

AN EXAMINATION OF THE READING EXPECTATIONS
INHERENT IN THREE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE READING EXPECTATIONS INHERENT IN
THREE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMS**

by

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ABSTRACT

Three junior high school language arts programs were examined to determine the explicit and implicit reading performance expectations held for junior high school students. Eight questions based on the findings of current reading research were formulated to guide the examination.

The results revealed a lack of any clear or implied statement of performance expectations for any of the thematic units selected for study from either of the three programs. Moreover, performance expectations for the assessment materials and the learning activities were general and open to interpretation. There was no progression of difficulty evident or specified for selections within the units, and readability ratings provided for the selections in two of the programs did not distinguish appropriateness for use in grades seven, eight, or nine. The third program specified selections and thematic units for each of grades seven, eight, and nine. However, within each grade level no progression of difficulty was specified for the selections within units or across units in the program. Although it was suggested that reading strategies such as predicting or scanning be used with particular selections, no explicit instruction guidance was provided on text structure knowledge, or reading strategies, two areas identified in the research as distinguishing proficient readers from less proficient readers. Nor was there a clear statement of the amount of reading students were expected to do in the units. In effect, teachers were expected to adapt the units to meet the needs of individual students. Hence, teachers were not given any criteria on which to judge students' success.

Based on the research reviewed, the research questions developed, and the analysis of the programs, two main conclusions were drawn: clear reading performance expectations are wanting, and comprehensive instruction in reading is not provided in three current junior high school language arts programs.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the reading expectations inherent in three junior high school language arts programs. To be able to read well is an expectation evident in schools, the workplace and in recreation. We live in a print saturated world where situations are encountered daily in which a multitude of print materials such as warning labels, instructions for many different procedures, schedules, advertising, and operations manuals or sophisticated technical reports must be read. Through our personal reading of newspapers, magazines, and books, we keep informed about current issues in the world around us. Sometimes we use reading to escape for a little while from the pressures of that world, as well as to confirm that there are other people with our interests, worries, and excitements. Because of the central place of reading in modern life, we have a responsibility to ensure that our young people learn to read well.

It would seem to be a reasonable expectation that by junior high school most students would be proficient readers. The available evidence, however, indicates that students are not proficient. Surveys and test results indicate that North American students are not good readers. In the U.S. slightly less than one third of the students in the eighth grade can be termed 'proficient'. Between 2 and 4 percent of American students can be considered 'advanced' readers (National Center for Statistics, 1992). In Canada results

from the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), International Educational Assessment (IEA), the Statistics Canada (StatsCan) and Southam surveys reveal that Canadian students, too, are not reading as well as they should (Phillips, 1995). The Standards Assessment Indicators Program (SAIP) results of 1994 showed that just 45 percent of Canadian thirteen-year-olds could read at the third level of performance on a five-level scale of increasing magnitude. Only 10 percent of thirteen-year-olds could read advanced materials (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1994). The SAIP results for Newfoundland students, who have consistently ranked below the national average on the CTBS in reading comprehension, vocabulary, language, and study skills, were "... at all levels essentially the same as the results for all Canadian students..." (p. 74). Lower than expected levels of reading proficiency among students may be accounted for by the complexity of the reading process as well as the many factors that affect that process.

The materials used, the methods of instruction adopted, and the performance expectations held are some of the factors that can affect success in reading. It is widely known that textbooks predominate in junior and senior high school reading practices (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Bloome, 1987; Chall & Conard, 1991; Menke & Davey, 1994). The influence of textbooks on what is taught and the inherent expectations are less well known. Hence, this study examined three commercially prepared language arts programs intended for use in the junior high school. The purpose of the study was to determine the explicit and implicit reading expectations of those programs at the junior high school level. Specifically, the study examined one thematic unit from each of the

following programs: *The Issues Collection* (1994); *In Context* (1990); and *MultiSource* (1993).

Background of the Study

The demands of literacy have increased as modern civilization has become more complex (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Heath, 1991). What was considered an acceptable level of reading proficiency in a pre-industrial (peasant) society or even in an industrial society is no longer sufficient in the 'information age' of computer technology. In the workplace, good basic skills in reading, writing, and calculating are prerequisites for job training, and potential employers express the need for "... a high degree of competence in writing, reading, communicating..." for entry level positions (Meanwell & Barrington, 1991). In daily life people have a responsibility to be well informed about current issues (Burrill, 1987), and fulfilling this responsibility requires that they be proficient readers. The foundation for increased levels of reading proficiency is strengthened in schools where reading proficiency is necessary for academic success.

At the junior high school level academic success is also affected by the organization and focus of the program. The organization and focus of junior high schools is different from that of the child-centered elementary schools (Alvermann & Moore, 1991). In elementary schools, students are taught basic literacy and numeracy skills, usually by a teacher whose training has been in instructional methods. In contrast, at the junior high school level the focus of the teaching is on the course content, and the area of teachers' expertise is usually the subject matter being taught. It is assumed that by the time

students enter junior high school their reading proficiency is such that they are able to meet the demands of their content courses (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Department of Education, Division of Special Education Services, 1991; Irvin & Connors, 1989; Maleki & Heerman, 1994; Roe, Stoot, & Burns, 1991), and that there is little need for organized reading instruction. The expectation of teachers that students at this level are able to read required materials "... with facility, inferring meaning, and reading critically..." creates an educational dilemma (Richardson & Morgan, 1990) because the students are, in fact, unable to do this. Poor reading has an impact on progress across the curriculum. Students experience difficulty in all subject areas including such core subjects as mathematics, science, social studies, and literature.

Content area subjects, including literature, are usually taught through the use of authorized commercially produced textbooks. In fact, textbooks are the main instructional tool in junior high school classrooms (Alvermann & Moore, 1991; Bloome, 1987; Chall & Conrad, 1991; Menke & Davey, 1994), and to some degree influence what is taught. Furthermore, the way teachers use textbooks in their junior high school classes varies according to teacher preference, the course being taught, and what the teacher perceives as the learning needs of the students.

Regardless of the instructional materials used, and the preferences of teachers and students, the expectations for academic performance at the junior high school level should remain constant. In the absence of an explicit set of expectations teachers may find themselves vague about their goals of instruction and about the increasing level of

sophistication that should be an evolving part of their instruction. Students may be vague and uncertain about what is expected from them. Teachers and students look to the course materials for structure and guidance. Whether the materials are comprehensive and representative of the expectations appropriate for junior high school is a matter of concern for many teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the explicit and implicit reading expectations of three recently published commercially produced language arts programs intended for use at the junior high school level. Specifically, the study examined comparable thematic units from *The Issues Collection*, published in 1994 by McGraw-Hill Ryerson; *In Context*, published in 1990 by Nelson Canada; and *MultiSource*, published in 1993 by Prentice Hall. Answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What theoretical stance towards reading is evident (explicitly or implicitly) in the programs?
2. Is there a progression of difficulty evident within the units? Within the programs?
3. What readability factors were considered in estimating the readability of selections in the programs?
4. Do the programs expose students to the full spectrum of discourse forms?
5. Are the performance expectations of the programs clearly indicated and appropriate for the junior high school level?

6. Do the programs present explicit instruction in strategies to develop and motivate reading proficiency?
7. Do the programs present and develop knowledge of text structure features?
8. How much actual reading is done by the students?

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature pertaining to the reading expectations held for junior high school students. Our currently held view of reading is that reading is a complex process in which both text factors and reader factors play an integral part. Integrating the text and reader requires reasoning through the use of on-going cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, prediction, inferring, generalizing, and monitoring. Strategic reading is the prime characteristic of expert readers (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991), so one question that must be asked is, "Are junior high school students expected to make use of effective strategies in their reading?"

In order to identify the level of reading proficiency that might reasonably be expected from junior high school readers, this review focussed on the characteristics of texts, the characteristics of readers, and how these characteristics affect the interaction of reader and text in the reading process. The chapter is organized in two main sections called text characteristics and reader characteristics. Characteristics of text, such as structure, coherency, and readability influence how easily readers understand what they read. Knowledge of text structure, for example, cues readers to the important information in the text as well as to the relationships between ideas contained in the text (Meyer, 1987). Reader characteristics, such as strategy use and motivation, also influence the level

of reading proficiency achieved. Individuals who are not strongly motivated towards learning to read are unlikely to persist long enough to achieve success, and non-strategic readers may become fluent word-callers who do not comprehend what they read. Clearly text and reader factors are important variables in reading. In each section I show how findings from the literature on text characteristics and reader characteristics are related to the reading process, and how these findings affect expectations held for junior high school readers. In addition, because of the role of questioning in reading instruction, a brief review of literature directly relevant to this study is included. Because reader response is the pedagogy used in the programs analyzed, a short section of research findings on reader response theory is also included.

Text Characteristics

Structure of Narrative Text

Research into the structure of narrative text concerned itself with story schema (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977). A story schema is the generalized knowledge that readers have about the structure of stories. From this generalized knowledge readers hold certain expectations of the way stories unfold. For example, readers expect that a story will have a setting, characters, a complication, and a resolution. Even young children have an intuitive knowledge of story structure that includes knowledge of character, plot, and setting, as well as the conventions that storytellers use (Tompkins, 1990). The goal of the early research on the structure of

narrative text was to determine how story schema contributed to the reading of narrative texts.

The referential theory of Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) lent some support to the idea that the relationships among the events in narratives were the central component of the text organization. The relationships in Kintsch and van Dijk's theory were based on the content, where events were considered to be connected if they had a noun, verb, or content word in common. Important events in the hierarchy were those that had many links.

Research showed that knowledge of story structure (i.e., having a story schema) helped readers recall information about the organization of the higher levels of the text, which facilitated the prediction of and memory for details or events from the lower sentence or proposition level of the text (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977). Events and episodes that were part of the higher level organization of narrative texts were most often recalled by readers as important to the narrative, and included in readers' summaries (Thorndyke, 1977). Readers were more likely to recall facts from the setting, the initiating event, or the outcome of the narrative rather than from the reaction or internal response categories because readers' interpretations of the latter categories are dependent upon their understanding of the complete story (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Trabasso, Secco, & Van den Broek, 1984; Van den Broek, 1989).

Omansen (1982), in keeping with Rumelhart's (1977) original depiction of narratives by syntactic (story grammar categories) and semantic (causal links)

components, suggested that both story categories (that is, the setting, initiating events, etc.) and the relationship of events to the central core of the story are complementary ways of describing narrative text structure, and that both may play a part in reading comprehension.

Building upon this dual conception, Trabasso, Secco, and Van den Broek (1984) hypothesized that causal links in the narrative, and not the story schema, were responsible for the finding that readers frequently recalled information from the higher level structural organization of the text. Events with many causal links, that is, repetitive story information central to the narrative, were recalled by readers more often than events with fewer causal links. In subsequent research, Trabasso (1986) found that while the referent links described by Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978) in narrative text helped initially to establish causal links, when the causal links were in place the referents did not appear to play any further role in the comprehension measures under study. The teaching of comprehension, then, requires more than the teaching of the content of the text. It requires also the teaching of text structure which would include an emphasis on the main text ideas, the sequence of ideas, and the interrelated causes and effects.

Evidence from research on the structure of narrative text suggests that the structure of the text does influence how readers comprehend and recall narratives. Possible explanations of how this occurs include the effects of the story schema that readers bring to the reading task (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Rumelhart, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977), the causal links between lower level elements in the text (Trabasso,

1986; Trabasso, Secco, & Van den Broek, 1984), and the referential links between lower elements in the text (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978). If, initially in the reading process, referential links in the text help readers to recognize and infer causal links in the story, thereby improving their comprehension of the whole text, then narrative texts used in schools should be cohesive through the presence of explicit referents. If the number of causal links to a central causal chain cues readers to recognize the important ideas in narrative texts, then the causal links in the materials that students read should be explicit, and reading instruction should include questions that lead students to infer the implicit causal links necessary for the higher level understanding of the complete text. If students' story schemas, which have developed through hearing and reading stories, have an impact on the students' comprehension of narrative text, then teachers can build on the knowledge that students possess, and through instruction in story grammar help them to develop a more sophisticated story schema that would enable them to comprehend more complex narrative texts.

Structure of Expository Text

Unlike narrative text which has a structure that is recognizable to readers, expository text has no one pattern of organization that is readily recognizable (Mulcahey & Samuels, 1987). In fact, expository text is rarely pure exposition. Elements of description, argumentation, and narrative are often interspersed at the paragraph level of organization in expository texts, and a number of different organizational patterns may be evident within the overall rhetorical structure of the whole text. The rhetorical

organization of the text is determined by its purpose (Schnotz, 1984), and indicates to readers the “logical connections of ideas and subordination of some ideas to others” (Meyer, 1987). When readers approach a text they recognize its rhetorical structure either by inferring from ideas presented early in the text or from the writer’s explicit signalling of the structure. For example, the structure of a text that begins with an explicit signal such as “The problem of pollution...” will be recognized by readers as a problem/solution pattern of organization. As they continue to read, readers will logically expect to find specific details that further describe the problem of pollution (and are subordinate to the main idea which is that a problem exists), as well as a proposed solution to the problem of pollution. Thus, through the readers’ knowledge of text structure the relationships between ideas are made clear, and comprehension is enhanced

The two widely used hierarchical theories of text organization (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978; Meyer, 1975) account for three levels of organization in expository texts – the microstructure or sentence (idea unit) level, the macrostructure or paragraph level, and the overall organization or rhetorical structure of the whole text. Texts are connected at the sentence level primarily by verbs (Meyer & Rice, 1984), and by repetition of content or referents (Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978). The connection is made at the paragraph level and the whole text level by logical relations of ideas contained in the text (Meyer & Rice, 1984). Although the purpose of a text determines its rhetorical structure, the nature of the content also has an influence on its organization. History, for example, is generally

organized around significant events in a cause and effect pattern (Horowitz, 1985b), while other school subjects have different organizational patterns.

Meyer (1975) has identified five basic patterns of expository text structure that are widely accepted, namely: collection (lists), cause and effect, description, compare and contrast, and problem and solution. Each basic structure has a distinct pattern which, when identified by readers, has been shown to facilitate greater understanding and recall of text content. Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth (1980) found that when grade nine students recognized a text's rhetorical structure and used it to identify the relationships between propositions in the text (that is, to chunk the ideas and details according to their relationship to the main idea of the text), they recalled more information from that text than did grade nines who did not recognize or use knowledge of text structure.

Taylor and Beach (1984) taught grade seven students to prepare a hierarchical summary of social studies text in which they first identified main idea statements, grouped them under topic headings, and finally generated the key idea of the whole text. This instruction in using text structure was found to increase recall of unfamiliar social studies content. In an earlier study that compared reading ability and age to recall of expository text and sensitivity to text structure, Taylor (1980) found that awareness of text structure facilitated recall of the text. Adults in the study recalled more than good grade six readers who, in turn, recalled more of the text than did poor grade six readers and grade four readers. Analysis of the recalls revealed that sensitivity to text structure correlated with recall of the text. She noted that in the delayed recalls there was no difference between the

recalls of good and poor sixth grade readers who had used the author's text structure to organize their recalls. This last result provides additional support for the claim that awareness of text structure facilitates recall.

Taylor's (1980) study provides some evidence that knowledge of text structure and the ability to apply that knowledge to reading develops with age and schooling. Further support comes from Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth (1980) who observed that mastery of the structure strategy had been achieved only by 22% of the grade nine students in their study, that is, those who had used the strategy on all four passages. They surmised that the grade nine students who had used the structure strategy on only one or two passages had probably only mastered the rhetorical structures found in those passages. Varying degrees of text structure awareness have also been found at the grade six level (Richgels, McGee, Lomax, & Sheard, 1987), where students experienced particular difficulty with the cause and effect structure.

Research on the effective teaching of expository text structures, such as the use of graphic organizers (Richgels, McGee, Lomax, & Sheard, 1987) and summarization strategies (Armbruster, Anderson, & Osterlag, 1987), shows that teaching text structure improves reading comprehension. In a summary article on reading comprehension instruction, Pearson and Fielding (1991) report "... incredibly positive support for just about any approach to text structure instruction for expository text" (p. 832). Because of its impact on reading comprehension and learning, it is to be expected that instruction in

text structure would make up a significant part of reading programs intended for use at the junior high school level.

As well as providing instruction in recognizing and using the organizational patterns of expository texts to aid understanding, teachers can improve students' learning from texts by insuring that 'considerate' texts are provided for student's use.

'Considerate' texts (Armbruster, 1984; Armbruster & Anderson, 1984) are clearly organized and skilfully written. They have an identifiable global structure which increases the probability that readers will learn from the text – an important feature in secondary classrooms where textbooks dominate. The main ideas of the text are signalled by the text structure, and significant details are presented in contexts that relate them to the main ideas of the text. Signalling devices, such as titles, subtitles, introductory paragraphs, and topic sentences are used to indicate to readers the structure of the text. Coherence at the local or sentence level of the text is achieved through the use of pronoun reference, substitution, and conjunctions. The use of such cohesive devices makes reading less difficult because explicit links between ideas at the sentence level of the text reduce the amount of processing that the reader must do to make a meaningful interpretation of the text. Excessive details that could distract the reader from the important ideas of the text are omitted, or placed as footnotes to the text, but sufficient information is interwoven in the text to present a complete picture of the topic at a level deemed appropriate and to keep the text interesting. Research comparing comprehension of 'considerate' and

'inconsiderate' texts indicates that students comprehend 'considerate' texts better, and learn more from them (Baumann, 1986).

The influence of 'considerate' texts on the use of context to understand unfamiliar vocabulary in content subject areas was studied at the eighth and eleventh grade levels by Konopak (1988a, 1988b). She investigated the influence that four features of 'considerate' text would have on students' comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary. These features were the proximity of contextual information to the unknown word, the clarity of the connection between the contextual information and the unknown word, the explicitness of the contextual information, and the comprehensiveness of the contextual information. Konopak (1988b) found that eleventh grade students showed better word and topic comprehension after reading 'considerate' text, and that eighth grade students also learned more from the 'considerate' text, but there was some discrepancy between the self-reports of what students knew and their actual demonstrations of knowledge. Students reported that their knowledge of the vocabulary tested was increased after reading both 'considerate' and 'inconsiderate' texts. Konopak surmised that students in the study may not have realized that their knowledge of the vocabulary was incomplete or erroneous.

More able students out-performed weaker students at both grade levels, indicating that weaker students might need instructional support in using this strategy. Gordon, Schumm, Coffland, and Doucette (1992) found that while fifth grade students learned some vocabulary from 'considerate' text, their learning was much less than that found at

the secondary level. This finding seems to support the view presented earlier that the ability to use text structure as a learning strategy develops with age and schooling.

The question of whether awareness of text structure is a result of cognitive development, exposure to varied texts, instruction, or some combination of these and other factors remains unanswered. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) found that children ages ten to twelve have knowledge of discourse structures such as argumentation and directions, which they do not seem to access or use spontaneously in planning written compositions. This finding points to the need to draw out and build upon the knowledge that students have, and to teach them to use knowledge of text structure as an aid to both reading and writing.

Structure of Argumentative Text

The terms, argumentative and persuasive, are not used consistently in the literature. Some writers use the terms synonymously. Crowhurst (1990), for example, states that the terms argumentative and persuasive were used interchangeably in an IEA study done in fourteen countries, and she uses the terms the same way in her work. Others, such as Holt (1991) distinguish between the two terms. Holt says that although both terms imply an attempt to convince, persuasion and argumentation differ in the techniques used to accomplish that goal. Persuasion, which he says was developed by Athenian lawyers in their attempts to have clients acquitted of various crimes, uses emotional appeal in addition to rational logical appeal. Persuasion may, but does not necessarily have to, include argument. In contrast, argumentation, in this view, consists of

"...rational substantiation of an assertion". The Literacy Dictionary (1995) defines argumentation as a type of discourse that develops an argument in a logical or persuasive way. This definition indicates that argumentation is the superordinate category, and persuasion and logic are each subordinate. The definition of argumentation provided in The Literacy Dictionary was adopted for this thesis.

The study of argumentative texts appears to be more closely aligned with the teaching of composition than with reading and as a result, there is very little research available on the reading of argumentative texts. However, the literature that is available on the writing of argumentation indicates that writing argumentation is an area of difficulty for students. According to The Writing Report: Writing Achievement in American Schools in 1986 only 12% of American eighth grade students could be considered adequate in argumentative writing (Moebius, 1991). Studies done in the U.K. and in Ontario found that students of junior high school age write better in the narrative mode than in the argumentative mode (Crowhurst, 1990). From studies of argumentative writing across age and grade levels, Crowhurst reported that although there is some improvement in students' argumentative writing as they progress from elementary to secondary school, most compositions are characterized by poor organization, a lack of knowledge about argumentative structure, and inappropriate and immature language. She cites the cognitive difficulty associated with writing argumentation, difficulties associated with lack of experience, and lack of knowledge as the problems students experience in writing argumentation.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) suggested that one of the reasons for the difficulty students have with argumentative writing is that they do not have a schema for written argumentation, such as they seem to have for the reading and writing of narratives. This lack of a schema for argumentation may, according to Anderson and Hamel (1991), be a result of students having had "...little experience with well reasoned argumentation, which is not surprising in a society that does much of its persuading in thirty-second sound bites" (p. 44). It would seem reasonable to expect that exposure to argumentative texts would expand readers' potential with discourse as well as help to develop a schema for this type of discourse which would aid in the reading of argumentative texts, and in the use of argumentative structure, where appropriate, in their writing. Since knowledge of text structure has been shown to improve reading comprehension and recall in both narrative and expository texts, we can assume, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that knowledge of the structure of argumentative texts may also facilitate comprehension and recall in this mode of discourse. Crowhurst (1990) argues that students will not add the forms and structures of argumentative texts to their repertoire of knowledge unless they are exposed to these texts. Just as readers' knowledge of story structure or story schema is formed and refined from listening to and reading stories, so too reading and discussing argumentative texts will enable readers to form a mental representation or schema of the ways in which arguments are organized. Conversational argument and persuasion, although a naturally occurring event in the lives of young people, is structured differently from written argumentation. This is because the development of the argument in

conversation depends on input from a conversation partner and the context is set, whereas in reading the context must be inferred by the reader and in writing the context must be established by the writer. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) found evidence of children's reliance on conversational prompts in their study of dictated opinion essays by grades four and six students which supports the notion that a schema for the structure of written argumentation must be learned from exposure to good models of written argumentation. Because the development of a schema for argumentative texts can come only from exposure to such texts, Crowhurst (1990) recommends that students of all ages should read argumentation.

The importance of reading argumentation is underscored by Prince (1989), who reports exposure to different modes of discourse may, in fact, influence the cognitive development of students, and is essential if students are to develop to the level of literacy that is expected of college students. Clearly, then, if academic excellence is a goal of education, reading and writing argumentation will be one means of attaining that goal, and failure to include the argumentative mode in reading programs would represent a serious omission and an inadequacy of such programs.

Structure of Descriptive Text

Very little has been written about reading descriptive text as a separate mode of discourse. Although descriptive passages frequently play an important part in narrative, expository, and argumentative texts, pure description is rare. In fact, Larsen (1992) argues against using the four traditional modes of discourse to categorize texts because virtually

all text types contain patterns from the other modes. For example, concrete description is frequently used in narratives to explicate the setting, build atmosphere, and set the mood of the story, or it may be used in an exposition, such as in a chemistry text to inform readers of the properties of a particular metal. Meyer (1975) included description as one of the rhetorical text structures inherent in expository text, consequently some of the research on expository text structures is equally applicable to description.

Horowitz (1985a) identified description, or attribution, as one of five text organizational patterns of exposition found in school texts, and states that readers develop awareness of this structural pattern earlier than they acquire other patterns, such as causation or comparison. This is due to the fact that list-like structures are familiar to readers as part of oral discourse and stories. Meyer (1987) reported that while readers of all ages, whose vocabularies were rated above-average, recalled more from comparison and causation text structures than from description, poor readers recalled as much from description as from causation or comparison patterns of text organization. Meyer suggested that this is because poor readers may not have knowledge of the comparison and causation patterns, and simply viewed the texts as lists of things to be remembered. These findings seem to indicate that most people, even poor readers, have a schema for descriptive text structure. Further support, though tangential, for this point comes from Carrell and Connor (1991), who reported that when the measure of reading comprehension was a multiple-choice test, the ESL students in their study found descriptive texts easier to read than persuasive texts. It appears from the available research

that most readers find descriptive texts less difficult to read than texts organized in more complex patterns such as comparison and causation.

Descriptive texts are a significant part of academic learning. A large scale survey to determine the writing demands of post-secondary education, which involved thirty-four American and Canadian universities, indicated that descriptive writing was considered particularly important in the fields of engineering, computer science, and psychology (Carrell & Connor, 1991). It seems logical to assume that these fields would also require that students read descriptive texts recounting the work of contributors to the particular field of knowledge, detailing procedures to be carried out in the course of the work, or describing the properties of materials to be used. The reading of descriptive texts is important in other fields as well. For example, medical and nursing students are required to read detailed descriptions of the workings of human body systems; geology students read descriptions of the formations of various types of rock and landforms; and law students read descriptions of precedent setting legal cases as part of their training.

The reading of descriptive text is also important at the junior high school level. Descriptive texts occurring at this level in social studies, for example, might describe the hardships experienced by the navvies who worked on the Canadian Pacific Railway, or the way the land along the St. Lawrence River was distributed to the early French settlers. Descriptive texts in junior high school science might inform students how the periodic table is organized, or how living organisms take in food. Reading descriptive texts in literature at the junior high school level is often for the purpose of learning about how

authors use description in the creation of literary works such as poems, novels, and short stories.

It is maintained that for full comprehension and appreciation of literature, students must not only read description in narrative texts, but they must also develop an awareness of why particular descriptive words, phrases, and sentences are found in a text. An illustration from a currently used grade nine anthology follows:

The approaching jungle night was, in itself, a threat. As it deepened, an eerie silence enveloped the thatched village. People were silent. Tethered cattle stood quietly. Roosting chickens did not stir, and wise goats made no noise. Thus it had been for countless centuries, and thus it would continue to be.

(Kjelgaard, 1981, p. 55)

The author, Jim Kjelgaard, has heightened the readers' suspense through his description of the setting as stated in the first four lines of the story. Readers of "The Tiger's Heart" will understand that by describing the eerie quiet of the jungle night first in terms of people, then tethered cattle, roosting chickens, and wise goats, Kjelgaard has elected particular words, phrases, and sentences to explicate the setting, to build the suspense, and to set the mood of the story. In the opening sentence (The approaching jungle night was, in itself, a threat.), the author has indicated that there is a threat associated with the approach of night, making readers at once anxious to read on and find out what this threat can be. But then, he slows the reader down as he describes the eerie silence by specifically referring to the human and animal inhabitants of the village one by one. Even his use of short simple sentences is part of the effect. It is simply not possible to rush through these sentences and at the same time acquire a sense of the author's intent.

The fourth sentence introduces a sense of timelessness and changelessness that further increases the readers' desire to find out the nature of the impending threat. By now, readers are developing an awareness that they are unable to change whatever it is that will happen during this jungle night.

Readers who recognize the effect of this writer's skilful use of description will surely have a greater appreciation for the narrative than readers who do not recognize how the author's use of description has contributed to the overall effect of the narrative. Such understanding and appreciation is a part of comprehending good literature, and the comprehension and enjoyment of literature is a goal of reading at the junior high school level. A comprehensive, well developed reading program will expose students to description that is skilfully interwoven into narratives and into the other modes of discourse.

Categories of Discourse and Language Learning

In addition to the four traditional modes of discourse already discussed in this chapter, other systems of categorizing texts have had an influence on the reading that goes on in junior high school. James Moffett (1968) conceptualized the structure of discourse as the result of a set of relationships that exist between a speaker and listener around a subject or, stated another way, relationships among first (I), second (you), and third (it) persons. The nature of the relationship between speaker and listener (the 'I-you' relationship) is rhetorical and is concerned with what the speaker says about the subject and how the speaker says it. The nature of the relationship between the speaker and the

subject (the 'I-it' relationship) is referential, and concerned with the speaker's mental representation or understanding of the subject, that is, how the speaker abstracts from the subject. The relationship between the listener and the subject is the listener's comprehension or interpretation of the subject that results from the speaker's message. Based on an interpretation of the message the listener forms a mental representation of the subject. In other words, the speaker says something about the subject (abstracts from the subject), while taking care to speak in terms that will be understood by the listener (abstracts for the listener), thus forming a connection between the listener and the subject.

According to Moffett (1968), the different modes of discourse result from an increase in distance in the speaker and listener (I-you) relationship, and an increase in time in the speaker and subject (I-it) relationship. The increases in both dimensions follow a progression. In the speaker and listener relationship the discourse activities of thinking, speaking, corresponding (informal writing to a person who is known to the speaker), and publication (writing for an audience unknown to the speaker) show a progression from the self outwards. Thinking occurs totally within the individual, while speaking occurs between two individuals who usually are in close enough physical proximity to each other to hold a conversation. When the speaker and listener are physically too far apart to hold a conversation the discourse takes the form of informal writing or some other form of correspondence. However, the written correspondence, while more difficult than conversation, will probably not be as difficult for the speaker to produce as discourse for publication would be, because the correspondence is between two individuals who are

known to each other. In correspondence, the speaker through knowledge of the listener can anticipate how the listener will interpret the message, and this knowledge helps with the organization of the discourse. The final form of discourse in the progression is publication, or writing for an audience unknown to the speaker. In the progression from thinking to publication the language of discourse increases in complexity and in the need for organization. This is in contrast to the earlier forms of discourse, such as conversation, where the discourse is shaped by input from speaker and listener in turn as the subject is elucidated. However, when the physical distance between speaker and listener increases to the level of publication, the message must be complete in itself and organized in a manner that will enable the listener to comprehend the message from the text alone. Thus structure and organization become a necessary part of written discourse.

The increasing distance in time between the speaker and subject (I-it) relationship parallels increasing levels of abstraction, and follows a progression of increasing difficulty. Recording present events is considered the lowest level of abstraction, and this is followed in the progression by reporting past events. Generalizing from present and past events is yet a higher level of abstraction, and theorizing from the generalizations is the highest level. For example, if a speaker tells a listener that the trees are bare, the speaker is stating an attribute of the trees that the speaker is perceiving in the present. If the speaker talks of the beautiful foliage that covered the trees last summer, then the speaker is selecting and recalling from memory an attribute of the trees that was perceived at some time in the past. The latter is considered a higher level of abstraction. If the speaker generalizes from

the first two statements that trees lose their leaves in the fall, this is again a higher level of abstraction, and if the speaker developed a theory that could predict the exact day on which the trees would be naked of their leaves, then the speaker is theorizing or operating at the highest level of abstraction.

Moffett (1968) equates the levels of abstraction in this progression to modes of discourse. Thus recording of present events becomes drama, reporting past events becomes narrative, generalizing becomes expository, and theorizing becomes logical argumentation. By drama Moffett means "...any raw phenomena as they are first being converted to information by some observer" (p. 61). The observations and perceptions of individuals – young children especially – as they are being recorded in language form can be considered drama.

Moffett (1968) recommends that the sequence of language development should be the basis of curriculum rather than theories of discourse based on classification of written texts. In general, the reading and writing curriculum should follow the pattern of children's language learning. Furthermore, Moffett asserts that the reading curriculum should follow a pattern similar to that of learning to write, but the reading program should run a little ahead of the writing program since the ability to receive and understand a given discourse precedes the ability to produce it. This assertion is in agreement with the point expressed previously in this thesis that providing good models of the different modes of discourse should improve reading, writing, and thinking ability in students.

Kinneavy (1971) identifies four aims of discourse which, like Moffett's model, appear to have their basis in a communication triangle. That is, the forms of discourse result from interactions of the speaker (encoder), the listener (decoder), and the reality or the thing referred to (p. 58). However, Moffett's work differs from Kinneavy's in that Moffett's work focused on the structure of discourse whereas the focus of Kinneavy's work was the aims of discourse. Kinneavy states that three elements namely, the encoder, the reality, and the decoder are present in all modes of discourse. The heightened focus on either of these elements distinguishes one mode of discourse from another. For example, reality may be presented by the symbols of a language, hence one type of discourse is referential discourse, which focuses on the reality or the 'thing being referred to'. Referential discourse has three aims, which are scientific, informative, and exploratory.

The aim of scientific discourse is to demonstrate the truth of an assertion about the reality being talked about through inductive or deductive logic. The aim of informative discourse is, of course, to inform. Newspaper articles, textbooks, and reports are examples of informative discourse. Exploratory discourse includes all discourse aimed at exploring a reality. Some examples of exploratory discourse are tentative definitions, seminars where the aim is to explore a topic and learn more about it, and proposed solutions to problems (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 61). These three aims are more specific than the superordinate referential aim. Scientific, informative, and exploratory discourse would be categorized as expository writing in the four traditional modes of discourse. The three other aims

proposed by Kinneavy are persuasive (focuses upon the listener because its aim is to convince or persuade); expressive (focuses on the speaker because its aim is to let the speaker express feelings and ideas in an informal way, and includes personal speech of individuals, as well as the expression of the social personalities of groups); and literary (focuses on the aesthetics of the form). Kinneavy's literary category is similar to Britton's poetic mode, where the structure and the aesthetics of the discourse are the significant features. Kinneavy's intent was to develop a sound theory of discourse, taking into account the nature, underlying logic, organizational structure and stylistic characteristics of each type of discourse (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 5). However, as pointed out by Applebee (1980), although the purpose and terminology of the work was different, the thrust of the work was similar to that of James Britton, whose work is discussed next.

One of the more influential systems of categorizing language is that of James Britton and his colleagues (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975). They classified students' written texts for the purpose of studying the development of language and writing ability in children. Texts were classified into three main categories based on the functions of the discourse, but at the same time it was recognized that there was much overlap between and among the categories. The main categories include transactional, expressive, and poetic. According to Britton et al. (1975) the expressive mode is the one in which children first speak and write.

The expressive mode is characterized as the children's "first draft of talk" (Britton, 1988, p. 113), and is usually highly contextualized and directed to someone who responds

to the utterance in such a way as to help children refine and redefine their ideas and thus enable them to speak about the same idea (now more clearly defined and understood) to a wider audience. For example, four year old Johnny while walking along the beach with his mother may notice an iceberg surrounded by smaller pieces of ice drifting a short distance offshore and remark, "Mommy, look at the iceberg swimming!" His mother will most likely respond by telling him that the iceberg is not alive, and therefore cannot move by itself. The iceberg is floating which means being carried along by the movement of the water. Through her response the mother has to some degree refined Johnny's concept of icebergs. He now knows that icebergs are not living creatures, and cannot move under their own power. If Johnny then notices the smaller pieces of ice floating near the large berg, and comments that the baby bergs are staying near their mother, his mother's reply will likely be that icebergs are not alive, and do not have babies. Thus through this use of expressive language Johnny is gradually defining and redefining his notion of icebergs. When he goes to nursery school the next day he may (still in the expressive mode) share his revised "first draft of talk" about icebergs with the wider audience of his classmates and teacher, and from that conversational exchange refine his concept of icebergs still more.

The transactional and poetic modes develop from the expressive mode. Transactional language is language for the purpose of getting things done or for "participation in the world's affairs" (Britton et al., 1975, p. 83). The traditional modes of exposition and argumentation described earlier in this chapter would be included in

Britton's transactional mode. The transactional mode differs from the expressive mode in that the language used is more specific, and is organized in a particular way to achieve its purpose. For example, if I want a package delivered across town I must inform the courier of the address and I may give directions. My directions may be sequenced in the order that they will be carried out so that they may be followed easily. "Walk two blocks along Main Street, then turn left and go a block and a half ..." The way I organize my directions will depend on my purpose and my awareness of my listener. In the above example, if the courier is familiar with a number of stores or other buildings along the route, then I may direct him to go along Duckworth Street until he comes to Wordplay, then turn left and go to the second floor of the Clouston Building. On the other hand, if the courier is not familiar with the area I will use a specific street address such as 100 Duckworth Street, and I may even describe the physical appearance of some landmarks along the way.

The two main functions of transactional language are to inform (informative) and to persuade (conative). Britton's informative function has a number of sub-categories which are based on Moffett's analysis of the relationship between speaker and topic (Britton, 1971, p. 119). These functions include: recording present events, reporting past events, exposition of what happens (generalizing), and theorizing or developing argument to predict what will happen. The increasing levels of abstraction in Britton's informative category indicate the need for structure and organization in the speech or text. In the conative function, the language used will clearly show the speakers' intention of changing the opinion or even the behaviour of the listener (Britton, 1971, p. 119). For example, if

my intention is to convince my students of the need to complete homework assignments on time, I probably will begin by talking about the long term consequences, that is, the impact that failure to develop good work habits will have on the students' educational achievement, and then move on to the more immediate consequences of failure to complete work on time, such as lunchtime detention or loss of marks for each day the work is late or my possible refusal to accept work beyond the deadline given. My intention of changing the students' behaviour will be obvious to the listeners both from my words and my tone.

The poetic mode also develops from the expressive mode and has a formal organization and unity not present in expressive language. The poetic mode includes novels, stories, drama, and poetry, where the form and use of language provide part of the enjoyment. Britton (1971, p. 117) uses gossip as an example of expressive language, but states that an incident of gossip, if recounted in a play, novel, or poem would be considered as the poetic mode provided that the necessary degree of structure and unity was present.

Applebee (1980) adapted Britton's functional language categories, and studied the writing development of American high school students and the contexts in which they wrote. He changed Britton's terminology "... to make it more useful for observational and self-report data..." (p. 45) and added a category for what he termed mechanical writing, that is, writing in which the student was not required to create a coherent extended text. Mechanical writing included such tasks as short-answer questions that required only one-

or-two-sentence answers, fill-in the blanks, multiple-choice answers, or math calculations. In Applebee's system the transactional mode was termed informational, and included all writing that required the writer to select and organize information and shape an extended text. The subcategories of informational writing included writing essays and reports in order of increasing difficulty. The order of difficulty is derived from Moffett's (1968) levels of abstraction and ranges from recording events happening in the present to reporting past events to summarizing, analyzing, building and defending theory, and persuading. Applebee categorized as personal the types of writing that Britton called expressive. In this category Applebee included journals, diaries, letters to close friends, and note taking where the writers' purpose was a preliminary organizing of ideas (p. 48). Britton's poetic category became the imaginative mode and included literary works where appreciation of the form was the defining quality.

The theories of discourse and language learning discussed in this section indicate that as the complexity of language increases the need for organization and structure in speech and writing also increases. The type of structure or pattern of organization used by effective speakers and writers will be one that is most suitable to accomplishing a particular language aim or function. The ability to use structured forms of language develops as children use unstructured forms of language to explore the world of 'the thing referred to' as well as the world of the symbolic representation that is language. Knowledge of the structure of discourse, specifically text structure, is of value to readers

and writers as they produce and interpret increasingly complex texts at the junior high school level.

The theories of discourse described in this section have, for the most part, been applied to the teaching of writing, but applications of these theories also have relevance to the teaching of reading. Readers make assumptions about a text's purpose, its subject matter, its author and its intended audience based on their recognition of the text as a particular mode of discourse (Devitt, 1993). Research, cited in earlier sections of this chapter, has shown that a characteristic of good readers is their use of text structure knowledge as an aid to the comprehension of text. Categorizing discourse based on language aims or functions also leads to awareness of text structure.

Hoskins (1986) effectively adapted Kinneavy's communication triangle for use in teaching rhetorical structures (which she termed 'superstructures') to high school and first year college readers. She changed the labelling of Kinneavy's communication triangle schematic from encoder, decoder, reality and message to writer, reader, subject, and text respectively, thus using terms familiar to her students and making the triangle schematic specific to the immediate reading task. Hoskins taught students to determine the writer's aim or purpose by noticing whether the writer, the reader, or the subject was emphasized more in the text, but where Kinneavy's terminology could be equated to more familiar terminology she used the more familiar word. For example, she used 'expository' rather than 'referential' to describe text that was focused on the subject matter. By using an adaptation of the communication triangle, students were able to determine the writer's

purpose, and from that the rhetorical structure (superstructure) of the text. She then taught text patterns such as cause and effect or time order within the context of the superstructure. Hoskins' experience in teaching text structures convinced her of the important role that knowledge of text structure plays in reading comprehension, and of the importance of teachers "exploiting the full spectrum of discourse forms in their instruction" (p. 538). Hoskins' (1986) experience supports the findings of research on the importance of text structure knowledge that have already been presented (Armbruster, Anderson, & Osterlag, 1987; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Richgels, McGee, Lomax, & Sheard, 1987; Taylor, 1980; Taylor & Beach, 1984). The utilization of text structure knowledge by readers improves reading comprehension, and is a characteristic of good readers.

A comprehensive reading program for the junior high school level could reasonably be expected to include well structured texts written for various purposes. Such texts would expose students to good models of written summaries, analyses, defences of theories, and persuasive pieces, and should result in improved reading comprehension as well as improved written composition.

Readability

Concept of readability. Another aspect of text that influences readers' comprehension is its readability. Readability is defined by The Literacy Dictionary (1995) as the ease with which readers' comprehend text (p. 302). In a review chapter summarizing readability research, Klare (1984) stated that in the field of reading the word

'readable' meant the readers' ease of understanding, but he attributed the ease of understanding to the style of writing, that is, to text factors that affect readers' understanding (p. 681). However, over the years the concept of readability has changed from the view that readability is a feature of the text to the view that readability is an interaction of text characteristics and reader resources (Richardson & Morgan, 1990; Singer, 1988). Reader variables that influence readability include the readers' cognitive ability, background knowledge related to the text content, interest in the text content, as well as readers' motivation and attitude towards reading (Richardson & Morgan, 1990). To show the evolution of the concept of readability this section will be organized under the following sub-headings: readability formulae, criticism of readability formulae, and non-formula measures of readability.

Readability formulae. Klare (1984) reported that readability research began in 1921 with the publication of Thorndike's book of graded word lists for teachers. These lists also contained counts of word frequency, a feature which enabled researchers and teachers to identify familiar and unfamiliar words that occurred in school texts and to measure the difficulty level of reading materials objectively. Texts containing unfamiliar words that occurred infrequently in print were considered more difficult than texts containing more familiar, frequently occurring words. The earliest readability formulae, which focused on vocabulary, were based on Thorndike's work.

Chall (1988) described a period of readability research that spanned the years from 1928 to 1939. During this period, researchers focused on sentence variables as well as

vocabulary in an effort to identify other factors that would predict readability. Most studies of that period found that beyond vocabulary, sentence length, sentence complexity, and the use of prepositional phrases or clauses were most predictive of text difficulty (Chall & Conard, 1991, p. 10). A landmark study published in 1935 by Gray and Leary (as reported in Klare, 1984) identified content, general organization, style of writing, and format as text variables that influenced readability. However, these variables were not included in subsequently developed readability formulae because of the difficulty in measuring them quantitatively. In fact, continued efforts to include variables other than word and sentence length in readability formulae have not been successful because these variables are qualitative and do not lend themselves to mere counting. Most readability formulae compared two variables (word length and sentence length) and used regression equations to determine which factors in the variables under study correlated with reading difficulty. Klare (1984) reported that by 1973 over 200 language variables had been tried, and almost as many readability formulae had been developed.

Readability formulae were used widely because they provided teachers with a way to match reading materials with readers, and their popularity increased when they began to report readability in grade level scores. The McCall and Crabbs' Standard Test Lessons in Reading, first published in 1926, was used for many years as the standard against which passages were compared to set a grade level estimate (Klare, 1984; 1988). However, grade level readability estimates varied from one formula to another because formula makers used different criteria on the reading passages. For example, one researcher might

require that students answer 50 per cent of the comprehension questions on a passage correctly in order to rate the passage at the fourth grade level, while another researcher using the same passage would require students to answer 70 percent of comprehension questions correctly for it to be rated at the same grade level (Klare, 1988). As a result, different formulae applied to the same reading passages provided different readability scores, and thus raised perplexing and vexing questions of what these scores meant.

The use of McCall and Crabbs' Standard Test Lessons in Reading as a criterion reference for readability formulae was questioned by a number of researchers. Jacobson, Kirkland, and Selden (1978), for instance, found that the norms of the 1961 revision of Standard Test Lessons in Reading (which were comparable to the 1926 norms) were outdated. Two years later, Stevens (1980) investigated the reliability and validity of the Standard Test Lessons in Reading and found them to be lacking because the grade equivalents assigned to the lessons had not been based on extensive testing. In addition, the complete information detailing how the test lessons had been normed was not available because, according to Steven's personal correspondence with McCall, the test lessons had never been intended for use as a criterion for readability formulae. Steven's findings brought into question the validity and reliability of all readability formulae that had used the test lessons as a criterion.

Another variation on the readability formulae was the cloze procedure where readers' ability to complete or fill in omitted text was taken as a measure of comprehension. The cloze procedure was used by some researchers as a criterion

reference for readability formulae. Bormuth, for example, used the cloze comprehension test as a criterion from which he developed 24 formulae with up to 20 variables in each (Kintsch & Vipond, 1979). However, Taylor (1953) was actually the first researcher to use the cloze procedure. He reported that the cloze procedure could rank tests according to the level of difficulty as well as the more popular Flesch and the Dale-Chall readability formulae did (The Dale-Chall formula and the Flesch formula had used the McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading as a criterion reference). It was claimed that the cloze procedure could discriminate between different levels of readability and could be used with sophisticated texts written by authors such as Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, whereas the readability formulae could not. Taylor stated that in addition to predicting text readability, cloze provided a measure of the individual's reading ability. From his two experiments, Taylor concluded that there was "rough evidence" of reliability for the cloze procedure, but acknowledged the possibility that the cloze procedure and the readability formulae could both be "reliably wrong" in their predictive power of readability (Taylor, 1953, p. 196).

Bormuth (1968) established a relationship between scores from the cloze procedure and the criterion scores from other measures of readability such as word recognition and comprehension tests. He found that a cloze score of about 44 percent was equivalent to the instructional reading level on paragraphs from the Gray Oral Reading Tests (1963), and that a cloze score of 57 percent was equivalent to the independent reading level at the same grade level. Based on the high correlation between cloze scores

of readability and criterion scores used in standardized reading tests Bormuth concluded that cloze tests were "highly valid measures of passage difficulty" (p. 196).

By 1975, the cloze procedure was reported to be the "single most potent alternative to multiple choice tests to ever become available to readability formula developers" (Miller, 1975, p. 52). A perceived advantage of cloze tests was that they measured the actual difficulty of the reading passages rather than the difficulty of the questions used to test comprehension of the passages. Comprehension questions, especially multiple choice, had the potential to mask the real issue of text difficulty. Furthermore, where readability formulae measured text difficulty based on two variables, namely word and sentence length, the cloze procedure could potentially measure the difficulty of all words, phrases, and sentences in the passage, as well as intersentence relationships and readers' prior knowledge related to the text content (p. 53). Miller (1975) compared a cloze-derived readability formula (the Coleman No. 4) and a multiple-choice derived formula (the Flesch Reading Ease) to determine which type of formula was best overall for predicting readability. He concluded that although the Flesch formula seemed overall the more valid measure of readability, more research comparing formulae was needed before it could be stated with any certainty whether cloze-based or multiple-choice based formulae were the more valid way to estimate reading difficulty.

Klare (1988) reported that characteristics of the cloze procedure such as its objectivity, ease of scoring, and ease of interpretation led to widespread use as a criterion reference for the development of readability formulae. Sets of graded reading passages,

which had been scored using the cloze procedure, were used in the development of new formulae, as well as to check the validity of existing formulae. Nevertheless, the limitations of the readability formulae were a concern for the early developers because content, format, and organizational variables were omitted. Unfortunately, this omission continued because of the developers' inability to measure these qualitative variables (Chall, 1988; Klare, 1984).

Criticism of readability formulae Kintsch and Vipond (1979) were critical of readability formulae because the formulae had no theoretical base and did not take the higher level organizational features of the text into consideration. They agreed that the variables measured by the readability formulae (word length and sentence length) probably correlated with reading difficulty, but stated that these surface variables "were not the whole story", since they reflected neither the content nor the organization of the text (p. 336).

By applying the earlier work of Kintsch and his colleagues (Kintsch, 1974; Kintsch & Keenan, 1973; Kintsch, Kozminsky, Streby, McKon, & Keenan, 1975; Kintsch & Van Dijk, 1978), Kintsch and Vipond concluded that many factors affected text difficulty. They named the number of propositions or meaning units contained in the text; the number of new concepts per proposition; the number of inferences required to establish text cohesion; the number of long-term memory searches needed to call up prior knowledge or to reinstate propositions for inferring; and the number of reorganizations of text interpretations required to arrive at the best interpretation of the text. For example, a text

in which readers must infer relationships between many of the propositions requires more processing than a text in which the relationships are explicitly stated, and is therefore more difficult. More difficult still is a text in which readers must infer relationships between propositions in the text, but then must (in light of new information either explicitly stated or inferred) recall and reorganize the propositions of the previous interpretation to accommodate the new information. This last factor is significant in junior high school English programs because in literature this demand is frequently made on readers of short stories with surprise endings and on readers of poetry.

Kintsch and Vipond (1979) were critical also of cloze as a measure of readability because it measured the redundancy of the language rather than comprehension, and did not deal with the overall organization of extended texts. This criticism echoes the earlier position of Weaver (1963), who stated that cloze tests were "most closely related to redundancy utilization" (p. 111). Weaver also stated that the cloze procedure went beyond the ordinary demands of reading in that deletions from the text caused readers to interrupt the normal reading process, engage in an analysis of the cues that were present, and then engage in a memory search for the most appropriate word to fill in the space. These demands of the cloze procedure made it difficult to equate cloze to the normal reading process, and made it difficult to determine what was being assessed.

Kintsch and Vipond's criticism of readability formulae was supported by Olsen (1984), who analyzed a number of readability formulae, namely the Dale-Chall, the Gunning-Fox Index, the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, the McLaughlin SMOG Grading,

and the Spache and Wheeler-Smith, and concluded that they were inadequate for measuring readability for a number of reasons – most important of which was that the formulae did not consider variables highlighted in theories of reading. Olsen (1984) listed some of these ignored variables as readability factors from within the reader such as background knowledge and content-related variables such as the level of abstraction and the relationships of ideas within the text. Criticism of readability formulae and the gradual reconceptualization of readability as the interaction of text and reader variables led researchers to seek non-formula measures of readability.

Non-formula measures of readability. One of the earlier attempts to find a non-formula measure of readability was made by Lowe (1979), who proposed Thought Unit Sentences (ThUS) as an approach to readability that was, at least initially, content-focused. Texts were analyzed to determine the number and type of thought units in the passage, and readability formulae such as the Fry Readability Graph were used after the initial analysis. This approach was an improvement over the use of readability formulae alone because it placed more emphasis on the content of the text.

Another non-formula measure of readability was developed by Tamor (1981). Tamor's subjective text difficulty was an approach to predicting readability which combined objective text variables, such as the density and type of contextual cues contained in the text with behavioral variables (reading performance on graded passages from the Gilmore Oral Paragraph Reading Test) with readers' variables including the readers' ability, tendency to use available cues, content knowledge, and breadth and depth

of vocabulary. This provided an estimate of text difficulty for the individual reader. The subjective text difficulty approach was intended to replace the readability formulae rather than supplement it as the ThUS approach had done.

A criticism of both readability formulae and the cloze procedure was that neither dealt with the overall organization or macrostructure of texts, which research had shown to facilitate readers' comprehension of the text content (Meyer, 1975; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980). Amiran and Jones (1982) drew from the research on language acquisition, text structure, literary analysis, and the study of writing in an attempt to redefine readability. They found that the text variables crucial to the concept of readability were text structure, text texture, and content density. By text texture these writers meant the normal condition of text (akin to Armbruster's (1984) considerate text, described earlier in this chapter). Text texture was assumed to exist on a continuum from normal text to defective text. A normal text was characterized by clear definition of terms, making clear the antecedents to its pronouns, explicit statements of motive, cause, and act, and the use of headings to signal structure. In contrast, defective text was characterized by the necessity to infer referents of pronouns where there may be no antecedent or more than one antecedent, the structural connection between statements that were signalled incorrectly, the meanings of sentences in which words had been misused, and so on (p. 21). Text was considered content dense "... in proportion to the number of self-contained or unelaborated propositions which must be elaborated by the reader" (p. 23). To elaborate dense text readers may have to refer back in the text to earlier explanations that

clarify the present passage or consult another source of information if their world knowledge is not helpful. Amiran and Jones gave an example of a passage from a chemistry text where related but unexplained procedures were described in statements such as "reaction x is similar to reaction y except that molecule a is used in place of molecule b" (p. 23). In this passage, the writer has assumed that readers have sufficient background knowledge to comprehend the passage, and has given no elaboration on reaction x that would help readers' understanding of reaction y. In this situation, the text density means that the passage will be difficult reading for all readers except those with specific background knowledge of reaction x.

The variables included in Amiran and Jones' (1982) definition of readability were text features and reader features. The important text variables included text structure, text texture, and content density. The reader variables considered important were defined as mental operations that facilitated the acquisition, retention, and retrieval of information, and included inferring. Any of these variables, either singly or in different combinations, was believed to influence the readability of texts. The chemistry text discussed in the previous paragraph illustrates how the interaction of two of those factors – text density and background knowledge or lack thereof – combine to make the reading passage difficult for many readers.

As the following quote asserts, the work of Amiran and Jones illustrates the gradual reconceptualization of the concept of readability, "Although a readability index proper ... would apply only to text variables, a complete understanding of readability must

involve some attention to the reader as well” (p. 23). Attempts to develop an effective way of predicting readability in keeping with the current model of reading continued.

Zakaluk and Samuels (1988) developed a nomograph for predicting text comprehensibility. This graphic representation of text-based and reader-based numerical relations was the basis of their prediction of the comprehensibility of a text for a particular student. The graph included a plotted estimate of the text-based or “Outside the Head Factors”. This estimate of text readability (from a readability formula) plus the presence or lack of adjunct aids to comprehension such as questions interspersed in the text and learning objectives stated at the beginning of the passage was one variable. The reader-based or “Inside the Head Factors” included the readers’ knowledge of the text topic and word recognition skill. This variable was estimated through a word association technique, while word recognition skill was estimated by having readers read from a 150 word passage at the readability level of their grade placement. The resulting scores of the text-based and reader-based variables were graphed and a connecting line drawn between them. The point at which the connecting line intersected the predicted level of readability scale (which was in the center of the nomograph) indicated the predicted level of reading comprehension for a particular student.

Another relatively recent effort at predicting readability focused on the stylistic age of the text – in this case novels. Danielson and Lasorsa (1989) found that stylistic changes in writing (shorter sentence length and a reduced range of punctuation marks used) over the past 240 years could be used to date novels fairly accurately, and that the changes in

writing style coincided with what is considered more readable text. They proposed that the formula which they had developed to identify the stylistic age of novels be used as a readability formula. On the surface this is an interesting idea that appears to be relevant to the teaching of English literature at the junior high school level. It has potential appeal if it could be judged reliable and valid. However, although Danielson and Lasorsa made use of current computer technology in their identification of the stylistic changes in writing that occurred over the past 240 years, the concept of readability that they used was limited. Like the earlier readability formulae it deals only with text factors in readability. However, in other recent research efforts both text and reader based variables were taken into consideration.

Meyer, Marisque, and Willis (1993) proposed an eight step model to predict the readability of documents such as charts, schedules, and labels encountered by older readers in their daily lives. In this model, they applied the findings of earlier readability research on reader variables, text variables, and the effects of ageing on reading comprehension. Some of the variables in their model for assessing the readability of everyday documents included the length of the document (number of propositions), the location of important or necessary information, whether specialized prior knowledge was needed for comprehension, the discourse structure that was used to present the information (that is, description, causation, comparison), the complexity of the search (that is, how many places readers had to look before locating the needed information), and whether important information was signalled through the use of such devices as capital

letters, boldface, or headings. Points were added to the document readability score for difficult text features such as the necessity of making high text-based inferences, and deducted for factors that were considered indicative of ease of reading such as the use of the sequence discourse structure. Documents that yielded low scores according to the model were considered easier for older adults to read.

Results from a trial of the model with 482 elderly adults indicated that "... the dimensions of readability identified by prior research are salient for predicting actual comprehension in everyday task materials for older adults" (p. 244). Meyer, et al. (1993) concluded their study contained further evidence that text factors help to determine the readability of texts, that more difficult texts are more difficult because of the higher intellectual/processing demands they make on readers, that texts such as those studied could be made more readable for the elderly by reducing the cognitive demands they make, and that the elderly could be taught strategies to help them read everyday documents. Although this study focused on text, readers' prior knowledge and ability to process text, readers' intellectual and memory capacity were also considered. Despite the continued effort, to date no efficient predictor of readability has been found.

Reader Characteristics

Reader Characteristics in Readability

As the concept of readability broadened to include variables other than text factors, reading researchers directed their efforts toward identifying the reader-based variables in readability and developing an understanding of how these factors affected

reading proficiency. Thus far in my research the reader-based variables of cognitive ability, background knowledge, interest in text content, motivation, attitude towards reading, readers' use of available cues in reading, breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, and use of learning strategies have been named as factors that influence reading comprehension. Obviously there are others, for example, readers' knowledge of language, readers' world knowledge, readers' knowledge of the nature of the reading task. Often there is overlap in the way that writers chose to describe the various reader-based readability factors. For example, breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge can be considered part of readers' knowledge, just as prior knowledge and readers' knowledge of the nature of the reading task are part of readers' knowledge. Readers' use of available cues is tied with learning strategies which is also part of readers' knowledge as well as a significant factor in readers' motivation. In the following section, reader-based readability factors will be discussed under the headings of readers' knowledge and readers' motivation.

Readers' Knowledge

What readers know before they begin to read influences how well they understand what they read (Alvermann, 1987; Franks, 1993; Grindler & Stratton, 1992; Kintsch, 1993; Langer, 1980; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Stahl, Hare, Sinatra, & Gregory, 1991). If readers know something about the text content before they begin to read, they will find the text easier to comprehend. Knowledge of the vocabulary used in the text also makes texts easier for readers to read and understand. Likewise, readers' knowledge of

language and general world knowledge can be used to assist them in comprehending the texts they read. Terms such as prior knowledge, background knowledge, and world knowledge which are very close in meaning, have been frequently used in the literature when discussing readers' knowledge. Phillips (1992) used the term readers' knowledge to encompass all the knowledge that readers have that can be applied to the reading task. The term readers' knowledge will be used in this research in a similar way.

Readers' knowledge of the reading process. Readers' knowledge of the nature of reading is important in the development of reading proficiency. It seems self-evident that in order to accomplish any task some concept of the nature of the task is necessary, and that a realistic concept is needed if the task is to be performed well. Downing (1984) stated that there is an interactive link between readers' understanding of the reading task and success or failure in learning to read (p. 54). Beginning readers start with a preliminary understanding of what the task involves. For example, novice readers, especially young children, often view reading as simply knowing the words. This preliminary understanding of the task provides a framework for their growth as readers. Through reading and reading instruction they develop an awareness that in order to understand what is in the text they have to think about what the words say in relation to what they already know of the world, that is, they have to infer. This new knowledge about the inferential nature of reading allows them to develop further their reading proficiency, as well as to develop further their knowledge of the nature of reading as they encounter more difficult texts. It seems that knowledge of the nature of reading develops

with experience and instruction. Nevertheless many readers reach junior high school with inaccurate knowledge of the nature of the reading task. Junior high school students who seek extra help with their studies are a good example. In their efforts to explain the nature of their learning problems, these students (and their parents) frequently say the students can read their textbooks, but don't understand what they read. They do not have the concept that to read the text is to understand it, but instead they understand reading to be fluent word-calling.

Poor readers and young children who are just learning to read often do not have a clear idea of the nature of reading. Johns (1984) reported that in grades one through six, student perceptions of reading were often vague, meaningless, or focused on one aspect of the reading process such as word recognition or fluency. Most students did not perceive reading as an attempt to construct meaning from the text. Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rakliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, and Bassiri (1987) related poor knowledge of the reading task to poor reading performance, and stated that "poor readers lack understanding of the strategic nature of reading" (p. 349). Phillips and Norris (1988) described how the reading of two grade six students (one a proficient reader and the other a poor reader) differed in strategy use and in thinking. The different reading behaviors observed indicate that these students had different understandings of the nature of reading. The poor reader seemed unaware of the need to monitor comprehension and change strategies when an interpretation of text did not make sense in light of later text information, while the proficient reader, a young boy, continually monitored his

interpretation to be sure that it was consistent with text information and his world knowledge.

Evidence that students entering junior high school lack an understanding of the essential nature of the reading task indicates there is a need for instruction in this area. Haller, Child, and Walberg (1988) advocate helping students develop an awareness of the type of thinking needed in successful reading, that is, teaching students to monitor their comprehension, and to change their thinking and strategy use during reading when necessary. In their view, "the effect of metacognitive instruction on reading comprehension is substantial" (p. 8). Development of the concept that reading is the construction of meaning should be part of any reading program intended for the junior high school level.

'Prior' knowledge. Readers' knowledge that is specific to the context of the text to be read (frequently called prior knowledge in the literature) has a lengthy history of investigation. As early as 1947, Chall (as reported in Richardson and Morgan, 1990) found that students in grades six and eight who had the most knowledge about tuberculosis scored highest in reading comprehension after reading a passage about that topic. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers. Bransford and Johnson (1972) found that readers' comprehension ratings and recall for a passage were low when the readers had not been given an appropriate context for the passage prior to reading. Lipson (1983) reported that Catholic and Jewish students in grades four, five, and six understood texts better when the content was from a culturally familiar context. Yochum

(1991), in fact, stated that based on the results of prior knowledge research done in the 1970s and 80s, accurate prior knowledge could be said to enhance recall of texts and answers to questions about those texts. Her own study, in which she compared the effects of high prior knowledge to low prior knowledge, revealed that the effects of prior knowledge varied depending upon the readers' ability, the task to be performed, and the information to be learned.

Stahl, Hare, Sinatra, & Gregory (1991) studied the effects of prior topic knowledge and vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension. Their subjects were tenth grade students, some of whom were knowledgeable about the career and achievements of Tom Seaver, a New York Mets baseball player, and others who were knowledgeable about baseball but presumed to have less knowledge of Tom Seaver. Both groups read a passage about the retirement of Mets player, Tom Seaver and the fact that his number 41 jersey was also retired. Stahl, et al. (1991) found that students who were knowledgeable about baseball recalled more main ideas and more statistics from the passage than did those with low prior knowledge of that sport, and that students who had high vocabulary knowledge recalled more information at the proposition (microstructure) level of the passage than those who had less vocabulary knowledge. They also reported that the effects of specific prior knowledge (about Tom Seaver) and general knowledge (about baseball) were closely related and could not be disentangled, that is, they were unable to determine whether general knowledge or specific prior knowledge played a greater role in comprehension of the passage. The effects of general vocabulary

knowledge and specific knowledge of baseball vocabulary on comprehension were also difficult to discern, since both general vocabulary knowledge and specific knowledge of baseball vocabulary accounted for approximately the same amount of variance in measures of comprehension used. These findings of Stahl, et al. (1991) provide a basis for Norris and Phillips' (1994) research which challenged the role attributed to specific prior knowledge in reading comprehension.

Much of the reading done by students at all levels and by adults in the workplace is for the purpose of locating information. A study by Symons and Pressley (1993) found that prior knowledge of the topic helped students locate specific text information by enabling them to focus attention on information in the text that was consistent with their prior knowledge. Based on the positive findings of studies on prior knowledge, readers' prior knowledge of a topic came to be viewed as an essential element of the reading process. Schema theory was used to explain how readers' prior knowledge of the topic aided comprehension, although it did not account for the fact that in order for prior knowledge to facilitate reading comprehension a certain amount of reading and reasoning proficiency was necessary for readers to make what they knew relevant to what was being read.

Readers' knowledge in schema theory. According to schema theory, readers' organized knowledge of the world is the basis of their understanding of the ideas contained in texts (Anderson, 1985). A schema is an organized knowledge structure that summarizes what an individual knows about a particular topic, including the relationships

between its component parts (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 259). When reading a text, readers infer links between the text information and their own knowledge (schemata) which may or may not fit with the information in the text. If the text information doesn't mesh with readers' prior knowledge then readers may modify their existing schema in light of the new knowledge thus creating a new schema or knowledge structure, or another schema may be activated and linked to the text information in an effort to construct meaning. Anderson (1985) states that "... comprehension is a matter of activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse" (p. 375). This is not a simple process. In schema theory reading is viewed as a complex interactive process which involves "... more or less simultaneous analysis at many levels. The levels include graphophonemic, morphemic, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and interpretive" (Anderson, p. 376). Because readers' knowledge of the world depends on individual experience it will vary from one individual to another, and there will be variations in the interpretations of text that readers make. In schema theory more than one interpretation of text is possible.

The schema through which readers interpret a text will be influenced by such factors as age, sex, race, religion, nationality, and occupation (Anderson, 1985, p. 374). Lipson's (1983) study provides an example to illustrate this point. In her study both Jewish and Catholic children comprehended the reading passages better when schema from their own culture could be applied to the text. In fact, these students failed to discard their culture-specific schema even when it failed to assimilate textual information. A more

recent study by Wilson and Thomas (1995), suggests that readers may reject interpretations of text that contradict their own prior knowledge. Reluctance to change previous knowledge in the light of textual information results in what Wilson and Thomas term "idiosyncratic interpretations" of text, that is, interpretations that are not bound by universal standards of adequacy (Norris & Phillips, 1994). In other words, these readers (because of their strongly held beliefs about the world) are not arriving at an interpretation of text that is similar to interpretations other readers would make from the same text. The readers in the Wilson and Thomas study have not really comprehended the text in question because of their overreliance on prior knowledge.

It would seem that reasoning must also play a role in the interpretation of texts. Alvermann (1987) pointed out that there is a paradox in the notion that to learn from text you must know a lot about the topic before you can learn more by reading. While this notion may offer an explanation of why readers from illiterate or semi-literate backgrounds often become poor readers, it does not explain how other readers with very little or no prior knowledge learn from text.

In a study that compared grade 6 readers' strategy use with reading proficiency and background knowledge, Phillips (1988) found that proficient readers scored higher in strategy use than poor readers regardless of their levels of background knowledge, and that readers with high background knowledge scored higher in strategy use than readers with low levels of background knowledge only when they had a higher level of reading proficiency. Furthermore, readers who were in the low reading proficiency group did not

comprehend text better when they had more background knowledge. These findings indicate that the presence or absence of background knowledge does not influence reading comprehension to the degree that previous research had seemed to indicate. Clearly factors other than background knowledge play a significant role in reading comprehension.

Readers' knowledge in the perspectival view of reading. Phillips (1989) stated that specific background knowledge related to text content is not necessary for reading comprehension since proficient readers use "their ability to think critically with the information available to them" as they form interpretations of text (p. 164). Building on their earlier work, Norris and Phillips (1994), in what was termed the perspectival view of reading, looked at reading from a contextualized, first-person or readers' perspective. They challenged the widely held view that readers' prior knowledge related to reading a particular passage can be identified and activated before reading. According to the perspectival view of reading, the relevance of readers' knowledge can only be determined by readers themselves in the context of forming their own interpretation of a text. Readers themselves judge what of their own knowledge is relevant to the interpretation of a particular text as they read. For a teacher to decide what prior knowledge is relevant to a reader's interpretation of a text would be imposing an interpretation on the reader that is not his own. That is not to say that interpretations of text do not have to meet universal standards of adequacy, but it means that more than one universally adequate interpretation can usually be made of a given text.

The perspectival view of reading shows how readers create relevance for their own knowledge and use it to interpret text when they have no prior knowledge of a topic. Using the example of a young reader who participated in their study, Norris and Phillips (1994) described how this reader formed an adequate interpretation of a text for which he had no 'prior knowledge' by integrating his knowledge of an analogous situation with the text information. This ability of readers to make the knowledge that they have relevant to a topic through inferential links is what differentiates proficient readers from poor readers. In situations where they have no background knowledge specific to the text content proficient readers will draw upon their general knowledge and construct a plausible interpretation of text by inferring, evaluating their inferences and interpretations in light of text information to confirm or deny the interpretation, rejecting interpretations that are inconsistent with text information, and refocusing their attempts on another part of the text – all without losing sight of the overall passage meaning (Phillips, 1988). This reasoning process enables readers with low levels of prior knowledge to read independently. It seems that the quality of thinking is more important in comprehending text than the amount of background knowledge readers have.

Findings on the role that readers' knowledge plays in reading comprehension have implications for the way in which reading is taught at all levels. The more recent studies have shown that too great a reliance on readers' prior knowledge may actually hinder full comprehension (Lipson, 1983; Wilson & Thomas, 1995); that the effects of readers' prior knowledge specific to text content are difficult to disengage from the readers' general

knowledge (Stahl, Hare, & Gregory, 1991); that the effects of prior knowledge on reading comprehension depend on the readers' ability, the task to be performed, and the information to be learned (Yochum, 1991); that the reading proficiency of the reader has a greater impact on reading comprehension than does the readers' level of prior knowledge specifically related to the topic (Phillips, 1988); and that proficient readers create relevancy for the knowledge they possess as they read and therefore can read independently regardless of their level of knowledge on any one topic (Norris & Phillips, 1994).

Clearly there is more to be learned about the effects of readers' knowledge on comprehension, and about how proficient readers and poor readers approach the task of reading, but based on what we know about the complex relationship between readers' knowledge and reading comprehension, it seems that our teaching efforts should focus on improving students' thinking and reasoning abilities. Rather than merely providing what we deem to be the necessary background information for a particular passage, our goal must be to teach students the thinking strategies that are used by proficient readers. Such strategies include, but are not limited to, rethinking an interpretation of text that conflicts with previous information, shifting focus when the text information cannot be resolved within the present interpretation, confirming prior interpretations based on later information in the text, and empathizing to the experiences of others (Phillips, 1988). It is only when readers can successfully interpret a text for which they have little or no prior

knowledge of the text's content that we can say that they are truly learning through reading.

Readers' Motivation

Adaptive and maladaptive behavior patterns. Most researchers agree that the motivation to pursue a goal is influenced by the value that the learner places on the achievement of the goal, and as well by the learner's beliefs regarding the likelihood of actually achieving the goal (Wigfield & Asher, 1984). If runners did not value the experience of running the Boston Marathon (and possibly finishing first) they would not put in the long gruelling hours of training for the event. Furthermore, unless they believe that there is a good probability of them finishing the course in a respectable time they will likely not enter the race, or devote their time to training and spend their money travelling to Boston. Their belief that there is a realistic and reasonable chance their efforts will be successful is what motivates these athletes to act. The same can be said of individuals who are learning to read. They have to want to read, and they have to believe that there is a reasonable chance that if they invest their time and effort they will be successful. Learners who believe they lack the ability to read are unlikely to invest the time and effort needed to become proficient readers. Unfortunately, the belief that they lack ability is characteristic of many unsuccessful learners.

Learner characteristics, such as the belief of unsuccessful learners that they lack ability, influence motivation. Dweck (1986) described adaptive and maladaptive patterns of learner behavior that have been found to influence achievement motivation. Students

with adaptive patterns of behavior sought to learn new things and develop new competencies, were willing to take on challenging goals, were persistent in the face of difficulty, and valued their learning achievements. They attributed success to effort rather than to ability and failure to lack of effort. In contrast, learners with maladaptive behaviors, when faced with a new learning goal, sought to gain a positive judgement or at least to avoid a negative judgement of their abilities, rather than to engage in learning for its own sake. They did not set reasonable, valued learning goals for themselves and did not persist in their efforts to achieve the goal when they encountered difficulty. They attributed their failures to causes beyond their control such as lack of ability or task difficulty. In fact, learners whose behaviors were described as maladaptive also attributed their successes to ability rather than to effort, thus placing both success and failure outside their control. This behavior pattern has been identified with learned helplessness. Butkowsky and Willows (1980) found that learners' low self-concepts of their own ability led them to have lower achievement expectations of themselves. Each failure they encountered, which they attributed to low ability, confirmed their low expectations of success, and led them to have even lower expectations for meeting the next learning goal. Learned helplessness was the result when they finally stopped trying.

Learned helplessness is evident in many junior high school classrooms where academically low-achieving students sit and do nothing (or misbehave) while they wait their turn for individual attention and assistance from their teachers. A teacher prompt to read the directions for the assignment and to scan the related textbook section or other

source materials inevitably brings the response, "I can't". After years of experiencing failure they are no longer willing to invest effort into what they perceive to be a hopeless task. They attribute their inability to achieve academic success to lack of ability, and do not believe that any amount of effort on their part will change the end result.

There is a developmental pattern in children's attributional beliefs. Chan (1993) found that children do not differentiate between effort and ability as causes of academic success until they reach adolescence. Furthermore, her study revealed that while fourteen and fifteen year olds (Grade Nines) differentiated between ability, effort, and the use of learning strategies for both success and failure, twelve and thirteen year olds (Grade Seven) made this distinction only for successful outcomes, but not for failure. Chan's (1993) finding that students' attributional beliefs continue to develop throughout the junior high school years underscores the importance of teaching cognitive strategies during this time when students' awareness that they control their own learning is developing. Furthermore, a reciprocal link that exists between motivation and the use of learning strategies (Borkowski, 1992; Chan, 1993; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Paris & Winograd, 1990) also supports the notion that the junior high school years are a prime time for the teaching of learning strategies.

Parent, teacher, and peer expectations. Parental expectations, teacher expectations, and peer expectations also influence achievement motivation (Wigfield & Asher, 1984). The value placed by parents on academic success and parental involvement in learning activities influence the achievement motivation of their children. Teacher expectations

have also been shown to influence students' achievement motivation (Marshall & Weinstein, 1986; Wigfield & Asher, 1984; Wixson & Lipson, 1991). High teacher expectation is believed to lead to higher achievement motivation in students, and to higher levels of achievement (Wigfield & Asher, 1984). Baksh & Martin (1983) reported that all students did not perceive teacher expectations in the same way. They reported that when, in the view of students, high expectations were believed to be realistic, they were likely to have a positive effect on student motivation. However, if students viewed teachers' expectations as unrealistically high, a positive effect was less likely, and instead the result could be student discontent or hostility toward the teacher.

Teachers' achievement expectations can be communicated to their students unintentionally through teacher behaviors such as grouping practices within the classroom, the assigning of dissimilar tasks to students of varying abilities, differences in the teachers' wait-time when questions are asked of high achievers and low achievers (Marshall & Weinstein, 1984). High achievers get longer wait-time because it is the teachers' expectation they will be able to answer the question. Low achievers get less wait-time because the teacher assumes they will be unable to answer regardless of how long the wait-time is. Questions directed to high and low achievers also differ in the level of cognitive difficulty which publicly reveals the teachers' achievement expectations for the student in question. Marshall and Weinstein (1986) noted, however, teachers' behaviors may be interpreted differently by older students than by younger students, and that there may be an interaction effect between the teacher behaviors. A teacher behavior that conveys a

message of low expectations to a student may be offset by other behaviors that convey more positive expectations. For example, teachers' short wait-time when asking questions of low-achievers which signals low expectations to the students may be offset by pointing out signs of personal progress to weaker students. If Tom failed the last three science quizzes, but got 63% on the latest quiz the teacher can take time to point out to Tom that she has noticed the improvement, discuss with Tom how he brought his mark up on the last quiz, and offer hints that might help him improve further in science. The personal contact indicates to Tom that his teacher believes he has potential to do better work (a positive expectation) and offsets the negative message of the short wait-time.

Effective teachers routinely communicate their achievement expectations to students in an effort to motivate them (Roehler & Duffy, 1991). In this situation, clarity of expectations is important. Students need to know exactly what is expected of them, and why it is important. Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, & Bassiri (1987) reported that explicit teacher explanation of the reasoning associated with reading strategies, explicit explanation of when to use specific strategies and how to use specific strategies resulted in more conscious use of strategic reasoning among low-achieving grade three students, and in improved reading achievement. The achievement gains made by these students were maintained five months after the completion of the study. On the other hand, unmotivated learners who do not see the purpose of the learning task assigned often fail to use strategies and skills they already know in learning situations. For example, it is not enough to remind my students to

preview a chapter of Social Studies before reading it and predict from the headings and subheadings what important information each section might contain. I must also explain to them that the purpose of this strategy is to get them thinking about the information they are reading, and this will improve their understanding and recall of the information in the chapter. Otherwise, many students will (like the disengaged readers described by Beck, McKeown, & Worthy, 1995) simply read the chapter from beginning to end without really understanding the relationships between the topics described in the text. Readers' failure to use the reading strategies that they know is problematic at the junior high school level where the reading of increasingly sophisticated and difficult texts is required.

At the junior high school level peer expectations also influence achievement motivation, especially for students who do not achieve success in academic settings (Wigfield & Asher, 1991). Often low achievers are not well accepted by their normally achieving classmates, and gain recognition in groups of fellow underachievers. The motivation to belong to a social group then works against attempts by teachers and parents to raise the students' achievement motivation.

Lack of reading motivation Getting junior high school students to read can be problematic. In a review chapter on secondary reading, Alvermann and Moore (1991) reported that reading in the secondary school is but one means of communication or route to learning, and that students at this level prefer to learn through teachers' presentations of subject matter in the form of lectures, discussions, and films (p. 965). Similarly, Gomer (1994) found that the grade nine students in her study did not see the need to read in a

technological society where they could gain information in many other ways, such as through television, recordings, and computers, even though reading is required to make optimum use of either medium. Gomer worked to improve the reading skills and motivation of low-achieving grade nine students through a program that included field trips, dramatization, and costume parties (all of which had a reading component). After eight months she found that although there was an improvement in her students' reading skill, an improvement in grades (some of her low achievers made the honor roll), and increased self-esteem only ten percent of the students in the study reported increased motivation to read and actually did read more.

Frager (1993) reported that students who are capable readers frequently do not even complete readings assigned by content area teachers, and that those who do complete the assigned readings often do not use strategies that enable them to learn through reading. He suggested this is because teachers neglect the affective factors that are present even in content materials. Davis (1994) stated that students who are proficient in reading are choosing to read less and less. She attributed this phenomenon to the educational practice of providing extrinsic rewards for reading. In Davis' view, readers should be provided opportunities to share what they have read with friends in informal settings, and to read for enjoyment with parents and other family members at home. The enjoyment inherent in activities such as these should help develop intrinsic motivation for reading. Beck, McKeown, and Worthy (1995) reported that the students in their studies (which were aimed at improving reading comprehension through the use of more coherent

texts) used only scant information from text, indicating these students (whom they called disengaged readers) had not engaged in actively processing the information and ideas presented in the text. Beck, et al. (1995) described a disengaged reader as one "...whose attention is shallow, who may be easily distracted from the reading, and who operates by mainly scanning the text, registering the words but driven by the goal of getting through rather than dealing with what's there" (p. 220). Clearly students of the 1990s lack motivation for reading. This conclusion begs the question "Why?"

The answer to the preceding question is important for educators. A serious concern is whether current educational practices contribute to the lack of motivation for reading. The point made by Davis (1994) is well taken. Extrinsic motivators do not always lead to the development of intrinsic motivation. However, the reported reluctance of students to read assigned materials is an even greater concern. It raises the question of whether teachers are doing too much for their students. For example, many teachers at the junior and senior high school levels of schooling provide their students with a complete set of notes on each of the topics in the courses they teach. All students have to do is to copy the notes from the board or overhead. A situation is created in which students do not have to read the textbook or other source materials to learn. All they are required to do is to memorize their notes for regurgitation at the appropriate time. There is no motivation for reading in this situation, and students are losing opportunities to improve their reading proficiency and increase their sense of self-efficacy.

Oldfather (1995) suggested a number of factors that may in part be responsible for the decreased motivation to read that is observed in junior high school students. Among these were differences in school structures, classroom climate, and the culture of the junior high school. However, based on the findings of a four year longitudinal study of intrinsic motivation for reading that began with grade six students and followed them through junior high school, Oldfather attributed the decline in reading motivation to a lack of opportunity for student self-expression.

Frager (1993) states that reading comprehension depends as much on the affective domain as it does on the cognitive domain, and that proficient readers bring inner resources such as interest, self-confidence, control of negative feelings, and a willingness to take risks to the task of reading (p. 616). Through the instructional practices they follow, such as asking questions that require students to think and respecting students' responses even while challenging them, teachers can create a classroom climate in which all students can develop self-confidence and feel free to risk being wrong. Also, students must see that in order to do well academically they must read, study, and indicate through reasoning they understand. In such an environment students can deal with negative attitudes towards reading, and take the risk of trying again. In addition, teachers can provide interesting reading materials to motivate students to read more. Text characteristics, such as interestingness, have a positive impact on students' motivation to read as well as on their reading comprehension (Chambliss, 1992). However, students sometimes have very limited interests and experiences. In such cases the role of teachers is

to arouse student interest and open new worlds of knowledge to their students through reading.

Interest, motivation, and strategic reading. Some researchers (Hidi, 1990; Mitchell, 1993; Scraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995) distinguish between readers' personal interest and readers' situational interest. Personal interest is long term, specific to a particular topic, and is unique to the individual. In contrast, situational interest is short term, elicited in a particular situation, and common to many individuals. For example, a mathematics teacher may create situational interest in a particular math topic by presenting the class with a challenging puzzle, although for many class members puzzles may not be of personal interest. Personal and situational interest do not develop independently of each other, but rather each type of interest influences the growth and development of the other (Hidi, 1990). A situational interest in space travel aroused in science class may become a lifelong personal interest leading to hours of avid reading on the subject for some students.

While both personal and situational interest have a positive impact on reading comprehension, situational interest is more relevant to classroom teaching where the teacher's task is to arouse the interest of individuals, who have varied personal interests, in a specific topic at a particular time and in a particular setting. Students' situational interest in the topic should motivate them to read about the topic, and from the point where they start reading the interestingness of the text should enhance their engagement with the text as well as their comprehension of it.

Researchers have identified some of the features that add interest to text. These features include themes such as death, sex, and power which have universal appeal (Kintsch, 1980; Shrank, 1979); elements of surprise or unexpectedness (Anderson, Shirey, Wilson & Fielding, 1984; Hidi & Baird, 1986; Iran-Nejad, 1987; Mandler, 1982; Shrank, 1979); the degree to which readers become involved or can identify with events or characters in the text (Anderson, Shirey, Wilson & Fielding, 1984; Hidi & Baird, 1986; Mitchell, 1993); the readers' purpose for reading (Hidi & Baird, 1986; Schraw & Dennison, 1994); adding voice to the text (Beck, McKeown and Worthy, 1995); ease of comprehension and vividness of writing (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995); and details that add interest but are not essential for understanding the important ideas of the text (Garner, Gillingham, & White, 1989; Hidi & Baird, 1988; Wade & Adams, 1990).

While the provision of interesting reading materials and materials that match readers' personal interests is a strategy junior high school teachers can use to motivate their students to read, the demands of the junior high school curriculum dictate that at least some of the time students will be required to read materials in which they have minimal interest. A similar situation exists in high school and beyond. Hence, motivating students to read for reasons other than personal interest becomes a matter of importance. Achieving academic excellence requires reading proficiency, and research indicates "strategic reading is a prime characteristic of expert readers" (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991, p. 609). Through the use of learning strategies for the self-regulation of thinking during the reading process readers come to realize that goals are achieved as the result of

effort, and a sense of self-efficacy develops (Borkowski, 1992). In short, strategy use increases motivation to read, as well as reading proficiency. Additional support for the teaching of learning strategies at the junior high school level comes from a quantitative synthesis of twenty studies on the effectiveness of 'metacognitive' instruction. Haller, Child, and Walberg (1988) concluded that learning strategy instruction was helpful at all grade levels, but "particularly effective for seventh and eighth graders" (p. 8). A well designed reading program for the junior high school level then would be expected to provide for the development of motivation and reading proficiency through strategic reading.

Questioning

The role of questioning in reading comprehension can be traced back to a 1917 study by Thorndike (as reported in Allington and Weber, 1993). Prior to that time, questioning was used as a means of assessing reading comprehension, but not as a means of teaching it. Then, as now, the value of questions was believed to be "their capacity for stimulating thought processes" (Allington & Weber, 1993, p. 47). Over the years, many reading researchers have studied the effects of questioning on reading (as well as on other school subjects) and a large body of literature exists. However, because an analysis of questions is only one aspect of the present study, select literature directly pertinent to the study is reviewed. Hence, this section focuses on three issues relevant to the role of questioning in junior high school reading instruction. One issue is whether questioning improves reading comprehension. If so, do questions provided by the teachers and

textbooks have a more positive impact on readers' comprehension of text than do student-generated questions? A second issue is whether the level of questioning used by teachers and textbook writers stimulates thought processes and develops the readers' metacognitive awareness of the reading process? Related to this point, do student-generated questions stimulate thought processes and develop metacognitive awareness of the reading process? A third issue is whether cognitive strategies for junior high school reading are best taught directly or developed through questioning.

Pearson and Fielding (1991) found students believe the questions teachers pose during instruction highlight important information in the text, regardless of whether the questions do, in fact, highlight important text information. Students allot more attention and more processing time to text information related to questions teachers ask (Reynolds & Anderson, 1982), and hence their recall of this information is better. If teachers ask questions that require only recall of factual information, then this is what students see as the important information from the text. If, however, teachers ask questions that require students to think about the central text ideas and the relationships that exist between pieces of factual information and the central ideas of the text, then the questions can be expected to enhance the development of students' thinking abilities and metacognitive knowledge of reading.

Another approach to questioning is to have students generate their own questions. The rationale behind this teaching strategy is that students must process the text information thoroughly in order to generate questions about it. Denner and Rickards

(1987) compared the effects of questions on reading comprehension at three grade levels namely, grades five, eight, and eleven. Their purpose was to determine if questions provided by the text or teacher resulted in greater recall and comprehension of text than did student-generated questions. They found both provided and generated questions significantly improved students' recall over that of students who simply read the text, indicating that questioning does improve reading comprehension. However, provided questions produced more efficient recall of main ideas, whereas student-generated questions produced recall of factual details. Developmental differences were also noted. Grade eleven students were more able to generate questions related to the ideas contained in the texts, and to organize the facts from the passages around the central ideas, while students in grades five and eight were not. Denner and Rickards hypothesized that the grade eleven students' greater knowledge of text structure enabled them to ask more idea-oriented questions, and that the grades five and eight students lacked sufficient awareness of text structure to generate questions about the central ideas of the text.

Student-generated questions do not necessarily result in more active and thorough processing of the text. How students process text information seems to depend on their ability to identify the central ideas contained in the text. Denner and Rickards (1987) concluded that questions provided by the teacher or the text, which tend to be focused on higher level text information rather than on isolated facts, can enhance the performance of young readers (p. 143).

Self-questioning, however, has been shown to improve students' comprehension of text especially for students with low verbal ability (Alvermann & Moore, 1991), but the key to successful use of self-questioning is instruction in that strategy. Beach and Hynds (1991) taught students to generate their own questions in reading literature and reported that students' understanding of the stories was improved. Alvermann and Moore (1991), in a review chapter on secondary reading, concluded instruction in self-questioning seems to improve students' processing of text, but that it is more effective with poor readers than with proficient readers. Furthermore, successful self-questioning involves direct instruction in the strategy or explicit written examples of good questions. In view of the findings of the Denner and Rickards' study, it seems instruction should also be aimed at increasing students' awareness of text structure.

The level of questioning, not the source of the question, appears to be the factor that influences whether reading comprehension is improved by questioning. Questions that are conceptual or inferential in nature require readers to think, and to integrate factual information from the text with their world knowledge. Such thinking increases knowledge of the nature of reading. However, most questions asked in secondary classrooms (grades seven to twelve) are factual in nature, and often require verbatim responses (Alvermann & Moore, 1991). This is especially true when teachers are dealing with poor readers. This fact, unfortunately, denies poor readers the opportunity to become more proficient in reading. The purpose of questioning is to develop students' understanding (Roehler & Duffy, 1991) and to stimulate thinking and reasoning. Students who are continually asked

questions that are factual in nature have no need to engage in the type of critical thinking required for proficient reading, and consequently construct only a superficial understanding of the text.

Despite the importance of higher level questioning in improving reading comprehension, there is a place for factual questions. Explicit text information must be understood by readers before they can use it to construct an interpretation of the overall text (Pearson & Fielding, 1991, p. 825). In this connection, teachers sometimes ask factual questions to guide readers as they make inferences about the text, and to confirm students have understood the facts on which the inference is to be based. Teachers first pose a higher-level (inferential) question about the text, then follow up with a series of factual questions and procedural questions (how questions, for example) intended to guide students as they make the necessary inferences to answer the original question.

The third issue is whether metacognitive awareness of reading can best be developed through the use of questioning or if direct instruction in reading strategies is needed. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) support direct instruction in learning strategies as "...the surest means of developing the strategic processing ... characteristic of skilled readers" (p. 72). Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, and Bassiri (1987) reported that as a result of teachers' explicit explanations of reading strategies, the reason for using them, the benefits of using them, and how and when to apply them, low achieving students' conscious use of strategies and reading achievement increased. Paris, Wasik, and Turner (1991) supported

both direct and indirect efforts to teach learning strategies. Poor readers seem to benefit from direct instruction of the type provided in the Duffy et al. (1987) study, while more proficient readers show less improvement. This may be because proficient readers had been aware of and using reading strategies prior to the instruction. There are indirect teaching strategies such as reciprocal teaching and co-operative learning that can be used to develop strategic reading in students, but each of these methods uses direct instruction in the initial stage. Although questioning can play a role in the development of strategic readers, it may be more effective if preceded by explicit and comprehensive instruction of the type described by Duffy, et al. (1987).

From this brief survey of pertinent literature, it can be concluded that questioning does result in improved comprehension and recall of text when the questions focus on high-level text information. There is some evidence that the ability to generate questions about the central ideas of the text and about the relationships between facts and central text ideas may be developmental. Students need instruction before they are able to generate questions of their own that will stimulate thought and develop their strategic knowledge of reading. Although there are several ways of teaching students to generate their own questions, explicit and direct instruction is a component of each method in the beginning stages where teachers explain the self-questioning strategy, the purpose of using it, the advantages of using it, and how and when to use it. A reading program for junior high schools should include questions to stimulate thought and develop readers' knowledge of strategic reading.

Reader Response

The concept of reader response is an integral part of most current language arts programs. Hence, it was deemed necessary for the purposes of this study to include research findings on its effectiveness in developing strategic, motivated readers. Reader response is used mainly with literature texts - particularly with narratives and poetry (Smith, 1992), as a means of developing and expanding students' ability to think about their interpretations of text. The Literacy Dictionary (1995) describes three stages of the reader response model. In the first stage, called evocation, students suspend critical judgement and lose themselves in the text. In the second stage they think about the text from other viewpoints through which it could have been presented or they compare it to other texts they have read. This stage of the model, called examining alternatives, is accomplished through informal writing such as journal writing or through peer group discussions where group members share and discuss their interpretations of the text. The role of the teacher is to observe group discussion and interaction from the sidelines, coaching where necessary. In the final stage, reflective thinking and evaluation, students consider applications of the text content to real life, as well as the inherent value of the themes and ideas contained in the text.

The theoretical basis of reader response presumes reading is a transaction between individual readers and texts. From the transaction, readers construct subjective (some might argue unique) interpretations of the text. The idea that there is one normative interpretation of a text, or one appropriate, expected response to a text is challenged by

reader response advocates who view each reader as a "universe of one" (p. 453). However, similarities have been found in the interpretations of readers from similar cultural backgrounds, common interpretative backgrounds (such as students who have learned the same cognitive strategies for reading, or readers from religious groups who make literal interpretations of Bible narratives), and from similar personality attributes (Beach & Hynds, 1991).

Readers' purposes for reading influence the interpretations they make from the text. Rosenblatt (1978) described two stances readers take depending on their purposes for reading. The efferent stance is taken when the reader's intention is to find information for a specific purpose (such as recall of information for an exam), and the aesthetic stance is taken when the reader's purpose is to read for enjoyment. In the aesthetic stance, the reader vicariously enters and becomes part of the world created in the text. In fact, both stances may be adopted at different times in the course of reading the same text, that is, they are not mutually exclusive or text specific. One of the problems Rosenblatt (1978) saw with traditional methods of reading instruction was that teachers took primarily an efferent rather than an aesthetic stance towards literature. Rather than asking open-ended questions that required readers to examine their interpretations and compare them with alternative possibilities, most teachers asked factual questions about story content that required readers to restate the text.

Because reader response (ideally) requires that students think about their interpretations of text and about the sources of those interpretations, Newton (1991)

suggested reader response may help readers develop metacognitive awareness of reading. In her work with college freshmen, she found that through writing regularly about their text interpretations her students became more aware of their learning patterns (p. 478). However, since research indicates both the ability to respond to literature and the development of metacognitive awareness increase with maturity and experience (Beach & Phinney, 1992), it is possible that the age and maturity level of Newton's subjects influenced the outcome of her study. That is, students of junior high school age may not have developed the same degree of metacognitive awareness of reading through writing about text interpretations.

The ability to respond to literature follows a developmental pattern. As students mature their ability to make abstractions about the actions, values, and goals of the characters they read about increases (Beach & Phinney, 1992). Students at the junior high school level are able to respond at a more interpretive level than are students at the elementary school level. However, other factors such as reading proficiency and previous reading experience also influence the responses students make to reading. Students who have read more and have read widely for pleasure are more likely to give an interpretive response than are those who have not (p. 139).

Although knowledge of text structure and text conventions is not emphasized in reader response theory as much as it might be in more conventional text-centered approaches to reading instruction, readers do use their accumulated knowledge of text factors to assist in making interpretations of texts (Beach & Phinney, 1992). According to

reader response theory, students' knowledge of text structure and text conventions are learned tacitly as readers generalize from previous reading experience (p. 135). Nevertheless, when teachers become aware that their students do not have the knowledge to facilitate their interpretation of a particular text, they are expected to plan experiences for such students to guide them in making the necessary generalizations about texts.

Systems of categorizing reader responses to literature have been developed for the purposes of analyses, but these systems stop short of suggesting one category of response is better than another one. In most systems the descriptors range from a low-level response, such as 'literal-descriptive' to a higher level response such as 'interpretive/inferential' (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 457). However, researchers do not define good reading as the production of high-level responses, rather the goal of reading instruction is the development of a repertoire of sophisticated responses to be used in the appropriate reading situation (p.459).

After spending much of his life studying reader response and literature, Purves (1993) critiqued reader response pedagogy for three reasons. First, he challenged the assumption that reading in school is the same as reading for pleasure. In his view, "It would be futile to make school like the world outside school when it cannot be: school exerts its own reality and influences the ways in which a particular subject (mathematics) or activity (writing) is construed. Regardless of the ideology behind them, schools are divorced from the communities in many ways..." (p.351). It is Purves' view that reading literature in schools is not necessarily an aesthetic experience. Reading is effereent when

students are expected to give clear answers about the texts' meaning, whereas in aesthetic reading students are expected to explore possible meanings of the text (p. 352). He sees both as valid objectives of the study of literature, although neither of these responses represents what readers do outside of school settings. Second, Purves questioned the assumption made by some advocates of reader response that "naive readers" are better readers, and that the only way to arrive at a "true response" is through "group soul searching" (p. 349). The readers' experiences in life and specifically in schools mean no reader (at the junior high school level especially) comes to the task of reading devoid of knowledge about reading, given students have received reading instruction since kindergarten. According to Purves, responding to a text means much more than naive group discussion and discovery. It includes making sense of the text, summarizing and establishing reasons for points included in summaries, analyzing, personalizing, and interpreting. Purves' third point of criticism is that reader response negates the importance of the writer because it credits the reader with the creation of meaning. This criticism of reader response is valid when the reader's response is to indulge in an exploration of the self (that is, of memories and associations evoked by the text) instead of transacting with text created by the writer to form an interpretation. A distinction must therefore be made between the interpretation of a text and a personal reaction to the content of the text. The blurring of this distinction between interpreting texts and reacting to texts leaves reader response theory vulnerable. If, in the classroom setting, teachers accept any and all responses to reading as acceptable and of equal value, and do not

challenge their students to think about their responses in light of universally adequate text interpretations, then what does the student learn about either reading or literature?

Vipond, Hunt, Jewett, and Reither (1990) proposed three modes of reading, one of which (dialogic reading) credits the writer with the creation of meaning more satisfactorily than does reader response theory. In their conceptualization of reading Vipond et al. described three modes of reading, two of which (information-driven and story-driven) are roughly equivalent to Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic reading. The third mode is point-driven or dialogic reading, which is based on the assumption that meaning is created as a result of a collaboration between the writer and the reader. In this conceptualization of reading, the writer imbues the text with meaning, and readers bring their knowledge to bear on the text creating an interpretation that, while it may differ from the interpretations of other readers in some respects, will meet universal standards of adequacy. In the dialogic mode readers use cues (such as incongruities or inconsistencies) from the text as signs that the author had a specific purpose for writing the particular text. Reading then becomes a dialogue with the writer as the reader seeks to determine the point of the text. In the dialogic mode of reading, readers have to engage with the text to seek out a deeper meaning.

Purves' (1993) view of reading is that schools, through instruction, develop in readers a set of habits about reading and responding to reading. The way in which students respond to reading is habituated from this exposure and practice. These habits include, for example, stances taken to various texts in different settings, the need to infer

in reading, and the way to talk about reading (in a school setting). This means most responses to reading within a school setting will have much in common. In addition, the response a reader will take to a text depends on the situation in which it is read and the reader's purpose, and in school settings teachers are instrumental in setting the purpose for reading. Because much of the talk about reading and literature that is done in schools is habituated, Purves asserts that our concern should be with communal readings of texts and habituated discourse about texts, as opposed to individual readings and reader's response (p. 354). That is, the primary focus of our teaching should be on helping students make common or universally adequate interpretations of text. The students' personal responses must be to the authors' intended message.

It seems there is a risk in reader response pedagogy that the balance between the partners in the transaction, namely the writer and the reader, can be upset when too little attention is paid to constructing a universally acceptable interpretation of the text. As with other reading pedagogies, input and careful guidance from a teacher who holds specific reading performance expectations for the students is necessary if students are to develop greater reading proficiency through reader response.

Summary

Research has shown that knowledge of text structure helps readers to identify the central text ideas and understand the relationships between ideas in the text. Patterns of text structure have been identified, some of which are more difficult than others, but when readers recognize a pattern of text organization it cues them to anticipate what will follow.

There is evidence that knowledge of text structure and the ability to apply that knowledge to reading develops with age and schooling, and all forms of instruction in text structure have resulted in improved reading comprehension and recall. In addition, clearly organized and skilfully written texts ('considerate texts') are easier for students to read and to learn from.

The work of Moffett (1968), Kinneavy (1971), Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975), and Applebee (1980) has demonstrated that the forms or modes of discourse are derived from the author's purpose in speaking or writing. Moffett (1968) equated the modes with the levels of abstraction in discourse, which means there is a progression from drama (reporting events in the present) to logical argumentation (defence of theories). Students develop the ability to use the structured forms of discourse from using the unstructured forms, but they need exposure to the structured forms if they are to learn from them.

Readability, which was once conceptualized as a characteristic of text, is now conceptualized as an interaction of text and reader variables. Input from teachers is also considered a readability factor in the current view of text comprehension. Nevertheless, factors such as the intellectual and processing demands that the text makes of readers determines to some degree the level of difficulty.

Reader characteristics have also been found to influence reading proficiency. It has been found that there is a link between readers' understanding of the nature of the reading task and success or failure in learning to read, and students often reach the junior

high school level with vague and inaccurate knowledge of reading. Research indicates that in order to read well students need an accurate understanding of the reading process. In addition, they need to be taught the type of strategic thinking characteristic of proficient readers. The effect of 'prior knowledge' has been shown to be less important than the ability of readers to form interpretations of text by establishing relevance for their own knowledge through reasoning. Explicit strategy instruction, which focuses on the strategies used by proficient readers, is important to junior high school students for a number of reasons. As well as improving reading comprehension, successful strategy use gives students a greater sense of self-efficacy at a time (adolescence) when they are beginning to attribute their success to effort and strategy use rather than to ability (over which they have no control). This increased sense of self-efficacy results in increased motivation. However, research has shown that even students who are proficient readers are not motivated to read, and frequently do not complete school reading assignments, preferring instead to learn through listening. Students' lack of motivation to read is an issue beginning to be addressed in the literature. Frager (1993) surmises that the affective aspect of reading needs consideration, while Davis (1994) argues that allowing students to respond to reading through informal discussions will develop their intrinsic motivation to read.

Research on the role of questioning in reading comprehension has shown the effectiveness of questioning depends on whether the questions focus on central text ideas. The ability of students to generate their own questions does not necessarily mean more

thorough processing of text information, since younger students tend to generate questions about details in the text rather than about the central ideas. The ability of senior high school students to generate questions to focus on central text ideas is attributed to text structure knowledge that older students possess. Instruction in self-questioning is necessary if self-questioning is to be used successfully to improve reading comprehension.

The ability to respond to literature has been found to follow a developmental pattern, and factors such as reading proficiency and previous reading experience influence the type of response made by students. Recent criticism of reader response pedagogy charges it does not always emphasize the need to form a universally acceptable interpretation of the text in addition to a personal response. Furthermore, when teachers accept any and all responses as being of equal value students are not learning to integrate text information into their readings of texts.

CHAPTER THREE

Design of the Study

Content analysis of textbooks and other reading materials used in schools have been undertaken for various purposes during the past two decades. Most of these analyses have been focused upon basal reading programs intended for use at the primary and elementary levels. Basal reading programs have been analyzed for the language register (formal, informal, or technical-special) used in adolescent novels and grade six basal readers (Jacobson & Freeman, 1981); the comprehension instruction present in basal reading programs (Durkin, 1981); the relatedness of instruction offered in teachers' manuals to the actual text that students read in the basals (Reutzel & Daines, 1987); the representation of females, ethnic groups, the elderly, the disabled, and the act of reading in basals intended for grades four, five, and six (Robinson, 1988); the presence of analogic reasoning in basal reading materials at the elementary level (Bacharach, 1988); the portrayal of visible minorities in basals (Chester, 1989); the extent to which lessons and suggested learning activities in the basal programs promote independent strategic reading (Schmitt & Hopkins, 1993); and a comparison of older and newer basal reading materials (McCarthy & Hoffman, 1995).

At the high school level, recent analyses of textbooks have been undertaken to determine such factors as the degree to which concepts are elaborated in high school biology texts (Lloyd, 1990) or the under representation of women and minority writers in

anthologies of literature used in American schools (Pace, 1992). However, to date an analysis to determine the reading expectations inherent in an integrated language arts program has not been undertaken.

Although specific details of the procedures used in analyzing text content may vary from study to study, the skills trace method of analysis is often used in the analysis of reading programs. Skills trace analysis is a procedure in which each occurrence of a particular skill or program feature under study is identified and recorded. Each recorded occurrence is then compared with previously determined skill categories to determine if the occurrence, method of teaching, and outcome is in keeping with criteria established for that category. For example, Schmitt and Hopkins (1993), in a study of strategic reading instruction in current elementary basal reading programs, analyzed the 1989 teachers' manuals of eight basal reading programs. They first identified lessons in the programs which incorporated reading strategy instruction as well as lessons identified as strategy lessons by the publisher. These lessons were then compared with three successful instructional methods for promoting strategic reading that had previously been identified from the literature. However, Schmitt & Hopkins chose to do an in-depth analysis at three selected grade levels rather than to use random sampling in their analysis because they found the treatment of metacognitive strategies was "diverse and sporadic... within and across series" (p. 14), and thus there was a danger they might misrepresent the extent of strategic reading instruction in the programs by sampling randomly.

Jacobson and Freeman (1981), in their analysis of the language style (or register) used in adolescent novels and grade six basal reading programs, randomly selected four pages of text from each of five basal reading programs and two pages from each of the ten novels used in the study. On each of the pages selected, the language used to express every complete thought was categorized as formal, informal, or technical-special, according to the criteria set to define each category. Tabulations were done and percentages found for each style of language.

Bacharach (1988) analyzed four basal reading series to determine whether instruction in analogical reasoning was included in those programs, and if so, to what extent and how was it taught. She first examined the scope and sequence charts for each of the reading programs, and then reviewed the skills index in each teacher's manual. If analogical reasoning was mentioned as a component of the program she recorded the instructional techniques used to teach it, and finally compared the techniques suggested in the teacher's manuals with strategies that had been used in analogy training studies.

In the present study an analysis similar to the skills trace analysis was undertaken to trace the presence of specific reading expectations in the three programs selected. Each unit was examined for the presence of explicit and implicit expectations in areas of reading instruction that my search of the literature has revealed should be part of a comprehensive junior high school reading program. For example, research indicates knowledge of text structure improves reading comprehension, so the materials were examined to determine if explicit instruction in text structure was part of the reading program (Are readers expected

to use knowledge of text structure to improve their understanding of what they read?). It is widely agreed in the literature that proficient readers are strategic readers, that strategy use improves motivation to read, and that the junior high school years are a prime time for the teaching of strategies, so instruction in reading strategies was traced in the units studied (Are junior high school students expected to read strategically?). Research also indicates that young readers should be exposed to the 'full spectrum of discourse', so the units were analyzed to determine if students are exposed to a variety of discourse forms (Are junior high school readers expected to read good examples of all modes of discourse?). More general features examined in the study included the progression of difficulty within the unit and the instructional coherence of the unit (Are junior high school students expected to read increasingly more sophisticated and difficult materials?).

Once it was established that a particular expectation was present in a program, the instructional methods used to assist students in meeting the expectation were compared to criteria established (based on the findings from the literature) as to the most effective way to help students meet that expectation.

This study to determine the explicit and implicit reading expectations held for junior high school readers (through an examination of comparable thematic units in three current junior high school language arts programs) was conducted in two phases. In the first phase of the study, three junior high school language arts programs were identified, and one thematic unit was selected from each program for analysis. In phase two of the

study the analysis of the thematic units was carried out. The results of this analysis will be the subject of chapter four.

Phase one includes a description of the identification of the three language arts programs and the selection of the thematic units examined. An overview of the three language arts programs and a brief, detailed description of the thematic units analyzed is presented next. This is followed by the presentation of phase two of the study, which was the analysis of the thematic units. The procedure used in the analysis of the thematic units is described here.

Phase One: Identification and Selection of the Units

Identification of the Programs

The three programs selected for study are *In Context* (1990) published by Nelson Canada, *MultiSource* (1993) published by Prentice-Hall, and *The Issues Collection* (1994) published by McGraw-Hill. The programs selected are currently used or approved for use in Canadian schools, and as recently published programs, they should reflect current knowledge of reading process and pedagogy, as well as current reading expectations for students at the junior high school level.

Selection of the Thematic Units for Analysis

In selecting a sample unit for examination from each of the three programs an effort was made to choose units that contained some similarity. Since the three programs were organized thematically it was decided to choose units with a comparable theme. It was reasoned that choosing units centered on the same theme might provide a common

base from which to compare program features such as learning activities, readability, and performance expectations. A thematic unit on mysteries, for example, would not make quite the same demands on readers as a unit on poetry, nor would the teaching strategies used in teaching a unit on poetry be similar to strategies used in teaching a unit on mysteries. Hence, the comparison of two units on the same theme such as mysteries would be more defensible.

An examination of the thematic units contained in each of the programs (See Table 1) showed that each of the programs contained a thematic unit on the topic of relationships. In fact, the MultiSource Relating Unit Guide identified four themes within the unit on relationships in their program. The *In Context* anthology, In Context Book One, contained a thematic unit called "Friends and Relations" and *The Issues Collection* contained a mini-anthology called Families in Transition. It was noted during an initial examination of the tables of contents for each of the three thematic units that the selection "Priscilla and the Wimps" was featured in both the unit "Friends and Relations" in In Context Book One and in the Relating Anthology of the *MultiSource* program. In addition, the selection "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Good Night" appeared in both the Relating Anthology and Families in Transition. This finding lent support to the idea that these units were comparable. Hence, units on the theme of relationships were selected from the three programs.

Table 1

Thematic units in language arts programs selected for examination

<i>In Context Book One</i>	<i>MultiSource</i>	<i>The Issues Collection</i>
Friends and Relations	Changes	Biography
Sports Pages	Creativity	Families in Transition
Journeys	Imagine Poetry	Futures
It's A Mystery	Mystery and Wonder	Gender Issues
Dark Water, Deep Water	What a Story!	Global Issues
Words and Music	Working Together	Justice
Getting the Message	Heroic Adventures	Multiculturalism
Challenges	Media and	Music
	Communications	Native Voices
	People Profiles	Values
	Play Making	Wellness
	Relating	
	What's Fair	

However, a point of difference existed between the thematic units selected. The unit "Friends and Relations" from the *In Context* program was designated for use in grade seven, while the thematic units on relationships in the other two programs were not

designated for use at a particular grade level. The advertising brochure of the *MultiSource* program suggested that the unit on relationships could be used in grades eight or nine, however, the introduction to the program found in the Relating Unit Guide made it clear that "Teachers can make the decisions about what to use and how to use it. Or they can let their kids make the decisions" (p. 3), which means that the unit could be used in grades seven, eight, and nine. Given the flexibility claimed for both the *MultiSource* and *The Issues Collection* units, and observing that the three programs appeared to be holistic in their stance towards reading, it was decided to use the thematic units on relationships (or relating) from each of the programs. Hence, the units selected for analysis were the thematic unit "Friends and Relations" from the anthology In Context Book One of the *In Context* program, the thematic unit "Families in Transition" from the mini-anthology Families in Transition of *The Issues Collection*, and the thematic unit "Relating" from the *MultiSource* program. The thematic unit from the *MultiSource* program consisted of the Relating Magazine, the Relating Anthology, as well as a resource book for students called the Language Arts Survival Guide.

Overview of the Programs

In Context. The *In Context* program is described by its authors as "a set of Canadian language arts materials for students in the middle years" (Teacher's Resource Book One, p. 6). The materials for each grade level include an anthology of thematically arranged literature selections, a book of non-fiction reading selections (also thematically arranged to correspond with the anthology), a teacher's resource book, a student book of

suggested writing projects and writing strategies, a teacher's handbook to accompany the writing book, novels, and a reproducible activity pack (See Table 2). The teacher's resource book guides teachers in coordinating the program components and includes teaching suggestions that may be selected and adapted by teachers to meet the needs of a particular class. The *In Context* philosophy is that language is learned as a whole and not in pieces, and each of the language processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing mutually supports the development of the others. According to this view, reading cannot be taught separate from the other language processes. The philosophy of the program is expressed in twenty-two stated beliefs found in the *In Context Teacher's Resource Book One*.

Readability is viewed as an interaction of text, student, and teacher in the *In Context* program, and it is stated that difficult reading selections are made accessible to less proficient readers through "a balance of instruction and peer support" (p. 7). Nevertheless, selections in the anthology are given one of four readability ratings that range from easy to challenging.

In Context lessons comprise three distinct segments for use before, during, and after reading. In the first part of the lesson, called *Creating a Context* the learning activities include such strategies as using prior knowledge, building awareness (of people or situations deemed necessary for understanding the selection), previewing text, predicting, and word awareness. The second part of the lesson, *Developing the Context*, includes personal response, responding creatively, critical thinking, and understanding

Table 2

Components of language arts programs

<i>In Context</i> (Nelson, 1990)	<i>MultiSource</i> (Prentice-Hall)	<i>Issues</i> (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1994)
<u>In Context</u> (Anthology)	Anthology (Each has one	12 mini-anthologies
<u>Responses: Non-fiction in</u>	topic and four themes)	Teacher's guide for each
<u>Context</u>	Magazine (non-fiction)	anthology
<u>Writing in Context</u>	Student language arts	
<u>Writing in Context:</u>	handbook	
<u>Teachers Handbook</u>	3 Novels	
2 Novels	3 Videos	
<u>Teacher's Resource Book</u>	1 Audiotape	
Activity Pack (Available	Transparency package	
at grade 7, 8, & 9 levels)	Teacher's Unit Guide	

conventions. Activities such as listening, discussing, media awareness, making connections, related reading, and researching make up the final section of the lesson, which is called *Extending the Context*.

Assessment in the *In Context* program is based on the principle that "Involving students in the assessment of their own growth ensures that they will become more active learners, better able to identify the strategies they particularly need" (p.12). Assessment is continuous, and options such as Thinking About the Theme and Thinking About Yourself are offered at the end of each thematic unit for student self-assessment. As well, there are a number of checklists in the teacher's resource book for use in teachers' assessment of student progress. In the *In Context* program, the role of the teacher in assessment is to assist students in monitoring their own learning and to revise instruction as needed to meet the needs of the students.

MultiSource. The *MultiSource* program is a set of materials for use in junior high school language arts programs that includes anthologies, non-fiction magazines, novels, videos, audiotapes, transparencies, a student handbook, and a teacher's guide to accompany each thematic unit. The program is designed to be flexible. Each unit stands alone, and teachers make decisions about which of the thematic units to use, when, and how to use them. Teachers may, for example, choose to use the themes as organized in the program, teach the selections by topic or genre, or configure their own thematic units from the program materials. Another option suggested is to allow the students themselves to select the units they will use.

In the *MultiSource* program the stated goal of language arts learning is the effective use of language outside the school. Like the *In Context* program, *MultiSource* is based on the belief that language processes and skills are interrelated, and best learned in

a supportive environment. According to the editors of *MultiSource*, involvement with literature, language, and media is the best foundation that can be given students to prepare them for the study of literature in high school. The *MultiSource* program aims to make students lifelong learners of language arts, to prepare them for the academic study of literature, to integrate language arts into other disciplines, to develop strategies for the meaningful use of skills, and to emphasize critical thinking and aesthetic experiences with texts.

A unit overview, which lists all program resources related to the unit theme, is provided for each thematic unit in the *MultiSource* program. The themes and the program resources to develop them, specific skills to introduce through the unit (indexed to selections that are best suited to teaching them), suggested cross-curricular links, and selections most appropriate for different types of learners, such as the visual learner, the auditory learner are indicated in the unit overview. Teachers may use the unit overview to select the materials needed to meet their specific teaching objectives. According to the *MultiSource* program, "The key to helping students read literature is flexibility - knowing what materials are most suitable for your students and knowing when to step in and teach concepts and skills" (Relating Unit Guide, p. 14). The role of teachers is to select the materials best suited to their students' needs, and to provide feedback and needed instruction to students.

MultiSource learning opportunities in reading are described in the Relating Unit Guide under the three headings of Response, Comprehension, and Writer's Craft (p. 10).

Opportunities to respond include identifying with characters, focusing on the aesthetics of reading, making a personal response, and making a critical response. Opportunities to develop comprehension include building background knowledge, predicting, and confirming. Writer's Craft includes analysis of literary elements in different genres and analysis of author's techniques and styles.

Although there is no scripted lesson format, suggestions for learning activities and responses are provided for each selection in the Unit Overview. A Unit Overview is provided for each thematic unit in the program. In addition, the *MultiSource* Unit Guide contains a six page section on teaching and learning ideas for reading. This brief section focuses mainly on responding to texts (both print and non-print). Reader response is the main teaching strategy evident in the program. Personal response through journals and small group discussion, as well as critical response through guided discussion, mini-lessons, reading like a writer and comparing texts are the foci of instruction.

Reading selections in the *MultiSource* program are rated as easy, average, or challenging, although there is no information given as to how these estimates were reached.

Evaluation in *MultiSource* is ongoing and involves students in self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. These are in addition to teacher evaluations. A variety of suggestions for evaluating progress are made. These range from pre- and post-testing during the course of a lesson to having students generate the marking scale to be used in evaluating their

work. Other suggested teacher evaluation techniques include observation, work samples, conferencing, and journals.

The Issues Collection. *The Issues Collection* is described by its editors as "a multi-level, cross-curricular collection of Language Arts resources" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p. 11) for grades seven, eight, and nine. The materials are organized thematically around issues that are believed to be especially appealing to adolescents, for example, gender issues, justice, music, and values. *The Issues Collection* is designed for use in mixed ability, multi-level classes, and the selections are not specifically designated for a particular grade. This, according to the *Families in Transition Teachers Guide*, allows teachers to select materials at the appropriate level of difficulty for students at different ability and achievement levels. Readability of the selections is believed to depend on "teacher and peer support, as well as student experience with the issue" (p.1). Nevertheless, estimates of readability are provided for the selections in the program, which are intended to "alert teachers to the complexity of individual selections" (p.65). Heterogeneous grouping of students according to needs and interests is recommended, and collaborative learning is stressed. The program is holistic in stance, and skills and strategies are learned in the context of "genuine ideas and problems" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p. 4). *The Issues Collection* offers suggestions for integrating each selection in the thematic unit across the curriculum.

The learning environment is considered important in *The Issues Collection*. The classroom must be a place where students feel at ease to "take risks". High, but

reasonable expectations must be held for all learners, and collaborative rather than competitive learning is stressed. Evaluation procedures are suggested, which ask teachers to consider that adolescent growth is erratic and non-sequential. Students are involved in self-evaluation and peer evaluation, and blackline masters of evaluative tools such as anecdotal records, rating scales, and analytic records are provided for student and teacher use.

The programs from which the thematic units were selected for this study are integrated language arts programs, two of which (*MultiSource* and *The Issues Collection*) are intended for use over three years, and as such contain a number of thematically organized anthologies and other program components. Table 3 lists the materials that make up the thematic units on relationships in each of the programs.

Given the focus of this study was on reading expectations, only those components of each thematic unit directly related to the reading strands of the programs were examined in phase two of the study. That is, program materials which focussed upon listening, speaking, writing, and viewing were not analyzed, though it is acknowledged that all are complementary processes in the development of the language arts. Table 4 lists the program components examined in phase two.

Table 3

Materials for use in thematic unit on relationships in each of the programs

<i><u>In Context Book One</u></i>	<i><u>MultiSource</u></i>	<i><u>The Issues Collection</u></i>
<u>In Context Anthology One</u>	<u>Relating (Anthology)</u>	<u>Families in Transition</u>
Unit: Friends and Relations	9 short stories	(Mini-anthology)
6 narratives	14 poems	17 poems
4 poems	1 dialogue	11 short stories
<u>Responses Non-fiction In</u>	1 essay	9 non-fiction selections
<u>Context One</u>	1 article	2 short fiction selections
5 selections	<u>Relating Magazine</u>	<u>Families in Transition</u>
<u>In Context Teacher's</u>	22 articles	<u>Teacher's Guide</u>
<u>Resource Book One</u>	<u>Language Arts Survival</u>	
Novels	<u>Guide (Useful sections)</u>	
<u>Danny's Run</u>	Responding to reading	
<u>Wild Dog Summer</u>	Reading for information	
<u>Writing in Context</u>	Reading critically	
<u>Writing in Context:</u>	Reading narrative	
<u>Teacher's Handbook</u>	Reading poetry	
Activity Pack		

(table continues)

Table 3 (continued)

Materials for use in thematic unit on relationships in each of the programs

<i>In Context Book One</i>	<i>MultiSource</i>	<i>The Issues Collection</i>
	Novels	
	<u>Harriet's Daughter</u>	
	<u>No signature</u>	
	<u>Homecoming</u>	
	<u>Transparencies</u>	
	<u>12 transparencies</u>	
	Videos	
	<u>The Man Who Planted</u>	
	<u>Trees</u>	
	<u>Face Value</u>	
	<u>Doctor, Lawyer, Indian</u>	
	<u>Chief</u>	
	<u>Relating Unit Guide</u>	

Table 4

Program materials examined in phase two of the study

<i>In Context</i>	<i>MultiSource</i>	<i>The Issues Collection</i>
"Friends and Relations"	<u>Relating Anthology</u>	<u>Families in Transition</u>
unit from <u>In Context</u>	<u>Relating Magazine</u>	<u>Families in Transition</u>
<u>Anthology Book One</u>	<u>Relating Unit Guide</u>	<u>Teacher's Guide</u>
<u>Responses: Non-fiction In Context</u>	<u>Language Arts Survival Guide</u>	
<u>In Context Teacher's Resource Book One</u>		

Program Materials to be Analyzed in Phase Two

The thematic unit "Friends and Relations" from the *In Context* program consists of ten selections in the literature anthology In Context Book One and five related selections from the book of non-fiction readings, Responses-In Context. Both of these program components were included in the analysis, as was the In Context Teacher's Resource Book One. Program components from *The Issues Collection* examined in phase two of the study were the mini-anthology Families in Transition, which contains forty-seven selections described as poems, short stories, non-fiction and short fiction selections, and the Families in Transition Teacher's Guide. Materials from the *MultiSource* program

included the Relating Magazine, a magazine of twenty-two non-fiction articles; the Relating Anthology, which contained nine short stories, fourteen poems, a dialogue, an article, and one essay; the Relating Unit Guide for teachers; and the section on reading in the Language Arts Survival Guide, as well as any other sections of the guide to which students were referred in the course of reading activities suggested in the Relating Unit Guide.

Phase Two: Analysis of the Thematic Units

The examination of the units was guided by eight questions derived from current reading research. These eight questions focussed either on features of the programs or on factors that were considered in developing program features and were directly related to the performance expectations held for students. For example, research question 3 asks what readability factors were considered in estimating the readability of selections in the units. The three programs in the study provided estimates of readability for each selection in each of the units. These estimates or readability ratings, which usually ranged from 'easy' to 'challenging' on a four-point scale, were presented either numerically or as a category name, that is, a word or a brief descriptive phrase such as 'average to challenging' which indicated the estimated level of difficulty for the piece. The expectation that students read selections rated as 'challenging' was reasoned to be a higher performance expectation than the expectation that students read selections rated as 'easy' or 'average'. Hence, knowing the factors that were considered in making the estimates of readability becomes relevant to the expectation that junior high school students read materials of

increasing difficulty and necessary for investigating whether selections rated as 'easy' are in fact less difficult than those rated as 'easy to average' or 'average'. Similar links are evident between the other seven research questions and reading performance expectations held for junior high school students.

The Two-Step Analysis Procedure

A two-step procedure was used to examine the three thematic units under study for explicit and implicit reading expectations. Because the examination was guided by eight research questions, the two-step procedure was repeated eight times. In the first step of the examination, the introductory sections in the teacher's manuals were carefully examined for any and all references to the specific reading expectation being traced. Introductory sections in the teacher's manuals usually included an overview of the program, discussion of the program philosophy and organization, and discussion of assessment. All of these sections were read at least once. Program statements about the specific reading expectation being traced found in the introductory sections, as well as any discussion judged relevant to that expectation, were carefully examined and reported. In the second step of the examination, the teaching suggestions for each selection in the unit were examined to determine whether the expectation was present (either explicitly or implicitly) in the unit. To illustrate the procedure consider Question 7, which asks if the three programs present and develop students' knowledge of text structure.

Research indicates that knowledge of text structure can improve reading comprehension, so it is reasonable to assume an up-to-date reading program intended for

use in junior high schools would offer instruction in text structure and hold the expectation that students use their knowledge of text structure as a strategy to aid their understanding of what they read. To determine if the units under study presented and developed students' knowledge of text structure the first step of phase two was implemented. The introductory section of the In Context Teacher's Resource Book One was read in its entirety, and it was noted if references to text structure knowledge were found. Then in the second step of the examination, each of the lesson plans for each of the ten selections in the thematic unit on relating (called "Friends and Relations") were examined. Learning activities that seemed related to the concept of text structure were identified and examined further. This information was reported, and then the procedure was repeated as the thematic units from the other programs were examined in turn.

The introductory sections of the Families in Transition Teacher's Guide were examined next. Section One: Introducing *The Issues Collection*, Section Two: Teaching Young Adolescents, and Section Three: Evaluating Learning were carefully read in this part of the examination, and any references to text structure that occurred in these sections was noted. The lesson plans for each of the selections in the unit "Families in Transition" were then examined for learning activities that presented text structure knowledge, and these instances were reported.

The *MultiSource* program was next examined. Two introductory sections of the Relating Unit Guide, "Teaching With MultiSource" and the "Unit Overview", were carefully read for references to text structure knowledge. The teaching and learning

suggestions for each of the selections in the Relating Magazine, the Relating Anthology, and three novels that were part of the thematic unit were examined. In addition, the Language Arts Survival Guide, a student handbook, was examined for references to text structure. These findings were also reported.

Modifications to the Analysis Procedure

In the course of phase two, the analysis of the materials, it became evident that the procedure outlined for examining the units would have to be modified to gather sufficient data to answer several of the research questions. Question 1, for example, asked what is the stance of the three programs towards reading. Step one of the examination procedure, the reading of the introductory materials in the teacher's guidebooks, was carried out and the stance towards reading in each of the three programs was identified. It then became necessary to identify characteristics associated with the stance claimed by the programs, and thereby establish a set of criteria with which program materials and instructional methods used in the programs could be compared to determine if they were consistent with the stance claimed. To answer Question 1, the characteristics of holistic reading programs from Sippola's (1994) *Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers* were introduced and used as criteria in making this judgement.

The need to modify the analysis procedure again became obvious during step two of the examination of materials for Question 4. Question 4 asked whether the thematic units in the three programs exposed students to the full spectrum of discourse forms. It was found that the selections in one thematic unit were categorized as poems, short

stories, non-fiction, and short fiction. Since the term non-fiction could include a number of discourse forms, further examination was needed. Selections categorized as non-fiction were then listed and the lesson plans for each of these selections were re-examined to find out how these selections were described in the teaching and learning suggestions, and this information was reported. In this case, adding a third step to the examination procedure resulted in more specific and descriptive classification of the non-fiction articles which in turn resulted in a more accurate answer to the research question. All modifications to the analysis procedure that occurred are reported in the course of answering the research questions.

The two-step analysis procedure was applied across all three programs and for all eight questions. The results and discussion of the analyses are the subject of chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Discussion

In chapter four I will present findings and discussion from the analyses of the three thematic units. The eight research questions that guided the study will be answered, and a brief summary of the findings will conclude the chapter.

Question 1: What theoretical stance towards reading is evident (explicitly or implicitly) in the programs?

The theoretical stance of the programs selected will be determined on the basis of the positions taken by each towards the teaching of reading. The position is typically expressed by a statement of beliefs. It appears that a holistic stance towards the teaching of reading is taken in the three programs examined. To support my conclusion, excerpts from the three programs will be presented as well as an analysis using Sippola's Holistic Analysis of Basic Readers. The excerpts are presented first, followed by the holistic analysis criteria.

Through statements such as "Language is learned as a whole, not in pieces..." and "Students need strategies for self-improvement, rather than skill fragments," (In Context Teacher's Resource Book One, p. 6) the *In Context* program is taken to be holistic. The introduction to *The Issues Collection* states that the program "... is interdisciplinary by nature and recognizes the importance of holistic, integrated ways of knowing" (Families in Transition Teacher's Guide, p.1), and "Language is best learned by proceeding from

whole to parts, and not the other way around" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p.14). A stated goal of *The Issues Collection* is to dissolve boundaries that (according to the editors) have, in the past, fragmented learning. Among these boundaries needing dissolution the editors cite boundaries that isolate components of language learning as well as boundaries that fragment skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Integration of the language processes of listening, speaking, writing, a reading is a declared feature of *The Issues Collection*, as is learning for 'genuine purposes' in 'authentic learning situations' (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p.5).

The stance taken towards reading in the *MultiSource* program may also be described as holistic, although its editors acknowledge that there is no one best way to teach reading (*Relating Unit Guide*, p. 5). The choice of words and informal tone of the language used in *The Editor's Talk* to describe the *MultiSource* program is reminiscent of the language of whole language proponents.

Sippola (1994) pointed out that many recently published basal reading programs advertised and promoted as holistic in their approach to the teaching of reading are, in fact, not whole language-like. Based on his review of the literature by whole language proponents, Sippola developed *The Holistic Analysis of Basal Readers*, an assessment tool intended to assist curriculum committees in determining which of the contemporary basal programs were truly "whole language-like". He identified the following as characteristics of holistic reading programs:

1. Language arts are integrated.

2. Language arts are integrated with other curriculum areas.
3. Unabridged children's literature is used.
4. Phonic skills are taught in the context of real stories.
5. Skills are taught when the need arises in the context of real literature. There are no skill sequences.
6. There are no workbooks or worksheets to reinforce specific skills.
7. Meaningful extension activities are provided instead of skill sheets or workbooks.
8. Assessment is open-ended. Students' response to literature and student portfolios are used for evaluation. (Sippola, 1994, p. 239).

Using Sippola's characteristics as criteria, the *In Context* program seems to have many of the features of a holistic reading program. The four language processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are incorporated into each lesson in the "Friends and Relations" thematic unit of *In Context Book One*. Reader response is the most frequently used teaching strategy. Reading strategies are taught on an as-needed-basis in the context of the literature selections. For example, there are two mini-lessons in reading strategies featured in the unit - one on scanning to predict text content and the other on short story structure. Links to other curriculum areas are suggested for two of the ten lessons in the "Friends and Relations" unit. Skill worksheets are not a feature of the *In Context* program, but there are a number of blackline masters (known as highlights) intended to accompany the unit. These 'highlights' provide questions to guide students

through activities such as viewing a television drama or scanning an article for overall impression. Follow-up activities for use after the reading of the selection include such learning experiences as comparing the selection to other texts, reading related non-fiction articles, writing personal experience poems, taking photographs to convey feelings, and discussing conflict in a TV drama. Students are involved in assessment of their own progress in the unit. After the teacher reviews the evaluation criteria with them, the students complete two highlight sheets that assess their own learning. The teacher's evaluation is based on observations of the student during the unit learning activities and the teacher's impression of the student's work. A finalized grade is agreed upon by student and teacher in conference. The *In Context* program meets seven of the eight characteristics named by Sippola. Characteristic number four is the exception. There are no word identification strategies taught in the unit except through the use of context.

The Issues Collection and *MultiSource* programs also seem to meet Sippola's criteria for holistic reading programs. The language arts of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated in both programs and suggestions are offered in both programs to link the sections across the curriculum. There is no sequence of skill instruction evident in either program, but the general statement is made that teachers step in to provide instruction where necessary. There are no workbooks provided for either *The Issues Collection* or the *MultiSource* program, and the blackline masters provided are for use in student self-evaluation, teacher evaluation, or to guide students through a learning activity. There is no drill and practice on specific skills. Unlike the *In Context* program

which provides an anthology at each grade level, these two programs feature a number of literature anthologies that can be used at any grade level in the junior high school. Reader response is the pedagogy of choice in both programs.

A more specific description of the whole language-like nature of the two programs follows. In *The Issues Collection*, the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection are organized under the headings of 'Connecting', 'Experiencing', 'Considering', and 'Exploring'. 'Connecting' includes pre-reading activities such as discussions or journal writing intended to establish prior knowledge for reading. In the 'Experiencing' section suggested options are given for the reading of the selection. Suggestions include having the teacher (or a student who has practiced reading the selection) read aloud and the class listen to the whole selection, having the teacher read the beginning of the selection and the students read the remainder silently, having the students read to a strategic point in the story, stop and write a reaction to the story thus far and predict the outcome, or having the students read the selection silently as a preparation for an oral reading they might give. However, the most frequent suggestion is for students to read the whole selection silently. The reading of the selection is most often followed by having students write a journal response, which is usually guided by suggestions or by questions. Alternatively, students engage in small group discussion of the selection, which is also guided by suggestions or questions. This is followed by further discussion and dialogue to extend the ideas contained in the reading.

The section called 'Considering' contains learning suggestions that link the selection to other curriculum areas. For example, suggestions to link "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight" with language arts include writing from the perspective of the father, comparing this story with other stories of father-son relationships, and improvising an "out-scene" which was not described in the story. Other links are suggested with family studies, music, and visual arts. It is interesting to note the teaching activities suggested for the short story "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Goodnight" which appears in both *The Issues Collection* and *MultiSource* are similar, particularly for language arts. 'Exploring' suggests other selections in *The Issues Collection* related to the topic that students might wish to read.

Evaluation in *The Issues Collection* is accomplished through the use of writing portfolios, student-teacher conferences, anecdotal records, and rating scales. Evaluation is expected to reflect all the learning activities used in the unit, not just pencil-and-paper tasks. Teachers are also expected to develop rating scales with the students for self and peer evaluation. Specific criteria related to reading are found in the Rating Scale for Response Journals (Blackline Master 6). These items include "Response reveals understanding of selections read " and "Responses reveal growing understanding of the relationship among author, text, and reader" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p.51). These statements are rated on a five point scale ranging from 1 (weak, underdeveloped) to 5 (strong, fully developed). It is suggested that teachers' observation of reading strategies used by students be recorded on the anecdotal record (Blackline Master 7). In

keeping with Sippola's (1994) criteria the teaching and learning suggestions found in *The Issues Collection* appear to be truly holistic. There is no sequence of materials nor specific instruction in skills.

Many of the features of the *MultiSource* program are similar to those of *The Issues Collection*. As in *The Issues Collection* reader response is the main teaching strategy, and there are teaching and learning suggestions made for each selection in the anthology and the magazine of non-fiction. However, *MultiSource* teaching suggestions are not organized according to lesson stages such as before, during, and after reading as in the other two programs examined. The teaching suggestions are, however, similar to those offered in the other two programs. Discussions to activate prior knowledge are suggested for each selection as well as follow-up activities. For example, the activities suggested for the short story, "Two Kinds" are an initial discussion of the word 'prodigy' and the characteristics associated with individuals who are prodigies. This is followed by the reading of the story (which students are expected to read independently), response to the reading either in the form of journal writing or discussion, and open-ended follow-up activities such as making a video or writing a humorous story guided by activity sheet A8. As in the other two programs, a number of blackline masters are provided for student and teacher use. However, these blackline masters are not used for drill and practice of specific skills, but rather for student self-evaluation or to guide students through a group activity.

A unique feature of the *MultiSource* program is the *Language Arts Survival Guide*, a resource book for students which contains a forty-three page section on reading strategies. The reading section contains tips for the student on how to read narratives and poetry, how to read for information, and how to read critically. The resource book also contains sections on writing, listening and speaking, creating and viewing, researching, and studying. A reference is made in the teaching suggestions for each selection in the unit noting the appropriate resource book page related to the learning activities suggested for the selection. The suggested use of the *Language Arts Survival Guide* seems to be in keeping with the holistic criteria of teaching skills and strategies on an as-needed basis.

Evaluation in *MultiSource* is similar to that described in the other programs. Observations, student-teacher conferences, work samples, self-evaluation and peer-evaluation are included in the evaluation and checklists and response forms are provided for student and teacher use. Based on an examination of the language used by the authors to describe the programs and on Sippola's (1994) characteristics of holistic programs, it can reasonably be concluded all three programs under study are holistic in their theoretical stance towards reading.

It has been established that the stance of the three programs towards reading is holistic. This raises the question of whether the holistic stance towards reading is in keeping with current knowledge of the reading process. In fact, current knowledge of reading contradicts some of the assumptions on which the holistic approach to reading

instruction is based. For example, Nicholson (1992) pointed out the conceptualization of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game is erroneous. Predicting and guessing while only sampling from print cues is the mark of a poor reader rather than a proficient reader, because proficient readers simultaneously process information from orthographic and phonological cues even as they monitor the longer segments of text for meaning. Current research (Adams, 1990) indicates that proficient readers use all available cues automatically and fluently as they interpret texts. The strategy of using context to decipher unknown words is of value, but is only one of the cues that good readers use (Adams, 1990, p. 155).

In addition, the perspectival view of reading (Norris & Phillips, 1994) has challenged the emphasis placed on background knowledge in the holistic approach to reading, and has demonstrated that the quality of thinking rather than the amount of background knowledge is what distinguishes proficient readers from poor readers. The work of Wilson and Thomas (1995) has shown too great a reliance on prior knowledge and failure to integrate text information can lead to idiosyncratic and inadequate text interpretations. The implications of these recent findings are that reading instruction should be focused on the thinking strategies used by readers as they try to make universally adequate interpretations of text. Current knowledge of the reading process implies that teachers must go beyond merely providing (or activating) what is deemed to be the appropriate prior knowledge to aid a student's comprehension of a selection. Instruction in the strategies used by proficient readers such as revising an initial reading of

text in light of later text information that does not fit, or changing focus when the text information cannot be resolved within the present interpretation, or using analogical reasoning should be part of a comprehensive and current reading program.

The research of Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, & Bassiri (1987) on the effects of directly explaining the reasoning behind the use of learning strategies would seem to indicate that there is a place for explicit instruction in literacy programs at the junior high school level. Explicit instruction in cognitive strategies has been shown not only to improve reading comprehension, but also to provide teachers and students with a common language to use in the discussion of strategic reading (Gersten & Carnine, 1988).

The use of reader response as the main teaching and learning strategy in holistic reading programs is also problematic in light of current research. Purves (1993) critiqued reader response on the grounds that the distinction between forming a universally adequate text interpretation and making a personal response to the text becomes blurred when teachers accept any and all reader responses as being of equal value. Responding to texts, in Purves' view, means readers must make sense of the text (that is, form a universally adequate interpretation of the text), be able to summarize it (that is, identify the central ideas contained in the text) and give reasons for points included in the summary (that is, recognize the relationships between ideas contained in the text to the central ideas), analyze it (that is, to examine it closely and critically), form an interpretation of it in light of their own knowledge and experience of the world, even as they make personal

responses to it. However, in the holistic programs under study, the distinction between interpreting the text and responding to it is not explicated. Students are required to respond to questions which evoke personal memories and associations, but which do not advance the students' knowledge of strategic reading. If the teacher is unfamiliar with current reading research, there is a danger that students may not realize the importance of a 'communal' text interpretation. It must be concluded then that the stance taken toward reading in the programs under study is less than inadequate in light of current knowledge of reading.

Given the publication dates of the three programs examined, clearly it would be unreasonable to expect that up-to-date knowledge of reading would be found in them. The gap between when a program is published and when it is used by teachers and students is a time when teachers must assume their professional responsibility to be up-to-date. As a result, teachers must use their up-to-date professional judgement to alter, omit, and add to programs in order to make them more timely and more effective.

Question 2: Is there a progression of difficulty specified for the selections in the thematic unit on relating in each of the three programs?

Three factors were considered in determining if a progression of difficulty was specified for the selections within the thematic units. These factors were the philosophy of the programs, the ordering of the selections within the units, and the estimated levels of difficulty provided for each selection. The holistic philosophy of the programs was considered first. Then the units were examined for evidence of a progression of difficulty

by numbering each of the selections according to the order in which it occurred in the unit. The editor's estimate of the level of difficulty for the selection was noted opposite each selection number, and a table was created to show this information. The tables for each of the programs were then scrutinized for evidence of a progression of difficulty.

Ordering reading selections within a unit based on the estimated level of difficulty is not in keeping with holistic beliefs about reading. Goodman (1986) stated that whole language is not "slicing up reading and writing into grade slices, each slice neatly following and dependent on prior ones" (Goodman, 1986 p. 34). This belief made it unlikely that a progression of difficulty would be evident or specified in programs that are holistic in stance.

Information from the "Friends and Relations" unit of the *In Context* program is shown in Table 5. Note that the 'easy' and 'easy to average' selections occur early in the unit and the more difficult selections rated as 'challenging' and 'average to challenging' appear toward the end of the unit. On the surface, this arrangement seems to indicate a progression of difficulty across the selections in the unit. However, the placement of selection 9 (rated 'challenging') and selection 10 (rated 'average to challenging') raises the question of why (if there is a progression of difficulty in the ordering of the selections) the only selection rated as 'challenging' was not placed last in the unit.

The readability comments in the teacher's guide for selections 9 and 10 were reread in an effort to understand the placements of these selections and to discern what differences there might be between the readability estimates of 'average to challenging'

Table 5

Readability ratings assigned to selections in the thematic unit "Friends and Relations" in the *In Context Program*

Selection #	Readability Ratings
1	Easy
2	Easy to Average
3	Easy to Average
4	Easy
5	Easy to Average
6	Easy
7	Easy to Average
8	Easy to Average
9	Challenging
10	Average to Challenging

and 'challenging'. Examination of the readability comment for selection 10 (rated 'average to challenging') revealed this selection featured indirect revelation of setting and characters, the use of dialogue to tell the story, and references to the language, beliefs and customs of a unique cultural group (Context Teacher's Resource Book One p.46). These were the text features that had earned the rating of 'average to challenging'. The readability comment for selection 9 (rated as 'challenging') was likewise reexamined. It contained references to farming terminology such as "cordwood" and "threshing count" that would be unfamiliar to students, but would not interfere with student understanding

of the story, particularly if teachers taught such terms prior to reading. From these comments it would seem selection number 9, although rated as 'challenging' was actually less difficult than selection 10, which had been rated 'average to challenging'.

Comparison of the readability comments for selections 9 and 10 did not reveal the reasoning behind the placement of selections 9 and 10 in the unit, but rather raised further questions about the criteria used in making estimates of readability. It seems reasonable to assume that the selections estimated to be 'challenging' for grade seven students would not only have a greater number of difficult text features, but also that the text features would be more complex than those found in a selection rated 'average to challenging'. However, this was not the case for selections 9 and 10 in this unit.

A further check was made comparing the readability comment for selection number 8, which was rated 'easy to average' with the comments for selection 10 which was rated 'average to challenging'. This was done to investigate whether there might also be inconsistencies in other estimates of readability. Comments on selection 8 spoke of the journalistic style of writing which would be familiar to readers, short sentences, vocabulary that was not too difficult, and the use of subheadings as text features that were considered in making the readability rating of 'easy to average'. Based on the idea that what is familiar is easy and what is less familiar is more difficult, selection number 8 appeared to be less difficult than selection 10, which was consistent with the readability ratings assigned these two selections. Considering the stated philosophy of the program,

and the apparent contradiction in the estimates of readability for two of the unit selections, it was concluded there is no explicit or implicit progression of difficulty within this unit.

Like the *In Context* program, *The Issues Collection* was examined for evidence of a progression of difficulty by numbering each of the selections according to the order in which it occurred in the unit, noting the editor's estimate of readability for the selection opposite each selection number, and showing the information in a table which was then examined for evidence of a progression of difficulty within the unit. Table 6 presents the readability estimates from *The Issues Collection*.

The lack of clarity in the readability ratings provided in *The Issues Collection* is problematic because the information provided tells nothing that would help teachers plan effective reading instruction. Nevertheless, accepting these readability estimates on face value, the examination of the unit was carried out to look for evidence of a progression of difficulty within the unit.

The thirty-eight selections in this thematic unit were given estimates of readability that ranged from 1 to 4, where 1 is the easiest and 4 is the most difficult. Because the thematic units in *The Issues Collection* can be used in either grades seven, eight, or nine, the readability estimates provided immediately raised questions. For example, would not a selection rated 1 (which means that it can be read independently by virtually all students in grades seven, eight, and nine) be far too easy for the majority of grade eight or nine students? Wouldn't a selection rated 4 (which means that only 20% of students in grades seven, eight, and nine would be able to read it) be far too difficult for the majority of

Table 6

Readability ratings assigned to selections in the thematic unit "Families in Transition" in
The Issues Collection

Selection #	Readability Rating	Selection #	Readability Rating
1	1	20	1
2	1	21	1
3	2	22	2
4	3	23	1
5	4	24	2
6	2	25	2
7	1	26	3
8	2	27	2
9	2	28	2
10	1	29	4
11	2	30	3
12	3	31	4
13	4	32	2
14	3	33	3
15	2	34	2
16	1	35	1
17	3	36	2
18	3	37	4
19	1	38	1

grades seven and eight students?

It is true that individual differences within grade levels will mean for example, that a small number of grade seven students will be able to read the most challenging selections in the unit, and a small number of students in grade nine will be unable to read anything but the easiest selections in the unit. The authors of the teacher's guide for *The Issues Collection* indicated, "the wide range of genres and levels of difficulty in each of *The Issues Collection* anthologies ensures that materials are accessible to students of diverse reading abilities and interests. With teacher and peer support, all students can participate actively in the issues explored" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p. 7). In other words, the purpose of interspersing less difficult selections throughout the more difficult selections in the unit seems to be to enable weaker students to participate in the unit of work (with help) without being singled out because they are using a different set of learning materials. In this situation, no doubt, some incidental learning will occur. The question that must be asked, however, is whether less able students will become more proficient readers in this learning situation. The majority of students at each grade level can be expected to improve their reading proficiency over the three years in junior high school through a combination of effective instruction and exposure to increasingly difficult materials, and the use of progressively more difficult materials would be of benefit to them. Furthermore, less proficient readers will not improve unless they are given the appropriate strategy instruction and exposed to materials at their reading level and that increase in difficulty. Presenting students with too difficult reading materials will cause

frustration, and presenting them with materials that do not offer any challenge will be equally frustrating. If a goal of reading is to have students read independently and become more proficient readers, then exposure to progressively more difficult materials is necessary. Programs organized around a progression of difficulty can save teachers many hours of "re-inventing the wheel", because in the absence of such organization it is the responsibility of teachers to ensure learning materials are presented to students in a manner and order most conducive to learning.

Examination of Table 6 showed that eleven selections in the unit were given a readability rating of 1 (virtually all students are able to read independently), fourteen selections were rated as 2 (80% of students will be able to read independently), eight selections were rated as 3 (40% of students will be able to read independently), and only four selections were rated as 4 (20% of students will be able to read independently). According to the readability estimates for the selections in the unit, 80% of students in grades seven, eight, and nine will be able to read approximately two-thirds of the material in this unit independently. Selections numbered 1, 2, 7, 10, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, 35, and 38 all have a readability rating of 1. Note that selections rated 1 are distributed throughout the unit. This fact indicates that the selections are not arranged in order of difficulty. A look at the placement of selections rated 2, 3, and 4 in the unit supports and further illustrates this point. There is no evidence of a progression of difficulty for the selections in this unit and none is specified. This finding is in keeping with the program's holistic stance towards reading.

Thematic units in the *MultiSource* program are also intended for use throughout grades seven, eight, and nine, so the same concerns expressed earlier in this discussion about vagueness in the estimates of readability in *The Issues Collection* also apply to this program (For example, does a readability rating of 'easy' mean the selection is easy for grade seven, grade eight or grade nine? Shouldn't grade nine students find any selection easier than grade seven students would?). Furthermore, in the *MultiSource* program there are no comments on specific text factors that influenced the readability rating provided for each selection, as there were in the other two programs, so there is nothing to indicate how the estimates were reached for the individual selections. The *MultiSource* program was examined in the same way as the other two programs to determine whether it contained any evidence of a progression of difficulty within the unit. Because of the large number of selections included in the program, two tables were used to display the information. Table 7 shows the selections from the *Relating Anthology*, and Table 8 shows the selections from the *Relating Magazine*.

Table 7 shows the selections in the *Relating Magazine* and readability estimates assigned to them by the program editors. Of the twenty selections (three of which contain two articles or poems) seven are rated 'easy' and sixteen are rated 'average'. Considering that the designations 'easy' and 'average' means easy or average for grades seven, eight, and nine, this doesn't really provide much information to teachers because it is not specific. As with *The Issues Collection* the designation of readability ratings raise more questions than they answer. However, taking the readability ratings at face value, it can be noted

Table 7

Readability ratings assigned to selections in the *Relating Magazine* in *MultiSource*

Selection #	Readability Rating
1	Easy
2	Average
3	Easy & Average *
4	Easy
5	Average
6	Average
7	Average
8	Easy
9	Average & Easy *
10	Average & Average*
11	Average
12	Easy
13	Average
14	Average
15	Average
16	Easy
17	Average
18	Average
19	Average
20	Average

* Two ratings indicate that two selections were presented in one lesson. A rating is given for each selection in the lesson.

that there are no 'challenging' selections in the Relating Magazine. Selections numbered 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, and 16 are rated as 'easy', and the order in which they occur throughout the unit illustrates that there is no progression of difficulty evident in the Relating Magazine.

Table 8 shows the readability ratings assigned to selections in the Relating Anthology. Selections numbered 1, 16, 18, and 20 are rated as 'easy'. Selections rated as 'average' are numbers 4, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16, 17, 22, and 25. All other selections in the unit are rated as 'average to challenging'. The order of occurrence of these selections throughout the unit is evidence of the fact that there is no progression of difficulty evident within the unit. This finding is in keeping with the holistic philosophy of the program, and raises questions about the effectiveness of instruction based on the holistic stance towards reading.

It is interesting to note that there are no 'challenging' selections included in the Relating Anthology. This begs the question of whether this thematic unit, which is suggested in the *MultiSource* advertising brochure for use in grade eight or nine, might be considered unsuitable for grade nine in view of the fact that grade sevens are expected to find the materials only 'average to challenging'.

A matter of concern to teachers is that a problem can arise in a situation where materials are not designated for a particular grade level or arranged in a progression of

Table 8

Readability ratings assigned to selections in the *Relating Anthology* in the *MultiSource* program

Selection #	Readability Rating
1	Easy
2	Average to Challenging
3	Average to Challenging
4	Average
5	Average to Challenging
6	Average to Challenging
7	Average
8	Average
9	Average to Challenging
10	Average to Challenging
11	Average to Challenging
12	Average
13	Average to Challenging
14	Average to Challenging
15	Average
16	Average & Easy*

(table continues)

Table 8 (continued)

Selection #	Readability Rating
17	Average
18	Easy
19	Average to Challenging
20	Easy
21	Average to Challenging
22	Easy & Average*
23	Average to Challenging
24	Average to Challenging
25	Average

* Two ratings indicate that two selections were presented in one lesson. A rating is given for each selection in the lesson.

difficulty. In teaching situations where junior high school English teachers are frequently responsible for teaching English to 150 or 200 students, without specific teaching goals and clear performance expectations a student could conceivably work through three years in junior high school, supported by peer groups in many learning activities, choosing to read only selections at the lower end of the scale of difficulty. In the reality of crowded classrooms and constraints of teacher workload and time, students do "slip through the

cracks" despite teachers' best intentions. Can we say then, as teachers, that such a student has completed the course of study for grade seven, eight, or nine? The current movement towards accountability in education demands clarity both in teaching objectives and performance expectations.

Question 3: What readability factors were considered in estimating the readability of selections in the programs?

Two statements about readability occur in the statement of beliefs upon which the *In Context* program is based. These are "Readability can be defined as the interaction of text, teacher, and student" and " Even difficult material can be made accessible through an effective balance of instruction and peer support" (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p.7). The editors of *In Context* further state, "... the readability of a given selection varies from student to student..." (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book* p.9). These statements about readability indicate a recognition that readability factors lie within the reader as well as within the text, which is a current view. Readability factors from within the text such as vocabulary, syntax, stylistic features, and concept load are mentioned in the general statements about the readability of the selection made at the start of each lesson plan.

Selections in the anthology *In Context Book One* are rated on a four-point scale ranging from easy to challenging. Selections from the non-fiction book of readings, *Responses In Context*, are not rated for readability. However, each non-fiction selection is linked with a literary selection in *In Context Book One*.

An examination of the statements about readability factors found at the beginning of each lesson revealed that the readability factors most frequently mentioned for selections rated as 'easy' were the simple style of writing, the straightforward syntax, and the fact that concepts and ideas in the selections were close to the personal experiences of students. Factors considered in the rating of 'easy to average' were stylistic features such as familiar language patterns and sentence structure, and in one selection the use of headings to indicate structure. Comments about the content in the 'easy to average' rating suggest characters were familiar to students and themes would be of interest. Selections rated as 'average to challenging' had comments about writing style, such as the indirect revelation of setting and characters, and the use of dialogue to tell the story. A comment about the content of one selection indicated references to unfamiliar language, customs, and beliefs of another cultural group might make the selection more difficult. Only one selection in the unit was rated as 'challenging', and the readability comment indicated references to farming terms from the past would be unfamiliar to students. A concern here is if students are to become proficient readers they cannot be limited to reading only about what is familiar, nor can they rely on the provision of 'prior knowledge' for every unfamiliar topic they will encounter through reading. Students, if they are to learn through reading, must learn to create relevance for their own world knowledge in the course of reasoning out a text interpretation as proficient readers do.

The editors of *The Issues Collection* state, "... the best indicator of readability is the individual student's experience . Even difficult material is accessible to poor and / or

reluctant readers if the context is familiar and the topic is engaging" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p.65). However, in the description of the four point scale used to estimate the difficulty of the selections, the following readability factors are mentioned: prior knowledge, interest, length of selection, syntax, and concept load. These references to length, syntax, and concept load indicate a recognition that readability is made up of text factors as well as factors that lie within readers.

Readability ratings of 1 to 4 are assigned to each *Issues* selection. A rating of 1 indicates virtually all students in grades seven, eight, and nine will be able to read the selection independently; a rating of 2 indicates eighty percent of grade seven, eight, and nine students will read the selection independently; a rating of 3 indicates forty percent of grade seven, eight, and nine students will read the selection independently, although it will require teacher preparation; and a rating of 4 indicates twenty percent of grade seven, eight, and nine students will read the selection independently, while most students will need the teacher to read it aloud (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p.66).

Comments on readability are provided in the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in *The Issues Collection* under the heading "What's Special?". An examination of "What's Special?" for each selection revealed selections which were given a rating of 1 were characterized by simple vocabulary and syntax, and were about familiar topics expected to appeal to junior high school students. Length of the story, more difficult vocabulary, the need to infer the situation from details provided, shifts in time, symbolic imagery, understanding allusions and metaphors, making inferences, and unique

formats were some of the readability factors mentioned for selections given a rating of 2. Comments about selections rated 3 included interpreting references (allusions), terms and idioms used, more difficult vocabulary, the use of quotes, lack of a traditional plot line, dense imagery, extended or dense metaphors, figurative language, complex connections, and subtle meanings embedded in the text. Embedded meanings, metaphors, allusions (to religious terms), vocabulary, and figurative language were also noted in the comments about selections rated as 4 in the program, along with different levels of understanding (that is, literal, symbolic) possible for one selection.

As with the *In Context* program although readability factors are identified for each rating level, there are no teaching suggestions provided for helping students read the selections independently.

Readability is not specifically addressed in the *MultiSource* teaching materials. The following statement was found under the heading Comprehending: "... your students' comprehension and response are shaped by the same factors that make them individuals - their backgrounds, their personal experiences, their personalities and their skills" (*Relating Unit Guide* p.20). This statement implies that readability factors all lie within the individual reader, although all the selections in the anthology and in the magazine were given a difficulty rating on a scale from easy to challenging. There were no comments on readability factors included in the teaching suggestions as there were in the other two programs. Teaching strategies are suggested for helping students comprehend (for

example, establishing a context for the selection) and these will be discussed in a subsequent section of this thesis.

The concept of readability applied to *In Context* and *The Issues Collection* is in keeping with current knowledge of reading. The concept of readability applied to *MultiSource* is not discussed in the teaching materials. However, a concern exists that while many of the readability factors that lie 'within the reader' (such as cognitive ability and world knowledge) are beyond the control of teachers, others are not. Such 'within the reader' readability factors as breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, readers' use of all available cues, readers' use of cognitive strategies, and readers' knowledge of the reading process (which have been identified from the literature) that impede students' growth as proficient readers can be addressed through a program of systematic, comprehensive reading instruction. Thus far, there is no evidence of such systematic and comprehensive instruction in these programs.

Question 4: Does the thematic unit on relating in each of the three programs expose students to the full spectrum of discourse forms?

The thematic units on relating in each of the three programs were examined for the presence of a wide range of discourse forms. The introductory sections of each of the teacher's manuals were read for the purpose of finding any discussion related to the forms or modes of discourse as well as any program claims about the forms included in the program materials. Discourse forms claimed to be included in each of the programs were listed and a tally made of the number of examples of forms as they occurred in the

thematic unit. Tables showing the number of occurrences of each discourse form in the thematic units of the three programs were created.

Each of the introductory sections in the teacher's manuals for all three programs contained a very brief acknowledgement of the importance of exposing students to a wide range of forms, but there was no elaboration on the point. *In Context* was the only program to state the forms that were included in their program.

The *In Context* program claimed to "... represent a wide range of forms..." namely short stories, novel excerpts, poems, songs, plays, articles, biographies, interviews, and memoirs (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p.7). Slightly over half of the forms named would be classified as poetic by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975), that is, the structure and use of language in the piece is the focus of the discourse. Britton's transactional form, which includes the traditional modes of exposition and argumentation, is less well represented. An examination of Table 9 indicated all of the forms claimed by the editors of the *In Context* program were not represented in the "Friends and Relations" unit of the program. An inspection of the Index of Selections by Genre in the anthology *In Context Book One* revealed, however, that in subsequent thematic units the program does contain two plays, five songs, and seventeen pieces of non-fiction writing. However, the categories of biography and memoirs were not listed in The Index of Selections by Genre. This means all categories of discourse claimed by the editors/authors were not present in the Anthology.

Table 9

Discourse forms claimed to be present in the *In Context* program and discourse forms contained in the unit "Friends and Relations"

Discourse forms claimed to be present in the program	Discourse forms in the "Friends and Relations" unit <u><i>In Context Book One</i></u>	Discourse forms in <u><i>Responses In Context</i></u>
short stories	4	
novel excerpts	1	
poems	4	
songs		
plays		
articles	1	4
biographies		
memoirs		
interviews		1

Based on examination of the thematic unit on relating, the *In Context* authors' claim that a wide range of forms is represented in the program does not seem accurate. In light of current research on the importance of exposing students to all the forms of

discourse, the absence of good examples of expository and persuasive writing is a serious omission.

The research literature on modes of discourse and language learning showed knowledge of discourse structures can help students improve their reading comprehension. In order for this to happen, students must be exposed to good models of the different forms of discourse such as exposition and persuasion (including logical argumentation) that too often are not included in their reading programs. Without early exposure to such texts, Crowhurst (1990) argued students will not add these forms and structures to their repertoires of knowledge, and as a result will be at a disadvantage both in reading comprehension and writing.

Reference is made to "the wide range of genres" to be found in *The Issues Collection* in the context of describing this program's capability of providing for students with "diverse reading abilities and interests" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p. 7). Another reference to the need to expose students to a wide range of discourse forms was found under the heading, "What Kind of Programs Enhance Language and Literacy Development in Young Adolescents", where it is stated that immersion in the widest possible range of genres and texts develops language learning and student confidence (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p. 13). Although it is claimed the anthology selections in this program "expose students to a wide range of genres and writing styles" (p.23), there is no specific listing of these forms in the teacher's guide.

The table of contents in the anthology "Families in Transition" was then examined. The selections in this anthology were classified as poems, non-fiction, short stories, and short fiction. Table 10 shows the forms included in the "Families in Transition" unit of *The Issues Collection*.

There was no explanation provided for the difference between short stories and short fiction. However, a reading of the "What's Special?" section in the teaching and learning suggestions for the first of the two short fictions indicated it was a set of vignettes and a reading of the second short fiction revealed it was a narrative essay, that is, a story related for the purpose of making a particular point.

As with the *In Context* program, slightly over half of the selections in this thematic unit would be considered to be in the poetic mode. The selections described as non-fiction were then checked against their descriptions under the "What's Special" heading in the teaching and learning suggestions provided for each selection in the teacher's guide. This check was done to determine whether there were any examples of expository and persuasive writing included among the non-fiction selections. Research has shown students of junior high school age do not write exposition and persuasion (especially logical argumentation) as well as they write narratives, and experts such as Crowhurst (1990) believe the inability of students to write in these forms is due to a lack of exposure to good models. Table 11 lists the non-fiction selections in the unit and presents the description of the selection found in the teacher's guidebook.

Table 10

Discourse forms included in the thematic unit on relating in *The Issues Collection*

Discourse forms in <i>The Issues Collection</i>	Discourse forms included in "Families in Transition" unit
poems	17
short stories	11
non-fiction	9
short fiction	2

There were no examples of expository or persuasive writing found among the non-fiction selections of the unit. Although the editors of *The Issues Collection* appear to recognize the value of exposing students to a wide range of discourse forms, the full spectrum of discourse forms is not represented in the thematic unit on relating.

A brief reference to the necessity of exposing students to good models of informative and expository writing was found in the *MultiSource* program under the heading, "Teaching/Learning Ideas for Writing". The statements were made "... one of the best incentives you can give students to become literary writers is to provide them with a wide variety of literature and the opportunity to read" and "modelling well-written informative prose" is a good teaching technique to help students develop an understanding of informative writing (*Relating Unit Guide* p.25). These statements are in keeping with

Table 11

Non-fiction selections in the unit "Families in Transition" in *The Issues Collection*

Non-fiction selections	Description from teacher's guidebook
Coming Together	magazine article
The Voices of Children	survey
Adoption: A View From Inside	magazine article
Dads and Daughters	newspaper article
A Kid's Room: No Place For a House	article
Boy Things Have Changed	oral history
Families and the Third Age	survey
Canadians Today Older and Lonelier	summary of census
Whose Family Is This Anyway	report

the findings of current research, but despite statements about the importance of exposure to good models of informative writing there are far fewer examples of informative writing included in the unit than there are of poetic or imaginative writing.

The Unit Overview listed the selections included in the unit on relating which were first classified as fiction or non-fiction and then according to forms. This information is presented in Table 12.

The poetic mode, which has forty-seven selections (including the three novels) appears to be more extensively represented in this thematic unit than the other modes, which have only eighteen selections to be shared among them. There is one expository essay in the unit, and there are no examples of persuasive writing.

From examining the thematic units on relating in each of the three programs it is evident that most of the reading students are expected to do in these units is in the poetic mode. That is, the emphasis is on poetry, short stories and other works of literature.

Table 12

Forms of discourse included in the *MultiSource* unit "Relating"

Discourse form	Fiction	Non-fiction
articles		13
visual essays		1
interviews		1
reflections		1
poetry	23	
short stories	10	
novel excerpts	1	
autobiographical excerpts		1
essays		1
novels	3	

Discourse forms that Britton et al. (1975) categorized as 'transactional' and Applebee (1980) termed 'informational' (which include exposition and persuasion) are poorly represented or conspicuously absent in the units examined. Only one selection in the three units was categorized by the editors of the program as an essay. Students are not exposed to the full spectrum of discourse in these units.

Question 5: Are the performance expectations of the thematic unit on relating in each of the three programs clearly indicated and appropriate for the junior high school level?

An initial reading of the introduction and program descriptions in the teacher's manuals for each of the programs indicates that specific performance expectations or learning outcomes for reading are not explicitly stated in any of the three programs examined. In fact, there is no clear indication of just what students are expected to be able to do either at the end of the unit on relating or (in the case of *The Issues Collection* and *MultiSource*) at the end of the three year program.

A statement in the *MultiSource* teacher's guide that "External requirements vary from school to school and district to district" (*Relating Unit Guide* p. 11) indicates that goals and objectives for the course would be set at the district or school level or by teachers. A further statement that "...assessment should reflect the goals and objectives of the course..."(*Relating Unit Guide* p.12) supports this interpretation. In the advertising brochure included in the *Relating Unit Guide*, *MultiSource* is described as a program that provides a "wealth of multimedia resources" from which teachers can "... tailor a contemporary language arts program..." to meet the needs of students. Hence, it is

unlikely that clear performance expectations would be explicated in the materials provided.

The teacher's guide for the *The Issues Collection* presents a variety of scenarios in which the thematic anthologies in that program might be used by teachers, and in the context of describing the program and its uses, some general learning outcomes such as, "When all the language components are integrated in natural and meaningful contexts, students become more proficient language users" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p. 3) are mentioned. With reference to expectations held for students, the statement is made, "Expectations for all students are high, but reasonable. All students are viewed as competent learners" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p. 7). As with the *MultiSource* program, it seems that the setting of explicit performance expectations or learning outcomes is left to the individual teacher, school, or school district.

The *In Context* program differs from the other two programs in that its thematic units are designated for a particular grade level, and the thematic unit "Friends and Relations" is designated for grade seven. The editors claim that the program is systematic yet flexible (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p.6). However, while it does not explicitly state performance expectations, there are some general learning goals implicit in the program description contained in the teacher's guidebook. These goals include:

- to help students develop, apply and monitor their experiences in reading (p.6)
- to improve their strategies for thinking and learning (p.6)
- to develop comprehension strategies (p. 7)

- to develop comprehension of different forms of writing across the curriculum (p. 7)
- to help students gains additional insights into anthology selections (p. 7)
- to encourage an outpouring of response (re: fluency in all the modes) (p.11)
- to have students reflect on why their approach to a task succeeded or failed (p. 11)

However, performance expectations for reading are not clearly indicated.

Since explicit and clear statements of performance expectations or expected outcomes which would indicate clearly what students could reasonably be expected to learn during their three years in junior high school were not evident in an initial reading of the teacher's manuals for the programs, an in-depth examination of the three programs was undertaken. In this examination of the programs, the teacher's manuals that accompanied the three language arts programs were again examined for explicit and implicit reading expectations. Each page in the introduction to the programs and the units on 'relating' directly linked to the teaching of reading was examined in detail for the purpose of finding explicit or implicit reading expectations. In instances where the headings and subheadings of a section indicated it was unlikely that specific reading expectations would be discussed, the section was scanned for references to reading expectations. For example, in the MultiSource program the section entitled "Teaching/Learning Ideas for Writing" was scanned, but the sections entitled "Teaching/Learning Ideas for Reading " and "Assessment" were examined in detail.

Careful reading of the introductory sections and program descriptions in the teacher's manuals of each program revealed that all three programs seemed to lack clear explication of performance expectations. Key questions remained unanswered. For example, what can students who are proficient readers reasonably be expected to do at the end of grade nine that they were unable to do at the beginning of grade seven? This question is particularly pertinent to thematic units in *The Issues Collection* and the *MultiSource* programs, which editors say can be used at any time during the junior high school years. For the *In Context* program, which designates thematic units for specific grade levels, the question becomes one of differentiating between expectations held for grade sevens as they begin the year and expectations held for them at the end of the year, and upon the completion of the year's language arts program.

When an examination of the introduction and description of each program did not reveal clear performance expectations for reading, it was reasoned that since valid assessment of teaching outcomes is derived from specific teaching objectives, an examination of the assessment components in each of the programs might reveal the implicit performance expectations or intended outcomes of that program. To that end, the assessment components of each program were systematically examined for the presence of implicit performance expectations for reading. The examination progressed from the search for more general (that is, broader) expectations (such as the expectation that students would become more proficient language users) that might be implicit in general discussion to more specific outcomes that might be expected in the course of a particular

lesson in the unit that dealt with a specific text (such as summarizing the central problem in a story).

All three programs contained a discussion of assessment in the teacher's manuals and all three provided blackline masters in the form of surveys, checklists, and analytic scales intended for student self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation. The *In Context* program also provided what they called Assessment Options within the lesson plans for eight of the ten selections in the thematic unit on relating. Because assessment is a continuous and on-going part of instruction teaching suggestions provided in the teacher's manuals for all selections in the thematic units on 'relating' in each of the three programs were also carefully read for the purpose of finding the explicit or implicit reading expectations of the program, as were the blackline masters designated for use with a particular lesson within the thematic unit, and the novel studies contained in the programs. In addition, sections of the MultiSource Language Arts Survival Guide to which teachers and students were referred in the *MultiSource* lesson plans were examined. First, the discussion of assessment and evaluation in each of the three programs was carefully read for implicit performance expectations in reading that it might contain. This was followed by examination of the other assessment options suggested for the unit.

From a careful reading of the *In Context* discussion on assessment, two general goals, namely, the development of students' self-awareness through reflection on language tasks and the development of strategic thinking, seemed implicit. The desirability of having students involved in evaluating their own work was mentioned as a means of

engaging them more fully in their own learning, and thus developing self-awareness. The following assessment components of the *In Context* program were identified in the discussion: the blackline masters for use at the end of the unit (Thinking About the Theme and Thinking About Yourself), the Student Interest Survey, the Language Arts Survey, the Assessment Options in the lessons, and the lesson plans themselves which are assumed to have on-going assessment built-in. These assessment components and instruments were examined and the implicit reading expectations that were identified are presented in Table 13.

It must be noted again that, unlike the other two programs in this study, the selections in the "Friends and Relations" unit of *In Context* are intended for grade seven students, and so it follows that the performance expectations are also for grade sevens. The question that arises is whether the expectations for the thematic unit "Friends and Relations" are intended for students at the beginning of grade seven or at the end of grade seven? A cursory examination of other units in the anthology seems to indicate that no progression of difficulty exists in the program, and indeed a progression of difficulty in learning materials would be against the stated philosophy of the program. It would seem that reading performance expectations held for students do not change through the grade seven year. It appears from examination of the discussion on assessment that the performance expectations of this program are not clearly explicated. The blackline masters intended for assessment purposes were examined next, starting with the Language Arts Profile.

Table 13

Reading performance expectations inherent in assessment components of the "Friends and Relations" unit in the *In Context* program

Blackline masters for student self-assessment and teacher assessment	Assessment Options <i>In Context</i> Feature	Suggested teaching and learning activities in lesson plans (novels, anthology, non-fiction reading)
<u>Students are expected to:</u>	<u>Students are expected to:</u>	<u>Students are expected to:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop self-awareness of reading preferences, habits and difficulties • reflect on selections read in the unit • summarize a story in one sentence • evaluate the effectiveness of the ending of a story • analyze a poem to find appealing qualities • identify with characters • compare characters from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek clarification of points in the story • give thoughtful personal reactions to selections • make predictions based on story events • confirm their predictions • scan selections • know why scan, how to scan, and where to look for main ideas in an article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predict outcome from beginning of story • use context clues to understand word meanings • scan text before reading to predict content • use prior knowledge • read orally, varying tone to change interpretation • interpret similes • develop awareness of techniques for creating humor • stop reading at strategic points

(table continues)

Table 13 (continued)

Blackline masters for student self-assessment and teacher assessment	Assessment Options <i>In Context</i> Feature	Suggested teaching and learning activities in lesson plans (novel, anthology, non-fiction reading)
different selections	• identify the key elements of exposition (setting, character, and complication)	and predict
• ask questions of themselves and others when they read		• confirm predictions made during reading
• evaluate how well they make predictions when they read	• make reasonable predictions based on exposition	• judge convincingness of characters
• evaluate how well they scan		• do oral dramatization of a story
• participate in reading activities		• make inferences
• set suitable purposes for		• reconstruct plot of story from memory
• reading		• develop awareness of poetic elements
• use headlines and illustrations to create a context		• do choral reading
• read for information		• understand allusions
• predict what will follow		• evaluate a selection
• infer meanings of words from context		• recognize exposition of a story
		• examine table of contents
		• compare selection with another

(table continues)

Table 13 (continued)

Blackline masters for student self-assessment and teacher assessment	Assessment Options <i>In Context</i> Feature	Suggested teaching and learning activities in lesson plans (novel, anthology, non-fiction reading)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retell content adequately • develop appreciation of author's craft • respond with imagination to the selections 		literary work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read related non-fiction article • identify with character in novel • summarize central problem in the novel • respond to novel through journal or discussion • formulate questions to be answered by the novel • visualize characters • notice techniques used to develop characters • form mental images based on description • discuss issues raised in the novel • read sections of dialogue aloud • identify problems in the novel

(table continues)

Table 13 (continued)

Blackline masters for student self-assessment and teacher assessment	Assessment Options <i>In Context</i> Feature	Suggested teaching and learning activities in lesson plans (novel, anthology, non-fiction reading)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the conclusion of the novel • give an oral summary of the novel • develop understanding of author's techniques (ie., arousing sympathy for main character, using flashbacks, signalling changes in time) • make inferences • map the narrative to track the action of the story • predict possible outcomes • prepare Reader's Theatre presentation • prepare monologue summaries • give personal response to whole

(table continues)

Table 13 (continued)

Blackline masters for student self-assessment and teacher assessment	Assessment Options <i>In Context</i> Feature	Suggested teaching and learning activities in lesson plans (novel, anthology, non-fiction reading) novel • recognize the difference between book review and advertising copy
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The *In Context* Language Arts Profile is intended for teachers' use in assessment and is described as a comprehensive list of criteria for evaluating reading (and the other language processes). The profile is intended to help teachers "sum up student progress in broader skills and strategies" (*Teacher's Resource Book One* p. 264), and hence the performance expectations for reading are broad in scope. For example, students are expected to "participate in reading activities", and "respond with imagination to reading material", and to "show appreciation of the author's craft" (p. 266). The use of such broad performance expectations in assessing student progress in reading raises the issue of clarity in defining the expectations for junior high school students. Does "participating in reading activities" mean sitting quietly listening as someone reads the selection aloud and barely understanding the story or does it mean reading the selection and interpreting it independently at the symbolic level? Does responding with imagination to reading materials mean drawing a picture of the protagonist of the story as a creative response to the story or writing associations and memories evoked by the text in a response journal?

Interpretations that can be made of the descriptor "participates in reading activities" seem endless, and tell nothing of what students are actually expected to do during the reading period or of the proficiency they are expected to attain.

The *In Context* blackline master, Student Interest Survey (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p. 265) is intended to help students think about their reading habits. The authors recommend teachers use the survey with the first thematic unit and later during the year to see if students' reading habits and interests have changed. In the survey, students are asked to indicate their favourite kinds of books, whether they read the newspaper, how well they can read different types of print materials, as well as answer questions about spare time activities such as watching TV, sports, and movies. An expectation implicit in the Student Interest Survey seems to be student self-awareness of individual reading habits and reading difficulties. The belief is expressed by the authors of the *In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* that "The path to learning strategies starts with a first step - searching for self-awareness" (p.11).

The highlights, Thinking About the Theme and Thinking About Yourself are part of student self-assessment for each thematic unit. Having students complete such self-assessment activities implies the goal of student self-awareness, while other more specific expectations may be implicit in the questions. Questions appearing in the highlights Thinking About the Theme and Thinking About Yourself were read and implicit expectations identified from them are included in Table 13.

A more specific assessment component in the *In Context* program was the Assessment Options provided with many of the lessons. Several of the Assessment Options in the lesson plans did not deal directly with reading, but dealt with other related areas of the program such as journal writing, participating in groups, or viewing television drama. However, implicit reading expectations could sometimes be inferred from them. For example, in one assessment option headed Responding Personally (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p. 20), the teacher was directed to observe students discussing a story in small groups. Questions provided in the assessment option suggested teachers should note if students (in their responses to reading) sought clarification of points in the story, if they responded spontaneously or cautiously, if their responses were open-ended or directed at finding the right answer, if they "reached into themselves" for reactions to people and events, or if they borrowed attitudes from friends (rather than thinking for themselves). Three of these points (seeking clarification of points in the story, responses that were directed at finding the "right answer", and borrowing attitudes) seem directly relevant to proficient reading in view of what current research informs us. Proficient readers continually monitor their understanding of texts and proceed only when the text makes sense to them. They are concerned with making universally adequate interpretations of text (that is, are concerned to some degree with the "right answer") before making a personal response, and they think about what they have read. Hence, three expectations directly relevant to reading were inferred from this Assessment Option. Of the eight Assessment Options suggested in the unit, four were judged to be directly

related to reading expectations. Performance expectations inferred from the Assessment Options were shown in Table 13.

Although they seem to be randomly placed throughout the unit, the implicit reading expectations of the *In Context* Assessment Options appear to be mainly concerned with strategic reading, which is a program strength. However, the seemingly random placement of specific strategies in the unit is a cause for concern because there does not appear to be any discernible logic underlying reading instruction in the unit.

On-going assessment is part of the teaching process. Hence, the lesson plans for individual selections in the unit "Friends and Relations" were examined carefully for implicit reading expectations. Blackline masters (called 'highlights') recommended as part of specific lessons in the unit were also examined, as were novel study suggestions provided in the program. Most of the implicit reading expectations were found in the part of the lesson called Developing the Context, which is the 'during reading' phase of the lesson. However, the expectation that students would use prior knowledge and that students would predict what selections might be about which was found in Creating the Context (the pre-reading phase of the lesson) seemed to be present for almost all selections in the unit. Expectations inherent in the highlights recommended for specific lessons reflected the expectations inherent in the lesson. As can be seen from Table 13, expectations inferred from the lesson plans were a mix of loosely defined learning expectations and reading expectations specific to a particular selection.

Examination of *The Issues Collection* followed the same procedure as did the examination of *In Context*, and began with careful reading of the discussion on assessment and evaluation in the teacher's guide. Next the blackline masters provided for student self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation were examined. Of the eighteen blackline masters provided, the Reading Survey for students, the Response Journals (rating scale) for teachers, and the Preparing for Student-Teacher Conference: Student Questionnaire were judged to be most relevant to reading and most likely to contain implicit reading expectations. Hence, these were examined in detail. Finally, the teaching suggestions for each selection in the unit were examined and the findings reported. Suggestions for integrating the selections across the curriculum were featured in the section of the lesson called Considering, but for the purpose of this study the examination of the lessons for implicit reading expectations was limited to reading of the suggestions for language arts activities. There were no novel studies or other supplementary materials included in *The Issues Collection*. Reading expectations stated in the "Families in Transition" unit of *The Issues Collection* were general.

There were fewer implicit reading expectations derived from *The Issues Collection* than from either of the other programs, and the performance expectations identified tended to be very general in nature. For example, the expectation that students will develop their understanding of the author, text, and reader relationship begs the question of the degree or level of understanding. Will it be the same for students in grade nine as for students in grade seven or eight, or will students' level of understanding

increase over the three years with exposure to increasingly sophisticated texts? The lack of specific information about reading performance expectations is a major cause of concern for teachers whose task it becomes to organize these reading materials into a coherent program of instruction by matching them to a series of performance expectations from another source (See Table 14 for performance expectations).

It is interesting to note a claim that using the Independent Learning Planner could inform teachers' planning decisions (Families in Transition Teacher's Guide p. 39). The Independent Learning Planner is a blackline master for students to use in planning their own units of work. Students record the issue they will explore, the selections they will read, the activities they will do, the names of their work partners or the members of their small group, the materials such as audio-visual equipment they will need, and the dates on which they will begin and complete the unit. The planner is then signed by student and teacher. Students are expected to write comments and note any modifications to their plan, as well as their reflections and self-evaluation on the back of the paper. The claim that teachers could use information from students' Independent Learning Planners to inform their planning was followed by examples to illustrate potential learning problems that might be identified through the use of the Independent Learning Planner and suggestions of actions teachers might take to deal with those problems. One of the examples suggests when a teacher discovers from a student's learning planner that the student is having difficulty understanding certain selections, the actions to be taken are to read aloud to that student, to provide a reading buddy or a taped version of the selection,

Table 14

Reading performance expectations inherent in assessment components of *The Issues Collection*

Blackline masters provided for student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation	Suggested teaching and learning activities
Students are expected to:	Students are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor and reflect on their own progress, learning strategies and achievements • through their responses demonstrate an understanding of selections read • go beyond plot summarizes to feelings and ideas in their responses • reflect on significance of themes and ideas • develop their understanding of author/text/reader relationship • relate to selections read • compare selections read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take part in activities to help them access prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, and trigger their thoughts about the issue • read selections silently • read selections aloud after practicing them • listen to a reading of the selection after having read it silently • stop reading at strategic points in the story, predict, and continue reading • identify with characters and situations read about • summarize after reading • do Readers' Theatre presentations • compare selections read with other

(table continues)

Table 14 (continued)

Blackline masters provided for student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation	Suggested teaching and learning activities
	<p>selections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpret the ending of a poem and relate it to the title • recall details for comparison purposes • summarize selections read

or to arrange for alternative selections. These somewhat superficial suggestions may indeed be all that a teacher can do in an overcrowded, tightly scheduled junior high school classroom. However, they surely are in contradiction of the goal of having students become more proficient language users (The last sentence is based on the assumption that being a proficient language user means being able to read independently at a level that will allow students to meet curriculum requirements for the grade in which that student is placed). Students may well display understanding of a selection after they have heard it read aloud, but they are demonstrating listening comprehension rather than reading comprehension. The two are not the same. Furthermore, these suggestions avoid dealing directly with the key problem that confronts many students in Canadian and American junior high schools - they are not proficient readers.

As with the other two programs, the examination of the *MultiSource* program began with a careful reading of the discussion on assessment and evaluation in the teacher's guidebook. The statement, "... assessment in the language arts should reflect the goals and objectives of the course and your assessment practices" (*Relating Unit Guide* p. 12) made it seem unlikely that explicit or implicit performance expectations would be found for the thematic unit under study in this program. However, it was indicated in the discussion of assessment that in the *MultiSource* program activity sheets containing assessment strategies were provided in each of the thematic unit guides. The use of assessment forms for student self-evaluation (A25 - A32) was suggested for the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the year to monitor student progress. These activity sheets were examined, and although four of them were not directly related to reading, a number of implicit performance expectations were identified in the others (See Table 15). In addition, checklists and response forms for both student self-assessment and teacher use (A62-A72) were also suggested, and a number of performance expectations were identified in them.

The performance expectations implicit in the assessment materials provided in the *MultiSource Relating Unit Guide*, like those in *The Issues Collection*, do not differentiate between and among expectations held for students in grades seven, eight, and nine. Hence, the setting of reasonable reading performance expectations for the end of each junior high school grade level or even for the end of junior high school is left to teachers.

Table 15

Performance expectations for reading inherent in assessment components of the
MultiSource Program

Blackline masters (student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation)	Suggested teaching and learning activities
Students are expected to:	Students are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aware of their own reading preferences and habits • be aware of the strategies they use • have a concept of what a good reader is • evaluate fiction • assess non-fiction holistically • evaluate informative writing • evaluate poetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read photographs, captions, and headings to evaluate how well they capture interest • reflect on what they have read • infer from photographs • evaluate predictions • understand literal and figurative language • analyze poetry • read and analyze sports section of a newspaper • analyze an interview • research topics in the selections further • prepare and give oral interpretations of a poem • compare two literary works

(table continues)

Table 15 (continued)

Blackline masters (student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation)	Suggested teaching and learning activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predict content from scanning title, captions, illustrations • analyze textbook for bias • interpret images • visualize poem as it is read • identify characteristics of human interest writing • note character traits as they read • use context to guess meanings of difficult words • use dictionary to confirm meaning guesses • give dramatic meanings of poems • discuss extended metaphor • identify with story characters and respond to their reactions • pause during oral reading to explain unfamiliar terms • compare two literary works

(table continues)

Table 15 (continued)

Blackline masters (student self-evaluation and teacher evaluation)	Suggested teaching and learning activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predict story from title, opening sentence and other strategic points in the story • respond to reading through journal writing • identify with situations in selections read • develop awareness of rich visual images • identify phrases that set up extended metaphor • compare 'message' of a poem to a series of quotations • infer personality traits of narrator • examine writing styles • evaluate how well a point is made • summarize a poem's message • identify with characters in a novel • evaluate decisions made by characters in a novel • focus on one aspect of a novel as they read • make a plot summary • research a topic related to the novel

It appears that in these programs the lack of clearly explicated performance expectations is viewed as a positive feature, namely, flexibility. However, clear reading performance expectations are necessary for both teachers and students if effective teaching and learning is to occur. The establishment of performance expectations that teachers could use as criteria or standards for judging student progress at each grade level does not in any way negate the importance of recognizing and teaching to individual differences. Salinger (1996) pointed out, "Standards represent learning targets or expectations for all students (or at least most students, if individuals with severe mental disabilities are exempted). It follows that schools should help students achieve these standards and that almost all students can accomplish them - given proper instruction, time, and resources" (p. 295).

The time taken and the amount of instruction given and the resources used to help students reach the expected level of reading performance may vary from student to student, but without clear performance expectations the goal towards which teachers and students strive is unknown.

The on-going assessment inherent in teaching and learning suggestions was examined for reading performance expectations next. That is, the teaching and learning suggestions for all selections in the Relating Anthology, the Relating Magazine, the novel studies for the unit, the Activity Sheets suggested for use with unit selections, and the Language Arts Survival Guide were examined for implicit reading expectations. The implicit reading expectations from the examination of all components of the *MultiSource*

program, with the exception of the Language Arts Survival Guide, are listed in Table 15. Reading expectations inherent in the Language Arts Survival Guide are listed in Tables 16a-c.

In summary, it is evident from the examination of the thematic units on relating in each of the three programs that the performance expectations are not clearly indicated. Many of the reading expectations inferred from the examination of assessment materials are broad to the point of vagueness, and are open to a wide range of interpretations. For example, are students showing appreciation of the author's craft when smiles of enjoyment creep across their faces as they read or it is when students explain the effectiveness of a writer's imagery or use of metaphor?

The issue of differentiation of expectations for the different grade levels is not addressed in two of the programs, and even in the *In Context* program which designates thematic units for each grade level, there are no criteria explicated by which teachers and students can judge if students' performance is less than satisfactory, satisfactory, or exceptional. In the absence of clear performance expectations, it is not possible to state whether the program expectations are appropriate for the junior high school level. There is evidence in the expectations listed in Tables 13 through 16a-c that students are expected to use reading strategies and thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation (both of which are appropriate to junior high school students), but there is no systematic provision for explicit instruction in these skills. Hence, development of a comprehensive reading program and the explicit strategy instruction that current research says is beneficial to

Table 16a

Reading expectations implicit in *Language Arts Survival Guide* of the *MultiSource* program (Sections examined are those to which reference was made in the teaching/learning suggestions for each lesson.)

Reading Fiction (p. 134)	Reader Response (p. 112)	Doing Research (p. 228)
Students are Expected to:	Students are	This section
• know story elements of setting, characters, plot, theme	expected to:	deals with
• use a story map to clarify story events	• understand that	developing
• make inferences	reading is a 2-way	library skills, and
• know literary devices of point of view, flashback, figurative language, mood, symbolism, sensory language, foreshadowing, characterization	process	does not deal
• prior to reading: preview the book, make predictions, set a purpose	• identify with	directly with the
• during reading: summarize, note the sequence, make predictions, assess understanding and enjoyment of the book	elements of story, i.e. characters	reading process.
• after reading: respond, go beyond the book	• respond through	
	journal writing	
	and discussion	

Table 16b

Reading expectations implicit in *Language Arts Survival Guide of the MultiSource* program (Sections examined are those to which reference was made in the teaching/learning suggestions for each lesson.)

Reading Poetry (p. 144)	Oral Reading (p. 175)	Reading Non-Fiction (p.116)
Students are expected to:	Students are expected to:	Students are expected to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a poetry reading strategy • use a strategy for discussing poetry • develop awareness of rhythm and rhyme and the forms of poetry • know the 'language of poetry' i.e. imagery, figurative language, personification • know forms of poetry such as haiku, free verse, sonnet, ballad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare for oral reading by identifying the mood of the piece, rehearsing different tones and speeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use K-W-L strategy • use SQ3R strategy • identify organizational patterns used to organize the material

Table 16c

Reading expectations implicit in *Language Arts Survival Guide of the MultiSource* program (Sections examined are those to which reference was made in the teaching/learning suggestions for each lesson.)

Reading Critically (p. 130)	Interpreting Images (p. 189)	Looking at Logic (p. 168)
<p>Students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read critically identifying main ideas, facts, opinions, and point of view • analyze and evaluate content • recognize faulty cause and effect reasoning, either-or fallacy, and overgeneralization • recognize bias in stories, poems, articles, etc. 	<p>This section deals with interpreting visual images</p>	<p>Students are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognize faulty logic such as: irrelevance, incomplete comparison, wrong conclusion • recognize persuasive techniques (propaganda) such as: bandwagon, repetition, testimonial, emotional words

junior high school students becomes the sole responsibility of each individual teacher.

Question 6: Do the thematic units under study present and develop instruction in strategies to develop and motivate reading proficiency?

Based on the findings of recent reading research, it was expected that current reading programs intended for junior high school use would include explicit instruction in such strategies as monitoring comprehension, rethinking interpretations that conflict with text information, and shifting focus (to another part of the text) when text information cannot be resolved within the present interpretation. Such explicit instruction would include discussion of reading strategies (that is, how to use them, when to use them, and the benefits of using them), teacher modelling of the strategies, and the gradual relinquishing of responsibility for strategy use by teachers to students. In addition, it was expected that the explicit strategy instruction would be comprehensive and an integral part of the programs, focussed on the type of thinking and reasoning necessary for successful reading, and aimed at teaching students to monitor and regulate their own thinking and strategy use during reading. Such a finding in this study would be in contrast to the findings of Schmitt and Hopkins (1993), who found, for example, that the strategy of teaching students to predict outcomes occurred three to four times at each grade level in the second, fourth, and sixth grade basals analyzed in their study, but was not taught explicitly. A similar finding in the present study (if it occurred) would mean strategy instruction was neither comprehensive nor an integral part of the programs, and responsibility to supplement the programs with the needed strategy instruction would then

rest with teachers. Explicit teaching of strategies is considered beneficial for all students, but especially important for less proficient readers who are less likely to develop their own effective reading strategies.

The thematic units on relating from each of the programs were examined for explicit strategy instruction. The examination of the three thematic units began with reading the introductory sections in each of the teacher's manuals to find general statements about strategy instruction or discussion of reading strategies. Next, the teaching and learning suggestions for the individual selections in all components of the three programs were examined for strategies. Where strategies were identified in the introduction to the program, they were traced in the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection, the occurrences counted, and tables created to present that information. Strategies found during the examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for each of the selections were noted and also included in the table. When strategies were identified, the method of strategy instruction was examined and compared with what research indicates are successful methods of strategy instruction.

The introductory section of the *In Context* teacher's guide contained a number of references to strategy use. Statements such as the following were made, "strategic thinking becomes a habit when students use it frequently and have good models to follow" and "Learning activities in the units are sprinkled with questions reflecting on the use of strategies" (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p.11). The description of the *In Context* three-stage teaching unit indicated that the strategies of using prior knowledge,

building awareness, previewing text, predicting, and word awareness were used in the pre-reading stage of the lesson (Creating a Context). It stated also that reading strategies to aid comprehension were often suggested in the second stage of the lesson (Developing a Context), which is the part of the lesson where reading occurs.

Teaching suggestions for each selection in the unit were then examined for the occurrence of strategy use, with particular attention being given to Creating the Context and Developing the Context because the introduction to the unit had stated reading strategies would be suggested in these two stages of the lesson. The information from this examination is represented in Table 17.

The *In Context* unit "Friends and Relations" consisted of ten selections in the anthology and five related selections in the book of non-fiction readings. There were no lesson plans provided for the five non-fiction reading selections in the unit. The suggestion that these thematically-related non-fiction selections be read was usually made in the third stage of the lesson (Extending the Context). Anthology selections 2, 6, 8, and 9 had non-fiction selections linked with them.

Table 17 shows the strategies identified in the general description of the lessons found in the introduction to the program, as well as the strategies identified during the examination of the lesson plans for each selection. The strategy of using context clues to identify unfamiliar words (which occurs in one selection in the unit) is really a subset of word awareness, and is the only word awareness strategy taught in the unit. Strategies in this unit were most frequently used during the pre-reading stage of the lesson (Creating

Table 17

Strategies identified in the unit "Friends and Relations" in the *In Context* program

Strategy	Creating a Context	Developing a Context	Extending the Context
Using prior knowledge	6		
Building awareness	4		
Predicting	2		
Scanning to predict	1		
Confirming predictions		2	
Word awareness			
Using context clues	1		
Previewing text			1

the Context). Using prior knowledge occurred six times in the unit and was the most frequently suggested strategy. Whenever the strategy of 'using prior knowledge' did not occur in the lesson the strategy of 'building awareness' was used. 'Building awareness' was used with four of the ten selections in the unit, and was not used when 'using prior knowledge' was suggested. The strategy of 'building awareness' seems to be aimed at providing the background knowledge deemed necessary for students to understand the selections, whereas in 'using prior knowledge' seems aimed at activating knowledge that students already possess. For two of the lessons where 'building awareness' was

suggested the strategy consisted of providing information directly to students, that is, information deemed necessary for their understanding of the selection. For example, in the story "The Education of Grandma", which is about a young Doukhobor girl named Katia whose grandmother does not see the value in her continuing to attend school, the 'building awareness' suggestion is that teachers talk to students about the early Russian immigrants to Canada - for example, their work ethic and the hardships they suffered.

Current reading research (Phillips, 1988; Norris & Phillips, 1994) has shown that the characteristic that distinguishes proficient readers from less proficient readers is the quality of their thinking rather than the amount of prior knowledge they possess. Proficient readers interpret texts for which they have no specific prior knowledge by making their own world knowledge relevant to their text interpretations through reasoning. In the process of reading they infer to create an initial interpretation of the text, evaluate their inferences and their interpretations in light of new information from the text, reject their initial text interpretation if it is inconsistent with text information, and sometimes refocus their efforts on another part of the text when their interpretations cannot be resolved, all while keeping the overall interpretation of the text in mind. In other words, proficient readers are aware of the need to monitor their comprehension of the text as they read. When what they read conflicts with their understanding of what they have read, they may change strategies in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the text.

In light of current thinking on the reading process, pre-reading strategies such as using prior knowledge and building context can be critiqued on the grounds that teachers are taking the responsibility for interpreting the text away from the students. Students are not being given the opportunity to reason through their own repertoires of knowledge and to apply what they see as relevant to their interpretation of text, which is what proficient readers do. Furthermore it denies students the opportunity to learn through reading.

Strategy instruction that is more in keeping with current knowledge of reading might entail having the teacher model strategic reading for the students. For example, after reading the second paragraph of the story "The Education of Grandma", which reads as follows,

"I've told you before, Dasha," stormed Grandmother in Russian,
"the girl is fifteen years old and she's still in school. What do you plan
to do about it?" (*In Context Book One*, p. 38)

teachers could think aloud, "My grandparents encouraged me to stay in school and even wanted me to go on to university. I wonder if I read that correctly", thus comparing their interpretation of the text with what they know of a grandmother's views on the need for schooling. "I wonder why Katia's grandmother talks this way?" Teachers then read on to answer the question that they have posed. As teachers read the next paragraph the text information reveals that their initial interpretation of the text was correct. Katia's grandmother is opposed to Katia staying in school. Reading further also provides the reasons for grandmother's thinking. Grandmother thinks Katia should be kept at home to help out with the work. At this point students might be asked to surmise why the

grandmother thinks that having Katia help out at home is more important than having her get an education. The lesson can continue with the teacher modelling the strategies of confirming or rejecting predictions and revising interpretations in light of new text information throughout the reading. Discussion of these strategies should be continuous during the lesson and lead students to use the strategies modelled (first with teacher guidance and then independently).

A second type of 'building awareness' activity is used with the poems "Together" and "Two Girls of Twelve". Before reading these selections teachers provide students with copies of seven sayings about friendship, for example, "Birds of a feather flock together" and "One friend in a lifetime is much, two are many, three are hardly possible". Teachers then explain to students what the sayings mean, and have students tell whether they agree or disagree with the statements and give the reasons for their answers. Students are then expected to find other sayings about friendships from sources such as posters, wall plaques, friends and relatives. This activity appears to be only tenuously linked to the reading of the poems. There is little in the act of collecting sayings that will increase reading proficiency. In fact, it seems in this 'building awareness' activity teachers are actually depriving students of the opportunity to engage in behaviours associated with reading proficiency. The students might have benefitted more from an opportunity to interpret the sayings themselves - perhaps as a small group activity where they could discuss their individual interpretations and arrive at a common interpretation of each saying. This would be more in keeping with the current view of the reading process.

It is interesting to note that when the strategy of predicting is used in the "Friends and Relations" unit it is followed up with discussion and confirmation of predictions made. The practice of following through on predicting by confirming or rejecting the predictions based on story information is valuable, because it models for students what proficient readers do when they read. Without such follow-up discussion the role of predicting in the reading process may be underestimated by students, especially when they do not see the merit of making the best predictions on the basis of available evidence and altering those predictions as new evidence becomes available.

The claim that learning activities throughout the unit were sprinkled with questions reflecting on the use of strategies was also investigated in the course of examining the unit. In two separate lessons students were asked whether predictions they had made prior to reading were accurate. For example, in the selection "Papa's Parrot" it was suggested that the teacher read the first part of the story to the point where Papa is hospitalized because of a heart attack. Students are then asked to predict what Harry (his son) will do now, what role the parrot will play in the story, and what the outcome of the story will be. In making their predictions students are required to state the information from the story on which they based their predictions. After students finish reading the story for themselves, they discuss the accuracy of their predictions. Such discussion builds and reinforces students' knowledge of the role of predicting and confirming in the reading process.

Questions about students' use of strategies, that is, questions that cause students to focus on the basis of their predictions, are important because the discussion of strategy use

that follows such questions helps develop and increase students' awareness of the need to consider text information when predicting, as well as when confirming or rejecting the predictions made (and the interpretations of text on which those predictions were based).

Questions asked about scanning, which occurred in the Assessment Options feature of one lesson plan, were: What purpose does it serve? What kinds of material could you scan? How do you scan? Where do you look for main ideas in an article? Why does scanning help you? Later in the same lesson after students had scanned a selection, predicted content, and confirmed the accuracy of their predictions, students were asked how scanning affected their concentration and how well they recalled the main ideas of the selection after scanning. These questions reflect current thinking that strategy instruction must include explanation of what the strategy is, how to use it, when to use it, and why use it.

Examination of the introductory sections of *The Issues Collection* did not find any discussion of explicit strategy instruction. The statement was made that "Young adolescents become independent, strategic readers when they encounter a wide range of reading materials and see reading as a meaning-making rather than decoding process" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p. 14). The section headed Teaching the Language Arts (under the subheading of *The Issues Collection Promotes Growth in Reading*) indicated that activities in the section of the lesson called Connecting would help students "...gain access to prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, and trigger thoughts and feelings about the issue" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide*, p. 21). In fact, the

subsequent examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in the "Families in Transition" unit showed that activities suggested in the 'Connecting' section of each lesson were designed to help students access prior knowledge, and in only one instance students were asked to predict. It was observed that suggestions for 'setting a purpose for reading' were not made under the heading of 'Connecting' (the pre-reading stage of the lesson), but were made under the heading of 'Experiencing' (the second stage of the lesson) and often involved a second reading of the text rather than the first reading.

In the absence of any further information about the inclusion of strategy instruction in the program, an examination of the teaching and learning activities suggested for each selection in the thematic unit was begun. Teaching and learning suggestions under the headings of Connecting and Experiencing were read because it was reasoned that reading strategies would most likely be used during the pre-reading and the reading phases of a lesson. In addition, an exploration of the Considering section of the lessons had shown that the suggestions made there dealt more with open-ended activities designed to stimulate writing or to integrate the selection with other curriculum areas. As in the examination of teaching and learning suggestions for the individual selections in the *In Context* program, the reading strategies mentioned in the introductory sections of the program were listed, and any strategies discovered during the examination of the teaching and learning suggestions were noted and included in Table 18.

Table 18

Occurrence of reading strategies in the thematic unit "Families in Transition" in *The Issues Collection*

Strategy	Connecting	Experiencing
Accessing prior knowledge	38	0
Setting a purpose for reading	0	10
Predicting	1	2
Checking predictions	0	1
Skimming to find major points	0	1

The strategies of 'accessing prior knowledge' and 'setting a purpose for reading' were mentioned in the introduction to the thematic unit, "Families in Transition", and the suggestions that students use the strategies of predicting, checking predictions, and skimming to find the major points of a selection were found during the examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for the selections in the unit. From the examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for the 38 selections in the anthology, it was found that predicting was suggested for selections 4, 23, and 37. Selections 4 and 23 were short stories, while selection 37 was described by the program authors as non-fiction. A reading of selection 37 revealed that it was a brief summary of information about Canadian families taken from the 1991 census, and that some of the information in the selection was

presented in point form. The suggestions for predicting were contained in the pre-reading stage of the lesson (Connecting) and involved having students predict (prior to reading) such things as the percentage of Canada's population that was over 65 years of age in 1991, or the percentage of single-parent families headed by men. In the second stage of the lesson (Experiencing) it was suggested that, after reading the selection silently, students note which of their predictions were most accurate. The predicting suggested for this selection was unlike the predicting and confirming that is part of the reading process in that it did not require students to integrate information from the text in making their predictions, and other than providing students with a purpose for reading, did not seem to contribute to developing students' reading proficiency.

It was noted that checking to confirm or reject predictions was suggested only for selection 37, and not for selections 4 and 23, which were short stories and for which the type of predicting suggested could be considered part of the reading process. For example, in the short story "Guess What? I Almost Kissed My Father Good Night" students were expected to break the story into three parts stopping at specific places in the story, to record their responses to the story thus far, and to predict the outcomes based on story information to that point. In this situation, a discussion of the accuracy of student predictions and the evidence on which the initial predictions were based as well as the evidence on which they were confirmed or rejected would have served to develop or reinforce students' concepts of the strategic nature of reading. However, no such teaching suggestion was included.

The strategy of skimming was suggested for selection 38. Students were asked to read the title, first two paragraphs, the first sentence or two of the remaining paragraphs in the selection, to glance briefly at the rest of each paragraph stopping to read whatever caught their attention, and finally to read the concluding paragraph of the selection and the descriptions of three families mentioned in the article. On completion of the skimming, students were asked to write the major points of the article in their response journals and the overall point of view about the family expressed in the article. Summarizing the main points of the selection is implicit in this skimming exercise, but it is not explicitly taught, nor is the connection made between summarizing and text structure knowledge (that is, using knowledge of how texts are organized, such as introductory paragraphs, concluding summaries, and topic sentences) which research has shown facilitates locating central text ideas.

Accessing prior knowledge was by far the most frequently suggested strategy in the unit, as evidenced by the fact that two or more activities intended to help students access prior knowledge were suggested for each selection. The points made earlier with reference to strategy instruction ('use of prior knowledge' and 'building awareness') found in the *In Context* unit also apply to suggestions for strategy use found in *The Issues Collection*. The suggestions found in *The Issues Collection* do not engage students in the process of reasoning out an adequate interpretation of the text. Furthermore, there is no explicit strategy instruction to increase students' metacognitive awareness of reading.

In counting the occurrences of the strategy 'setting a purpose for reading' throughout the unit, making a personal response was not considered a purpose for reading. Responding to the selection through journal writing (or sometimes through discussion) was expected after the reading of all selections and seemed to be an integral part of the reader response pedagogy used in the program. The suggestions given to guide students' responses simply indicated to students what they had to do after reading the selection, but usually did not contain ideas that would focus attention on a particular aspect of text or motivate students to read.

Purposes for reading that were identified in the teaching and learning suggestions for the unit are shown in Table 19. It should be noted that reading for a purpose was sometimes the second reading of the selection in the "Families in Transition" unit, and that setting a purpose for reading most often occurred in the section of the lesson called Experiencing, rather than in the pre-reading phase of the lesson. It would seem for 'setting a purpose for reading' to be an effective strategy it should be done prior to the initial reading, where it can provide a focus that will help students with their interpretation of the text.

There was no explicit strategy instruction found in the "Families in Transition" unit of *The Issues Collection*, but rather the use of strategies was suggested as one of the options a teacher might choose for a particular selection. Explicit strategy instruction was not suggested, and the decision to teach or not to teach strategies seems to be one area where teachers would have to assume professional responsibility based on current

Table 19

Purposes for reading identified in the unit "Families in Transition" in *The Issues Collection*

Purposes for reading	Occurrences in the unit
practice for reading aloud	3
read to discuss with partner	1
read to summarize character's ideas	1
read to develop questions for discussion	2
read to find statements that are 'moving'	1
read to find part of the poem that makes sense	1
read to confirm predictions	1

knowledge. That is to say, teachers using this program (whose goal is to have students read selections for which they have no specific prior knowledge) must organize a program of strategy instruction which would increase students' metacognitive awareness of reading. Such a program of strategy instruction would include explicit explanation of the reasoning behind strategy use - how and when to use the strategies, modelling of the strategies for students, and the gradual relinquishing to students of responsibility for strategy use.

Current reading research has shown that ability to monitor comprehension and regulate strategy use improves with maturity and instruction, and that the junior high school years are a time when strategy instruction is especially beneficial to students

(Borkowski, 1992; Chan, 1993; Haller, Child, & Walberg, 1988). Furthermore, explicit strategy instruction, in which the reasoning behind the strategy use is explained to students has been shown to increase students' motivation, use of strategies, and their reading comprehension (Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackcliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, & Bassiri, 1987).

A reciprocal link between strategy use and motivation has also been reported in the literature. Successful use of strategies gives students a sense of personal control over their learning outcomes which is motivational, thus increasing the likelihood that they will continue to use learning strategies and continue to improve their academic performance (Borkowski, 1992). Furthermore, Chan (1993) reported that prior to adolescence students do not differentiate between effort and ability as causes of success or failure, but that during junior high school years, and especially by grade nine, students develop the ability to attribute success to effort and strategy use. In her view there is a need to provide students with strategy instruction and to convince them that learning outcomes are attributable to the use of strategies. Such strategy instruction was not found in *The Issues Collection*.

A number of strategies were mentioned in the introductory section of the *MultiSource* teacher's guide. 'Building background knowledge' and 'predicting-confirming' were mentioned as strategies that help students understand text. In a section called Comprehending it was stated "... all readers can use certain strategies before, during, and after reading to help them get the most they can out of the text" (*Relating Unit*

Guide, p. 20). A number of strategies to aid students' reading comprehension were described, and the fact was mentioned that there were strategies such as SQ3R in the Language Arts Survival Guide to which students could refer. Specifically, the strategies of 'context building', 'setting a purpose for reading', 'predicting', 'identifying key sentences', and a strategy called 'quotes, questions, and concerns' were discussed briefly.

According to its description, the strategy of 'identifying key sentences' is intended to help students identify important aspects of the text. As they read, students write what they think are the key sentences in the text. They then compare notes with classmates and categorize the sentences to determine the importance of each. The importance of each sentence will depend on the readers' interpretation of the text, that is, what the readers see as the central text idea. Presumably students will arrive at a communal text interpretation through discussion of their ideas of what are the key sentences in the text. However, research has shown that younger readers tend to focus on details in the text rather than the central text ideas, and that awareness of text structure may be a factor in the ability of older students (grade eleven or higher), who are able to identify the central ideas in a text (Denner & Rickards, 1987). These findings raise questions about the effectiveness of the 'finding key sentences' strategy with students at the junior high school level. Although this strategy was described briefly in the section on Comprehending (Relating Unit Guide, p. 21), it was not found in the teaching/learning suggestions for either of the selections, nor was it included in The Language Arts Survival Guide where instruction on summarizing is provided.

The strategy of 'quotes, questions, and concerns', which was also mentioned, seems to be a part of the reader response approach to developing reading comprehension, where students note any difficulties they experience during reading and bring them to small group discussion for clarification. The strategy of 'quotes, questions, and concerns' seems to have been incorporated into the purpose for reading where students are asked to develop questions for group discussion as they read.

The teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in the "Relating" unit were examined to find the occurrence of strategies mentioned in the introductory section of the teacher's guide. As with the other two programs, strategies not mentioned in the introduction to the programs but which occurred in the teaching and learning suggestions were noted and included in Table 20.

'Context building' was by far the most frequently used strategy used in the "Relating" unit, and it appears to be similar in purpose to the strategies of 'using prior knowledge' and 'building awareness' found in the *In Context* program and *The Issues Collection*. The criticism of these strategies presented earlier with reference to the *In Context* program and *The Issues Collection* are also true of the 'context building' strategy in the *MultiSource* program. In short, these strategies do not promote the development of reading proficiency because they do not allow students to form their own interpretations of text through reasoning. The strategies 'identifying key sentences' and 'quotes, questions and concerns', which were described in the section on comprehension in the Relating Unit Guide, were not suggested for use with any of the selections in the unit, and seem to have

Table 20

Reading strategies identified in the "Relating" unit of the *MultiSource* program

Strategies	Relating Magazine	Relating Anthology	Novels
Context building	9	13	2
Setting a purpose for reading	2	4	
Predicting	1	3	
Identifying key sentences			
Quotes, questions & concerns			
Guess difficult words from context		1	
Discuss/confirm predictions		1	

been offered as examples of strategies that teachers might choose to teach to groups of students "...to help them get the most they can out of the text" (*Relating Unit Guide*, p. 20). However, these two strategies do not teach students to read independently, but rather teach them to rely on group support in forming and revising their interpretations of text, and are not in keeping with the current view of reading.

The *Language Arts Survival Guide*, a *MultiSource* handbook for students, features a number of reading strategies that could be adapted to provide explicit strategy

instruction. Areas touched upon in the handbook range from previewing text to recognizing faulty reasoning. This handbook is intended to be used on an as-needed basis, but teachers could adapt and supplement it to make a teaching unit on the reading process. Table 21 presents a list of strategies from the section of the handbook devoted to reading.

An examination of the thematic units on relating in each of the three programs has not found strategy instruction to develop and motivate reading proficiency. Overall, there is very little emphasis on reading strategies in the teaching and learning suggestions in the units, and (except for the lesson on scanning to predict and confirm in the *In Context* unit) no explicit instruction of the type likely to improve reading proficiency. In teaching these units it will be necessary for teachers (whose expectation is that students will become proficient readers) to take responsibility for developing and providing a program of explicit strategy instruction to meet the needs of students and to make the most of what is known from research that is current and informative.

Question 7: Does the unit on relating in each of the three programs present and develop students' knowledge of text structure?

Research has indicated knowledge of text structure improves reading comprehension. Readers who know and recognize patterns of organization in texts can more easily identify the central ideas of those texts and infer the author's purpose for writing. Furthermore, instruction in text structure knowledge has been shown to improve reading comprehension, regardless of whether graphic organizers or summarization

Table 21

Strategies found in reading section of the *MultiSource Language Arts Survival Guide*

Reading strategies from the *Language Arts Survival Guide*

KWL (What I know, What I want to know, What I have learned)

SQ3R

How to preview information

Visualizing

How to use directions

How to review and summarize

Find out how information is organized

How to distinguish fact and opinion

How to recognize faulty reasoning

How to recognize bias in writing

Finding story elements

Story mapping

Reading between the lines

How to read a narrative

How to read a poem

strategies were taught, and there is evidence that the ability to use text structure knowledge as a learning strategy develops with age and schooling. These findings from the research on text structure knowledge (which students learn to use as a reading strategy) combined with the findings from studies linking the use of learning strategies to increased motivation among adolescents, demonstrate the desirability of including instruction in text structure knowledge in a comprehensive reading program for junior high school students.

Text structure knowledge for junior high school students should focus on the type of texts students will encounter in their academic work. Types of text patterns have been identified in school texts include time order, list structure, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution (Horowitz, 1985a), so it would be expected that reading instruction would familiarize students with these patterns. In addition, students need to know the structures of narrative, expository, and persuasive texts, both as an aid to reading comprehension and to writing. Based on these findings from the literature, the three thematic units were examined to determine if instruction in text structure was included.

The thematic units on relating in each of the three programs were examined for the presence of lessons on text structure or suggestions for learning activities that would develop students' knowledge of text structure. The procedure used in the examination of the units was similar to that used in examining the units for other features. First, the introductory sections of the teacher's guides for each program were examined to find any

references to text structure knowledge. Then the teaching and learning suggestions for each individual selection in the unit were carefully read to find instruction or activities that would develop knowledge of text structure.

Careful reading of the introductory sections of the teacher's guides for all three programs revealed nothing. Text structure knowledge was not discussed or referred to in either program. One possible explanation for this finding is the reader response approach to reading instruction, which is used in each of the programs, presumes that students develop a tacit knowledge of text structure through exposure to texts. That is, students are believed to form generalizations about the organization of texts from their reading experience, so explicit instruction in text structure is thought unnecessary. Examination of the teaching and learning suggestions was carried out next, starting with the "Friends and Relations" unit of the *In Context* program.

Examination of the "Friends and Relations" unit revealed two learning activities that seemed related to text structure knowledge. The first was an indirect reference to text structure knowledge found in the readability comments for one of the selections which stated "Sub-headings will help students perceive the structure of the piece" (*In Context Teacher's Resource Book One* p. 37). Implicit in this statement was the expectation that students already have some awareness that texts are structured or organized in different ways for different purposes. As was stated earlier in this section, in reader response theory students are expected to generalize such knowledge from their experiences with texts. A mini-lesson on scanning to predict the content was featured in

the Creating the Context part of the lesson for this selection, and in that context students were told to look particularly at any subheadings as they scanned. There was no discussion of the structure of the article. Highlight 3, which was suggested for use with the lesson, was also read but contained no discussion of text structure (Highlights are blackline masters provided in the program that teachers can use to guide students through learning activities suggested for specific lessons).

The second reference to text structure knowledge found in the unit "Friends and Relations" was a mini-lesson on story structure. This lesson focussed on the exposition of a story and the story elements of setting, characters, and complication were part of the exposition. Highlight 5, which was suggested for use with the lesson, was a listening activity where students were expected to listen to a story being read and identify the story elements in the exposition. Nothing else related to text structure was found in the unit. The implications of these findings will be discussed at the end of the section with the findings from the examination of the thematic units from *The Issues Collection* and the *MultiSource* program.

Examination of teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in the "Families in Transition" unit of *The Issues Collection* revealed two references to text structure knowledge. These references were indirect and seemed based on the presumption that students had some tacit knowledge of text structure which had been gained from their previous reading experiences. In the first instance, students were asked to use the structure of a poem they had read as a model for a poem they would write. The

second reference to text structure was a question that asked students why the second part of a story was a separate section. The story called "Bridging" was about a father who, in trying to care for his motherless daughter, has become a Girl Scout assistant, while his nine-year-old daughter refused to become a Girl Scout. Jessica, the daughter, is an avid sports fan who insists on being dropped off at the stadium to watch a baseball game while her father attends Girl Scout meetings. The story was divided into three sections, the first of which set up the conflict; the second related information about the father and revealed his thoughts; and the third continued the story. The question why the second part of the story was a separate section was asked in the context of guiding students' personal responses to the selection. However, it could have provided an opportunity for a discussion of the way the text was organized, which would have connected the idea of text organization to the writer's purpose.

As was the case with explicit instruction in strategies, it seems that teachers must make themselves responsible for presenting and developing students' knowledge of text structure. Teaching text structure is not incompatible with the reader response approach to the teaching of reading, where teachers who observe that students are not making the necessary generalizations from their own reading are expected to orchestrate learning experiences for those students that will lead them to make the necessary generalizations.

The examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in the *Relating Magazine*, the *Relating Anthology*, and the three novels revealed text structure knowledge was not presented or developed in any of the lesson suggestions. However,

students could find information about how texts are organized if they were referred by teachers to the Reading for Information section of the student handbook, the Language Arts Survival Guide. References were provided in the teacher's guidebook which noted sections of the handbook that could be used with specific selections in the Relating Anthology and the Relating Magazine.

The section called Patterns in Information which is found on page 125 of the Language Arts Survival Guide contains information about patterns of text organization that students are likely to find in their reading. The following patterns are discussed: Main Ideas and Supporting Details, Definition and Examples, Description, Classification and Lists, Problem and Solution, Causes and Effects, and Comparisons and Contrasts. The patterns of text organization presented in the Language Arts Survival Guide are the same ones identified by Horowitz (1985a) except for time order, and they provide a starting point from which teachers can develop a program of instruction to meet the needs of their students. As with the *In Context* program and the *MultiSource* program, the responsibility for developing explicit instruction rests with the teacher. However, the *MultiSource* program does provide some basic information that teachers and students can use.

The omission of explicit instruction in text structure knowledge in the thematic units examined is significant because it means students, unless they make their own generalizations about text structure and its relationship to the writer's purpose, have one less cue available to help them interpret texts. Explicit instruction in text structure

knowledge has been shown to improve reading comprehension, and because of this it should be a part of comprehensive reading programs.

Question 8: How much actual reading is done by the students?

Current research in the field of reading has shown proficient readers to be strategic readers. That is, proficient readers integrate text information with the knowledge they already possess and which they have made relevant to their interpretation of texts through reasoning. Comprehensive programs provide explicit strategy instruction to guide readers as they develop greater proficiency. However, students also need time to practice reading and to use new strategies so an important element of reading programs is the expectation that students be required to read.

Furthermore, in programs where peer support and cooperative learning are emphasized as a means of enabling less proficient readers to take part in the learning activities, it is a matter of concern that less proficient readers may come to rely too much on the supports provided, and fail to make progress in reading because they are simply not reading for themselves. This concern is very real in teaching situations where one teacher may be responsible for teaching English to 200 students. Hence, it is important to know how much reading students are expected to do (without peer support) in reading programs. For example, is it an expectation of the program that students read all selections in the unit? How much of the work in the program is based on listening comprehension? Can students' participation in group work inflate their marks and mask their lack of reading proficiency? Can a student 'pass' the year's English course without

reading all or most of the selections? Canadian schools are organized according to grade levels, and public perception and expectation is that each successive grade is in some way more difficult than the preceding one. However, many of our teaching philosophies are developed as if a graded system was no longer in place. This inconsistency between our graded system and the programs we use creates a significant uncertainty on the part of teachers. Teachers are left wondering whether students are expected to read at a level of proficiency that will enable them to meet the academic challenges at their next level of schooling. These questions and concerns are of importance given the research findings cited in the first chapter of this thesis, which indicated less than ten percent of Canadian thirteen-year-olds could read at advanced levels. For the U.S. the findings were equally alarming - less than five percent of grade eight students in that country could be considered 'advanced readers'. An examination of the three thematic units was undertaken to try and find answers to some of the questions posed and to find out how much reading students were expected to do 'for themselves' in these programs.

The introductory sections of each program were first examined for information on the amount of reading expected of students in each of the units under study. The introductory section of the teacher's guide for *In Context Book One* contained the statement "students may experience the selection by reading it or listening to it and by interacting with it in a variety of ways" (p.7), which seems to imply that all ways of experiencing the selection are equally valuable. This cannot be the case if the goal of reading instruction is to improve students' ability to read. It was also stated that reading

fluency can only develop from "extensive involvement with tasks the student can manage well and enjoy" (p. 7), which raises the question of whether providing students with a challenge is considered appropriate in this program. Dweck (1986) found that continued success on easily manageable tasks (for example, listening to a story that you cannot read) did not produce confident and motivated students who responded well to challenges. However, tasks incorporating challenge and failure did produce such students. It seems reasonable to expect that students who rise to the challenge of reading increasingly difficult and sophisticated materials would develop a greater sense of self-efficacy than those who do not. All ways of experiencing a reading selection are not equally valuable when the goal is learning to read.

In the teacher's guide for the anthology *Families in Transition* from *The Issues Collection* it was indicated students were expected to read in the course of exploring the issues, and that this reading was for pleasure, information and knowledge. Oral reading was sometimes expected for various purposes, but only after silent reading of the selection had occurred for comprehension.

In the *MultiSource* program it seemed reading was expected to occur in the course of carrying out learning activities such as making a visual response to a selection or researching a topic. Statements in the *Relating Unit Guide* made it clear the materials provided in this program are intended for use by teachers who are teaching to sets of objectives provided from another source. Hence, there is no clear indication of how much reading students should do.

The teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in each of the three units on relating were examined next to find out how much actual reading students were expected to do in the thematic units under study. Considering the holistic philosophy of the three programs and the lack of clear statements in the teacher's guides about the amount of reading required in the units, it was not anticipated that a clear answer to the research question would be found. Nevertheless, an examination of the teaching and learning suggestions for each selection in each of the units was carried out.

The selections students were expected to read were counted and compared to the total number of selections in the unit and then expressed as a percentage. It was noted that selections which students were not expected to read were either read aloud to students by the teacher or an audiotape of the selection was provided for student listening. Suggestions for presenting the selections to students in ways other than having students read for themselves were not frequent. For example, of the 39 selections in the Families in Transition anthology the suggestion that the teacher read to the students or a tape of the selection be provided for listening occurred only four times.

Table 22 shows the amount of reading expected of students in each of the thematic units. Grade seven students using the *In Context* program were expected to read all the selections in the unit "Friends and Relations", while grades seven, eight, and nine students using *The Issues Collection* were expected to read thirty-five of the thirty-nine selections, that is, eighty-nine percent of the selections in the "Families in Transition" unit. Grades seven, eight, and nine using the *MultiSource* program were expected to read eighty-five

Table 22

Percentage of unit selections read by students

Program	Percentage of materials students were expected to read
<i>In Context</i>	100
<i>The Issues Collection</i>	89
<i>MultiSource</i>	85

percent of the fifty-one selections that made up the unit. On the surface, these numbers seem to indicate that students are expected to do a lot of reading. Recall, however, from the discussion in question 2 that holding the same reading performance expectations for grades seven, eight, and nine is problematic and somewhat confusing. Most students in grades eight and nine can reasonably be expected to read more difficult materials than grade seven students would be expected to read. Furthermore, grade nine students should be able to read more difficult materials than grade eight students. To say that students in grades seven, eight, and nine are expected to read eighty-five percent of the selections in the *MultiSource* unit or eighty-nine percent of the selections in *The Issues Collection* is not accurate. It would be more accurate to say students in grades seven, eight, and nine are expected to read selections from those units which teachers have judged to be at their instructional level and therefore appropriate for use. Classes differ in ability and

achievement levels and teachers differ in the reading performance expectations they hold for their students, so there is no set amount of reading that students must do to complete the units.

The flexibility featured in *The Issues Collection* and the *MultiSource* programs means, however, that the information from the examination of the units to find the amount of reading students are expected to do does not present an accurate picture.

Teachers are expected to adapt the units to meet the needs of their students, which means that a student who is not a proficient reader may not have to read as many selections as the more proficient readers and therefore the expectation that eighty-nine percent of the selections will be read is not true for all. This is problematic because less proficient readers need more reading experience (not less) to improve their reading proficiency. Furthermore, teachers may choose only a few of the selections from those provided to make up a unit of work, which means that the amount of reading expected of students will vary from teacher to teacher. In fact, there were no criteria evident in the examination of the units to indicate just how much reading students were expected to do, or what successful completion of the units might entail. This situation gives rise to further questions. For example, a suggestion made in *The Issues Collection* is that someone read aloud to students who experienced difficulty comprehending certain selections, so will students to whom the selections were read receive the same grade as students who read

the most difficult selections independently? In the absence of criteria against which to judge student progress in reading, and if no differentiation is made between students who can and cannot read the selections in the unit, how do teachers judge who is ready to move on to the next, more demanding level of schooling?

The reliance of less proficient readers on teacher and peer support is also a concern when the goal of reading is to have students read independently at a level that will fit them for the academic rigors of senior high school and beyond. A question that must be asked is whether through our teaching methods we are creating a dependency that sets some students up for failure farther down the academic road. Practicing teachers are only too aware of students whose participation in group activities and projects earns them a mark that does not truly reflect their personal, independent level of achievement. At some point reading must be a solitary task, that is, students must engage in the act of reading without the support of peers. It is only in this way that they can learn to develop interpretations of text that are universally adequate, but also their own.

In summary, the amount of reading students are expected to do in the three thematic units examined depends upon choices made by individual teachers. There were no criteria specified or implied to indicate how much reading students at grade seven, grade eight, or grade nine level must do to successfully complete the thematic units in two of the programs. In the third program where thematic units were specified for specific grade levels, there were no reading criteria evident for successful completion of the units. In these programs, teachers are responsible for setting performance expectations and

planning programs that will prepare students to meet the performance expectations set in order to move successfully to senior high school and beyond. The situation in which teachers find themselves has been described by Mosenthal (1989) as being "between a rock and a hard place." Teachers are charged with the responsibility of responding to individual differences within their classrooms while at the same time producing proficient readers who are capable of academic excellence and ensuring that the majority of students in their charge are adequately prepared to cope with the academic demands of the next level of schooling. Performance expectations that are clearly stated in unambiguous language would assist teachers in fulfilling these responsibilities.

Summary of Findings

All three programs were holistic in stance towards reading. However, current research challenges some of the assumptions on which holistic programs are based. The conceptualization of reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, the emphasis placed on the need for 'prior knowledge' in reading, and the absence of explicit instruction in text structure knowledge and effective reading strategies were areas of concern.

There was no progression of difficulty specified or evident in the units. This finding was in keeping with the holistic stance of the programs. In two of the programs readability ratings provided for the selections were intended for three grade levels, and did not distinguish between and across reading expectations held for grade seven and reading expectations held for grades eight or nine.

The concept of readability in the three units, which views readability as an interaction of reader, text, and teacher, was current. Two of the programs provided a brief readability comment on text factors in each selection that might make the selection difficult for students. It was noted that readability factors (within the reader) such as readers' use of all available cues, or readers' use of cognitive strategies, which might have been addressed through explicit strategy instruction were not dealt with or mentioned in either of the three units.

Over half the selections in the units analyzed were in the 'poetic' mode, and other forms of discourse, such as exposition and logical argumentation were not included in these thematic units. One essay was found during the examination of the three units, and non-fiction selections were usually classed as articles or simply non-fiction.

There were no clearly stated performance expectations for reading found in the units. Teachers were expected to develop their own performance expectations or teach from a set of program objectives or learning outcomes from another source. Reading expectations inferred from the learning activities and teaching suggestions were often quite general. For example, although students were expected to use reading strategies and thinking skills, there was no provision for explicit instruction in strategies such as monitoring comprehension, rethinking text interpretations in conflict with new text information, or shifting focus when the present interpretation of the text cannot be resolved. There were occasional suggestions that a strategy such as predicting or using context to understand word meanings be used, but no explicit instruction was provided.

Text structure was not mentioned or discussed in either of the units analyzed, and there were no suggestions for explicit instruction in text structure knowledge in the teaching and learning suggestions for the selections. However, information on patterns of text organization was found in the student handbook of one program.

The amount of reading students were expected to do in the thematic units could not be determined. The on-the-surface expectation found was that students were expected to read part or all of most selections in the units analyzed. However, teachers were expected to adapt the units to meet the individual needs of individual students, small groups, or whole classes, which meant there was no clear expectation that could serve as criteria by which to judge successful completion of the units.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

In this study three junior high school language arts programs were examined to determine the explicit and implicit reading performance expectations held for junior high school students. Comparable thematic units were selected (one from each program) for analysis. Eight questions, based on the findings of current reading research, were formulated to guide the analysis.

The analysis revealed there were no clear performance expectations stated or implied for the thematic units from either of the three programs, and that performance expectations inferred from assessment materials provided and suggested learning activities tended to be very broad (such as, 'respond with imagination to reading material' or 'improve reading comprehension'). There was no progression of difficulty evident or specified for selections within the units, and readability ratings provided for the selections in two of the programs did not distinguish whether selections were most appropriate for use in grades seven, eight, or nine. The third program specified selections and thematic units for each of grades seven, eight, and nine. However, within each grade level there was no progression of difficulty specified for the selections within the units or the units within the program. Although it was suggested that reading strategies such as predicting or scanning be used with particular selections, there was no explicit instruction provided in text structure knowledge, or in the reading strategies that research has identified as the

strategies used by proficient readers. The amount of reading students were expected to do in the units was not clear because teachers were expected to adapt the units to meet the needs of individual students. Hence, there were no criteria evident that teachers could use to judge successful completion of the unit.

Based on findings from the analysis of the units, two conclusions were reached. These conclusions will be presented and discussed next.

Conclusions and Discussion

1. The reading strands in the units examined are not comprehensive. Based on what research indicates should be part of effective reading instruction, these programs are incomplete. There is no explicit instruction to develop strategic reading, increase the students' sense of self-efficacy, and increase their motivation. The lack of comprehensive instruction in reading at the junior high school level may be because educators assume students know how to read by the time they reach junior high school. However, research cited in chapter one of this thesis indicates that many junior high school students need comprehensive reading instruction. Current reading research indicates that there is a need to focus on improving the thinking and reasoning abilities of students, and supports explicit instruction in the reading strategies used by successful readers. Such strategies include, but are not limited to, confirming interpretations of text based on later text information, rethinking text interpretations in conflict with available evidence, and shifting focus when evidence cannot be resolved within the present interpretation.

2. There are no clear performance expectations inherent in either of the units analyzed.

The absence of clearly stated performance expectations for reading in the programs analyzed is a matter of concern because teachers have no criteria with which to compare student performance and progress. In the absence of explicit performance expectations, students' performance in reading may be evaluated by comparison with the work of their peers (Salinger, 1996). In this situation, what teachers see is the students' rank in the class rather than their progress towards specified learning goals. Students whose performance is ranked low in the class will probably remain on the low end of the ranking scale, and less will be expected from them. However, when performance expectations for reading are set and viewed as learning goals, students' performance is compared with the standard or learning goal toward which they are working. The focus is on the instructional actions to be taken to help students achieve the specified learning goal. This is in contrast to situations in which there are no clearly explicated performance expectations held, where a student could conceivably spend three years in junior high school, and at the end of that time be reading with about the same level of proficiency as in grade seven, because individual needs are being met through flexibility of expectations. That is, the needs of less proficient readers were met through the inclusion of 'easy' selections in the thematic units, while the needs of very proficient readers were met through the provision of 'challenging' materials. The performance expectations held for proficient readers were different from those held for less proficient readers.

In two of the programs examined for this study there was no distinction made between and across reading expectations for grades seven, eight, and nine. In addition, the statement was made "The wide range of genres and levels of difficulty in each of *The Issues Collection* anthologies ensures that materials are accessible to students of diverse reading abilities and interests" (*Families in Transition Teacher's Guide* p.7). The needs of less proficient readers were taken care of through the provision of less difficult reading selections and there was no evidence of an expectation that less proficient readers would eventually be able to read the more challenging selections - either at the end of grade seven or eight or at the end of their junior high school years. As pointed out by Salinger (1996), there is a different mindset in standards based teaching, where the performance expectations remain constant and flexibility is shown in the amount and type of instruction offered to help students reach learning goals.

The presence of clear performance expectations for each grade level does not mean that recognizing and teaching to individual differences is abandoned. What it does mean is that teachers, students, and parents have clear goals in mind toward which they are working. It is advantageous to students when individual differences are viewed in terms of the time, effort and resources needed to help students reach learning goals, rather than as stable characteristics of individual students for whom lower performance expectations are held. Where performance expectations are held constant, individual differences are dealt with through sound teaching practices (such as presentation of

increasingly more difficult materials when the student is ready for them), time, and appropriate resources.

Another aspect of sound teaching practice is that teachers make their expectations clear to students and parents. In the 'real world' of junior high schools not all students are intrinsically motivated to read texts of increasing sophistication and complexity, and when performance expectations are vague it is easier for these students to stagnate at low levels of proficiency because it not clear to them or their teachers and parents that they are expected to do better.

Recommendations for Teachers

Recommendations for teachers are based on findings from reading research examined for this thesis as well as the findings from the examinations of the thematic units.

1. Teachers must ensure they incorporate making universally adequate interpretations of text into their teaching when they use the reader response approach to the teaching of reading. Students must recognize the contribution that the author makes in the reading transaction, and this should be reflected in their responses.
2. Teachers must seize 'teachable moments' for strategy instruction when they occur, in addition to providing explicit instruction in strategies as an integral part of their teaching.
3. Teachers must teach text structures related to the author's purpose for writing, and in addition provide models of texts organized in different patterns to allow students to apply their knowledge of text structure to reading.

4. Teachers should communicate their performance expectations clearly to students (and parents) at the beginning of the program, to students at the beginning of each unit in the program and prior to each lesson in the unit.
5. When language arts programs used in junior high schools do not provide up-to-date and comprehensive reading instruction, teachers have an obligation to their students to provide the needed instruction by supplementing the programs.
6. In the absence of explicit performance expectations for reading, teachers must assume responsibility for setting reasonable reading expectations in keeping with current knowledge of reading, and communicating these expectations clearly to students and parents. In order to fulfill these professional responsibilities teachers must know the theoretical bases of the various approaches to reading instruction as well as the developmental characteristics of the students they teach. It is essential teachers stay abreast of current research in the field of reading.
7. Teachers should inform textbook selection committees or program coordinators when they are dissatisfied with programs that are outdated or inadequate, and where possible take part in the textbook selection process.

Recommendations to Textbook Authors and Editors

Recommendations for textbook authors and editors are based also on findings from the reading research examined, as well as on the findings from the examinations of the thematic units.

1. Reading programs should include lessons to help students develop their understanding of the nature of the reading process. Research has indicated many students reach the junior high school level without a full understanding of what reading is. The strategic nature of reading is revealed to students when instruction in the reading strategies used by proficient readers is an integral part of the program.
2. Research shows students benefit from exposure to good models of all forms of discourse including exposition, persuasion, and logical argumentation. Reading programs should provide such models.
3. Reading programs should provide examples of the different patterns of text organization, such as problem /solution and cause/effect, which students encounter in their academic work.
4. A progression of difficulty should be specified for the selections included in reading programs. This will facilitate teachers' planning for specific lessons or for units of work. Selections within the units and units within the programs could be arranged in a progression of difficulty for the convenience of teachers without detracting from program flexibility. Teachers can continue to be selective to meet their own teaching objectives and the needs of their students, but for busy teachers the time that would be spent in arranging learning materials in an appropriate sequence for presentation would be saved.
5. Reading programs should include support materials for explicit strategy instruction. This does not mean scripted lessons plans but texts that lend themselves well to strategic reading, for example, texts for which students would be expected to have little prior

knowledge, and for which they would have to make their own knowledge relevant and reason to form an interpretation.

6. Authors and editors of junior high school language arts programs should state clearly the expected learning outcomes for the programs they develop - at the individual selection level, the unit level, and the program level. Programs should be developed based on sound theory and current research findings, and on the recognition there is no one approach to reading instruction that will meet the needs of all students. Programs should be comprehensive and include features from all approaches to reading instruction proven successful by research.

Concluding Commentary

Learning to read can be compared to taking a journey. Without a destination the journey may become aimless wandering. Travellers do not know how far they have come in relation to how far they have left to go. Similarly, when there are no clear performance expectations explicated for reading programs the instruction may become vague and unfocused. Teachers, students, and parents may be unclear about the level of reading proficiency students seek to attain, and about how far these students may already have progressed towards meeting these reading goals. It becomes difficult for teachers to plan instructional actions that will help students develop greater reading proficiency, when the level of proficiency at which they are expected to read is unclear. As was stated earlier in this chapter, in the absence of clear reading performance expectations student achievements tend to be judged in comparison to the achievements of their peers rather

than by comparison with what is yet to be learned. Less proficient readers do not receive the necessary instruction that might help them become more proficient, but rather their 'needs' are met through the provision of less demanding reading materials. More proficient readers may set the standard which may itself be less than what it should be. Clearly the lack of explicit reading performance expectations is a cause for concern.

Time is a constraining factor when it comes to having teachers, either individually or on committees, develop sets of performance expectations for the grade levels at which they teach. When the ever-increasing work loads with which most classroom and subject teachers must cope are taken into consideration, the value of a program of reading instruction in which the performance expectations are clearly stated becomes inestimable. Furthermore, the presence of clearly stated performance expectations in a program does not limit teachers' autonomy or flexibility. It simply provides necessary information that teachers must use in their program planning and decision making.

A caveat is in order regarding the findings of this study, which are based on the analysis of one thematic unit from each of the three programs studied. As in the Schmitt and Hopkins (1993) study (reading strategy instruction was found to be diverse and sporadic in elementary reading programs), it is possible that more in depth and specific treatment of such topics as reading strategies and text structure knowledge, for example, may be found in other thematic units in the three programs studied. Hence, it cannot be stated that such instruction does not exist in the programs. However, the existence of sporadic strategy instruction in other units does not negate the point made in this thesis

that on-going, systematic instruction in reading strategies should be an integral part of an effective reading program.

In addition, the question of whether results from reading research conducted with elementary students can be used to interpret junior high school students' programs and performance is an open one. The grouping of twelve, thirteen, and fourteen-year-olds (that is, grades seven, eight, and nine) in junior high schools is not a universal and unequivocal practice. For example, some Canadian school boards classify grades seven and eight as elementary level schooling, while grade nine is considered to be part of the senior high school system. Furthermore, in the literature the terms "middle school" and "intermediate school" are used often to describe varying combinations of the grades from five to nine. For example, Taylor and Beach (1984) referred to the grade seven students in their study as "middle-grade" students. In fact, it is not always clear from the label applied to the group of subjects what grade-level or age-level is being studied.

The issue is more readily apparent when the findings from a study using primary grade subjects are applied to junior high school students. For example, the Duffy, et al. (1987) study on the effects of explaining the reasoning associated with using reading strategies, which was cited in this thesis, was conducted with third grade students. The question is whether we can say, based on this study, that the effects of explaining the reasoning associated with reading strategies would be the same for grades seven, eight, and nine students. Clearly, the only way to determine that with even a small degree of certainty would be to replicate the study using junior high school students as subjects.

However, evidence from a synthesis of the research on metacognitive instruction (Haller, Child, & Walberg, 1988) indicated that metacognitive instruction had the greatest effect on grades seven and eight students, followed by grades two and three. It seemed to have least effect on grades four, five, and six. These findings, coupled with the findings of Chan (1993) that by grade nine the role of strategic learning was as important as motivation in explaining reading achievement, illustrate that findings of studies using elementary students can be applied to studies at the junior high school level when further evidence is available to support the point being made.

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