’s responses that finding out about the author was important for making connections with the literature. Some of her independent reading was selected on the basis of her connection with particular authors.

Item 4 [Write quotes that are effective or memorable]

Writing out lines or phrases from text is not a strategy that is used frequently by students, but when quotes are used to foreground material, they appear to add to students’ understanding of textual material. For example, Farhana wrote this quote and elaborated upon its significance about the poem “Me as my Grandmother.”

Now that she’s dead

I understand

I think this is a very important line because it sounds that she wasn’t close to her grandmother and now when she is dead she feels bad that she couldn’t spend more time with her grandmother. Or maybe the girl didn’t treat her grandmother [well] by not being there when the grandmother really needs her the most. Maybe all this time she was misunderstanding her grandmother and [now] she understand[s].

This discussion involving the lines from the poem was tied closely with Farhana’s understanding of the theme of the poem. Farhana was able to foreground this material so that she could better comprehend the work as a whole. Similarly, Crystal used one line from this same poem “me as my Grandmother” to articulate her understanding of the

theme of the poem. “This line ‘We look at all time with just that one face’ is so very true because we will be getting wrinkles and then no one will have to worry about looking different because everyone will have them. The aging generation goes back, way back.” It was interesting to note that students used many quotes that appear, for them, to express themes.

In some instances, students used quotes that focus students’ attention on imagery. One such example was April’s attention to the image of a fox [The Trap] who had been trapped and had chewed his leg in order to free himself. “One of the sad parts [is] Bleeding a path across the gold wheat, whining with pain, his eyes like cracked marbles.” Students who used quotes to focus on specific details, seemed to have a better sense of the whole of the literary selection. For example, Sarah, responding to “The Bull Moose” used quotes directly and indirectly to enhance her understanding of the situation described in the poem.

The moose came “stumbling through tamarack swamps.” I think that means he was already in pain when he arrived at the last fence. I think the moose knows he’s going to die and waits because of what it says in the 2nd paragraph/stanza. On the 6th stanza I think everybody thought it was gentle and they shouldn’t harm it. “He looked like the kind of pet women put to bed with their sons.”

Sarah’s use of quotes allows her to visualize the state of the moose and the reactions of the people who came to watch it.

Item 5 [Considering author's point of view and frame of reference]

Although there are very few direct references to author's point of view, certainly students inferred "the author's message" from themes developed in the literature. As Farhana pointed out in her response to "The Bull Moose,"

I think that there is a masage in this poem. I think the writer is actualy talking about people when we see a different [race] we try to bully him or her because they look difrent so I feel that the writer is trying to give us a masage in a diffrent way. Or maybe the character [speaker?] is telling us that we even bother animal[s]. We don't even let them go...this poem is sad it is about how stupid, mean, cruel people act. What I mean is this [situation] probably happened. I like the way the writer put the poem there could be lots of meanings.

This response illustrates how interconnected theme and author's intention may be. Farhana used her own experiences to derive an interesting thematic statement about how people treat others who are perceived as "different." In another response to "The Bull Moose", Veronica seemed to have the beginning of seeing the situation from the moose's perspective. She wrote that "the moose seems to have a mind of it's own, thoughts and feeling. And maybe animals know EXACTLY what is going on in the human world. I think that they might...maybe they know more than we do." Veronica took a different approach to the poem, speculating that the moose may have known all along what was happening, and chose to tolerate it.

In other respects, students sometimes tried to understand the time period in which the work may have been written as a way to comprehend the work more clearly. Tammy wrote the following about the frame of reference for the poem: "I can tell that this poem is

supposed to be in the olden days by the way the author was speaking about the man and wife.” Unfortunately, Tammy did not elaborate any further on this point. She did not explain what, in the poem, made her think that the poem was set in an older time period, or what, if any, effect this had on her understanding of the work.

Item 6 [Considering author’s style]

Only Rishi offered any direct statements about deliberate use of stylistic devices. No other student discussed author’s style of writing. There was no mention of word choices, sentence structure, or figurative language, apart from one instance. Rishi used a quote from the poem “The Bull Moose” to discuss the image it created: “‘They, scented the musk of death.’ I think they mean that the Bull Moose was about to die soon. It is a kind of foreshadowing. The bull moose was seeing the blood god, that gave him a sign.” It is noted that, even when encouraged, some students avoid a close examination of literary text. It does take time and effort; many students are unused (or unwilling) to expend the effort it takes to make meaning from literary text.

Item 7 [Creating Graphic Representations]

Although students were encouraged, once more, to find ways of representing their ideas, other than in written form. Very few availed themselves of the opportunity to depict their thoughts and feelings in forms other than writing. Lindsey, however, did attempt a sketch of the poem “The bull moose” and provided written explanation besides.

As you probably noticed in my sketch, that I used only two

enlightening colours, red and yellow. The main reason I picked the two colours I did is because they express my feelings the best. The yellow, because it is the brightest, makes me feel happiness for the moose because he has gone to a better place where he doesn't have to worry about enemies such as men and bears. The red on the other hand makes me feel sorrow and also helps me understand more of what type of pain this animal is going through.

It seems clear that Lindsey found sketching a method of making her feelings clearer to herself. She used pencil drawing images of a farmer's field to represent the poem's setting, with only two colours as a contrast, to exemplify her perception of the mood established in the poem. She used colour as symbolic representation of what she thought will happen to the moose after it has been killed.

I was disappointed to note how students did not use other forms of representation, despite the models I had available for students, and the encouragement I gave them to try different methods of responding to the literature. In my fieldnotes, I wrote about my disappointment.

The students tell me how boring it is to write so often in their journals. I don't blame them. There is an expectation of a great deal of writing. On the other hand, I have offered them a number of ways to respond. We have done lessons on using charts to compare different selections of literature, clipping pictures from magazines or newspapers that somehow relate to the literature, or even drawing. The immediate answer from some students is: "I can't do this. I'm not an artist." [October 5, 1995]

Question 2: Development of Student Responses

One of the greatest challenges of using dialogue journals is to be able to recognize when, and if, development of students' responses to literary text has occurred. Is it possible, for example, to observe points at which students seem to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes for interpreting literary text? There are, however, benchmarks that teachers may look for as indicators that students' progress is revealed through their written responses found in their dialogue journals.

It is difficult to determine with any certitude whether or not the students involved in this study improved their ability to interpret literature, or whether they were just becoming more adept at responding to literature in their dialogue journals. Perhaps, but in doing so, they also helped clarify for themselves what meaning the literature offered to them. There are some observations which may be benchmarks to determine students' development.

Length of Responses

The most visible means of testing students' development in responding to literature was the overall increase in length of students' responses. Fulwiler (1987a) has identified several features of student journals that indicate quality, and length is one of those features. Fulwiler (1987a) explained that "the more writing one does at a single sitting the greater the chance of developing a thought or finding a new one" (p. 3). For example, the tables following reveal that the average length of students' responses did improve. This suggests that their involvement with the literature increased as they had more to say about the reading selections.

Table 1.

Length and Averages, in Words, of Students' Responses: Early Entries

Names	Invictus	Bldflowers	Ounce of Cure	Poison	Friendship	Average length
April	47	188	30	137	86	97.6
Crystal	58	47	66	88	62	64.2
Farhana	165	326	452	319	N/R	315.5
Jessica	73	110	123	133	137	115.2
Lindsay	135	172	139	142	212	160
Rishi	44	206	279	294	63	177.2
Sarah	105	206	299	169	195	194.8
Tammy	97	166	132	213	215	164.6
Veronica	155	106	197	172	189	163.8

Table 2.

Length and Averages, in Words, of Students' Responses: Later Entries

Name of Student	Four Gen.	What Makes Us Fall in Love	Me as My Grand.	Dear Alphonse	The Bull Moose	Average length
April	92	151	159	92	137	126.2
Crystal	65	N/R	121	101	238	131.25
Farhana	239	126	220	222	241	209.6
Jessica	50	107	48	101	133	87.8
Lindsay	69	N/R	152	214	N/R	145
Rishi	238	351	51	77	264	196.2
Sarah	183	388	143	66	191	194.2
Tammy	108	164	81	187	192	146.4
Veronica	166	202	212	214	356	230

Willingness to Participate in Meaning Making Processes

Students' responses to the five readings assigned later in the semester indicated less time was spent retelling or summarizing the material. Instead, they appeared to concentrate on their personal reactions to situations, characters, and themes described in the literature. There was less resistance to reading the assigned selections, and, as students developed attachments to situations, characters, and themes, they seemed more able to comment on these aspects of text, rather than repeating the main events in the literature. There is evidence, however, that students' tolerance for the time necessary to interpret literary text thoroughly, is limited.

Ability to Ask Questions

It is apparent that, for those students who began to interrogate the text, to ask questions to sort out confusions or deal with ambiguities in the text, there was the beginning of a valuable strategy. It is clear that students' development in interpreting literary text is dependent upon their ability to formulate "higher level" questions. What is also clear is that students need to be shown how to pursue the answers to those questions, to make predictions, hypothesize, and test those hypotheses against others' interpretations of the same text.

Ability to Use Quotes

Students who were able to select and use quotes as a part of their meaning making strategy, highlighted for themselves salient features of textual information that they could explicate, explore, or ask questions about. Brent (1992) has noted that highlighting permits readers to establish meaningful conversations with the text. It is therefore an

important part of students' development in reading literary text.

In summary, students who used the guidelines made some improvement in their ability to interpret literary text. The gains, while not substantial, showed minimal improvement over the semester. Most of the participants were able to write longer responses, they moved beyond simple retellings into more reflective statements about character and theme. They made personal connections and comparisons between the literature and their lives, and, in doing so, provided some evidence that they were thinking about the text and working towards understanding it. Their responses may have been unsophisticated and embryonic, but there were attempts over the course of the semester to move into a more analytical stance rather than remaining mired in resistance.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The study was designed to investigate two questions:

- (1) What is the nature of secondary students' responses to literary text as revealed through dialogue journals?
- (2) Do secondary students' responses to literature in dialogue journals reveal development, and, if so, along what lines is that development revealed?

There will be a number of conclusions drawn from the data available, concerning the kinds of strategies students appear to employ as they learn how to interpret literary text. The categories of their strategies will be discussed. Next, there will be some deliberation regarding the nature, purpose, and outcome of using dialogue journals in the English class. Specifically, does the dialogue journal have value, evidenced from the data that the dialogue journal, as a significant tool to help students interpret literary text? If so, what guiding principles can be delineated so that maximum effect from dialogue journals in English classrooms can be achieved?

Discussion of the Problem

When I first began teaching senior secondary English, I faced my classes with the tools of instruction I had been given. There were activities such as plot diagrams, end-of-reading questions, and lists of literary terminology for students to define. I designed intricate plot diagrams that delineated text structure; I worked at developing carefully

worded questions that would inevitably lead students to a deeper understanding of the literary work; I invented essay topics that would inevitably lead students to a greater appreciation of literary significance. None of it worked. It seemed that the more lesson preparation took place, the less work the students completed. Moreover, they approached literature and the obligatory tests and assignments without enthusiasm. The teacher, as the only participant in making meaning of literary text, felt discouraged. I knew there had to be a better way to involve my students in these same meaning-making activities. At this time one of my colleagues introduced me to the concept of journals where the students may demonstrate depth and insight into literary text (Weir, 1991). The more the class used dialogue journals as a central feature of classroom instruction, the greater the student response. There was a discovery of what students could tell me about the literature they studied, which altered the classroom environment considerably to include student voices.

Presently, it is my contention that the dialogue journal should figure prominently in literature instruction in the building of advanced structures that foster students' ability to interpret literary text. The argument to be presented in this final chapter is that dialogue journals need to be valorized and promoted as the central feature in developing students' interpretive skills of literary text. The unique features of dialogue journals can replace many of the activities that are currently in use, and provide students with a flexible means of developing their understanding of literary text. Journals fit within the theoretical structures of Rosenblatt's transactional model (1978; 1976; 1989; 1994b) and Bakhtin's dialogism (1981) that advocates an acceptance of an individuated and polysemous nature of language. At the same time, journals can foster students' understanding of others'

perceptions about literature that could refine and extend, or even alter, students' initial impressions of literary works. Unfortunately, the journal does not yet enjoy a significant status as a language development activity.

I have given a number of workshops to English teachers locally and around the province of Alberta, where I teach. The theme of these workshops has been to demonstrate students' dialogue journals as the cornerstone for students who are learning to interpret literary text. Numerous teachers, while impressed with the volume and quality of insight exhibited in students' journals, nonetheless felt compelled to issue stern cautions against their overuse. One of the common complaints among those who attended these sessions is that teachers feared students would be "journalled to death." This was particularly true of teachers who knew journals were being used in other subject areas, such as mathematics and science. An English teacher, as well as an English professor, remarked that journals ought not to take the place of more valid school activities such as essays and tests. They conceded that journals might be a good thing if used in a limited way, but part of the problem was the apparent absence of standardized "assessments" of students' journals. How, the professor asked, could students' journals possibly be guaranteed any kind of consistent evaluation? (I did not dispute the obvious question of validity or reliability of English tests or essays.) Furthermore, the English teacher warned, all English teachers needed to remain sensitive to the fact that students disliked journals--as she did--and ought not to over prescribe their use. (I have since wondered if teachers need to be more sensitive to the fact that students dislike essays and tests, and ought not to over prescribe their use as well.) The implication of this remark was clear: no matter if

journals clearly demonstrated students' insights into literature, manifesting quality work from students as they sought to make meaning from literary text, the notion that journals become the pivotal feature of every English class was going to be a tough sell.

The Nature of Students' Responses to Literature

It was clear that the student responses from this sample group did not meet expectations of a full response to literature, or at least the kinds of responses to literary text I had come to expect from previous experiences using dialogue journals. It was a struggle for these students to understand the purpose of written responses to literature and how to develop their responses to literature. It is difficult to account for the specific reasons why students' responses were "thin" but some explanation is in order.

Many of the students from this class had not had a great deal of success with traditional schooling. Their marks from Grade 9 English had been marginal passes, and in general, they did not enjoy reading assigned by the teacher. For example, Sarah, who did read, only wanted to read novels like The X-Files, while Veronica wanted to read teen romance novels [see Fieldnotes, September 12, 1995]. The limited success students had made, coupled with a limited range of reading experiences, the beginning of the semester difficult for them. When asked about previous assigned reading, many could not remember the titles of poems or short stories they had read in Grade 9. Bortolussi and Dixon (1996) have posited that training students in reading literary text is, by itself, not sufficient for understanding. Apart from developmental aspects, such as age, that may be attributed to some readers, they suggest that "It is quite possible that a great deal of the difference

between experts in literature and novices is attributable to dispositional characteristics of the readers...It also seems likely that becoming an expert in literature requires a great deal of native intelligence, language skill and motivation” (p. 473). It could be that these students were weak in language skills or motivation.

Many students were not able to sustain a focused attention on a piece of literature. They wanted to read the selection, be able to summarize the content, comment on how they felt about the selection, and move on. They had little patience for discussion about the literature, especially if they were asked about details regarding word choice. The data reveal, especially in early responses, their frustration with the text--and with me--for asking them to work at creating meaning for themselves. They were angry, certain that I was not telling them what they needed to know about the literature. Their anger is most evident when they were resistant to writing about the literature without re-reading parts so that they could begin to construct meaning for themselves. They were willing to wait to see if I would “transmit” what I thought about the text.

It was also evident that these students had not been used to a close examination of text nor were they used to extended forms of writing. From informal conversations with many students, I gathered that they had been used to answering end-of-chapter questions, which may or may not have been taken up or marked by their teachers. Answers to such questions, they informed me, were usually short and could be found in the text. Students were used to skill tests that assessed their reading abilities based on the answers to comprehension questions. If they had been given a writing assignment of any length at all, it had been brief paragraphs, or a five-paragraph theme of a page or so.

These students often had a difficult time tapping prior knowledge to help them comprehend the literature they were assigned to read. At the beginning, I sensed that when they were asked questions prior to a reading that were designed to get at prior knowledge (e.g. “What do you know about India?” prior to reading “Poison”) they were reluctant to volunteer information that they may have known. In general, these students were not willing to take risks revealing what they may not have known; they did not understand how involvement in pre-reading activities might have helped them understand the literature better. Bortolussi and Dixon (1996) have argued that “understanding many literary texts requires background knowledge that is unlikely to be gained in literary training” (p. 473). This was evident in the responses to the story “Poison” which required a general understanding of the animosity between British and Indian people. After I had told the class about the problems between the races prior to Indian independence, there was a little more appreciation of the themes of the story, but not a great deal.

Even when working in small groups, students had trouble sharing ideas to bring to class discussion. Some students revealed that if they shared ideas, that their “answers” would be copied for the benefit of others, and they would lose some kind of advantage when competing for marks. To a number of students, this was a form of cheating, and refused to take part.

It was difficult for some students to know what I anticipated would be the result of using dialogue journals, even though they had seen models of journals written by some former students. Some students, like Farhana and Rishi, would ask continually, “Is this what you want?” after they had written each response. They were unsure of their

capabilities as readers and writers, and had to check that they were doing all right. Even so, neither Farhana nor Rishi ever got much beyond superficial responses such as summarizing, identifying with a character, or writing a thematic statement about the work. They were not able to develop their ideas, nor provide evaluative commentary on either content or form. They were not going to risk any kind of response that might prove their interpretations about the literary work “wrong.” Moreover, many students had low tolerance for the ambiguity of text. They wanted definitive answers--to be supplied by the teacher--and did not seem to grasp the idea that they had to be participants in making meaning of literary text. They resisted the idea that there could be other interpretations of text, or that their interpretations could be valid.

The nature of the students’ responses, however, did reveal some things about the nature of responses. A number of early studies (Purves & Rippere, 1968; Cooper & Odell, 1978) identified Engagement-Involvement or Personal Statements as a significant aspect of student response to literature. This emerged to be the case in this study as well. The preponderance of statements about the literature in students’ journals, especially in students’ early entries, seemed to be of a personal nature. Students were very concerned about how easily they can gain access to meaning of the text, and how well they could relate to the selection as a whole, and what they believed to be the theme of the work.

But, within the category of personal reaction to the text, there appeared to be many sub-categories that bear examination. Some kinds of personal reactions seemed to restrict the possibility of further investigation of text, other kinds of personal reactions, such as connections to information about authors, may have had the effect of perceiving a

work favourably, and may have even encouraged students to seek out other works by the same author.

In the majority of cases, the responses so evident in the first part of the term, declaring the piece “lame,” “stupid and boring,” or even “interesting,” seemed to serve only to shut down the meaning-making approaches. At the beginning, students who made such statements often appeared to feel absolved of responsibility for making meaning and sometimes made no further attempts to understand the purpose and nature of the text they were studying. Having issued a final pronouncement about the work, they ended their entries abruptly. Their first entries, as well as being short, clearly demonstrated how unused they were to responding to literature on their own, and how difficult--and frightening--it was to attempt to find meaning without the teacher’s constant intervention or explication.

Also at the beginning, some students, notably Sarah, had a hard time with literature which presented situations which, to her, were too “unfamiliar.” In cases like these, we can see that journal entries illustrate how some students react against “defamiliarization” in text, and exhibit an unwillingness to be receptive to the author’s fictive world. Sarah also demanded that stories deal with “gritty” issues facing today’s teenagers, not situations that were common or ordinary. Students who tend to demand in poetry or narrative only those situations or characters that seem “realistic” to them may not be open to reading literary text and may avoid the text altogether. Students need to understand that especially in poetry and narrative forms of literary text, authors may not always create situations that are exact replicas of what reader’ life experiences are.

Personal reactions to themes, characters, and situations seemed to have a great influence on their motivation for reading, and, ultimately, understanding the story as a whole. Some students who could not “understand the point” of the literature, failed to connect with it in some way. It must be remembered, however, that just because students connect with literature by relating anecdotes, etc. that they do not understand the literature. Many and Anderson (1992) caution that “students who choose to respond effereently do not do so because of a lack of life or experiential background upon which to draw when framing aesthetic response; instead, other factors may be guiding the reasons for their choice of stance” (p. 64).

While it is important for students to have some personal contact with the literature, it is important to discourage students from writing about literature in a manner that serves to shut down thinking further about it. Rosenblatt (1976) wrote that

The student should feel free to reveal emotions and to make judgments. The primary criterion should not be whether his reactions or his judgments measure up to critical traditions, but rather the genuineness of the ideas and reactions he expresses...Frank expression of boredom or even vigorous rejection is a more valid starting point for learning than are docile attempts to feel “what the teacher wants.” When the young reader considers why he has responded in a certain way, he is learning both to read more adequately and to seek personal meaning in literature. (p. 70)

There needs to be a distinction made between responses that are frank, personal reactions to literature that encourage students to further meaning making, and statements that only act as a defence against attempting to interpret the literature. There is evidence in the sample of journal entries that when students are uncertain as to how to respond to

literature that is difficult, personal reactions do not serve to further their interpretive abilities.

Students need to withhold judgmental statements until after they have attempted to make some sense of the piece. This seems more evident in students responses to later entries. Students appeared more willing to engage with the literature, explore possibilities, and involve themselves in acts of interpretation as they explored the literature through their dialogue journals. They withheld remarks that closed discussion. They seemed to recognize that such comments concluded any further exploration.

While it is important that students relate to the situations, characters, and themes presented in the literature, it must be remembered that they can develop interpretive skills and engage with literature that is different from their personal experiences. The essay “The Uncertainty of Friendship” may have been too difficult a reading experience for most of the students in that class, but the idea that weaker readers need “easy to digest” material is not altogether true. Hazard Adams (1991) noted that

If what I have been saying has any truth to it, learning to read literary texts is hampered by a tacit pedagogical presumption that we must begin with so-called easy texts and gradually work toward more obviously complex ones. This is the parallel in pedagogy to the idea that scholarship should establish once and for all the text and the historical and biographical context before writers should hazard an interpretation. If this principle is rigorously held to, criticism never begins, for texts are rarely finally established and contexts are infinite in possibility. (p. 45)

The students responses illustrated a number of responses to “difficult” literature such as “The Bull Moose” in which students attended to the language of the text because

the content caught their attention. Students need to be challenged by the literary texts they study, difficulty with language notwithstanding. By their own admission, if students feel the content or subject matter will pique their curiosity, they will try to gain insight into the themes of the work. In order to foster students' ability to interpret literary text, students need to develop their own voices, even with tenuous statements concerning the validity of their interpretations. We cannot continue to hold back on students, waiting until they have cut their teeth on flimsier or more simplistic literary texts. Too many simplistic texts do not have themes or language that will sustain students' interest. It may be appealing to turn to rather effortless reading materials that entreat students' attention, but most of that material is artless. Rosenblatt (1976) reminds us that "the teacher should keep in mind the adolescent psychology that leads to this low-grade fiction, and should try to provide more wholesome and invigorating satisfactions for this need" (p. 213). It is important to remember that not all literature promotes higher-level thinking, and that if critical thinking is an important earmark of the discipline of studying literary text, better literature must be supplied to students. Clifford and Friesen (1993) tell us that literature of great worth are stories that have "engaged the imagination of generations of adults because of the engagement they demand...They connect each of us with the past, ground us firmly in the present moment of listening to their rich language and images, and cause us to contemplate together what life holds in store" (p. 346).

Students did not use the strategy of including quotes in their responses often, but they did employ quotes to help them establish what they did understand about a work in terms of its theme. Lindsey, for instance, used quotes to ask herself questions about parts

of the literary work that she did not understand.

There was no evidence that students in this sample group were sufficiently aware of point of view or stylistic devices that might have enabled them to understand the subtleties of language and its effect on a reader. Although teachers' professional judgment may consider point of view and style an important part of students' development of interpreting literary text, these students neither examined author's frame of reference or style at all.

Principles for Using Journals

From this study, there are a number of suggestions that may help teachers and students use dialogue journals more productively as they explore literary text in English classrooms. These principles are derived from the evidence indicated in this study.

- Find literature that will permit students to develop habits of interpretation using literary text. Not all literature will promote critical thinking or appreciation. "Lightweight" materials that may appeal to students' interest in topics of current--but quickly dated--material, but responses to such literature are often shallow. After a summary of themes, there is not much else to write about. This does not mean that students' interests need be ignored; rather, there needs to be further consideration of literature that present themes of universal concern rather than the allure of superficial themes. It seems that we seriously underchallenge our students when it comes to reading literary text.
- Modelling is crucial for development of students' ability to respond to literature. It

is most important for students to have continual access to models of written responses to literary text. They need to see varying kinds of student responses, particularly if students are to find ways of representing their ideas other than through written responses. If students are to understand that “representing” knowledge can be demonstrated in forms other than written work, there need to be more models for students (and teachers) to follow. Teachers need to be encouraged to respond to literary text themselves, even if the reading selection is one with which they are familiar. Teachers can respond to Hamlet even if they have read the play many times before. On occasion, students would also appreciate seeing teachers responding to reading selections that are unfamiliar to both teachers and students, so that they can teachers can model how they approach a new piece of literature.

- It is important that students know that their entries will be read and that the journal will be used as a springboard for other kinds of activities. It may not be important that all the journals be graded, but comments on students’ responses is necessary. Students who can use their journals as a basis for oral discussion, for further writing, will likely see the value in journal writing than if they were just a collection of unused thoughts and ideas. It would be very informative to know if students could use their journal as the basis for more formal writing, and whether or not their journal writing would be more effective than, say, beginning with an outline. A number of teachers who have used journals note that there is a difference between students’ insightful thoughts on literature as expressed in their journals,

and the stilted, predictable literary essays that students hand in. Developing their own topics from students' own journals for further exploration might help students write better literary essays.

- Students need to be taught how effective questions that they develop themselves can lead to further exploration of ideas and issues presented in the text. We may endorse “higher-level” questioning of text, but it seems that students have too little practice and experience in devising and answering questions that require them to judge, evaluate, or speculate about the literature they read.
- Students need instruction in examining the text for support. There seems to be too little that students have to say about authors' credibility, or the point of reference from which the text is written. It is important that students understand more about authorial intention.
- Students also need to advance their skills at recognizing and commenting on authors' styles of writing. For example, students need to recognize the effect that word choices and word sounds have on the reader. Students may need direct instruction concerning authors' conscious use of words, figurative language, or rhetorical devices that achieve a particular effect. Students may resist the idea of “close reading” of text, especially if they are never given time to consider the meaning of the whole text; however, I believe students' resistance will diminish once they have achieved a confidence in their own abilities to discuss effective style of particular works of literature. This means that teachers need to find ways of having students develop habits of looking at word meaning, apart from regular

“vocabulary lists” which students do not appear to find useful.

Students often complain that too much dissection of literature spoils it for them. Langer (1998), however, offers this advice:

In a later study, we tackled a tough question many people asked from early on: do traditional literature curriculum goals (literary knowledge, such as literary elements, genre, terminology) get lost when the focus is on the students’ understandings? We found that they don’t. In classes where the focus is on the development and communication of rich envisionments, literary concepts and language become part of the fabric of ongoing thought and communication. Literary language and concepts creep into almost every discussion in which individuals are creating and exploring their own responses. (p. 21)

Generalizing from the Study

This is essentially a case study of eight participants’ responses to literary text within a semester of Grade 10 English. The question must be raised as to whether or not--or the extent to which--the results of this study can be generalized to a wider population. Most teachers have had experiences with students who have not had success with school. Teachers must have a repertoire of classroom practices that enable students to become literate people in a world where acquiring knowledge from print material is significant. Insofar as the students’ abilities to respond to literary text described in this study match teachers experiences with reluctant learners, there will be chords of recognition struck for many secondary English teachers. It is important to know that, despite modest gains in students’ development in responses to literature, these eight students began to understand

near the end of the semester, what they could accomplish as they learned to control their interpretations of text.

Studies For Future Research

There needs to be future research regarding the effect of journal responses if we are to learn more about how they can be used most positively in literature instruction. Developing the coherent body of literature concerning journals will take further studies. Students often made comments that having to write about the assigned literature in journals slowed their reading, encouraged them to read for detail, or required that they re-read specific sections of the literary work in order to understanding the work more fully. Lindsey, for example, wrote in her final summative evaluation, "I know now about quotes, questions, trying to answer my own questions, conflict, theme, mood and seeing thing[s] from other points of view. I guess we never recognize but we do learn something new each day, and I guess it really does help."

What is the effect of examining students' responses to literature through dialogue journals over an extended period of time? The first suggestion is that students' responses to literary text through their dialogue journals needs to be evaluated over a longer period of time, such as an entire school year, or even over several years. It is my sense that, had the students involved in this study been able to continue past one semester, their journal responses would have demonstrated further evolution. Disciplines like English depend on having the time needed to consider the literature being studied. Effective use of journals need time to engender thought and interest in creating responses to literature and to

formulate, express, and test out ideas with others. In this respect, the limitations placed on schools which operate on semesters mitigate against development that could be found in journal writing.

Research should be undertaken to determine the affect of discussion on “Second Looks” in journal responses. This study only dealt with students’ initial responses to literature in their journals, but in most classroom situations, I have all my students write “Second Looks” after they have had a chance to listen to others read and discuss the literature in small groups and large class discussions. They are required to write a further entry in which they are to detail any new discoveries about the literature, whether their interpretations were validated, or whether they had to be refined or radically altered in light of others’ perceptions of the literature. “Second Looks” permit students to find meaning by reading as a shared activity, and, from student accounts, is a valuable activity. As early as 1971, Rosenblatt suggested that the beginning of critical response was at the point when the reader could “be led further to pull his experience together and to reflect on it” (p. 165). This reflection can be completed after hearing and seeing others’ perceptions of the work, and comparing those perceptions to one’s own. Thus, Studies should be conducted to examine the difference that discussion makes to students’ understanding of literary text as evidenced in their dialogue journals.

What effect, if any, might teachers’ comments and questions to students’ responses to literature have on their development of interpreting literary text? In general, teachers have used comments to “correct” students’ written work, to point out their errors and justify the mark that they put on students’ work (Sperling, 1998). However, if teachers

wish to employ dialogue journals, their nature of their comments and questions will have to invite open conversation, rather than shut it down. Sperling (1998) has cautioned that students, who still have difficulty conceptualizing their role in a process-based classroom, may misread teachers' comments.

Sarah Freedman and I examined how one high-achieving student interpreted her teacher's comments on her papers. The teacher wrote these comments to suggest alternative ideas or language and to move the student to think critically about her writing. However, rather than interpreting the comments as intended, and rather than questioning the teacher's judgment compared to her own, we discovered that the student's reading of the comments was rooted in her own prescriptivist assumptions about the role of these comments in her writing process. (p. 144)

Teacher's comments, if prescriptive, will only serve to "correct" students' interpretations about literature, and need to be investigated.

It has been suggested that teachers' reading and comments make a difference to the value that students place on journal writing, and how those comments affect further student responses to literature in their dialogue journals. Kooy and Wells (1996) felt that "Students value this style of personal contact and care that their ideas are taken seriously. Log comments play an important role in maintaining literary discussions" (p. 65). Moreover, Kooy and Wells (1996) claimed that their comments affirmed for some students that they are on the right track, and other kinds of comments pushed students to explore their thinking further. Studies of teacher comments in students' dialogue journals need to be examined to see if, indeed, this is the case. Because journals focus on informal writing, designed to elicit students' processing and understanding of literary text, teachers'

comments will focus on creating a dialogue with students about those processes and understandings. Reading student journals will require a different stance or way of responding to student texts. Beach (1989) noted that “Well formed texts invite me to read primarily for comprehension, creating an implied role of ‘comprehending reader.’ Informal writing invites me to read and reciprocate as a ‘dialogue participant,’ who behaves in an equally informal manner” (p. 184). In addition, we need to explore the idea that teachers’ comments that reflect a “dialogue participant” role may produce an entirely different student composition than teachers’ comments that react to student writing from a stance of “comprehending reader.” Newell (1994) suggests that “Papers written as a ‘teacher-learner dialogue’ tended to have more revisions reflecting the working out of ideas, while those written to the teacher-as-examiner had more revisions concerned with proper presentation of the material” (314). Thus, another area for research would be a closer look at the kinds of comments teachers make in students journals, and the effects those comments had on student writing. In addition, we need more specific information regarding which kinds of comments demonstrate that teachers are engaged with student writing on a level of dialogue, and how teachers’ comments may stimulate further exchange of ideas. We know that as teachers comment on other forms of students writing, a message is sent about the kind of responses we expect from students. For instance, do teachers who claim to be using journals in a student-centred situation, who claim to be establishing open “dialogue” with students, still mark journals in a traditional sense? That is, do teachers still correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar, even if the journal has been established ostensibly to promote students’ exploration of literary text?

What kinds of grading/evaluation procedures are used with journals? Which procedures might be most effective? Does evaluation take on a new kind of “culture” when teachers respond to students’ dialogue journals? Or does grading merely carry on traditional practices? And, if so, what effect do traditional grading practices have on development of students’ responses to literary text?

These are some of the questions I have left to explore even as I finish this study. It bears repeating that we need answers to some of these questions if journals are to become a valid and rigorous method for instructing students in literature classes.

I maintain my conviction that dialogue journals enhance students’ ability to understand literature. They permit students to be active participants in constructing meaning of literary texts as they construct texts of their own. I hope that future research will provide further evidence that, as a tool for learning and teaching students to interpret literary text, the dialogue journal is central.

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APPENDIX A

Form I**THE LITERARY JOURNAL**

The purpose of the literary journal is to allow you to make meaning from text in a way that is significant to you. Every reader is an individual and makes sense of what he/she reads in an individual manner. But good readers are willing participants in the act of reading; good readers are actively involved in what they read, emotionally and intellectually. Your journal will be a visible record of you as an active reader and demonstrate your understanding of concepts, issues, ideas, and thoughts as you progress through the course. The journal is a place to help you reflect on and think critically about the literature you read, the discussions you have, and the films you view.

Present your journal with pride. It is a text that you will create over the semester that will illustrate your capability as a reader of literature.

When we read critically, we are reading for meaning--and that is not the same thing as reading for a "message." Meanings are not things, and finding them is not like going on an Easter egg hunt. Meanings are relationships: they are unstable, shifting, dynamic; they do not stay still nor can we prove the authenticity or the validity of one or another meaning that we find. But that does not imply..."To me it means X--and that's that!" Rather...the need for making a careful case for our interpretations becomes evident.

- Ann E. Berthoff, The Making of Meaning, 1981, p. 42

A good interpretation, then, is not definitive or final, but is one that keeps open the possibility and the responsibility of returning. The text and I must be allowed to "play."

- David Jardine

A journal is a place for confusion and certainty, for the half-formed and the completed.

- Ken Macrorie, Telling Writing, 1980, p. 151.

Literature will require a **first** and **second** look. Both represent significant stages of development as a reader and will demonstrate your active involvement with the text and evolving meaning. Your **initial response** is not just a breeze through or jotting of rough notes. It represents everything you can do with the text as an individual. It is not good enough to say, "I do not understand." Your need to keep reading, writing, and asking questions until you have made sense of it for yourself. The **second look** reflects your interaction with the ideas of your peers and teacher after group and class discussion. It is not good enough to say, "I still think the same." Further reflection of the literature will lead you to extend, refine, or alter considerably those ideas expressed in your initial response.

ABOUT JOURNALS

What is a Journal? It's a notebook in which you explore your ideas and feelings about a literary work. This is a record of your personal growth as an interpreter of text -- independent reading, viewing films or television programs, group or class discussion -- and as such should show commitment to the process of making meaning. The journal can be a source book of ideas, thoughts, opinions which can be "mined" for writing portfolio topics.

Characteristics of a Good Journal. While the journal is an individual endeavour, there are certain features which good journals have in common:

Frequent entries. The more often the journal is written in, the greater the opportunity to catch one's thoughts. Use every class to begin--and possibly finish--responses to the literature studied.

Long entries. The more writing one does at a single sitting, the greater the chance of developing a thought or finding a new one. In most cases, you should begin by aiming for at least a page, expanding to 3 - 5 pages later on. (The page numbers increase if you are using paper smaller than 8.5 x 11.)

Self-sponsored entries. The student regularly makes entries without teacher prompts. Design your own curriculum. Select articles, poems, short stories, novels, films, on your own and write responses to them.

Chronology of entries. The student keeps the journal up to date with the literature being studied, so that discoveries are made while reading, not after. All entries are dated.

When to Write. Time will be given in class to write or create graphic representations (e.g. draw) in your journal. There will be occasions on which you will be required to work on your journal outside of class. The journal writing should keep pace with your reading and viewing. It should also be a place for you to experiment and extend ideas that you would like to explore in greater depth. Most importantly, learn to use your journal even when you are not in an academic environment. Good ideas, questions, comments, and arguments don't always wait for convenient times for you to record them.

How to Write. You should write in whatever manner you feel like writing. Your exploration and personality are most important. The point is to **think and learn** visually on paper without worrying about spelling, punctuation, organization, right answers, or the teacher's expectations. Use your personal voice; language that comes naturally to you and expresses what you want to express. Write for yourself, not the teacher.

(adapted from The Journal Book by Toby Fulwiler)

GENERAL GUIDELINES

These guidelines can be applied whether you are reading, viewing or listening:
As you respond, note your reactions. Explore your feelings and thoughts about issues and ideas raised by the author; examine your reactions to themes, characters, events expressed through literary works and films. For shorter selections – poems, short stories, essays, articles -- you may wish to write things as they strike you or when you are completely finished; with longer pieces – plays, novels, biographies -- you will have to break it into manageable chunks.

Ask yourself questions. Generate different types of questions, especially of the "higher order" or "open ended" variety. Write questions that are inferential and evaluative. But don't stop there. Try to work towards answering those questions.

Make connections. Relate your reading, viewing, and listening to your own experiences, others' experiences, other subjects, other literary works, films, art, or music. How are themes, characters, situations alike?

Write down any lines, phrases, expressions that strike you. Why are they effective or memorable? How do they contribute to your understanding of the text? Explore the meaning they hold for you. Use carefully selected quotes to support your ideas.

Consider the author's point of view and frame of reference. Can you identify what that point of view or reference is? How do they affect the work? What impact, if any, does the writer's, or director's, attitude (tone) have on you as a reader or viewer? Consider the appropriateness of this tone as well as the credibility of the author.

Consider author's style. Comment on the author's approach to writing, noting the language used, such as word choices (connotation) and figures of speech. Comment on the sentence structures used and the organization of the text. Do we believe, or are we familiar with, the world the author is creating? Does it provide you with keys to understanding your own world? Find interesting and/or unfamiliar vocabulary that appeals to you. Look for patterns in your reading.

Create graphic representations. Be artistic or concrete. Draw your way to meaning. Use symbolic representations. Use diagrams, charts, graphs, or maps to help you understand the text. Try a web or a mind-map to illustrate relationships among characters or ideas.

When viewing film, consider the musical score, the lighting, photography, costuming. If there are other ways that you might think of to help you make meaning of text, include them. **Do not limit yourself to the suggestions listed above.** Think your way through what you have read. Each person responds to the text in different ways. What you make of the text is unique to you -- no one else can do the reading for you.

A SECOND LOOK

After a period of reflection, or after you have shared your responses with your group or the class, consider:

what you noticed that others also noticed.

what you missed. If this has been supplied by teacher, peers or other sources, please acknowledge those sources. Other interesting interpretations that seem plausible, but that you hadn't considered before.

any points of departure (disagreement regarding interpretation). How did your group resolve or come to agreement on these points? Or did they?

connections that other have made to their personal experiences, other literature, films, art, music, that you may not have considered before.

whether or not your questions were answered to your satisfaction; or did they bring about new questions/problems?

ideas that you might like to explore further, perhaps for your portfolio.

how your own thinking has been influenced by various texts, and the connections you are making in your own thinking within the journal. Can you agree with the ideas or themes presented in the text?

come to some conclusions about the texts you have encountered.

Response Journal Assessment Guidelines

A

The response journal demonstrates a high degree of **commitment**. **Ideas are thoughtfully developed**. The length and completeness of entries illustrates this commitment. For example, each entry is between 2 - 5 pages in length.

The reader demonstrates **superior analytical skills** and shows an understanding of how **specific details** contribute to overall understanding of the text. **Terminology** is discussed in meaningful contexts, and reference to the text is made frequently. The reader examines the language found in the text to demonstrate how authors achieve their purpose/effect. **Quotes** are frequently used as examples of terminology and language. The reader formulates **higher level questions** and attempts to answer them.

Connections are often made to themes found in other literature, film, music, art, or life experiences.

Comparisons may be drawn.

The reader is **actively involved** and works diligently to come to terms with the material. **Discusses ideas intelligently and passionately**. The reader demonstrates a sophistication of language use (e.g. diction and style) and shows evidence of understanding complex ideas. The reader is able to deal with subtleties and ambiguities of text.

Graphic representations (e.g. drawings) show thought, effort, and sophistication.

All assigned readings are complete.

Self-selected reading is varied and responses are in-depth. Length is, again, an indicator of active involvement in reading. Entries relating to self-selected reading demonstrates exceptional **analytical skills**, with **frequent references to the text**.

The **2nd look is excellent, shown by its depth, length, attention to the details of conversations, and length.**

It is thoughtful, informed, perceptive and demonstrates a **growing understanding and appreciation** of other's contributions to meaning-making of literature, film, current events, and issues. The 2nd look clearly demonstrates active involvement in group and class discussion.

B

The response journal shows **evidence of commitment and understanding that is well above average**. The length of the entries and detailed reference to the text illustrates a **competent** level of analytical skills. Ideas are discussed, but perhaps could have further development, particularly by using details, references, or illustrations to the text.

The reader's **involvement** in the literature is **often evident**. The reader is more aware of specific details and how they contribute to an overall understanding of the text, and there is often reference to textual detail.

Quotes are often used. **Terminology** is sometimes apparent and is discussed in meaningful contexts. Support is general and selected well. **Questions** about the text are sometimes formed, and attempts are made to answer these questions.

Language skills of the reader is straightforward and responses are complete.

Graphic representations (e.g. drawings) show some thought and effort.

All assigned readings are complete.

Self-selected reading is somewhat varied and responses illustrate proficient understanding of the texts. However, even responses to self-selected reading demonstrates **above average ability to analyze** literary texts.

The **2nd look demonstrates increasing understanding and appreciation** of other's thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Comments are often made about group/class discussion. Length is also increasing.

C

The response journal shows **satisfactory understanding of the literature, but interpretation** may be limited or incomplete. Length demonstrates understanding of **surface level comprehension** but ideas need to be developed. The reader's involvement is primarily limited to **literal meaning and plot summaries**. Length (usually 1.5 pages or less) may illustrate undeveloped ideas or insufficient effort to grasp the meaning of the text.

Terminology is infrequently (or incorrectly) used. **Quotes** are used on occasion, but reasons for selecting quotations from the text may be incomplete or missing. Entries may deal with ideas **simplistically, with little reference to the details in the text**. Unsupported generalities. Entries appear to have been done hastily, just to get the assignment done. **Questions** are infrequently formed, and little attempt is made to answer these questions.

The reader's **involvement is limited to the personal**. The reader may be **preoccupied with likes and dislikes** rather than attempting to understand the meaning.

Language skills (e.g. vocabulary and style) may be underdeveloped.

Understanding may not be communicated clearly due to **inability to comprehend the material, carelessness, poor communications skills, or English as a Second Language**.

Graphic representations (e.g. drawings) may be hastily done, with little thought and effort. They may be childish.

Most assigned readings are complete. Perhaps one or two entries are missing.

Self-selected readings are **few and variety of reading materials** is restricted to one type of literature. Or, literature may have been chosen that is simplistic in nature, such that **few ideas can be drawn from it**.

The **2nd look** is often short and shows little evidence of thoughtful discussion in either group or class. Little evidence of **increased understanding and appreciation of other's ideas**. The reader doesn't use group or class discussion to extend understanding or is unable to come to his/her own conclusions.

D

It is evident from the weak responses that the reader may have a **great deal of difficulty understanding the material** or has **difficulty demonstrating that understanding** due to poor communication skills or English as a Second Language. Or the reader may not be **interested** in working toward an understanding of the material.

The reader's journal entries are **incomplete or demonstrates a shallow discussion of ideas that merely skim the surface**. The length (usually one page or less per entry) shows that there has been little involvement with the texts.

Journal is handed in late.

Very few responses to self-selected reading have been made.

There are few or no **2nd looks**, which are limited to generalized comments. There is little evidence that the group made an effort to discuss the literature.

The reader has not made an **honest effort to fulfill the requirements** of the journal.

F

The reader has **made virtually no effort to fulfill the requirements** of the response journal. Entries are few, very short, and many assigned responses are missing. Entries are messy, and the journal is disorganized. There are no **2nd looks or they are too short for consideration**.

The journal has been handed in too late for evaluation. (Past one week.)

Form II

January, 1996

Informed Consent

I understand that this research project is studying secondary students' strategies for comprehending literary text and that this project is being conducted by Kathryn Lemmon as a part of her dissertation for her Ph. D. in English/Language Arts at the University of Victoria. I am aware that Mrs. Lemmon is the sole experimenter in this project.

I understand that I will be asked to write about literature in a dialogue journal, and that the journal entries will be examined to determine the various means I employ to understand literature. I understand that, in addition, I will be interviewed in order to articulate what strategies I have employed, and to assess changes that develop in my ability to interpret literary text over the semester. I understand that this will enable teachers to know more about the ways in which students learn to interpret literary text so that improvements can be made to instruction in literature.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation.

I understand that any data collected in the study will remain confidential; dialogue journals and interviews will be kept in a locked file cabinet or in a classroom that is locked. Furthermore, I understand that I will be informed of the excerpts to be used in the study, and that a pseudonym will be attached to the excerpt, unless I wish to be recognized as the author. I understand that my anonymity will be protected.

I understand that parts of my dialogue journal will be photocopied for the purpose of examining the strategies I use to interpret literature. I understand that my interviews will be audiotaped or videotaped, as I discuss the strategies I use to interpret literature. I also understand that if I do not wish a particular entry from my journal used, or if I do not wish to have my interview taped, I can refuse to do so. I understand that, once the study has concluded, all video and audio tapes will be erased.

I understand that whether I participate or choose not to participate will have no bearing on my grade in this class.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Experimenter: _____

Form III

School Wide**Demography****Native Languages**

English	869	74.15%	Austrian	1	0.09%
Chinese	82	7.00%	Blackfoot	1	0.09%
Punjabi	70	5.97%	Greek	1	0.09%
Spanish	30	2.56%	Hungarian	1	0.09%
Vietnamese	29	2.47%	Ilocano	1	0.09%
Gujarati	15	1.28%	Kmer	1	0.09%
Hindi	12	1.02%	Lebanese	1	0.09%
Urdu	11	0.94%	Malayam	1	0.09%
Kutchi	7	0.60%	Mohawk	1	0.09%
Arabic	5	0.43%	Romanian	1	0.09%
Farsi	5	0.43%	Russian	1	0.09%
French	5	0.43%	Serbian	1	0.09%
German	3	0.26%	Somalian	1	0.09%
Russian	3	0.26%	Tamil	1	0.09%
Burmese	2	0.17%	Ukrainian	1	0.09%
Czech	2	0.17%			
Filippino	2	0.17%			
Japanese	2	0.17%			
Korean	2	0.17%			
Persian	2	0.17%			

Number of Languages**35****Number of Responses****1172****Percent of School Pop.****78.87%**

School Wide**Demography**

288

Countries of Origin

Canada	915	79.10%	Malaysia	2	0.17%
India	41	3.50%	Myanmar (Burma)	2	0.17%
Vietnam	33	2.82%	Nigeria	2	0.17%
China	21	1.79%	Russia	2	0.17%
Hong Kong	21	1.79%	Spain	2	0.17%
United Kingdom	15	1.30%	Syria	2	0.17%
El Salvador	13	1.11%	Tanzania	2	0.17%
Pakistan	13	1.11%	Turkey	2	0.17%
Australia	7	0.60%	Uganda	2	0.17%
Germany	7	0.60%	Unspec. African Countries	2	0.17%
Afghanistan	6	0.51%	Belize	1	0.09%
Jamaica	6	0.51%	Denmark	1	0.09%
Japan	5	0.43%	Fiji	1	0.09%
Chile	4	0.34%	Hungary	1	0.09%
United States	4	0.34%	Iran	1	0.09%
Argentina	3	0.26%	Kenya	1	0.09%
Kampuchea (Cambodia)	3	0.26%	Kuwait	1	0.09%
Nicaragua	3	0.26%	Laos	1	0.09%
Philippines	3	0.26%	Romania	1	0.09%
Taiwan	3	0.26%	Somalia	1	0.09%
Czechoslovakia	2	0.17%	Sri Lanka	1	0.09%
Guatemala	2	0.17%	St. Lucia	1	0.09%
Guyana	2	0.17%	Sudan	1	0.09%
Honduras	2	0.17%	Trinidad	1	0.09%
Korea	2	0.17%	Zimbabwe	1	0.09%
Lebanon	2	0.17%			

Number of Countries	52
Number of Responses	1172
Percent of School Pop.	78.87%

APPENDIX B

Samples of Student WorkInvictus

I first thought the poem "Invictus" was a good and interesting poem. I think that in this poem the author is explaining war because, for example, he explains the darkness and darkness and the guns. The last two lines, I think, are the strongest yet, the weakest lines in the poem the first of the two is "I am the master of my fate", "I am the captain of my soul" is the second of the two lines. I think in these lines the author is saying that no matter what others did to him, he is the only one in control of his body and soul, but if someone has a gun pointed at your head who really is the one in control of your soul? No one knows, good poem, realistic, I quite enjoyed

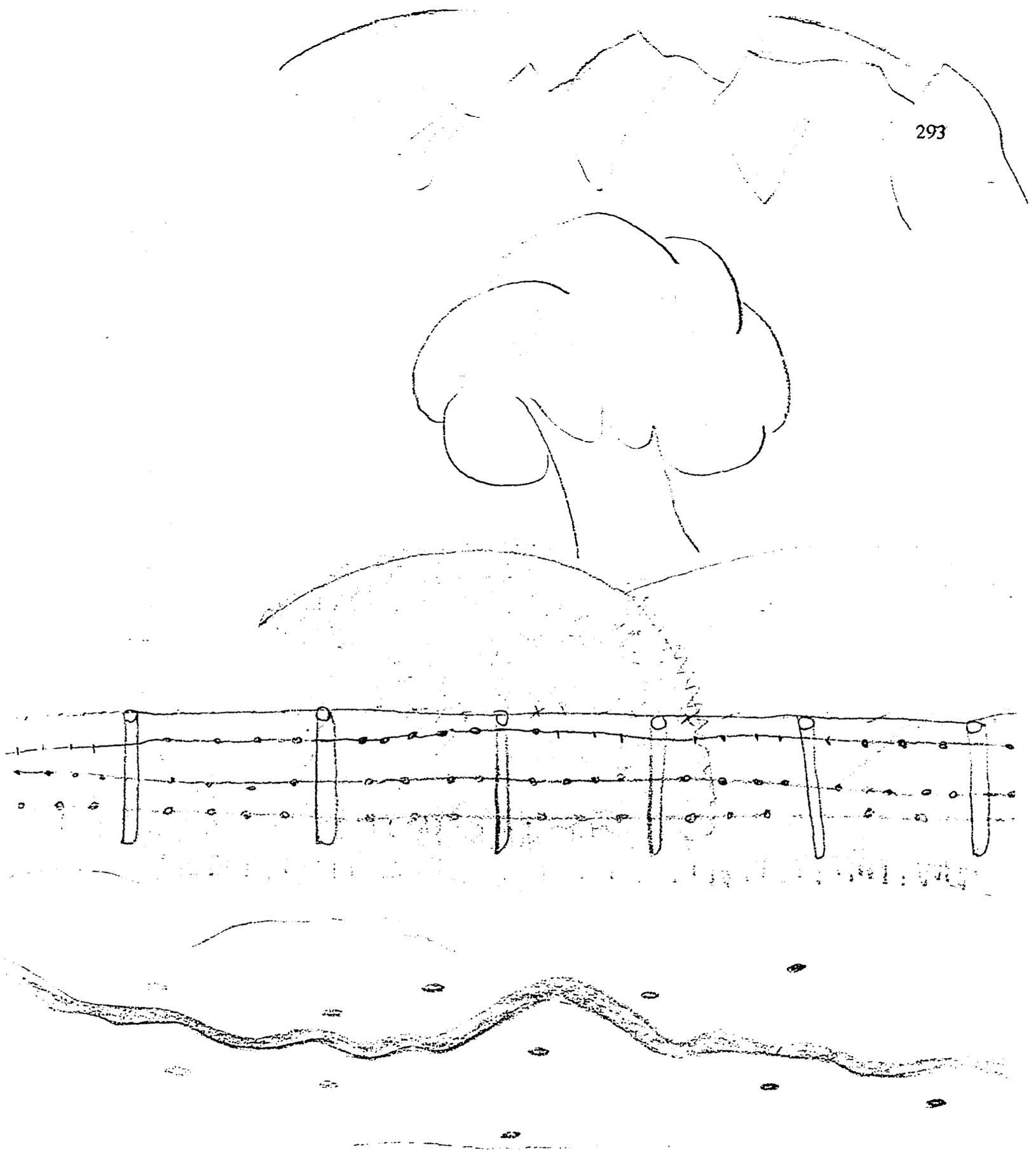
PoisonRonald Dahl

This story is stupid big time. I don't understand a thing. What ever happened to the snake if there was one. I think that if there was a snake on him it left and all he felt was the knot and button and anything else of his pajamas. The snake could have bitten ^{serum} ~~serum~~ him after he had that ~~serum~~ injected into him and then left. Or he could (the snake) have fallen off somewhere because of the sleeping gas. But I don't have a ~~clue~~ clue. I'm only guessing.

September 23

Four Generations

I really liked this Essay. I don't think that I will ever forget this Essay. I really like the line: "Everyone of those mothers loves and reads her daughter more than her daughter will love or read her some day, and we are each of us, the only person on earth who is quite so consumingly interested in our child." That is my favorite line because it is true. Sure, daughters need their mothers but mothers need their daughters even more. And when you lose your mother you cease to be a daughter because being a daughter means getting love no one else can get. If I lose my mother I would suddenly start reading her and wanting to hug her. Right? Nobody can replace your mother. I think I got the meaning of this Essay. This is true. But, if a daughter doesn't need a mother as much as a mother needs a daughter. What about sons? And what about the fathers? I think that this Essay makes you think and I really like it.



THE BULL MOOSE