

USING LITERATURE WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS  
TO IMPROVE READING PROFICIENCY

FOLIO PAPER 1: USE OF LITERATURE IN THE  
PRIMARY GRADES

FOLIO PAPER 2: USE OF LITERATURE IN THE  
ELEMENTARY GRADES

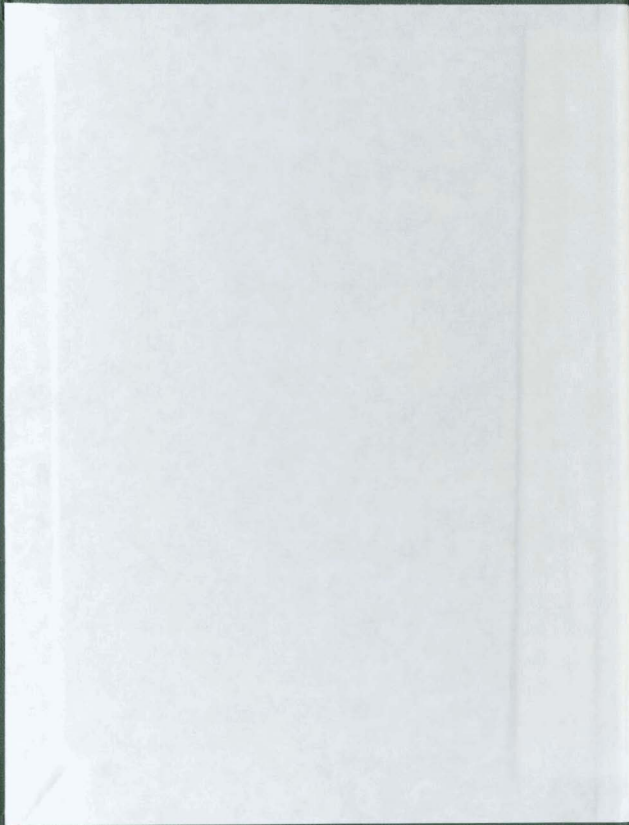
FOLIO PAPER 3: USE OF LITERATURE IN JUNIOR  
AND SENIOR HIGH GRADES

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

**TOTAL OF 10 PAGES ONLY  
MAY BE XEROXED**

(Without Author's Permission)

**DONNA ELIZABETH FOUGERE**









**Title: Using Literature With Children And Adolescents To Improve Reading Proficiency**

**Folio Paper 1: Use Of Literature In The Primary Grades**

**Folio Paper 2: Use Of Literature In The Elementary Grades**

**Folio Paper 3: Use Of Literature In Junior And Senior High Grades**

**by**

**Donna Elizabeth Fougere, B.A., B.Ed., B. Sp.Ed**

**A Paper Folio submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Education**

**Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland**

**September 1998**

**St. John's**

**Newfoundland**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
 <b>USE OF LITERATURE IN THE PRIMARY GRADES</b>	
READING ALOUD .....	1
FORMS OF RESPONSE .....	10
SIGHT VOCABULARY .....	19
PHONICS INSTRUCTION .....	24
STORY STRUCTURE INSTRUCTION .....	30
SAMPLE GENRE UNITS .....	37
CLASSROOM / SCHOOL PROGRAMS .....	42
SUMMARY .....	55
REFERENCES .....	58
 <b>USE OF LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES</b>	
READING ALOUD .....	1
RESPONSE JOURNALS .....	8
LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS .....	17
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT .....	28
CONTENT LEARNING .....	38
SAMPLE GENRE UNITS .....	47
CLASSROOM / SCHOOL PROGRAMS .....	52
SUMMARY .....	69
REFERENCES .....	73
 <b>USE OF LITERATURE IN JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH GRADES</b>	
READING ALOUD .....	1
RESPONSE JOURNALS .....	8
LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS .....	16
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT .....	25
CONTENT LEARNING .....	33
SAMPLE GENRE UNITS .....	40
CLASSROOM / SCHOOL PROGRAMS .....	48
SUMMARY .....	63
REFERENCES .....	67
 <b>CLOSING RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	 <b>76</b>
REFERENCE .....	79

## REFERENCES

- Booth, D. (1996). *Literacy techniques for building successful readers and writers*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.
- Cox, C. (1996). *Teaching language arts: A student- and response-centered classroom*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (1998). *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada English language arts curriculum*. Halifax, NS: Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation.
- Fredericks, A., Blake-Kline, A., and Kristo, J. (1997). *Teaching the integrated language arts: Process and practice*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Fuhler, C. (1990). Let's move toward literature-based reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (4), 312-315.
- Funk, H. and Funk, G. (1992). Children's literature: An integral facet of the elementary school curriculum. *Reading Improvement*, 29, (1), 40-44.
- Giddings, L. (1992). Literature-based reading instruction: An analysis. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 31, (2), 18-30.
- McGee, L. (1992). Focus on research: Exploring the literature-based revolution. *Language Arts*, 69, (7), 529-537.
- Routman, R. (1994). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners*, K - 12. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Routman, R. (1996). *Literacy at the crossroads: Crucial talk about reading writing, and other teaching dilemmas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Savage, J. (1992). Literature-based reading instruction: It works! *The New England Reading Association Journal*, 28, (1), 28-31.
- Tunnell, M. and Jacobs, J. (1989). Using "real" books: Research findings on literature-based reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 42, (7), 470-477.

# USING LITERATURE WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS TO IMPROVE READING PROFICIENCY

## INTRODUCTION

Within the past decade, there has been a growing body of evidence that supports the use of authentic literature as the foundation of a classroom language arts program. The Atlantic Canada English language arts curriculum is shaped by several outcomes, one being that students are expected to use multiple materials that also include a range of literature in order to become reflective, articulate, literate individuals in personal and public contexts. Available studies and reports indicate that the use of literature not only develops one's reading and writing abilities but also has a powerful influence in promoting positive attitudes toward books (Fuhler, 1990; Funk and Funk, 1992; Savage, 1992). In addition, many authors of recent book publications support a similar view (Booth, 1996; Cox, 1996; Fredericks, Blake-Kline, and Kristo, 1997; Routman, 1994). Considering that a literature-based approach means different things to different people, all agree that there is a wealth of learning potential within the pages of a well-written book.

Although recently revised basal reading programs do reflect a serious effort to incorporate literature, the diluted literary quality of much of the content in basal readers is significantly criticized. From the perspective of advocates for literature use, it is better for learners to read within the context of a "real" book rather than from an excerpt or a shortened version. Generally, "real" books have a greater richness of vocabulary, sentence structure, and literary form than do basal readers. They also have more character development, more plot complication, and more conflict to hold the reader's interest. Routman (1994), one of the most noted educators in the field of language development, cautions that the basal text can be used as a resource if it is done so judiciously. In the hands of a knowledgeable professional, it can be used meaningfully if teachers are selective about what parts of

the published series are used.

In past years, the arguments against literature-based reading instruction by some school-based educators (e.g., teachers and administrators) have always revolved around skill mastery and test scores. The general feeling was that while "real" books were a nice addition to the curriculum, there was no solid evidence that students could learn the skills of reading through the use of literature. This is no longer true because numerous studies have found that the use of literature has a positive effect upon students' reading achievement (Giddings, 1992; McGee, 1992). Based on research (Savage, 1989; Tunnell and Jacobs, 1989), there is ample documentation of reading programs that have successfully used literature to increase vocabulary, improve comprehension, and raise test scores (examples cited by Funk and Funk, 1992 - "The Shared Book Experience" in New Zealand, Ohio's "Reading Recovery Program", and New York City's "Open Sesame Program").

To determine how literature can be used to improve reading proficiency in terms of vocabulary and comprehension skills, a series of three papers focusing on its use with students at different grade levels follows. The levels include: primary (i.e., grades K to 3), elementary (i.e., grades 4 to 6), and junior/senior high (i.e., grades 7 to 12). Also included is a sampling of recent research along with descriptions of actual classrooms/schools where literature-based programs have been in use.

## USE OF LITERATURE IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

A variety of information on the use of literature with children at the primary level is presented in this paper. This information deals with the benefits of using authentic literature to enhance their reading development as well as effective strategies that teachers can use and actual settings where such teaching and learning have been taking place. The topics addressed are as follows: (i) reading aloud; (ii) forms of response; (iii) sight vocabulary; (iv) phonics instruction; (v) story structure instruction; (vi) sample genre units; and (vii) classroom/school programs.

### READING ALOUD

There is a strong base of research to show that reading aloud to students accompanied by dialogue through questions and comments has many benefits, especially when used in a literature-based approach (Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein, 1986; Manarino-Leggett, 1995; Saban, 1994). The following information demonstrates how reading aloud is beneficial and provides a summary of effective methods that can be applied.

∞ ∞ ∞

In an attempt to know more about the specific language skills that children acquire from listening to stories, Elley (1989) conducted two studies with young children to measure the extent of new vocabulary they gain from storybooks read aloud to them. All literature selections were newly published and were considered to have an appealing story with large, attractive illustrations. Storybooks were also chosen on the basis of having enough difficult words for the purposes of these studies.

The first study involved a sample of one-hundred sixty-eight 7-year-old children, divided into seven classes. Standardized procedures were developed for testing and reading the story aloud.

A pretest of the target words was administered 7 days before the first reading. A particular storybook was then read to each class over a period of 1 week, with no teacher explanation of word meanings. A posttest with the same target words was administered 2 days after the final reading. Results showed that the overall gain in vocabulary learned was around 15 %. The words that were most readily learned in the story were those for which the surrounding context was helpful, those that occurred more than once in the story, and those that were illustrated in at least one picture.

The second study was undertaken to address the limitations of the first one by using different storybooks and a more elaborate design. This study involved a sample of one hundred seventy-eight 8-year-old children who were divided into eight classes. Six of these classes included children in the experimental groups designated as Groups A and B. Two of these classes included children in the control groups designated as Group C. Children in the experimental groups were exposed to two treatments. The first treatment involved reading a particular storybook three times. Explanations of unfamiliar words were given. In the second treatment, a different storybook was read three times. No explanations of unfamiliar words were given. Pretesting was done as in the first study. Posttesting for each story was administered 1 week after it was read initially, and again 3 months later to measure permanence of learning. Children in the control groups took all tests but heard neither story. Results showed that after hearing the same story, children who received no teacher explanations showed gains of 15% and those who did receive explanations showed gains of 40 %. By contrast, the same groups produced considerable less gains on a second story with different characteristics. For children in the control groups, only minimal gains in vocabulary were made. Follow-up tests showed that most of the vocabulary learning was retained.

These two studies provide evidence that reading stories aloud to children is a significant

source of vocabulary acquisition, that teachers' explanations of unfamiliar words can greatly improve vocabulary knowledge, and that most of the new learning is retained. Text features that enhance learning of new vocabulary are frequency of word use, depiction of the word in illustration, and a context that provides helpful clues. It is hypothesized that the different results for the two stories read to the experimental groups in the last study may be attributed to the fact that the second story did not capture the children's interest and thus contributed to their lack of involvement. The evidence provided by these two studies indicates, however, that multiple readings of an appealing 10-minute story with brief explanations of unfamiliar words can produce significantly large gains in vocabulary.

A study was conducted by Morrow (1990) to investigate whether reading to children in small groups and encouraging verbal interaction can lead to an increase in comprehension as well as the number and complexity of questions and comments voiced. This study was based on research that shows children learn better in small groups and benefit from the verbal interactive behaviours made possible (Sharan, Ackerman, and Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1980; Yager, Johnson, and Johnson, 1985). A further dimension to this study was to involve only children of low socioeconomic status because it has been documented they are read to less frequently at home than other children, causing them to have fewer interactions with adults involving storybook readings (Heath, 1980; Ninio and Bruner, 1978).

For this study, Morrow selected a sample of 108 kindergarten children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These children for the most part were not read to at home, as determined from results of a questionnaire sent to their parents. Half were randomly selected for the experimental groups and half for the control groups, with each group consisting of 3 children.



Research assistants met with the children once a week for 11 weeks. Each session lasted 20 minutes. Children in the experimental groups were involved with research assistants who had participated in "interactive behaviour training" where there was a focus on questioning, building dialogue and response, offering praise or positive reinforcement, giving or extending information, clarifying information, restating information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to life experiences. During each session, the children were read to using a literature selection that met high quality standards. Interactive behaviour was strongly encouraged during the storybook readings. Children in the control groups were involved with research assistants who received training in teaching from a traditional reading readiness program which included teachers' manuals and children's workbooks. The assistants taught lessons from a manual with follow-up activities that were skills-related in terms of visual/auditory discrimination, colours, letters, and rhymes. Interaction between adult and child and among children was not encouraged.

Comprehension tests, which consisted of traditional questions and story structure questions (as described further on in this paper by Morrow, 1984) were administered in the form of pre- and posttest measures. For these testings, children in both groups (i.e., experimental and control) were read Storybook 2 and Storybook 11 in the second and eleventh sessions. From these tests and tape-recorded sessions, it was found that children in the experimental groups not only scored higher in comprehension but also showed superior performance in the number and complexity of their questions and comments.

A conclusion to this study is that small group interactive story readings seem to be an important strategy to incorporate into early literacy programs at school, especially with children who are not experiencing read-aloud events at home. An implication of this study is that storybook reading

in small groups provides a cooperative, social atmosphere in which adults and children interact with and learn from each other. All children are more easily included, especially those who are passive or insecure and tend to get lost in large groups or are too inhibited to respond in one-to-one settings.

French and French (1991) report from the research how read-alouds have a positive impact on the literacy development of children in pre-school and kindergarten programs. They have noted that reading aloud should be a process that involves forethought in the selection, presentation, and elaboration of stories.

In terms of literacy development, the authors write that read-alouds lead to the following reading conditions:

- children attending to visual cues by practicing left/right orientation, exploring the concept of language units (i.e., letters, words), and recognizing word structure and form.
- children applying intuitive knowledge of language by associating print with meaning, developing the concept of story (e.g., beginning, middle, ending), and learning the foundation of retelling and story telling.
- children integrating visual and language cues by recognizing that sentences are comprised of words, recognizing that context becomes more evident, and making predictions.
- children participating in a meaningful group experience as a viable alternative to workbooks and skill sheets, and as part of a structure for literature-based programs later on.

In selecting stories to read aloud, a quotation from the writing of these authors lists criteria compiled by experts which note these attributes of good reading material:

- Stories should contain appropriate themes and subject matter.
- Stories should use language effectively and imaginatively.
- Stories should use straight-forward plots.
- Stories should build to a satisfying conclusion.
- Stories should contain rhythmic language.
- Stories should be within the conceptual level of the child.
- The books themselves need to be sturdily constructed.
- Stories should be liked by the person doing the reading.
- Literary elements should be used effectively.
- Stories should be free of ethnic, racial or sex-role stereotypes.
- Illustrations and text should be synchronized.
- Children should be able to "read" the story by looking at the illustrations.
- Children should be able to view and re-view the illustrations, each time getting more from them.

In describing interactive behaviours that are appropriate for story reading, another quotation from the writing of these authors stresses their belief that adults in educational settings who read books to children should focus on the following:

• **Managing**

- (i) Introduce story.
- (ii) Provide background information about the book.
- (iii) Redirect irrelevant discussion back to the story.

• **Prompting**

- (i) Invite children to ask questions or comment throughout the story.
- (ii) Scaffold responses for children to model when no responses are made.
- (iii) Relate responses to real life experiences.

• **Supporting and Informing**

- (i) Answer questions that are asked.
- (ii) React to comments.
- (iii) Relate your responses to real life experiences.
- (iv) Provide positive reinforcement for children's responses.

According to Reutzel and Couter (1996), one particular benefit of read-alouds is that younger readers are helped to develop a sense of story structure which has been clearly linked with effective reading instruction. Developing a sense of story helps individuals to store information more

efficiently, predict with greater ease, and recall details with increased accuracy. Base on Trelease's (1989) *The New Read-Aloud Handbook*, quoted from the authors is a partial list of "do's" and "don'ts" for read-alouds:

#### **Do's**

- Read as often as you and the class have time for.
- Try to set aside at least one traditional time each day for a story.
- Start with picture books and build to storybooks and novels.
- Vary the length and subject matter of you readings.
- Occasionally read above the children's intellectual level and challenge their minds.
- Allow time for class discussions after reading a story.
- Use plenty of expression when reading.
- Read slowly enough for the child to build mental pictures.

#### **Don'ts**

- Don't read stories that you don't enjoy yourself.
- Don't continue reading a book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice.
- Don't feel you have to tie every book to classwork.
- Don't read above a child's emotional level.
- Don't impose interpretations of a story on your audience.

Read-aloud sessions are a powerful way to bring children and books together in a setting that has the potential to enhance their enjoyment of literature and promote their literacy development. Even children who have limited reading ability can reap these benefits. In this way, all children have the opportunity to experience numbers of books by which it is possible to improve listening skills, build vocabulary, aid comprehension, and have a positive impact on attitudes toward reading.

"Shared reading", as described by Button and Johnson (1997), allows children to take part in read-alouds by reading in unison with the teacher. Such experiences offers a way for teachers to help children develop successful reading strategies through the use of quality literature. A more detailed definition by Routman (1994) is that "shared reading" can be any beneficial reading situation

in which listeners see the text, observe a reader (usually the teacher) reading it with fluency and expression, and are invited to read along. In the area of emergent literacy, "shared reading" is well supported by research and theory. First developed in New Zealand in the 1970s by teachers working with noted educator Don Holdaway, "shared reading" stemmed from Clay's work (1979) which documented her extensive observations of what good readers do. She found that skilled readers rely on meaning and syntax before attending to print details. This gave rise to the practice of teachers using meaning and syntax to support children's developing knowledge of print.

"Shared reading" may involve different readers, such as the teacher gathering students together to read to them or students being selected by the teacher to read to others. When teachers read, a typical approach is for them to use a familiar text with print large enough for all to see so that students can read along. This approach is not a program for teaching specific reading skills in a predetermined sequence. As teachers and students work together to gain meaning from text, "teachable moments" occur. With careful monitoring, the teacher may identify those moments to provide the instruction needed at that time. To gain meaning from text, the teacher may request that the students use illustrations, look carefully at the print, consider sentence syntax, or re-read a passage. During the early years of schooling, this focus on meaning supports students' growing awareness of concepts about print that include the differentiation between letters and words and the recognition of high frequency words.

One of the important points to be made is that teachers can use instructional situations that arise during "shared reading" to explain and illustrate principles and strategies, rather than teaching skills in isolated ways. Another important point concerns the individual nature of such unison activities. Students participate according to their levels of understanding and confidence with some

reading proficiently and others reading with approximations of the text. If the texts used are able to engage the students' interests, it then becomes possible for them to participate actively and enthusiastically as they learn to become more independent and successful readers.

Graham and Kelly (1997) write about practices to follow for effective read-aloud sessions. First of all, give serious thought to timing. Although children are often most receptive early in the day, a story read later on can also be a successful way of ending the day. Another consideration is what to read to children. This should be done with a view to balancing genres throughout the school year and tying in relevance to ongoing classroom work. Once it has been decided what will be read, careful planning should take place to ensure how much should be read and where should be the stopping points to sustain interest. No matter what is chosen to be read, it is important to read through it first in order to anticipate any difficulties that may arise with understanding. Expectations about behaviour should also be given consideration and discussed with the children. Talking with the children before reading and asking for their ideas can go a long way towards minimizing petty interruptions. The way read-aloud sessions are opened and closed also have an impact on children's interactions with text. So it is important to give careful thought to how a book should be introduced and concluded to maximize students' understanding and appreciation of what was read.

Gunning (1996) states that whatever specific steps are used, the important point is to interact with students in efforts to build their understanding before, during, and after the reading of literature selections. It is well-recognized that students comprehend better when stories that are read to them are discussed. Extension activities are also important. However, a word of advice is not to overdo discussions and activities as this may detract from children's enjoyment of the text read.

## FORMS OF RESPONSE

Research has documented that providing children with opportunities to respond to literature establishes a framework for them to apply their understanding about what has been read (Close, 1992; Nystrand, Gamoran, and Heck, 1993). To elaborate, Macon, Bewell, and Vogt (1991) write that the purpose of having students engage in response activities to literature is so that they can get immersed and totally involved in reading selections. Information which shows the diverse ways in which children's responses can be guided follows.

oo oo oo

Kelly (1990) writes about how taking a graduate course in children's literature influenced her as a teacher of third-grade students who were learning to respond to literature. As a result of taking this course, Kelly learned about a new concept of response that addressed the following three issues: 1) what was noticed in the book; 2) what was felt about the book; and 3) how the book was related to personal experiences. With these prompts, individual thinking is promoted within a wide range of possible answers. Readers interact with text to construct meaning based on their background knowledge, allowing for different interpretations as a result of what the reader brings to the reading.

Over the course of 1 year, all of the 28 students in Kelly's class participated in activities that encouraged personal response to literature. Due to the range of reading abilities in her class, Kelly decided to introduce responding to literature by reading a wide variety of literature aloud to the class rather than having the students read silently. Using the prompts already noted, children responded to the readings with oral and written responses. In Phase 1 of the study, once a week during the beginning months of the school year, students responded orally to prompts that followed each reading. This was done as a whole-group activity, with student responses recorded on chart paper

for all to see and practice reading. With this approach, students were allowed to hear each other's thoughts supported by the realization that all responses were valid and valuable and there was no single right answer. Response activities in Phase 2 took place once a week during the remaining months of the school year. Students responded in writing to the prompts that followed each reading. For each prompt, there was a time allotment of around 5 minutes. Students were encouraged to write for the time allowed and not to worry about spellings as this often slows writing. Unfamiliar words in the story such as characters' names were spelled on the board and troublesome words were spelled if requested. After all writing was completed, students were given an opportunity to share their responses with the class. These written responses were then collected for the teacher to read, after which samples of work were put in student portfolios and duplications were made for teacher files.

Examination of student responses produced certain findings. Initially, oral responses recorded were brief and usually related to only one incident in the story. As students became more accustomed to being given the opportunity to respond to literature, their one-line responses became more detailed. As time went on, all students regardless of reading ability responded in a meaningful, although sometimes brief, manner and were able to relate story events to experiences in their own lives. Overall, there was a progressive increase in length and depth of responses. This may have resulted from the students becoming more comfortable with each other which made them more willing to contribute their own ideas. In analyzing written responses, it was noted that the better readers were also more fluent writers. All students were inclined to write in more detail and with more fluency as the year progressed. Their writing also improved with fewer errors in sentence structure and spelling. As the year passed, students also seemed better able to put their feelings into words when relaying



how they felt or relating story events to their own lives. This increasing emotional involvement was an indication that students were making more personal connections to the stories read.

The author concludes that encouraging students to go beyond literal levels of thinking to more in-depth analyses and emotional interpretations of literature provides a framework for them to become actively involved in constructing meaning. Not only were the students in this study actively involved in both oral and written forms of expression, their enthusiasm for literature was sustained throughout the year.

A genre of literature that many teachers find challenging when guiding students' response is poetry. After exploring textbooks and research publications which gave very little direction in how to present and teach poetry to children, a study was undertaken by Straw, Craven, Sadowy, and Beardman (1993) in order to gain insight into how this genre of literature can be effectively dealt with at the primary level. Based on the results of other studies which have shown that high school students responded best to poetry under collaborative learning conditions, the experimenters in this study decided to explore such an approach with younger students. The purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of traditional instruction with collaborative learning on the performance of primary-grade students when they are asked to respond to poetry.

The participants in this study were twenty-one 8- and 9-year-old children in a third-grade classroom. All of the children participated in four sessions, two of which were organized around a teacher-led format and two which focused on student-directed, small-group collaborative discussions. Four poems from contemporary literature were chosen, all of similar length and complexity. For each session, a different poem was used to control for the effect of any one poem on the results of the

study. The duration of each session was 45 minutes, whereby the children spent 30 minutes engaged in oral activities focusing on the poem and 15 minutes writing a response to the poem. During the first two sessions which were teacher-directed, the children engaged in the following activities: 1) the teacher read the poem aloud; 2) the children read the poem aloud with the teacher; 3) the teacher drew attention to patterns in the poem, such as its rhyme; 4) the teacher explained any unfamiliar words and asked the students to give their interpretation of what was taking place in the poem; 5) the teacher and the children clapped the rhyme of the poem; 6) the teacher asked the children for suggestions about how to read the poem again in choral fashion; and 7) the students did a final choral reading of the poem according to their suggestions. This was followed by having each child respond in writing to the meaning of the poem. During the last two sessions which were collaborative in nature, children were assigned to heterogeneous groups with 4 or 5 members. Each group was given multiple copies of the poem to discuss with other members. After 15 minutes, the small groups were called together into a single group. A reporter from each group then shared the ideas that had been discussed among themselves. The role of the teacher at this time was only to act as a facilitator and to assure everyone that their ideas were valid. This was followed again by each child responding in writing to the meaning of the poem.

The children's written responses to each poem were graded according to the following criteria: a) a score of 3 was given to responses considered to be interpretive if they showed insights into a theme for the poem as a whole; b) a score of 2 was given to responses considered to be inferential if they drew some conclusions based on part of the poem, but did not make an interpretive statement about the overall meaning of the poem; c) a score of 1 was given to responses considered to be literal if they retold and related contents of the poem; and d) a score of 0 was given to responses

that indicated little or no understanding of the poem. The highest possible score that could be obtained from participating in either the teacher-directed or student-led sessions was 6. After analyzing data from the study, the results showed that the collaborative learning strategy led students to make more in-depth responses than the teacher-directed strategy. For students under the teacher-led condition, more than 60% scored between 1 and 3 while less than 40% scored between 4 and 6. For students under the collaborative learning condition, less than 25% scored between 1 and 3 while more than 75% scored between 4 and 6.

Despite the fact that this study was limited to a small sample, it does point out that students can learn a great deal through small-group interactions with peers and that this type of learning is valuable for developing higher-level thinking skills such as inferencing and interpretation. With the heterogeneity of collaborative learning groups, the more able students are not only able to provide ideas that catalyze but also to serve as models for higher-level thinking. While it is not the recommendation of the experimenters in this study that traditional ways of presenting and teaching poetry should be totally abandoned, they do strongly advise teachers to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and experience through small-group interactions so they can make fuller sense of the literature they read.

A study conducted by Commeyras (1994) focuses on the idea of students posing questions for discussions related to stories that have been read. Referring to a particular review of reading comprehension research (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, and Pearson, 1991), questioning was identified by the researchers as one of seven strategies used by thoughtful readers. In response to recommendations in the literature that reading instruction should gradually release responsibility for

tasks to students (Pearson and Dole, 1987) and the growing interest in student-only discussion groups (O'Flahavan, 1988), Commeyras undertook a research project in collaboration with a classroom teacher and her second-grade class. The purpose of this undertaking was to explore the process of conducting discussions in which students engaged in aspects of critical thinking and to understand the process of moving from whole-class discussion led by an adult to small-group, student-only discussions.

Over the course of 17 weeks, all of the 20 students in this class took part in weekly videotaped sessions. Initially, discussions were led by adults. Following the seventh session, it was decided to shift responsibility of what was discussed to the students. After listening to a literature selection read to the class, students were invited to pose questions which would generate a discussion of opposing viewpoints. The questions were recorded on chart paper. Then considered was questions which would generate a discussion of opposing viewpoints. Having narrowed the list, students chose the question they would like to discuss at length.

Based on informal observations and examinations of the videotapes, it was noted that students had a dialogue as rich in critical thinking as any which had taken place during discussions led by the adults. The conclusion reached by Commeyras and the teacher involved was that good discussion questions are the ones students want to discuss because this provides them with opportunities to think about the issues they see as relevant and interesting.

Through interviews with students, Commeyras documented that motivation to learn was enhanced in classrooms where teachers encourage self-expression, and show respect for their ideas, opinions, and feelings. When the second-graders in this study posed and discussed their own questions, they were experiencing opportunities for self-expression and respect for their thoughts

and feelings.

Literature extension activities are an excellent way to complement and expand books as well as to examine text and illustrations more closely. In efforts to elicit varied forms of response, literature extension activities provide students with pleasurable, challenging opportunities to interact with books and each other. Adapted from the writings of Routman (1988, 1994), literature extension activities that can lead to a vast range of responses are as follows:

- Recreate the story as a picture book, play, or television script.
- Write an introduction or dialogue.
- Write a different ending or additional chapter.
- Design a new cover for the front and/or back.
- Make a poster that advertises the book.
- Write diary entries from a character's viewpoint.
- Make a mural or diorama depicting scenes from the book.
- Act out part or all of the story.
- Write a letter to a book character or the author with suggestions or questions.
- Advertise the book through a commercial.
- Dress up as a character explaining his or her role.
- Illustrate the setting of the book as a poster, photo album, map, or travel brochure.
- Make a picture book or Big Book from a chapter book.
- Create a dictionary for specialized language or facts found in the book.
- Write a review of the book.

- Research background information about the author.
- Analyze all books by one author.
- Illustrate favorite characters.
- Chart sequence of story events, including a picture and sentences to sum up each event.
- Create a project to demonstrate enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of the book.

According to Routman, a literature extension activity is worthwhile only if it has a natural extension to what was read, encourages students to experience thoughtful reflection, and demonstrates that something has been gained from the book. Activities that are overused can become boring and meaningless for students. Too much response can turn students off to a book. The most important caution is to incorporate activities that reflect educational theory about the teaching and learning process. Any activity needs to be chosen on the basis of how it serves a useful purpose, how well it fits in with teaching and learning, and how it enhances students' appreciation and knowledge of literature.

To give direction in how to present and teach poetry to children, Booth (1996) provides information on how this genre of literature can be effectively dealt with at the primary level. In efforts to elicit response from children, teachers can share poetry in the following ways:

1. Choose poetry that is enjoyable and that the children will find significant.
2. Help children to find the pleasure and satisfaction of poetry.
3. Prepare poetry in advance and explore different ways of presenting it.
4. Explain poetry at pertinent points but don't dissect it.
5. Discuss a poem after it has been read with open-ended questions (e.g., What did you like about

the poem? Did any particular words appeal to you?)

To create a poetry environment for the classroom, some of the ways suggested by Booth are as follows:

- **Capturing a poem on paper**

Propose to children that they have been hired by the poet to illustrate his or her poem. Before they begin, ask them to consider the message of the poem and what medium would best express it. After deciding on the message and medium, children may work individually or in groups to compose and illustrate the author's views. Following completion, work may be displayed.

- **Journal jottings**

When poems are being read, children can jot down their thoughts and feelings as well as any important connotations or associations. This independent activity can provide children with material to discuss in response to the reading of poems.

- **Questioning the poem**

After listening to or reading a poem, children can take time to think of questions about the poem that they would like to discuss with others. In small-group discussions, these questions can be raised with peers.

- **Brainstorming a title**

Read a poem aloud that the children have not experienced. Before reading the poem, explain that it will be read without its title. After listening to the poem in small groups, children brainstorm possible titles. As a large group, a vote can be taken for the title that best suits the poem.

In the last twenty years or so, a more informal and child-friendly strain of poetry has been published. What this means is that children have increased opportunities to experience poetry's

delights and teachers can feel more comfortable working with this genre. Choosing poems that appeal to children and providing activities that they enjoy will increase their appreciation of poetry as well as enhance their literacy development. With this approach, it then becomes possible to reach the ultimate goal of having students sample a wide variety of poetic forms and become readers of poetry.

### SIGHT VOCABULARY

It has been shown in recent studies that sight vocabulary can be effectively taught to readers using literature with meaningful context (Simons, 1992; Sinatra, 1992). Information follows on a discussion about the importance of sight words to the reading process followed by techniques for developing sight vocabulary within the context of quality literature.

∞ ∞ ∞

When using literature with children, what kind of a role do sight words have in the reading process? In discussing the importance of sight words, Groff (1994) writes that beginning reading materials need a certain number of these words to create sense and substance. This is so because initiates to the reading process have few or no skills to decode words using phonics information. Groff also refers to research findings that document good readers can recognize words holistically (Adams, 1990; Ehri, 1992). The sounding out of words is bypassed which enables the reader to go directly from the spelling pattern of a word to its meaning.

How can sight words be acquired? Groff refers to research evidence that points out the capacity to recognize such words is developed through repeated exposures to written words (Samuels, Schermer, and Reinking, 1992). This is so because readers are slower in recognizing words that they have never seen before than words they have previously encountered in print.



Reference is also made to the recent research by Adams (1990) and Ehri (1992) that strongly states the reader's close observance of the spelling pattern of words is the key element in making the transition from decoding words to reading them by sight.

What are the implications for instruction? Groff writes that for beginning readers, the number of "preliminary" sight words should remain as few as possible initially, but at the same time be sufficient in number to make reading meaningful. Therefore, it is a wise decision for the teacher to make sure that these "preliminary" sight words evolve into "authentic" ones by incorporating them into phonics instruction at appropriate times for a careful study of their spelling patterns. So it can be concluded that the systematic instruction of conventional spelling, according to these researchers, is a critical aid in reading development.

What is the connection to quality literature? Fine books abound with words that can be drawn upon to study spelling patterns at opportune times in meaningful contexts.

Leu and Kinzer (1991) state that sight word instruction should take place within meaningful context. The reason is that children are more certain about a word's meaning when it appears in a sentence or phrase. There can be confusion among words that look or sound alike (e.g., close/clothes, red/read), so it is important to use context to identify words. Another reason for teaching words in context is to approximate the reading process. Presenting words in isolation may lead children to think that reading is simply a process of recognizing separate words. Often the result is slow, inefficient word-by-word reading without attention to meaning. To develop sight vocabulary, the authors suggest the following practices:

- **Integrating sight words into classroom activities**

The more opportunities students have to read real texts, the more they encounter high-frequency words. Therefore, it is important for students to read during classroom activities. Reading promotes the development of sight vocabulary which, in turn, promotes the development of reading. Creating a literacy environment with a prominent display of words from varied sources, including literature, can do much to develop sight word knowledge.

- **Using individualized word banks**

Such word banks consist of boxes with index cards inside. Words to be learned are noted on these cards so that one side has the word in isolation and the other side has the word in a sentence context. The words can be practiced individually or with a partner. Individualized word banks may originate with students themselves who decide what words need to be practiced and learned. Words are taken from varied sources, including books read.

- **Using sight word envelopes**

To develop sight word envelopes, the teacher prepares words taken from varied sources such as books read. For each word on paper, one side has it presented in isolation while the other side has it presented in sentence context. The words can be practiced individually or with a partner. In checking the students' ability to recognize these words, a dot is made in the corner to indicate it was correctly recognized once while two dots are for correct recognition twice. When all sight words are known, they are removed from the envelope at which time the date is recorded on it.

- **Traditional whole-word method**

A whole-word method follows these steps: 1) new word is presented in sentence context; 2) student is helped to read entire sentence; 3) students focus on new word as they read, spell, and

reread it; 4) meaning of new word is checked for understanding; 5) similar words are listed; and 6) sentence is erased except for new word which is read, spelled, and reread. Drawing students' attention to the spelling of the word helps them to focus their attention on its visual features. Usually no more than three or four words are dealt with in a single session. Also, some type of learning activity to increase recognition of the word should be provided.

To conclude, a reader has to recognize words quickly, accurately, and easily in order to read effectively. So that there is a focus on making meaning with the text, the reader has to become efficient at recognizing words with minimal effort. The more students read, the more familiar words become which results in more efficient recognition of words.

Holding a similar view to that of the preceding authors, Graves, Watts, and Graves (1994) state that the quickest, easiest, and most appropriate way to teach students sight words so that they can read text is to teach them as whole words. That is, words are taught as intact units without focusing attention on individual letters or sounds. The method is simple and straightforward - show students the word to be learned and say it aloud so they can recognize the association between the spoken word and the written word. Then have them say the word as they are looking at it. To reinforce their learning, students' attention can be drawn to the source of the word such as a book previously read.

The author concludes that the best practice for mastering sight words is to read them repeatedly in meaningful texts. As soon as possible, have students read the words being targeted in all forms of literature that include big books, little books, poetry books, or any other books that they find meaningful and enjoyable. Many encounters with the words in written contexts that students find

appealing is the key to automatic word recognition. After introducing students to words that occur frequently in text that they find enjoyable, then it is necessary to entice them to read and reread a host of books that contain these words.

Routman (1988, 1994) writes that teaching words in isolation, with no connection to context, is not effective reading instruction. Many basic sight words occur repeatedly in children's literature and can be easily learned in context without boring drill. One particular approach is that after a story has been read with a group, some high-frequency words can be put on index cards. Doing so enables readers to examine each word and pay attention to its specific letters. When reading the words, students are expected to do so with the support of the text. They go back to the text to find the word and read it in context, and then read it on the card. To further reinforce word identification, the vocabulary may be used in a new context through a dictated story using innovative words. Because the content of the story comes from the children's own ideas, another meaningful context for identifying words is created.

Having extensive experience working with literature in the classroom, Routman favors the use of predictable books with their features of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition to develop sight vocabulary. She states that sight vocabulary may be taught to beginning readers using predictable books because these materials enable readers to predict the next word or line or episode even though they may not be able to recognize individual words. Repeated opportunities to recognize high-frequency words in predictable contexts help children to develop a sight vocabulary that can soon be recognized in other contexts.

## PHONICS INSTRUCTION

According to research (Clay,1991; Deford, Lyons, and Pinnell,1991; Routman,1994), successful readers interact with text by using three cueing systems. These systems include semantics (context), syntax (structure and grammar), and grapho-phonics (letter-sound relationships). To achieve maximum comprehension, no area can exist in isolation from the others. Although phonics is considered to be subordinate to semantics and syntax, it is still integral to the reading process. The following information relates to approaches that may be taken in the use of phonics within a literature-based approach.

∞ ∞ ∞

Trachtenburg (1990) proposes how these two approaches may be combined in a complementary manner so that phonics instruction is provided within the context of quality children's literature. A description of this strategy that unites phonics instruction and children's literature will be presented initially, followed by the author's recommendations as to when and when not to use this strategy.

Trachtenburg proposes a "whole-part-whole sequence" that integrates phonics instruction with children's literature in the following manner: 1) whole - read, comprehend and enjoy an entire selection of literature; 2) part - provide instruction with follow-up activities in a targeted phonic element by drawing from or extending the selection of literature; and 3) whole - apply the new skill to another entire selection of literature. A good source of literature to use for this purpose would be trade books that have repeated phonic elements, such as the individual short or long vowel sounds. With this approach, there arises a welcome alternative to teaching phonics in isolation.

According to Trachtenburg, phonics instruction should focus on the most important and

regular sound-symbol relationships. She recommends using this approach only for high utility phonic generalizations. Another recommendation is that this approach should only be used with children who need such instruction. Through an informal diagnosis, teachers can identify which skills to teach to particular children. Setting up groups based on similar needs is more beneficial than offering blanket instruction to children, some of whom may already know what is being taught.

To present a balanced approach so that students can learn about print while engaging in authentic reading and writing, Durica (1996) makes the following recommendations:

1. Choose a book because it is one worth sharing with students.
2. Read the book and enjoy its literary features.
3. Choose selected words, phrases, or sentences from the text containing the phonetic element or high-frequency word to be emphasized.
4. For a phonetic element, have students note commonalities among words in sentences or phrases.
5. For a high-frequency word, have students try to find the word as many times as possible in the text.
6. After discussion, present a mini-lesson with direct instruction on the phonetic principle or high-frequency word chosen.
7. Return to the text with the idea of cross-checking by using the three cueing systems to determine words (e.g., meaning clues, grammar clues).
8. Demonstrate how the phonetic principle or high-frequency word is used in writing because the processes of reading and writing support each other.
9. Implement follow-up activities for additional practice. Remember to keep these fun rather than

make them drills.

10. Use other books to reinforce or review the content of a specific lesson.

Although Durica places emphasis on phonetics, she states that using this approach alone to achieve word accuracy and identification is inefficient and ineffective. Emphasis must be placed on the interaction of the three cueing systems already noted. Because there is so much wonderful literature available today, it should not happen that schools produce students who are capable of reading but choose not to do so because they have been exposed to books with little appeal. The skills and strategies taught to students are of no importance if they will not use them to enhance their lives with the pleasures of reading.

In discussing the role of phonics to early literacy development, Emmitt and Hornsby (1996) write that individuals need to develop at least a rudimentary knowledge of phonics and an ability to use that knowledge. To read proficiently, readers must combine the relationship between the patterns of sounds and letters in words with the "meaning-base" of words. Therefore, the use of phonics is most effective when used along with prior knowledge and context rather than in isolation.

So that teachers become better able to observe and interpret children's reading performances as well as provide appropriate demonstrations and feedback, Emmitt and Hornsby recommend that there should be instructional emphasis placed on the following categories of knowledge:

- **Phonemic awareness**

To develop and use phonic knowledge, children need to become attuned to the concept of "words" and the sounds within words. Although young children are capable of differentiating words that they hear, they may not be able to appreciate individual sounds in words or manipulate these

sounds. Considering that they can differentiate speech units such as syllables and the parts of syllables (i.e., onsets - initial consonant or consonant cluster; and rimes - remainder of letters often related to rhymes), certain activities can help them to become more familiar with the workings of words. Through stories, poems, songs, and jingles as found in quality literature selections, teachers can involve students in such activities as those that involve *alliteration* whereby initial consonants are repeated (e.g., mom, man, mop) and *rhyme* to point out similar sound patterns (e.g., - ook, - at, - in).

- **Letter names**

It is important for children to learn the names of letters because the name of a letter is always constant and reference can be made to it without any confusion whatsoever. A rich resource is the many alphabet books that are available in picture form.

- **Letter shapes**

To develop their visual images of words, children need to learn the shapes of letters and how they are formed. Through manipulative materials and well-illustrated books, children can acquire this kind of learning.

- **Consonants and common letter patterns**

Used with syntactic (grammar sense) and semantic (sentence sense) information, consonants and consonant clusters usually provide enough information for word recognition and reading for meaning. Research indicates that readers attend to initial letters more often than other word parts, that they attend to final letters more than medial letters, and that consonants are more important than vowels in providing the reader with information (Adams, 1990). Therefore, teaching children to sound out words letter by letter is unwise. Also, this practice can cause a distortion of sound so that the word pronounced is quite different from the target word. In addition, the practice of teaching



numerous complex vowel rules is unwise considering that they are relatively unimportant in identifying words. Since there is greater regularity between patterns of sounds and letters than there is between single sounds and letters, it logically follows that the focus of phonics should be on this relationship between patterns of sounds and patterns of letters. Through rich experiences of words in context, children should gradually develop an understanding of these sound-letter patterns. Some suggested follow-up activities include using words from literature currently being read in order to build word charts showing common patterns or sorting words according to common patterns.

One of the main points made by Emmitt and Hornsby is that children best acquire phonic knowledge through rich experiences with print made possible through the use of quality literature. In this way, children are provided with opportunities to use their phonic knowledge. The other point made by them refers to the importance of focusing on the patterns between sounds and letters so that children become able to transfer phonic knowledge to a lot of words. Therefore, it is essential that phonics be taught according to common sound-letter patterns within the context of meaningful literature.

In order to keep phonics in perspective so that there is not too little or too much emphasis placed on it, Routman (1996) recommends that teachers take the following steps:

- *Become knowledgeable. Make it known that phonics is taught.*

Refer to professional publications to acquire information about the role of phonics in the reading process. Inform administrators and parents that phonics is included as part of teaching literacy.

- *Share information obtained about phonics with administrators, other educators and parents.*

Read, discuss, copy, and distribute any information learned about phonics, such as strategies or kits that may be beneficial or even questionable.

- *Help parents to adopt a broad view of reading.*

Tell parents that reading books contributes more to reading achievement (i.e., vocabulary and comprehension) than any other factor. When reading, importance should be placed on discussions and questions to bring out the joys of books.

- *Post enlarged phonics charts in the classroom.*

Construct new charts each year that reflect students' needs and inquiries. Allow students to have input by including rules and patterns that are worth learning.

- *Use most of reading time to read.*

Although games and activities can help develop phonics knowledge, provide lots of books for reading as one of the quickest ways to help readers recognize words immediately and accurately.

- *Tape-record conference readings with students.*

Make comments offering support and suggestions to students so that later on, parents can listen to and model these comments in order to help with their child's reading at home.

- *Invite parents to join in at reading time.*

Have parents come in during reading time so they can see what kind of teaching goes on and ways to support their child's reading at home.

- *Use informal, direct assessments as alternatives to standardized testing.*

To assure a balanced, accurate picture of students' reading, keep records of strengths and needs observed during the reading process (e.g., word substitutions or omissions). These results can then be shared with individual students and parents.

- *Lobby departments of education against required courses in intensive, systematic phonics.*

Speak out against educational practices that may be to the detriment of students' learning. While phonics is necessary to the reading-writing process, there are many ways apart from an intensive, systematic approach for students to acquire knowledge in this area.

- *Vocalize concerns about teacher education in phonics.*

Be vocal about getting across the message that all aspiring teachers in education programs be exposed to information about phonics that is based on reputable theory, research, and practice.

An earlier writing by Routman (1994) sums up what teachers need to do in order to teach phonics meaningfully. One is to carefully observe students' daily reading and writing behaviours so needs can be determined. Another is to examine the most relevant research and draw conclusions. The other is to apply how students learn language processes to the teaching and acquiring of phonics. Not to be forgotten are parents who should have an understanding of the meaningful teaching of phonics. Teachers need to educate them about the current research and how it is being applied in the classroom.

### STORY STRUCTURE INSTRUCTION

The cognitive structure created when comprehending a story is known as a "story schema" which refers to internalizing the parts of a story and the relationships among these parts. So it logically follows that a knowledge of story structure is closely related to the process of comprehension. Presented here is information from studies which show this close relationship followed by descriptions of techniques which can be used to enhance awareness of story structure.

A study was conducted by Morrow (1984) to determine if a particular format that involved posing questions and discussing stories before and after reading could improve the listening comprehension of kindergarten children. In the past, research done with children who can already read has shown that their comprehension can be improved by including all levels of traditional questioning (e.g., literal, inferential, interpretive) or focusing on questions that emphasize story structure (e.g., characterization, setting, theme, plot, resolution). Through different levels of questioning, students are given an opportunity not only to recall facts, state cause/effect relationships and classify information, but also to derive information that is implied by reading between the lines or go beyond the information to think creatively. It has also been shown that having a knowledge of story structure helps readers to distinguish between major and minor components, see relationships among parts, improve memory of text, predict outcomes, and facilitate understanding. The purpose of this study involving kindergarten children was to compare the effects of three strategies upon their listening comprehension: traditional questions and discussion; story structure questions and discussion; or a combination of both procedures.

For this study, Morrow selected a sample of 254 kindergarten children and divided them into four types of grouping: traditional treatment groups; story structure treatment groups; combined treatment groups; and control groups (no pre- or postquestions or discussions). For each type of group, there were eight sessions with one each week for 8 weeks. About 5 minutes before reading and about 5 minutes after reading were devoted to questions and discussions related to the specific focus of the treatment groups. For children in the control groups, only the story was read with no questions or discussion. Comprehension tests which consisted of five traditional questions and five story structure questions were administered by the research assistants prior to and following these

sessions. Literature selections for all sessions and testings met strict criteria by having a well-developed story structure, being suited to the cognitive level of young children, and possessing a recent publication date.

The results showed that the use of questions and discussions caused children in the treatment groups to score significantly higher than children in the control groups. Traditional and story structure treatment groups each improved considerably on traditional and story structure questions, respectively. However, the combined treatment groups made the greatest gains in comprehension. An interesting finding was that it was the high and middle achievers in the treatment groups whose scores increased the most. None of the treatments made a significant difference in the performance of low achievers, which may signify they need instruction in smaller groups.

According to Morrow, the uniqueness of this study was that the strategies employed were investigated with children who could not read yet. Previous studies investigating the effects of these strategies on comprehension always involved children who could read. As it turns out, even children as young as 5- and 6-years old can enhance their comprehension through strategies that help them to deal with the information from the content and structure of stories read to them.

Based on research showing that story structure instruction promotes an ability to comprehend stories (Gordon and Braun, 1983; Spiegel and Fitzgerald, 1986) but a lack of studies involving students below third grade and with the use of authentic children's literature, Baumann and Bergeron (1993) undertook a particular study with first graders. Their objective was to investigate the effectiveness of instruction in story mapping as a means to promote young students' comprehension of stories from unabridged and unadapted children's literature. The story map used in the study

included the elements related to characters, setting, problem, major events, and ending as represented by the following questions: Who? Where? When? What's the problem? What happened? What's the solution?

In this one-month study, participants were seventy-four 1<sup>st</sup>-grade students randomly assigned to four groups: 1) a Story Mapping 1 group (SM1) in which students were taught to construct story maps; 2) a Story Mapping 2 group (SM2) in which students were taught how to write stories from a story map; 3) a Directed Reading-Thinking Activity group (DRTA) in which students engaged in a different strategy proven to promote comprehension, that being prediction; and 4) a Directed Reading Activity group (DRA) in which students engaged in activities prior to, during, and after reading, such as building background information and answering traditional questions on literal, inferential, and interpretative levels. Students in all treatment groups participated in 10 sessions: 1 pretest session, 6 instructional sessions, and 3 posttest sessions. In each session which took place on the same day, Baumann read aloud a quality literature selection while the children read along silently from individual copies that were provided. The pre- and posttests consisted of 10 multiple choice items that probed for knowledge of story elements. After the listening/reading of a story selected for testing, the children completed the follow-up test while the items were read for them. In order to obtain qualitative data related to story comprehension, in-depth interviews were then conducted with 4 students who represented a range of reading abilities from each group.

Results from the entire groups revealed that: 1) the comprehension instruction provided to students in the SM1, SM2 and DRTA groups caused them to outperform students in the DRA group; 2) the performance of students in the SM1 and SM2 groups was superior to that of students in the DRTA groups on some measures, but not on others; and 3) the performance of students in the SM1

and SM2 groups did not differ on any measure. Results from the students representing the different groups who were interviewed generally supported these findings. Thus, it was concluded that story mapping is another effective instructional strategy for promoting young students' ability to comprehend stories.

This study demonstrates that young children, who possess less sophisticated story knowledge than their older peers, can benefit from instruction in story structure that focuses on simplified story mapping. Effective teaching of story structure occurs when the reading material used for instruction is taken from intact children's stories written by well-known and respected authors.

To guide students in developing an understanding of story structure, Cox (1996) presents information on a sequence that can be followed as described here:

- **Preliminary reading (4 days or more)**

Using choose-your-own adventure books which cut across several genres, read aloud one or more literature selections followed by questions that encourage aesthetic responses (i.e., focus on personal meaning). On succeeding days, allow students to choose one or more literature selections to read to each other in groups accompanied by an interchange of ideas.

- **Mini-lesson on story structure (1 day)**

Choose one of the literature selections from a particular genre and take a more critical, analytical approach by posing questions about its literary elements:

- (i) Setting (e.g., What is the general mood of the story?)
- (ii) Characters (e.g., Why is a certain character necessary to the story?)
- (iii) Plot (e.g., What is the high point of the story?)

(iv) Point of view (e.g., Is the story told from the perspective of all characters?)

(v) Style (e.g., How is language used in the story?)

(vi) Theme (e.g., What is the meaning of the story?)

• **Use of graphic organizers** (2 - 3 days)

Brainstorm for ideas to place on diagrams, charts, and maps that present information about the story's elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot, etc.). This may be done as a whole class, in groups, or individually.

• **Draft, revise, and edit** (7 or more days)

Based on the visual representation of ideas, students can recreate part or all of the story by writing descriptions, drawing pictures, analyzing events, and so on. This may be done by having students work collaboratively on the same story in groups or individually to meet later with peers for discussion and feedback.

• **Publish or produce** (indefinite time)

Students' story versions can be bound as books and made available for display in selective areas of the classroom or school.

To elaborate on one of the preceding points, Gunning (1996) writes that graphic organizers, which are created as a visual outline of ideas representing important concepts and relationships, are one of the most effective ways to understand and retain text information. When students construct their own graphic organizers, they become actively engaged with text which enhances their understanding and retention even more.

Supported by recent writings (Morrow, 1994; Searfoss and Readence, 1994), it is written



by Gunning (1996) that one of the best approaches for developing an awareness of story structure has been around for a very long time - *retelling*. Learning on past research (Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus, and Heathington, 1988), the author presents information on the direct teaching of retelling as follows:

*Step 1: Introduction*

Explain what retelling is. Discuss why it is useful. Model this technique.

*Step 2: Explanation of retelling procedure*

Emphasize that only the main elements will be retold. For fiction, this may include a narration of main plot episodes, resolution of the problem, or the ending. For nonfiction, this may include a statement of the main idea and details, sequenced steps in a process, or a general description.

*Step 3: Guided Practice*

Lead students through a brief literature selection with question prompts. For fiction, this may include asking such questions as these: Where and when does the story take place? How does the story end? For nonfiction, this may include asking such questions as these: What is the message being conveyed? What details are used to explain the main idea?

*Step 4: Independent practice*

Have students work in pairs and retell reading passages. The listener should take an active role by asking questions to clarify details or request additional information. A positive interchange can result with comments from the listener stating what he or she liked best about the retelling.

To aid the process of retelling, Gunning makes further recommendations. Inform students if there will be a focus on a particular part of the literature selection (e.g., remember and recall plot events in order). Use props such as puppets or feltboard figures to serve as visual reminders of main

characters. These also help passive or shy children to forget themselves and assume other identities. Other visual aids can include a series of pictures showing the main episodes and using these as a way of structuring the story.

As stated by Reutzel and Cooter (1996), retellings are an effective strategy to develop knowledge of story structure which in turn aids comprehension. The reason is that students are involved in activating prior knowledge for remembering information contained in narrative and expository texts. By requiring readers to select information from such texts, retellings help them to focus attention on selective details as well as increase their awareness about the variety of text structures.

#### SAMPLE GENRE UNITS

As part of a literature-based program, students should receive exposure to the main genres. These include picture storybooks, traditional literature (i.e., folktales, fables, myths, legends), realistic fiction, fantasy, nonfiction, poetry, historical fiction, and biography. By striving for a balance when selecting books to read, students are given an opportunity to broaden their base of appreciation for the various forms of literature available.

oo oo oo

Duthie (1994), a first-grade teacher at a primary/elementary school in Trumansburg, New York, describes how she explored nonfiction as a genre with her students. Interested in conveying to her students that nonfiction not only provides information but has specific elements of style and can be read or written for pleasure, she decided to present this genre as one that can be fun and useful in many areas of study. Believing firmly in the reading-writing connection, she focused on both of

these literary aspects in doing activities with her students.

Duthie began the unit with the concept of "author study" to illustrate that the style and perspective of a book is produced by a real person. Considering the age and interests of her students, nonfiction work by Gail Gibbons was chosen. Each day for about a week, one of Gibbon's books was read to the students. A range of books was carefully chosen in order to present different formats as indicated by the following examples: 1) labelled drawings (*From Seed to Plant*, 1991); 2) use of story (*The Puffins are Back*, 1991); 3) charts (*Whales*, 1989); and 4) how-to guide (*The Pottery Place*, 1987). After about a week or so, Duthie switched to a different technique whereby several books with different formats on the same topic were presented. In this way, the students became exposed to a wide variation in the way nonfiction books are produced.

Throughout the duration of this genre unit which lasted several weeks, a reading and writing workshop approach was used. There were mini-lessons involving whole-group instructional sessions to teach reading and writing strategies, book discussions involving small and large groups, and writing conferences involving individuals as well as small and large groups. As one example, there was a mini-lesson presented to the whole class on the topic of research to discuss the different ways information can be gathered (e.g., interviews, library books, personal experience) followed by a brainstorming session on topics familiar to the students and the different ways information could be gathered. As a second example, students supported each other during writing activities based on how-to-books by focusing on such topics as how to take care of a puppy, make a paper airplane, ride a bike, and so on. As a third example, students met in small groups to discuss the individual books they were reading according to a particular topic or format.

Day by day throughout the nonfiction reading and writing workshop, the students developed

a class list reflecting their reading, writing, and learning. Part of what appeared on this list follows:

**Nonfiction writers can**

- use drawings.
- label drawings.
- use photographs.
- use a map.
- put captions under pictures.
- put captions in a different print.
- write about one part at a time.
- put the parts in ABC order.
- tell how to make something.
- write information like a story or poem.
- write about someone's life.
- put in an index (to show content).
- put in a table (to give extra information).
- put in a glossary (to explain words).

Duthie concludes that language arts teachers must give nonfiction attention as a genre long before students are required to use it as a source of learning in context areas. The early introduction and analysis of nonfiction should be considered a necessary preparation for students if educators want to help them to become competent and creative as readers and writers of nonfiction across all subject areas. Through the processes of reading and writing providing support to each other, this competency and creativity can develop.

Place (1997), a grade 1/2 teacher at a school in Cranbrook, British Columbia, describes how she used a particular picture storybook to explore this genre with her students. The book, entitled *A Wish for Wings That Work* (Breathed, 1991), is about a penguin named Opus who wanted to be able to fly like his snow duck friends. With Christmas time approaching, Opus made such a wish and sent off a letter to Santa Claus requesting that his dream come true. On Christmas Eve, a catastrophe happened whereby a man dressed up as Santa Claus who was in a sleigh pulled by reindeer landed in nearby icy waters. As it turned out, Opus and not his snow duck friends could come to the rescue because it is penguins who have the ability to swim well. To make his dream a reality in part and to show their admiration, Opus's snow duck friends carried him up into the sky and took him flying on Christmas morning.

Before reading this story to the students, Place had them participate in an *Anticipation Guide Activity*. This activity presented statements central to the story to which the students responded on individual charts followed by a discussion of these responses among class members. Taking this approach helps to generate curiosity and interest in what the story may be about. For this particular story, one of the statements presented was "Everyone has a special quality". The story was read several times over a number of days in order to incorporate the following activities. In reading this story to the students, Place used two different strategies. For the first strategy, *Reading Like a Writer*, the story was read and stopped at four points to allow the students to predict what would happen next. On a piece of paper with four boxes labelled 1 to 4, the students wrote or sketched their ideas. To provide an example, box number 2 was linked to the excerpt, "That night, Opus sat in front of his warm fireplace, considered his words carefully, and wrote an important letter." At this point, students were requested to sketch or write their ideas indicating to whom they thought Opus was

writing. After each pause in the reading, students shared their responses with a partner. For the second strategy, *Story Sequencing of the Main Idea*, the story was read again but on a different day. Again, the story was stopped at four points. This time, the students drew an illustration and wrote a simple sentence under it to indicate the main idea of that reading section. To provide an example, box number 4 was linked to the excerpt, "It was a penguin whose wings didn't work, laughing because he surely was flying on Christmas morning." To extend the students' thinking, a list of questions prepared by Place was used along with these two strategies. As examples, questions revolved around what factual information is learned about penguins from this story and what could be the meaning of any interesting or unusual words heard in the story.

Through the use of the first strategy, *Reading Like a Writer*, it was possible for Place to observe whether all of the students were picking up cues to predict what would happen next. Through the use of the second strategy, *Story Sequencing of the Main Idea*, it was possible for Place to observe whether all of the students were grasping the main idea of that reading section and how well they could put their thoughts in writing. One benefit of these two activities is that they enable all students to participate in thinking. With these two approaches and their power to focus on certain vocabulary and comprehension skills, other picture storybooks can be used in such a manner in order to familiarize students with this genre.

As so often happens, teacher questioning is not always conducive to involving everyone as shy or less confident students are not so apt to speak out. That is not to say that teacher questioning does not have its place of importance. Through carefully planned questions, students' attention can be drawn to aspects of a story they would not have considered on their own.

## CLASSROOM/SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Information follows about how the use of literature has been incorporated in the primary curriculum in various countries that include the United States, Canada, and Australia. Concerning information about programs in the United States, the first two articles describe how a first - and third -grade teacher have brought about the use of literature with their students, and the third article presents information on how a primary school reformed its curriculum to include more literature-based activities. Regarding information about programs in Canada, the two articles presented describe how primary grade teachers have developed creative approaches in their implementation of literature-based programs. Pertaining to information about programs in Australia, the two articles chosen reflect on how an organized approach to the use of literature in the classroom is most beneficial.

### United States

Egawa (1990), a doctoral student at Indiana University who is also a first-grade teacher at a primary school in the Tacoma School District of Indiana, describes how literature is used in her classroom in its role as an important part of the curriculum. Her program includes reading encounters with books followed by varied forms of responding.

The study of a literature selection takes place in small groups over a period of 5 to 8 days. To begin, five books are provided with sign-up sheets. This allows children to choose the one that appeals to them most after a brief perusal of each book. A minimum of 2 adults must be available at times to lead these study groups in their meetings as each group focuses on a particular book. For the first meeting with each group, the book is read to the children while avoiding teacher talk. When

finished, the children are left with multiple copies and are encouraged to read as much of the book as possible before the next meeting. This can be done through paired-readings, listening to the story on tape, or reading at home with a family member. For the second meeting, the book is read again to the children. But this time, the children are encouraged to ask questions and make comments. In addition to the format of discussions, questions and comments may be noted in a journal as another means of response. For the third and fourth meetings, discussions are continued with talk about story elements highlighted as this naturally emerges through group conversations. For the fourth and fifth meetings, children talk of ways to remember the experience of the book. They then prepare and engage in activities that may take many forms such as designing word cards in shapes suited to the theme of the story, creating posters with captions, dramatizing episodes in the story, and so on. Several days later, all of the children meet together for group presentations. With this approach, children are provided with opportunities to share as well as hear from classmates. Children from each group share their experiences that the study session's book raised while the remaining members of the class assume the role of audience by asking questions and making comments.

Egawa states that she became motivated to change her teaching approach to reading after noting that the stories in basal reading programs could not provide the same depth of discussion as the powerful experience of a beautifully written story so often found in children's literature. Her advice to other teachers is not to rely on adult-generated response activities but to stand back and support children's search for meaning and connections to the books they read about the richness of the world in which they live.

Shepardson (1992), a reading specialist at a primary school in Swanzey, New Hampshire,



describes how a third-grade teacher there has incorporated literature into her reading program. Throughout the year, this teacher alternates novels from contemporary literature with a few weeks of reading from the basal program.

When doing a novel unit, the teacher reads each chapter aloud while the children follow along in individual copies that are provided. For each chapter read, there are follow-up activities the next two days. On the first day, the children re-read the same chapter in one of the various ways chosen by the teacher. This may take the form of reading silently, reading in pairs, reading as part of a small group, and so on. On the second day, time is set aside for vocabulary development activities. The words chosen are those noted by the children. After a chapter has been read, the children copy the words they consider to be difficult or interesting in their journals which are passed into the teacher. The teacher puts these words on cards which may be colour-coded or have a shape relating to the story. The class is divided into five heterogeneous groups with each group getting a set of word cards. If the cards are colour-coded, then one group may get those that are red, another may get blue, and so on. When everyone in the group can say all the words, this set is passed on to another group. Following this activity, the word cards may be put on a wall for display, placed in a box for individuals to practice on their own, or made part of a game. For every book that is read, discussions related to its story elements take place. As an example, the children may discuss characters or plot through a mapping procedure. In addition, there is a variety of journal assignments which may take the form of analyzing a character or summarizing a chapter in a few sentences.

When using the basal program, the teacher chooses stories that fit her program rather than trying to do them in the order they appear. The same pattern as for reading novels is followed in that the story is read to the children after which they re-read as described earlier. One difference is that

vocabulary cards are not used. Instead, words considered difficult or interesting by the teacher and children are discussed in context as they appear in the story. For every story that is read, the class still engages in discussions about its literary elements accompanied by journal assignments.

For assessment purposes, the teacher records on an ongoing basis how the children are progressing. On days when the children are assigned to do independent readings, the teacher circulates among the class and makes informal notes. She may simply sit next to a pair of children as they read or have a child read to her on an individual basis. Usually, it is possible to do a tracking of about 5 students on each of these days. Once a month, a more formal assessment is done. At this time, the teacher chooses an excerpt from a book being read presently and has each child read the same material.

The guiding principle in this teacher's approach to reading is that it is not a series of skills. Rather, it is a process of comprehending the author's message whereby *the skills should be incidental to this goal and not be the goal.*

How a primary school near San Antonio, Texas moved from a traditional basal reading program to an approach built around quality literature is described in an article by Harris (1996), the superintendent in that school district. In recognition of the current philosophy that a good reading curriculum is one that keeps language whole and uses it functionally and purposefully in reading and writing, staff members set about to make certain changes. Realizing that major curricular reform to the school meant attitudes and teaching practices that some held dear would have to change, teachers met in the spring of year with school administrators to identify areas of agreement. After a review of current professional publications, it was agreed as a staff that: 1) children would be encouraged

to develop a love for literature by reading from books; 2) trade books would be increased while basals and workbooks would be relied on less; 3) phonics and other skills would be taught in meaningful contexts; 4) opportunities would be provided for children to develop higher order thinking skills; and 5) children would be encouraged to write creatively. Over the next few months, the school's staff visited in the area to observe literature-based reading programs in operation, attended workshops, consulted with university professors, and continued to read articles and books on the latest research.

When the next school year began, teachers were asked to keep journals of their experiences as they set about modifying activities that had previously focused on teaching skills isolated from reading text. Trade books were selected in order to incorporate skills within a more natural and authentic context. Children were given more choices in selecting books to read and use in follow-up activities. There was a continuous sharing of ideas among teachers through staff meetings and informal consultations. To educate parents about the changes taking place, information was sent home through the school newsletter. Clearly explained was the basis for the new teaching and learning practices in reading as supported by research and proven successes in other schools. Teachers also shared with parents what was happening in their classrooms by sending home a regular class newsletter and inviting them to observe reading classes to see for themselves how reading skills were being integrated with literature.

At the end of the first semester, teachers' journals were submitted to the principal. Journal comments from first-grade teachers indicated that increasingly, they were using trade books to encourage speaking, listening, thinking, reading, and writing across the curriculum. As an example, units were planned to incorporate the literacy program with other subject areas. From a particular literature selection, students might engage in the following activities: 1) Spelling - learn spellings of

unfamiliar story words; 2) Phonics - practice blending skills with targeted story words; 3) Writing - respond to story episodes; 4) Social Studies - find pictures related to setting of story; 5) Art - design posters with captions, and so on. Journal comments from second- and third-grade teachers indicated that all children kept journals whereby they were encouraged to articulate their thoughts on paper regardless of spelling or punctuation accuracy. Instead of doing lessons from workbook pages, it was customary for literature selections to be used in the teaching of particular skills. An example of the varied activities which took place was the creation of a big book by one class based on a literature selection read. After deciding what they wanted to say, the class was divided into groups with each group being responsible for a page on which they worded their part of the story with an illustration. The pages were compiled into a book which was bound and read together as a class.

Later in the year, teachers were asked to respond to a survey evaluating the program changes that were being made. In responding to what could have helped them to make a smoother transition to a literature-based reading program, a note is made of two comments in particular. One was that more specific guidance should have been given regarding how much emphasis to place on incorporating skills from the basal program with literature selections. Another was that more release time should have been made available to allow for the planning and presentation of literature-based activities. In addition, parents were asked to respond to a questionnaire in order to get their input regarding the changes being made to their children's programming. Many of the parents expressed enthusiasm, especially about the fact that skills were being taught with "real" books.

After 1 year, the most significant changes that have taken place in this school are that the approach to reading now involves integrating it with writing through the use of authentic children's literature. Meaning, rather than segmented skills, has become the focal point of the reading program.

**Canada**

Kilpatrick and Borthwick (1997), teachers at primary schools in Vancouver, British Columbia, describe a literature-based reading program that evolved from the needs of their grade 2 and 3 classes.

Known as "boxed reading", this program is one that is structured and student-centered with the capability of lasting in the classroom for about 2 months. It consists of 8 boxes, each one containing a selection of books accompanied by instructions to do particular activities. The books chosen are preselected by the teacher to ensure that they are suited to the reading levels of the students and the goals of the activities. A group of 3 to 4 students work at each box station. Each student is supplied with a folder for placing activity work. On the front of the folder is a record sheet to note dates when individual boxes are completed as well as student/teacher comments. No student moves to another box station until his or her work is checked by the teacher. In moving from group to group, the teacher listens to students read, confers, guides, and evaluates.

The following are sample suggestions for box activities using provided frameworks (i.e., fill-in activity sheets). Certain skills that need to be pre-taught relate to idea organizers, story mapping, picture summaries, and so on.

**Box 1: Creative writing**

- Write letter to character in story.
- Write newspaper article about story events.

**Box 6: Characters**

- Name and draw character.
- List three points about his or her personality.
- Draw map listing main events and locations.

**Box 3: Picture Summary**

- Draw pictures of main ideas.
- Print sentence under each picture to explain.

**Box 8: Story Mapping**

- Map story to show its parts: characters, setting (time, place), and plot (problem, events, solution).

Through this program, students are allowed to progress at their own rate and respond to literature in a variety of ways. Use of provided frameworks to organize thinking helps to strengthen comprehension and develop strategies which can be transferred to other reading and writing situations. No matter what their ability level may be, all students are provided with opportunities to experience success which in turn influences them to feel motivated and develop a love of reading. Benefits for the teacher are that he or she is provided with time for individual/small group instruction and conferencing, as well as a basis for evaluation and assessment.

An innovative approach to enhance the literacy development of their students was created by Smith, Makowecki, Zimmel, and Piro (1997), all primary grade teachers employed in Christ the Redeemer Catholic Region, Alberta. These teachers decided to explore the combination of two popular methods used to enhance literacy programs, "readers' theatre" and book tapes. With "readers' theatre", the students created a script from text for oral presentation to the class. With book tapes, the students recorded the scripted stories to serve as models for fluent and expressive reading. This project was financed by the provincial English Language Arts Council and was implemented with grade 2 and 3 students at the primary level.

In preparation, the search began for stories that were interesting, attractive, and well-illustrated. Other important considerations were that the books be adaptable to oral presentation, have an appropriate reading level, and be available in multiple copy sets. After reviewing available books, those selected were Literacy 2000 (Levels 7 and 8) from Ginn Canada. Throughout the project, mini-lessons were taught in small or large groups and focused on the development of such skills as reading fluently and using expression to convey meaning. Students were guided to apply

these skills in their group sessions as the teacher circulated among groups to oversee their work. For each book, a script was developed for 4 readers by highlighting a different colour for each part. The students then reproduced their created script on tape and later rehearsed their reading in dramatic form. At the grade 2 level, there was close teacher supervision. The students remained in their classrooms working at listening center stations while the teacher circulated among groups to oversee their work. At the grade 3 level, there was more relaxed teacher supervision. Using portable tape recorders, the students worked with parent volunteers in various locations throughout the school conducive to quietness for taping and rehearsing. At different points along the way, parentally permitted videotaping was done of groups during rehearsals and final performances.

How meaningful and successful was this project in developing the literacy skills of these students? According to these teachers, there were positive results from the various outcomes. Using such assessment tools as a checklist to note reading behaviours, teachers recorded students' progress. Students also had input into their evaluations by completing a self-assessment form during the initial and latter phases of the project. In addition, they wrote personal reflections in the journals on an ongoing basis. The general observation was that students worked hard to model fluent, expressive reading which is linked to comprehension. It was found that most students enjoyed this experience and became more confident and willing to participate. What were considered to have the most favourable influences included the sense of learning ownership provided to the students in an environment that promoted trust and risk-taking. Therefore, if students are to grow as readers and writers, they must be provided enough time for exploration and creativity and not be bored with endless, repetitive tasks.

**Australia**

Lacey (1996), a teacher of beginning students at a primary school in Victoria, describes how she incorporates the use of "big" books in her literature program. With their large clear print, variety of topics, and entertaining story lines, the creative use of "big" books makes it possible for every child to walk away from their first year of school totally enchanted by literature. So the approach taken by the teacher is critical. What follows is an outline of how Lacey utilizes "big" books in her classroom:

**"Big" Book Reading Program (1 hour daily)**

- **Silent Personal Reading (5 minutes)**

The children have two books to read from - the one taken home the day before and/or the one chosen from the classroom supply.

- **Whole Class Activities (15 minutes)**

Based on the book chosen for the class that week, the children engage in the following daily activities:

**Monday** After a discussion of the front cover, the children try to figure out the possible title. Then they predict what may be the content of the story. The teacher writes the children's predictions on the blackboard or chart paper, marked by individual initials at the end of each. To conclude, the teacher and children read the predictions together.

**Tuesday** The teacher and children read the predictions from the previous day. Then the teacher reads the story. This is followed by a discussion of the predictions to determine if anyone predicted correctly.

**Wednesday** The teacher reads the story and encourages the children to join in the reading. If time



permits, the story is read again in this manner.

**Thursday** A major role is played by the children in reading the book. The teacher joins in only when necessary.

**Friday** As the story is read, words are covered by the teacher. In this way, the children have to predict the hidden word. A discussion of alternative words may also take place.

• **Group Activities (30 minutes)**

**Monday to Thursday** Having divided the class into four groups, there is a rotation of activities done on these days as noted: 1) Group 1 - children listen to audiotaped versions of books at a listening station then engage in some kind of response activity; 2) Group 2 - children take turns reading to each other the previous book they have taken home; 3) Group 3 and Group 4 - children listen to a book read by the teacher followed by members in group 3 moving to a space to engage in a related follow-up activity, and members in group 4 reading the story along with the teacher and discussing certain points.

**Friday** An activity on the book chosen for that week is done with the entire class.

• **Share Time (10 minutes)**

The children pack up their materials and go back to the whole class to share their work for the day.

One particular benefit of this approach to "big" books is that children's beginning reading skills are supported by seeing the same text each day for a full week in a guided format. The approach is of benefit to the teacher as it becomes possible to evaluate each child's progress in small group sessions through the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities planned.

McGuire (1996), a teacher in a multi-age classroom at a primary school in North Territory, Australia, describes how her students were helped to better understand stories in terms of various elements (e.g., setting, sequencing) by creating story maps illustrating the various story elements in certain fairy tales. One tale was *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* which is a tale about a piper who rids the town of Hamelin from rats. The other tale was *The Princess and the Pea* which tells the story of a prince who sought far and wide to find a real princess he could marry.

To develop students' confidence in drawing maps, they began by sketching maps of outdoors, their homes, the classroom, and so on. This led to the next mapping activity which was the creation of a map to show various story elements from the fairy tale entitled *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Working in groups that included 5 or 6 members of mixed age and ability, the students negotiated how to construct their maps showing details they considered to be important. At sharing time, all the members from each group explained how they worked on creating their maps and gave reasons for including various details.

Next, the students moved on to creating individual story maps based on a fairy tale chosen by the class. Everyone wanted to work on the fairy tale entitled *The Princess and the Pea* after hearing it read aloud. Before creating their story maps, McGuire took time to point out the narrative layout of this story which revolved around the simple terms of beginning, problem, and solution. To enhance the clarity of their maps, the students were again encouraged to add written text. At sharing time, there was a great deal of discussion as the students spoke about their own representations of the story.

Finally, the students created story maps for narratives that they chose individually. Due to their past experiences, the students were able to do this work with minimum input from the teacher.

The approach taken by McGuire whereby her students were actively involved in contemplating and constructing story parts is an example to other teachers of how students can be helped to develop a better understanding of stories. What is important is to bring students to realize that the map is a device to help them determine and remember important parts of a story.

► With reference to the preceding descriptions of classroom/school programs, the range of activities reflects how authentic literature can be used in challenging and purposeful ways ( e.g., to develop higher-order thinking skills, vocabulary knowledge, fluent reading, and forms of response). Related to the philosophy of whole language which stresses the interrelationships that exist among the four language modes (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), quality literature has a wealth of potential to bring together these processes. To elaborate on one of these interrelationships, Graves (1991) and McCormick-Calkins (1991) who have done extensive work in the field of literacy contend that reading and writing are strongly connected and one should support development of the other. The particulars of how reading and writing are interrelated are presented by Eanes (1997) and Leu and Kinzer (1991) who state that reading and writing are similar types of processes because both involve the construction of meaning. As examples, readers plan by surveying a passage and writers plan by organizing their thoughts; readers create drafts as they refine meaning they draw from text and writers create drafts as they refine messages they wish to communicate; readers revise as they attempt to reconstruct meaning intended by the author and writers revise as they try to make meaning clearer for their audiences; and readers monitor their comprehension to make sense of what they read and writers monitor their work by editing what they write. Research by Tierney, Soter, O'Flahavan, and McGinley (1989) indicates that reading and writing in combination help to promote critical

thinking. Therefore, it is important for teachers to connect the two experiences for students by providing them with daily and varied opportunities that involve reading from quality literature which is then processed with writing activities at all levels of thinking.

### SUMMARY

To summarize the use of literature with students at the primary level, following is a brief overview of the main teaching and learning approaches covered in this section of the paper - *reading aloud, forms of response, sight vocabulary, phonics instruction, and story structure instruction*. Included is information on the general importance of each as well as selected points to show the relationship of each to the reading process in terms of vocabulary and/or comprehension development. Be advised that many of the points made reflect the views of others as already noted and are repeated in verbatim form as previously stated.

Reading aloud is a process that should involve careful planning in the selection, presentation and elaboration of material. Books should be chosen with a view to balancing genres throughout the school year and tying in relevance to ongoing classroom work. No matter what is chosen to be read, it is important to read through it first in order to anticipate any difficulties that may arise. It is important for the teacher to interact with students before, during , and after the reading because students comprehend better when books that are read to them are discussed. Listening to books read aloud can also produce significant gains in vocabulary.

Providing students with opportunities to respond to literature establishes a framework for them to apply their understanding about what has been read. Encouraging students to go beyond literal levels of thinking to more in-depth analyses and emotional interpretations of literature allows

them to become actively involved in constructing meaning. Paying close attention to text and going deeper into issues raised can contribute to mature readers and enrich the perspective they take to their next book. Literature extension activities are an excellent way to complement and expand books as well as to examine text and illustrations more closely. However, these activities are worthwhile only if they have a natural connection to what was read, encourage students to experience thoughtful reflection, and demonstrate that something has been gained from the book. The most important caution is to incorporate activities that reflect educational theory about the teaching and learning process.

Teaching sight words in isolation, with no connection to context, is not effective reading instruction. Many basic sight words occur repeatedly in quality literature and can be easily learned in context without boring drill. These words should be presented as intact units without drawing attention to individual sounds or letters. It is the reader's close observance of the spelling pattern of words that is the key element to reading them by sight. The more opportunities students have to read real texts, the more they encounter high-frequency words. So that there is a focus on making meaning with text, the reader has to become efficient at recognizing words with minimal effort.

Using a phonetics approach alone to achieve word accuracy and identification is inefficient and ineffective. To read proficiently, readers must use a combination of three cueing systems that include semantics (sentence sense), syntax (grammar sense), and grapho-phonics (letter-sound relationships). Since there is greater regularity between patterns of sounds and letters than there is between single sounds and letters, it logically follows that the focus should be on this relationship between patterns of sounds and patterns of letters. Students best acquire phonic knowledge through rich exposure with print made possible through the use of quality literature. In order to teach phonics

meaningfully, it is necessary to carefully observe students' reading and writing behaviours so needs can be determined. Of importance is to apply how students learn language processes to the teaching and acquiring of phonics. Also important is to examine the most relevant research and draw conclusions. Not to be forgotten are parents who should have an understanding of the meaningful teaching of phonics. Teachers need to educate them about the current research and how it is being applied in the classroom.

Having a knowledge of story structure enables readers to internalize the parts of a story and the relationships among these parts. Specifically, readers can distinguish between major and minor components, see relationships between parts, improve memory of text, predict outcomes, and facilitate understanding. Two effective approaches are the use of graphic organizers, which create a visual outline of ideas representing important concepts and relationships, and retellings, which require readers to activate prior knowledge in remembering selective details and using these as a way of structuring the story. Teaching students about story structure is especially effective when the reading material used for instruction is taken from intact stories by well-known and well-respected authors.

No matter what their ability level may be, all students can be provided with opportunities to experience success with the use of fine literature. This in turn influences students to feel motivated and develop a love of reading.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, M. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.
- Baumann, J. and Bergeron, B. (1993). Story map instruction using children's literature: Effects on first graders' comprehension of central narrative elements. *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, 25, (4), 407-437.
- Booth, D. (1996). *Literacy techniques for building successful readers and writers*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.
- Button, K. and Johnson, M. (1997). The role of shared reading in developing effective early reading strategies. *Reading Horizons*, 37, (4), 262-273.
- Chall, J. (1987). Reading and early childhood education: The critical issues. *Principal*, 66, (5), 6-9.
- Clay, M. (1979). *The early detection of reading difficulties: A diagnostic survey with recovery procedures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- Close, E. (1992). Literature discussion: A classroom environment for thinking and sharing. *English Journal*, 81, (5), 65-72.
- Commeyras, M. (1994). Were Janell and Neesie in the same classroom? Children's questions as the first order of reality in storybook discussions. *Language Arts*, 71, (7), 517-523.
- Cox, C. (1996). *Teaching language arts: A student- and response-centered classroom*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Danielson, K. and LaBonty, J. (1994). *Integrating reading and writing through children's literature*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Deford, D., Lyons, C., and Pinnell, G. (1991). *Bridges to literacy: Learning from Reading Recovery*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dole, J., Duffy, G., Roehler, L., and Pearson, P. (1991). Moving from the old to the new: Research on reading comprehension instruction. *Review of Educational Research*, 61, (2), 239-264.

- Durica, K. (1996). *Literature links to phonics*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Duthie, C. (1994). Nonfiction: A genre study for the primary classroom. *Language Arts*, 71, (8), 588-595.
- Eanes, R. (1997). *Content area literacy: Teaching for today and tomorrow*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.
- Egawa, K. (1990). Harnessing the power of language: First graders' literature engagement with "Owl Moon". *Language Arts*, 67, (6), 582-588.
- Ehri, L. (1992). Reconceptualizing the development of sight word reading and its relationship to reading. In P. Gough, L. Ehri, and R. Treiman (Eds.), *Reading acquisition* (pp.107-143). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Elley, W. (1989). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24, (2), 174-187.
- Emmitt, M. and Hornsby, D. (1996). Phonics in early literacy. *Practically Primary*, 1, (2), 11-17.
- Feitelson, D., Kita, B., and Goldstein, A. (1986). Effects of listening to series stories on first graders' comprehension and use of language. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 20, (4), 31-44.
- French, M. and French, R. (1991). Enhancing pre-school/kindergarten literacy with read-alouds. *Ohio Reading Teacher*, 25, (4), 4-13.
- Gordon, C. and Braun, C. (1983). Using story schema as an aid to reading and writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 37, (2), 116-121.
- Graham, J. and Kelly, A. (1997). *Reading under control: Teaching reading in the primary school*. London,GB: David Fulton Publishers.
- Graves, D. (1991). *Build a literate classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Graves, M., Watts, S., and Graves, B. (1994). *Essentials of classroom teaching*. Needham, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Groff, P. (1994). Clearing the air about sight words. *Ohio Reading Teacher*, 19, (1), 13-17.
- Gunning, T. (1996). *Creating reading instruction for all children*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and



## Bacon.

- Harris, S. (1996). Bringing about change in reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 49, (8), 612-618.
- Heath, S. (1980). The functions and use of literacy. *Journal of Communication*, 30, 123-133.
- Hoskinson, P., Gambrell, L., Kapinus, B., and Heathington, B. (1988). Retelling: A strategy for enhancing students' comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 41, 892-896.
- Huck, C., Helper, S., and Hickman, J. (1993). *Children's literature in the elementary school* (5th Ed.). New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston.
- Kelly, P. (1990). Guiding young students' response to literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (7), 464-470.
- Kilpatrick, L. and Borthwick, D. (1997). Boxed reading: A literature-based reading program. *Prime Areas*, 39, (2), 31-44.
- Lacey, C. (1996). Big books. *Practically Primary*, 1, (2), 44-45.
- Leu, D. and Kinzer, C. (1991). *Effective reading instruction, K-8*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- Macon, M., Bewell, D., and Vogt, M. (1991). *Responses to literature, grades K-8*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Manarino-Leggett, P. (1995). Children's literature: A springboard to literacy. *Reading Improvement*, 32, (1), 42-45.
- McCormick- Calkins, L. (1991). *Living between the lines*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- McGuire, G. (1996). Story maps. *Practically Primary*, 1, (3), 24-25.
- Morrow, L. (1984). Reading stories to young children: Effects of story structure and traditional questioning strategies on comprehension. *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, 16, (4), 273-288.
- Morrow, L. (1990). Small group story readings: The effects on children's comprehension and responses to literature. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 29, (4), 1-17.
- Morrow, L. (1994). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Ninio, A. and Bruner, J. (1978). The achievement and antecedents of labeling. *Journal of Child Language*, 5, 5-15.
- Nystrand, M., Gamoran, G., and Heck, M. (1993). Using small groups for response to and thinking about literature. *English Journal*, 82, (1), 14-22.
- O'Flahavan, J. (1988). Conversational discussion groups: A study of second graders leading their own discussions. Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Tucson, AZ.
- Pearson, R. and Dole, J. (1987). Explicit comprehension instruction: A review of research and a new conceptualization of instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 88, (2), 151-165.
- Place, C. (1997). A wish for wings that work: Literature in the primary classroom. *Prime Areas*, 39, (2), 25-30.
- Reutzel, D. and Cooter, R. (1996). Teaching children to read: From basals to books. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Routman, R. (1988). Transitions from literature to literacy. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Routman, R. (1994). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners, K-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Routman, R. (1996). Literacy at the crossroads: Crucial talk about reading, writing, and other teaching dilemmas. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Saban, A. (1984). A bridge to books: Reading aloud to children in primary education. *Reading Improvement*, 31, (1), 23-27.
- Samuels, S., Schermer, N., and Reinking, D. (1992). Reading fluency: Techniques for making decoding automatic. In S. Samuels and A. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp.124-144). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Searfoss, L., and Readence, J. (1994). *Helping children learn to read (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Sharan, S., Ackerman, Z., and Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (1980). Academic achievement of elementary school children in small groups versus whole class instruction. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 48, (2), 125-129.
- Shepardson, M. (1992). Using literature to teach reading in grade three. *The New England Research Association Journal*, 28, (3), 15-18.

- Simons, H. (1992). The effect of repeated reading of predictable texts on word recognition and decoding: A descriptive study of six first-grade students. Paper presented at the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the National Reading Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Sinatra, R. (1992). Using meaningful contexts to build poor readers' sight vocabularies. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 8, (2), 179-195.
- Smith, M., Makowecki, S., Zimmel, T., and Piro, G. (1997). Providing new beginnings: Linking talking books and readers' theatre. *Alberta English*, 35, (1), 14-18.
- Spiegel, D. and Fitzgerald, J. (1986). Improving reading comprehension through instruction about story parts. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, (7), 676-682.
- Straw, S., Craven, L., Sadowy, P., and Baardman, S. (1993). Poetry in the primary classroom: Collaboration and response. *Reading Horizons*, 34, (2), 104-121.
- Trachtenburg, P. (1990). Using children's literature to enhance phonics instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (9), 648-654.
- Tierney, R., Soter, A., O'Flahavan, F., and McGinley, W. (1989). The effects of reading and writing upon thinking critically. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24, 134-173.
- Yager, S., Johnson, D., and Johnson, R. (1985). Oral discussion, group to individual transfer, and achievement in cooperative learning groups. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77, (1), 60-66.

#### BOOKS CITED

- Black, S. (1990). *The Princess and the Pea*. In the Classic Hans Andersen Fairy Tales, (22-23). Philadelphia, PA: Courage Books.
- Breathed, B. (1991). *A Wish for Wings That Work*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.
- Corrin, S. and Corrin, S. (1989). *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Gibbons, G. (1987). *The Pottery Place*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Gibbons, G. (1989). *Whales*. New York: Holiday House.

Gibbons, G. (1991). *From Seed to Plant*. New York: Holiday House.

Gibbons, G. (1991). *The Puffins Are Back*. New York: Holiday House.

## USE OF LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

A variety of information on the use of literature with children at the elementary level is presented in this paper. This information deals with the benefits of using authentic literature to enhance their reading development as well as effective strategies that teachers can use and actual settings where such teaching and learning have been taking place. The topics addressed are as follows: (i) reading aloud; (ii) response journals; (iii) literature discussions; (iv) vocabulary development; (v) content learning; (vi) sample genre units; and (vii) classroom/school programs.

### READING ALOUD

Now that it is well-recognized reading aloud to students is an important contributor to their literacy growth, an essential component is that quality experiences be provided. Working towards a read-aloud program that is well-conceived and well-constructed requires considerable investment in time, skill, knowledge, and resources. The information which follows can serve to assist teachers in providing such a program.

∞ ∞ ∞

Having examined past research for ideas that contribute to model read-aloud time, Hoffman, Roser, and Battle (1993) present the following information:

- **Designate a time in the daily curriculum for reading aloud**

Setting aside time in the school day for reading aloud to students conveys the message that this event will occur and will assume a place of importance. Left to chance or a time slot that becomes available, read-aloud experiences may seldom occur. A 20-minute period (or longer) each day is recommended for reading aloud (Morrow, 1988; Wells, 1990).

- **Select quality literature**

Students who are exposed to fine literature (e.g., captivating stories, enlightening poems) are more apt to develop a long-term interest in books. Other benefits reported are that such exposure to literature enhances depth of response and critical thinking (Eeds and Wells, 1989; Wells, 1990).

- **Share literature related to other literature**

By organizing literature units connected by genre, theme, or topic, opportunities are provided for students to explore interrelationships among books, to discover patterns, to think more deeply, and to respond more fully to text. Other benefits reported are that there is increased student interest and independent reading (Hickman, 1981; Moss, 1984).

- **Discuss literature in lively, thought-provoking ways**

Encouraging personal responses and exploring the connections between and among related pieces of literature helps to provide the setting for critical, literate thinking among students (Eeds and Peterson, 1991; Eeds and Wells, 1989).

- **Group children to maximize opportunities to respond**

As it has been shown that smaller groups and settings result in increased participation whereby students more readily express what they are thinking and feeling, this arrangement should be put in place whenever possible (Morrow and Smith, 1990; Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo, and Woodman, 1992).

- **Offer a variety of response extension opportunities**

It has been reported that opportunities to extend experiences with literature beyond discussion (e.g., art, drama) involves students in expressing their understanding of stories in new ways. As a result, they are given a chance to linger a bit longer under the spell of a good story (Galda, Cunninan,

and Strickland, 1993; Hickman, 1981).

- **Reread selected pieces**

Through repeated readings, students can acquire a deeper understanding of stories as well as increase the quantity and complexity of their initial responses (Martinez and Roser, 1985; Yaden, 1988).

So the challenge to teachers is that as the curriculum gets squeezed by all the demands that are made upon it, they must not lose sight of the importance of storytime. No longer is it accepted that teachers engage in straight-through storybook readings whereby listeners are relegated to a passive role. It is the verbal interaction with text, peers, and teacher that helps students to enrich their understandings and develop important reading strategies.

Holding the view that the most efficient way to convince students books are worth exploring is to read aloud to them on a regular basis, Barchers (1994) offers information on conducting read-alouds with the following recommendations:

- **Preview book to be read**

Each book should be read first by the teacher to determine if it is appropriate for a particular classroom. A highly recommended book may be uncomfortable to read aloud due to cultural differences, community attitudes, or the teacher's personal preferences.

- **Schedule read-aloud time regularly**

A particular time of the day need not be scheduled for reading aloud, but provisions should be made for doing so everyday. This time may include the beginning of the day to set a positive mood or the end of the day to finish class with a relaxing tone.

- **Present challenging books**

Read aloud books that students may find challenging but which they may not read on their own. Although books that have received special recognition are often challenging, they may not be suitable for reading aloud. Read sections of these books in advance to determine their suitability for reading aloud.

- **Read a variety of books**

The variety of books read aloud should include the different genres, books by a particular author, assorted information about a topic, and so on.

- **Build comfort into pace of reading and atmosphere**

Read aloud at a pace that allows sufficient time for students to react to text and illustrations. Provide for relaxed listening, perhaps by sitting on the floor or adding soft cushions.

- **Enliven the reading whenever possible**

Adding props or dressing up as a character can do much to capture and sustain the interest of students during read-alouds.

- **Finish books within reasonable time.**

Be willing to summarize sections that take away from enthusiasm for the book or to discontinue reading a book if there is insufficient interest on the part of students.

- **Become familiar with children's literature**

Take a course in literature, consult with the local librarian, attend conferences, and read avidly.

In conclusion, an important accomplishment is achieved if students can be convinced that reading books is a very rewarding experience. Students who come to believe in the pleasures of



reading will turn to books for escape, entertainment, and inspiration. Frequent, enjoyable experiences with books establishes pleasant associations which influence students to become lifelong readers.

Regarding ways to increase listeners' involvement to stories read aloud, Barrentine (1996) presents information that can be utilized even with children in the elementary grades. Recommendations to help children engage in strategies that construct meaning and facilitate responding are discussed under two categories of headings as follows:

#### **1. Planning interactive read-alouds**

(i) *Read the book beforehand several times.* Explore the book from different perspectives. Study the characters. Think about the plot. Take note of illustrations. Articulate important messages. In other words, examine the literary and artistic aspects of the book.

(ii) *Reflect on reading goals as well as identify necessary process and strategy information.* Think about instructional purposes in relation to students' needs. Decide what to emphasize, whether that be explaining characters' actions, interpreting themes, or whatever else is relevant to the story.

(iii) *Determine what predictions should be sought and shared.* Identify moments when it is possible to assist students in constructing possible interpretations of the story. Having students predict at central points in the story allows them to figure the story out for themselves.

(iv) *Anticipate where it may be necessary to build background knowledge.* Consider what references to information may be unfamiliar to students. Decide at what points in the story these matters should be discussed as well as the extent of discussion.

(v) *Think through how questions inviting responses will be phrased.* Jot down clearly phrased questions as an initial step if necessary. Realize that students will not always respond in

expected ways. Therefore, value their responses to gain insight into how they think and feel.

(vi) *Be prepared to relinquish plans made.* Make allowances to tailor questions and comments to the dialogue that develops. Be responsive to students' ideas and help to explore them throughout reading of the story.

(vii) *Devise ways for students to explore stories in personal and exciting ways after reading.* Extend the students' connection to stories by providing opportunities for them to have further meaningful experiences that are relevant to what was read.

## 2. Conducting interactive read-alouds

(i) *Set the conversational atmosphere.* Prepare students for listening to the story by drawing their attention to various aspects. This may take the form of discussing the cover title and illustrations to predict the content of the story. An exchange of information may take place regarding the name of the author and other books read pertaining to this writer.

(ii) *Maintain ongoing interaction.* Invite brief interactions by having students notice aspects of the story they might otherwise overlook, develop an enlightened perspective on a character, or consider each other's ideas.

(iii) *Balance dialogue during reading.* Be careful not to get involved in lengthy talks during reading which can result in overanalyzing of characters, excessive informing, or providing too much background knowledge. Dialogue should not become too extended and out of balance so that it interferes with the flow of the story. Extended talk is best saved for after reading.

(iv) *Demonstrate and engage students in process and strategy activities.* Take advantage of students' responses to create "teachable moments" so that students can gain insights into the reading process and practice relevant strategies.

For interactive read-alouds to be successful, it should be clear that two factors are necessary - time and good judgment. Adequate time must be set aside to read stories interactively so that there is not a tendency to rush the event and limit student interaction. There must be good judgement about the amount of interaction to include during storytime for too much dialogue can interfere with the enjoyment of a story.

Referring to well-recognized research and theory (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985; Trelease, 1989), Popp (1996) shares agreement with the view that reading aloud to children is one of the most important activities for building the knowledge and skills needed for vocabulary and comprehension development. The author writes that the selection of a book to read aloud should be guided according to the following points:

- **Purpose for reading aloud**

- (i) *Share enjoyment of a favourite book.* Choose books to share enjoyment of those that are favourites from fiction or nonfiction. Talk to other teachers to find out what books they have found successful for reading aloud.

- (ii) *Introduce a topic or enhance a theme.* Through all types of literature, ranging from informational books to historical fiction, topics in various subject areas can be presented in an appealing way.

- (iii) *Expose students to beautiful language and rich vocabulary.* Good literature containing language that will stimulate thought and provoke emotion will not only enrich the vocabulary of listeners but also provide them with a quality listening experience.

- (iv) *Introduce a literary genre.* Reading aloud provides an excellent opportunity to introduce

students to the various genres of literature that may include picture books, informational books, folktales, myths, legends, poetry, realistic fiction, historical fiction, biographies, or fantasy.

(v) *Calm or restore positive interaction.* The power of a good book can be used as a pleasurable experience to offset feelings of stress or boredom that may arise in the classroom.

- **Experience and interest of audience**

Read books suited to students' age level. Consult with students about preferred topics, favourite authors, or types of books they like to read.

- **Books available from various resources**

Check to see what is available in the school and district resource center. Borrow books from the children's collection in local libraries. For building a classroom collection, take advantage of special offerings at teacher's bookstores, school book clubs, or used-book sales. To identify high-quality books, consider those that have received special recognition (Newbery or Caldecott Award books).

Elaborating on one of the preceding points, the importance of choosing books enjoyed by the reader should not be underestimated. By sharing personal interests, it then becomes possible to broaden the interests of listeners. This interest can be increased by reading the same book again, another by the same author, books on the same topic, or books in the same genre.

## RESPONSE JOURNALS

Through literature response journals, students are able to personally engage in text by reflecting on and sharing evoked thoughts and feelings. The content of written responses to literature can be a rich repository of information, allowing teachers to gain insight into how students interact

with text. By building on these responses, students and teachers can collaborate with each other in a relaxing format to construct further understanding of a literature selection read.

∞ ∞ ∞

Referring to past research on the use of response journals, Fulps and Young (1991) present a summary of this information. In order to focus on ideas that can be put into practice, a sampling of this information is presented as follows:

- **Design**

Students should be permitted to decorate their reading response journals to make them their own. Allowing students to use coloured ink pens or markers, for example, frees them from doing work with standard writing instruments and encourages them to be creative (Brewster, 1988).

- **Format**

A variety of formats can be used, some examples being anecdotes, letters, predictions, diagrams, interviews, songs, newspapers, and cartoons. In order to sustain student motivation, the format of reading journals should be changed every couple of weeks (Brewster, 1988).

- **Content**

Initially, the teacher may suggest that students react to their reading in specific ways. These suggestions may take the form of telling the story from a different point of view, changing the setting of the story, alternating knowledge and opinion statements, or relating what was read to personal experience. After several weeks, students should be guided away from reliance on the teacher's directions so that they can take more ownership of putting their thoughts and feelings into words (Strackbein and Tillman, 1987). If teachers opt to use questions or prompts to give direction to students' responses, they should be broad and open-ended so that students can develop their own

meaning rather than teachers' desired interpretations (Kelly, 1990; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989).

- **Teacher's role**

It is important that the teacher's response to what is written focus on the depth of thinking, rather than the mechanics of writing. Teachers may model correct usage of grammar and punctuation in their own responses, but they should not correct such errors in students' journal entries. Otherwise, the journal becomes a means to show students' mechanical knowledge rather than a vehicle to practice reflective thinking (Ruth, 1987; Simpson, 1986; Strackbein and Tillman, 1987).

When responding to what students have written in their reading journals, teachers should be careful not to do so with brief responses (e.g., a "smiley face", a "great", or "I agree"). The teacher's response should consist of at least three or four sentences that respond positively and specifically to what was written. This may take the form of affirming thoughts and feelings, providing or requesting further information, modelling elaboration, or guiding students to pursue new insights (Strackbein and Tillman, 1987; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989).

- **Initial stage**

In order to go beyond the simple retrieval of information, students need to be encouraged to take risks when interpreting what they have read. This can be accomplished by beginning with an oral group response to a selection that all of the students have experienced through reading or listening. In this way, students are provided with an opportunity to hear each other's thoughts and observe the teacher model that all responses are valid. This oral presentation provides a framework and practice for students to start generating their own meanings as they read, and compose from their own thoughts as they write (Kelly, 1990; Simpson, 1986).

As concluded by these authors, reading response journals have the power to work in any

classroom with a modelled introduction, careful management, and thoughtful teacher responses. Not only do journals develop students' reading strategies and an ability to communicate, often the most striking development is students' growth in confidence and motivation to read.

Hancock (1993) writes about how teachers can encourage elementary-grade students to explore the possible avenues of response that may be incorporated in literature journals. She provides information on research-based options for response, initial guidelines for literature journals, and ways classroom teachers can challenge students to enrich their personal responses.

The response options described by Hancock are the result of a classroom study involving sixth-grade students who responded to four books of realistic fiction in a response journal format. Categories of response were derived through interrater reliability from over 1,500 entries written in their literature journals. In helping students to move beyond writing summaries towards a richer variety and quality of response, teachers may use these categories to build a firm foundation for future development. These categories of response include **personal meaning-making, character and plot involvement**, as well as **literary evaluation**. Following is a description illustrating examples of the types of responses that fit each of the 8 response options within these three broad categories of response.

The following four **personal meaning-making** options encourage students to write responses in relation to the meaning of the story, character inferences, plot predictions, and expressions of wonder or confusion in an attempt to achieve comprehension.

- **Monitoring understanding**

Attempts to construct meaning from an unfolding plot and its evolving characters usually

occur during the reading of the first quarter of a book and seem to be a necessary stage for "getting into the story". Although these responses may begin with a reporting of facts, events, or such, they have the potential to advance to insightful statements reflecting the reader's personal construction of meaning.

- **Making inferences**

Responses in this grouping are apt to take the form of introspective statements on the feelings, thoughts, and motives for behaviour of the character. Attempting to gain insight into characters is an important step in comprehension and responses of this type enhance understanding of a story.

- **Making, validating, or invalidating predictions**

Considering that prediction is a higher level thinking skill, readers can be challenged by speculating about what is going to happen as the plot unfolds. This challenge is often pursued by confirming or denying a previously stated or unstated prediction. In formulating a prediction, this type of response is enhanced if readers move beyond guessing to synthesizing clues.

- **Expressing wonder or confusion**

In trying to make sense of the text, readers may reflect on what is happening by asking questions or expressing uncertainty. By working hard to comprehend the text, such thoughts of reflection help to serve as a bridge to understanding.

The following three **character and plot involvement** options encourage readers to interact with the text through reactions to the characters and events of the story. Encouraging a level of involvement enables the reader to move towards an even greater understanding of the text.

- **Character interaction**

It is possible for readers to interact with a character through empathetic statements, sharing



a related personal experience, or directly addressing that character to pass on advice.

- **Character assessment**

Another avenue for response is judging the actions and values of a character as measured against the reader's personal standards. Character evaluation, especially within the context of one's value system, allows the reader not only to make judgemental statements regarding another but also to reflect on his or her own personal morality.

- **Story involvement**

Personal involvement in the plot of a story goes beyond a relationship with a character and takes the form of commenting on the location, events, or time of that story. Through this type of involvement, the reader enhances his or her stake in the outcome of the story while becoming engrossed in the action of the plot.

The **literary evaluation** option not only encourages expressions of personal literary taste but also paves the way to becoming a literary critic.

- **Literary critique**

This type of response can move beyond the traditional like/dislike format to providing explanations for positive or negative statements. Responses may also take the form of praising or criticizing an author in relation to writing ability or style, usually by a comparison of the book, author, or genre with others known by the reader.

Although these examples of response options are limited to those from one group of students, they serve as a basis from which to promote a variety of ways in which readers can respond. By encouraging readers to express varied personal responses as they are venturing through pages of books, reading and writing become linked in meaningful ways. To elaborate, it is the view of Hansen

(1987) that writing takes on considerable importance when students become authors of the books they read. When they are authors, students gain significant insights into the reading process because writing provides a place for them to think on paper about what they read.

The use of literature journals may cause some teachers to become discouraged with minimal responses while other teachers may be looking for ways to enhance response styles. The following guidelines, as quoted from Hancock's article, provide steps to set the environment for response and include suggestions derived from the preceding response options.

#### **Guidelines for Literature Response Journals**

- Feel free to write your innermost feelings, opinions, thoughts, likes, and dislikes. This is your journal. Feel the freedom to express yourself and your personal responses to reading through it.
- Take the time to write down anything that you are thinking while you read. The journal is a way of recording those fleeting thoughts that pass through your mind as you interact with the book. Keep your journal close by and stop to write often, whenever a thought strikes you.
- Don't worry about the accuracy of spelling and mechanics in the journal. The content and expression of your personal thoughts should be your primary concern. The journal will not be evaluated for a grade. Relax and share.
- Record the page number on which you were reading when you wrote your response. Although it may seem unimportant, you might want to look back to verify your thoughts.
- One side only of your spiral notebook paper, please. Expect to read occasional, interested comments from your teacher. These comments will not be intended to judge or criticize your reactions, but will create an opportunity for us to "converse" about your thoughts.
- Relate the book to your own experiences and share similar moments from your life or from books you have read in the past.
- Ask questions while reading to help you make sense of the characters and the unravelling plot. Don't hesitate to wonder why, indicate surprise, or admit confusion. These responses often lead to an emerging understanding of the book.
- Make predictions about what you think will happen as the plot unfolds. Validate, invalidate or change those predications as you proceed in the text. Don't worry about being wrong.
- Talk to the characters as you begin to know them. Give them advice to help them. Put yourself in their place and share how you would act in a similar situation. Approve or disapprove of their values, actions, or behaviour. Try to figure out what makes them react the way they do.
- Praise or criticize the book, the author, or the literary style. Your personal tastes in literature are important and need to be shared.
- There is no limit to the types of responses you may write. Your honesty in capturing your thoughts throughout the book is your most valuable contribution to the journal. These guidelines are meant to trigger, not limit, the kinds of things you write. Be yourself and share your personal responses to literature through your journal.

As teachers make efforts to redirect, refocus, and expand students' response, they should

ensure that their comments are nonjudgemental, encouraging, and thought provoking. Comments should be suggestive but not demanding, for to make demands may negate the freedom of the response journal format while well-directed suggestions may lead the student to explore avenues he or she may never have considered. So that the literature response journal is not restricted to one line of communication between the reader and the teacher, an environment can be set up to share responses with other readers. A first step in this process may include choosing reading partners to share responses. After gaining confidence in sharing responses this way, a natural step is toward literature discussions. While literature response journals provide a comfortable format for expressing oneself, readers need the support and direction of the teacher in order to explore and expand their pathways to response.

To facilitate the use of response journals with students, Booth (1996) offers to teachers the following tips:

- Support the child's message by connecting with it in some way, whether by acknowledging, agreeing, or sharing similar views.
- Provide information when a journal entry indicates that the child misunderstands or lacks facts.
- Clarify and extend children's thinking by requesting clarification for unclear journal entries and challenging them to rethink, reflect, and expand their minds.
- Provide questions to serve as prompts when necessary.
- Disclose personal reading tastes by sharing favourite genres and authors.
- Respond to children's comments in ways to facilitate thoughtful responses.
- Ask children to be willing to share responses that are conducive to good discussions.

Elaborating on the preceding point about questions, Booth states that teachers now know children need to be able to pose questions to themselves in order for true learning to occur. However, children can increase their questioning powers by taking from the models that teachers present. Quoted from the author's writing is the following brief sample of questions that teachers can use to motivate literature responses:

1. What will you tell your friends about the book?
2. How would you have handled the problems characters faced in the book?
3. What would you ask the author of this book?
4. What did you learn from reading this book that you had not thought about before?
5. What quotations would you choose from this book to put on the wall of your classroom?

It is clear from the author's standpoint that the questions posed should be primarily aesthetic so that the focus is on personal thoughts, feelings, and associations that have been aroused by reading a piece of literature. When students are encouraged to become personally involved with text, there is a greater likelihood that reading will come to be viewed as a pleasurable activity rather than a chore. If literature has the power to capture the minds and hearts of readers, it follows that they will want to read and keep on reading.

In writing about response journals, Edwards and Malicky (1996) offer certain recommendations. The authors write that it is important response journals not be corrected for spelling, grammar, and so on, but be accepted by the teacher as a fellow reader and not as an expert on the text. Response journals are private and personal in that they contain the innermost thoughts and feelings of students as they respond to text. Therefore, teachers must take care to receive each response with respect and to further thinking by asking questions about the views expressed.

Also expressed by the authors is the idea that literature response journals should be as open-

ended and unstructured as possible. Reference is made to research (Pantaleo, 1994) that shows the more structure these journals have, the more contrived they become with less fluent and cohesive responses from students. Too often, teachers provide students with answers to questions that students have not asked. If given the opportunity to ask questions and search for answers themselves, students will gain understandings into and derive benefits from the literature they are reading. For those students who need help in responding to a book, it is usually effective if teachers allow for talk about the book first or to ask questions that will lead to deeper or fuller responses.

A further view expressed by the authors is that teachers should refrain from directing students to focus on one aspect of the text such as plot, setting, characters, and so on. This approach does not appear to be as effective as leaving the response options completely open to students. What is important to remember is that it is not a matter of learning what to write, but rather of learning how to write a response.

To conclude, agreement is shared with Gunning (1996) who states that teaching literature is a matter of structuring activities in which students respond to a selection and then relate the impact of it to their own lives. It is important to allow students to feel free to deal with their own reactions and then work out through reflection a personal meaning for what they have read. Because young people are active constructors of meaning, they should be given the status of ultimate interpreters. They must be helped to see that a piece of literature does not have a right or wrong interpretation but takes on meaning in light of their personal outlook and experiences.

#### LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS

Recent research supports the idea of students being given opportunities to talk about the

books they are reading from their perspective, rather than being restricted to responding as determined by the teacher (Gilles, Dickinson, McBride, and Vandover, 1994; Raphael and McMahon, 1994). This notion has led to the view that students should interact with both adults and peers using oral and written language in order to acquire meaning about what they have read. In this way, their reading and writing skills are enhanced through a social process.

Though different names have been given to this type of interaction (e.g., Literature Circles, Literature Study Groups, and Book Clubs), the general arrangement is that students work in heterogeneous groups to discuss the books they are reading. These groups usually range from 4 to 8 members who exhibit diverse traits and abilities. Typically, the day before students participate in a discussion, they read a literature selection and write individual responses in their journals. The next day, the students gather together to discuss their reactions, questions, and speculations. During the opening phase, the teacher leads the group of students by guiding them on how to interact with each other and what topics they can talk about. The teacher then leaves the group and students begin their discussions. As students talk during a predetermined time (perhaps 15 to 20 minutes), the teacher observes how the group conducts itself and coaches only at the boundaries. By talking to one another about what they have read, students become exposed to different interpretations which lead to the creation of new meaning.

∞ ∞ ∞

In light of the challenges teachers face when they shift from teacher-led to peer-based discussions, Wiencek and O'Flahavan (1994) offer a number of suggestions to address the questions they have fielded from teachers regarding literature discussions. Following is a list of these questions and a summary of the authors' suggestions that can be applied to students at the elementary level.

1. May stories be used from a basal reading program?

Stories from a basal program may be used but the ones chosen should be well-written and have the ability to captivate student interest. Quality literature with well-constructed story elements and high interest appeal will not only help students to comprehend what they read but also motivate them and facilitate discussions. Stories should be used in a way that follow students' interests and the teacher's instructional purposes rather than according to how the basal is organized. There should be exposure to diverse forms of literature (e.g., fables, biography, historical fiction, etc.) so that students can use different interpretive strategies in their search for meaning. Initially, the literature selections should be brief in length and belong to a familiar genre to allow students an easy entrée into discussions. As they gain in confidence and competence, there should be a move to longer literacy works and a variety of genres.

2. How should groups be formed?

When forming peer groups for discussions, plan thoughtfully to ensure that the size and diversity of the group will enable students to work productively and collaboratively. A manageable size is 4 to 8 students which allows for diversity of abilities and adequate opportunity to participate in discussions. It is suggested that ratings be done of each student's reading, interpretive, and social abilities, being careful to place students with varied scores in every group. Review each group's make-up and continue to rearrange students until there is an acceptable arrangement. Consult with students to determine if the group membership is acceptable to them or needs further changes.

3. How often should groups be changed?

Changing group membership is determined by what is appropriate for the teacher and the students, such as instructional purpose and student choice. Just as teachers need time to gain in

confidence and competence observing and coaching students in discussions, students also need time to develop their individual and collective skills. For these reasons, it is advisable to delay changing groups for 6 to 8 weeks initially. If it is noticed that one group is not functioning well, one option is to disband this group and distribute its members into several different well-functioning groups so that these students can experience better success. As time goes on, make allowance for students who may request that groups change so that they have the opportunity to work with other peers, perhaps by being grouped with those interested in the same book or theme to be discussed.

4. What may be done with students who are less able readers?

Reading may be defined by some as the ability to decode and comprehend printed text, while others may define it as the ability to share meaning with others. However it is viewed by a teacher, the challenge remains to make literature available to all students through reading experiences that are developmentally appropriate. To achieve this, students may read literature independently, with a more able peer, or in a small group. Another option is to have students listen to a selection read aloud by the teacher or follow along in a book through use of an audiotape. The ability to decode words should not be what determines who enters the world of literary interpretation. It is students of lesser reading ability who have a particular need to discuss how literature can enrich their lives. To meet the needs of these students, it is necessary to find creative ways to support their development so that they are not overly dependent on the teacher. Possible ways are to initiate a partnership with students from an upper-grade class so that these older students come in on a regular basis to read literature selections aloud to individuals or small groups of students, or to make arrangements with parent volunteers to assist in the same manner. By participating in literary experiences that involve discussions, students may become motivated to read more and thereby improve their reading abilities.



5. How is it possible to make time for peer discussions with so much else to do?

To make maximum use of whatever time is available, it is important to give careful thought to scheduling. It is suggested that each literature discussion group meet once a week initially, with only one group meeting each day. Such scheduling provides ample time to both teacher and students to develop in confidence and competence without feeling overwhelmed. By having enough time to monitor group interactions carefully, it then becomes possible to tailor one's teaching to the needs of each group. As students in groups become more able to conduct discussions on their own, the teacher should not have to provide as much guidance but be able to support two or more groups simultaneously as time goes on.

6. What prompts will help students to respond in their journals?

By allowing students to share responses in their groups, they become exposed to a variety of ways to respond to what they are reading. To build on this, teachers may plan time for the whole class to meet and talk about the meaning of response. This may be done by informing students about the class meeting a day in advance so that they will have time to prepare by selecting examples of their best or worst responses. The diverse examples taken from the entire class become public knowledge and can be presented to enlighten students on varied ways to respond. Another approach is for the teacher to model responses to a literature selection read aloud to the class so that students can be further enlightened.

7. How may students be guided in their interactions and interpretations?

To guide students initially in their interactions and interpretations, one approach may be for the teacher and group members to construct a chart that documents solutions to problems encountered during discussions (e.g., stay on the topic) and literary avenues that can be explored in

talking about a particular piece of literature (e.g., relate to personal life). As students begin to show more effective participation, there is less need to spend valuable time documenting so the chart should gradually fade away. This process can also be repeated each time there is exposure to new literature selections such as genres or themes.

8. What do the other students do while the teacher is involved with a group?

Accustom students to a variety of learning situations, with the key to success being that activities should compel students to work independently and with their peers. Reading activities could include having them read independently, in pairs, or at the listening center. Writing activities could include having them write in response journals or study spelling words in pairs. To point out an example, one group of students could read the literature selection assigned to them and write their responses in preparation for discussion the next day. As time goes on, continue to diversify the learning activities students experience on their own in order to motivate them to work as independently as possible.

9. How may discussion groups be evaluated?

One approach may be to develop a portfolio for each individual and group. On an individual basis, students could respond to a checklist or rating scale devised by them with the help of the teacher (e.g., story was read before coming to the group) or they could write reflective statements that critique their performance in terms of areas that need to improve or have improved (e.g., sometimes I interrupt). In addition, they could include examples of what they consider to be their best or most liked responses. On a group basis, videotape recordings could be made as discussions begin and again several weeks later. Not only could these recordings be evaluated by the teacher, but members could also have their input by noting ways in which they have improved or need to improve.

10. How can teachers improve their level of literary expertise?

In order to become more adept at coaching students, teachers should get involved in activities that will help them to expand their knowledge base. One possibility is to form a literature discussion group with colleagues at the school level and perhaps meet once a month to discuss a piece of literature read. If this is not feasible, join a book club sponsored by some other organization such as a local library or bookstore. Participating in literature discussions not only helps one to better understand the dynamics of a group but also helps to develop and diversify the ways literature can be interpreted. By actively doing what is expected of students, teachers become better role models by acquiring further insights into literary interpretation. Another source of knowledge is the many teacher resource books and journals that include such names as *The New Advocate* and *The Horn Book Magazine*. To gain even more expertise, teachers can attend workshops at local conferences and encourage school principals and district personnel to offer such inservices on professional development days.

In writing about literature discussion groups, Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, and Moore (1995) state that the teacher's goal should be to have a lot of student talk and to gradually turn over the direction of the discussion to the students. To begin a book discussion, open-ended questions such as "What will you remember most about the story?" aid students to begin talking about what they have read. To keep a discussion going, make comments such as "Tell me more about that." If the students' comments are unclear, ask for clarification with such questions as "What do you mean?" An important rule for teachers to follow throughout these discussions is to ask questions that have a possibility of answers. By asking questions that have only one correct answer, these discussions

become a closed search for what is in the teacher's mind rather than an exploration of ideas.

The authors refer to Alvermann (1991) who has written about a concept known as discussion webs. To provide a brief description, a question is placed in the center of the web followed by students discussing its pros and cons. Making jot notes on the web, students initially discuss the question in pairs then join another pair of students. This group of four students discusses and shares their thinking then comes to a conclusion that is placed on the web. A spokesperson is chosen to represent this conclusion during the general group discussion. To sum up, students try to come to a conclusion about how they think and feel concerning a central yes/no question to a book that was read.

**Fifth-Grade Discussion Web For *Stellaluna***  
(Illustrated by Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, and Moore)

Yes Reasons

- didn't know how bats live
- houses have rules to follow
- didn't want her children hurt
- did the best she knew how
- wanted Stellaluna to fit in so she'd be happy

Should Mother Bird have  
reared Stellaluna like a bird? -----

No Reasons

- she should be herself
- Mother Bird should have helped her go home
- Mother Bird should have learned about bats
- Stellaluna had things she could teach them

Conclusions

No matter what approach is taken, literature discussion groups are a forum for students to practice good listening habits, to think individually and critically, and to work together to discover

new meanings in books that they have read. Students engage in higher-order thinking rather than mere recall, using information from the literature selection to support their views. Models of reasoning and articulated views show other students how books can be examined from a variety of perspectives.

Almasi and Gambrell (1997) refer to past research (Almasi, 1995; Almasi and Gambrell, 1994; Almasi, McKeown, and Beck, 1996) that shows peer-led discussion groups result in improved reading comprehension, higher-level thinking skills, and increased motivation. To elaborate on these points and to support students who need help in mastering the conventions of discussion, the authors present information on how these outcomes can be achieved as follows:

- *Providing opportunities for students to ponder confusion about the literature text or to challenge it improves their reading comprehension.* It is important that teachers create a classroom climate that values reflective thinking over correct answers. In this way, students feel free to express confusion or challenge views in their efforts to construct meaning from text.
- *Providing opportunities for students to interact with each other and to challenge others' views during discussions promotes higher-level thinking.* When students build on or challenge the comments of others, stimulating conversation is sparked. Observing the cognitive processes of their peers enables students to make similar attempts and develop their higher-level thinking abilities.
- *Providing opportunities for students to explore issues of personal interest increases motivation.* When students have a choice in discussing matters that have personal meaning, it leads to an experience that becomes personally relevant and enables them to take ownership of the discussion. As a result, there is deeper engagement with the text which stems from increased motivation.

• *Limiting the amount of teacher intervention results in increased opportunities to develop discussion skills.* Teachers can support students in developing discussion skills by coaching at the boundaries or intervening to offer various strategies for interpreting the literature text. Through this kind of support, the discussions provide a means for increased language growth and the development of social interaction skills.

As concluded by the authors, it takes time for students to learn how to interact with one another meaningfully and to focus on interpretation and understanding of text. However, the benefits of engaging with peers in discussions about text are numerous. Specific benefits are that students improve their ability to monitor understanding of text, to verbalize their thoughts, to consider alternate perspectives, to take responsibility for their own learning, and to learn from and support others' learning.

Having been among the first to write about literature discussions, Eeds and Peterson (1997) report on what directions this idea has taken and discuss how teachers can make this form of talk authentic. To provide background information, the foundation upon which they promoted the idea of children talking to each other about books was based on certain views. Firstly, the main goals are to invite children into the world of story so that they become totally immersed and to provide them with the opportunity to examine their responses in the company of other thoughtful readers to enrich their understandings. Secondly, the social interactions with other children and with the teacher in acts of helpfulness allow each child to make a contribution at his or her own level so that growth in understanding and ability takes place. Thirdly, sharing individual interpretations results in the possibility that deeper meaning will be built upon through dialogue which enables each participant

to gain new and important understandings. Fourthly, how a book is interpreted depends on what meanings readers apply from their experiences, so there should arise multiple and diverse interpretations rather than a focus on which one might be correct.

To report on what has been happening with literature discussions, Eeds and Peterson state that advocates of children's talk about books generally fall into two groups. One of these involves a large group of people who want to use literature as a means to various educational ends. That is, the discussions of literature selections are being used to attain curriculum objectives and academic skills. Consequently, children who have the potential to be real readers are being steered down a path of traditional schooling dominated by a basal approach that interferes with producing deep responses to great books and developing positive attitudes towards reading.

The other group involves a large number of people who are interested in using literature for its own sake by engaging in conversations, dialogues, and critiques. Knowing that there are questions and concerns about the organization of discussions, the role of the teacher, and the forms that dialogue might take, Eeds and Peterson offer these responses. When organizing literature discussions, the focus should not be on schemes and procedures but on creating a community of readers to share their reflections. Although reading and talking about what great teachers do can be inspiring and helpful, there is no substitute for actually plunging in and doing it yourself. All that is needed is a book worth talking about, a group of individuals who have read it, and a willingness to talk about what was read. In this way, children become partners in dialogue amidst surroundings where all can express themselves as thinking, feeling human beings. As to what the role of the teacher should be, some emphasis should be placed on being the "knowledgeable other". The most effective teacher, however, is one who works according to the moment by following the lead of the children. There

do arise appropriate times when the teacher can put forth his or her knowledge about, for example, literary elements which enables children to acquire the language of literature. There also arise appropriate times when the teacher can move talk beyond the sharing of reactions toward a deeper level of understanding. Although literature discussions can operate without constant guidance from the teacher, there is still no substitute for the teacher's presence and participation as noted. As to the forms that dialogue might take, there are limitless possibilities for children to express their understanding in various ways (e.g., suggestions from teachers' idea books). However, these activities do stray from the deep heart-to-heartedness of true dialogue about books.

The message being conveyed to teachers is that ample opportunities should be provided for literature discussion in which participants accept and expect the expression of different points of view rather than single-answer responses. By engaging in interactive talk, individuals can stretch beyond their limits and gain new insights as they journey through the world of books.

### VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Although wide reading of literature provides students with many rich contexts for word learning, there is still a place for vocabulary instruction. It is known that contextual reading does not automatically result in word learning, nor does context always provide clear clues to word meaning. Through instructional interventions that draw attention to vocabulary, a deeper processing of words is possible to achieve which can improve comprehension. Information follows on expanding vocabulary using both approaches - wide reading of literature and instructional interventions.

∞ ∞ ∞

Focusing on literature as a means of developing vocabulary, Fisher and Terry (1990) claim



that research (Blachowicz, 1985) shows certain reading practices contribute to vocabulary development. The authors state that it is possible to develop and increase children's vocabulary by reading books aloud to them frequently. Teachers should provide time each day to read a book aloud. Discussion of particular words after reading a book aloud can expand children's knowledge of words. Presenting the words in meaningful context helps children to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words. Calling attention to certain words and discussing them ensures that they will be noticed. Using the words in other contexts, such as extension activities, helps children to incorporate them into their own vocabularies.

The authors also state that vocabulary is increased the more a child reads independently. It is not enough to provide a random assortment of books to read. A serious effort must be made to select a wide variety of books rich in vocabulary that will stretch and extend children's language. Teachers should encourage students to reread books already presented and call attention to other books they may wish to explore and read. A teacher's enthusiasm for and about books can have considerable impact on students' reading.

To support these views, Gunning (1996) refers to other research that shows significant gains in vocabulary can be achieved by reading aloud to students (Stahl, Richek, and Vandever, 1991) and through independent reading by students (Herman, Anderson, Pearson, and Nagy, 1987). For reading aloud, Gunning cautions that the book being read to students should be within their listening comprehension. Material that is too difficult will not be understood while that which is too easy will not be challenging enough. For independent reading, Gunning recommends the use of material that has some challenging words but not too many. As a general rule, no more than two or four out of a hundred should be unfamiliar.

The message being conveyed here is that meaningful encounters with words promotes vocabulary development. Immersing students in the rich language of books either read to them or read by them creates one of the best foundations for vocabulary growth. The challenge remains for teachers to nurture an interest in books involving all students.

Blachowicz and Lee (1991) offer the following guidelines for vocabulary instruction that concur with new literacy trends such as a literature-based approach. To show how some of these guidelines may be put to use in the classroom, they present examples drawn from teachers at the elementary level.

- **Choose all vocabulary for instruction from contextual reading that is part of the classroom program, including literary and content areas.** By focusing on words that students will encounter throughout the curriculum, the teacher can integrate vocabulary instruction with wider areas of learning to emphasize the connection between word meaning and comprehension.
- **Use an organizational form to help identify words for study.** Any words that are important in explaining, summarizing, or responding to the material read aloud should be presented in a way to promote a clear understanding of their meanings. See Figure 1 for an illustration of how a fourth-grade teacher used a map to build understanding of vocabulary taken from the book *No One Is Going To Nashville* (Jukes, 1983).
- **Plan activities prior to reading to activate students' knowledge of focal vocabulary.** Before reading, provide opportunities for students to see and hear focal words. See Figure 2 for an illustration of how another fourth-grade teacher used a technique to allow students to make predictive connections among key words from the same book.

Figure 1

Map of *No One is Going to Nashville* with target vocabulary italicized

## Characters:

1. Sonia = loves animals so much; dresses like a *vet*; asks people to call her "Dr. Ackley"
2. Richard = dad
3. Annette = *stepmother*
4. Max = *abandoned*, stray dog

## Setting:

Sonia lives with mom during week, dad and *stepmother* during weekend.

## Problem:

- Sonia wants to keep dog.
- Richard doesn't want *responsibility* of dog during week and feels all pets *abuse* him. Wants to send dog to *pound*.
- Annette is empathetic with Sonia but doesn't feel she has much say in *decision*.

## Resolution:

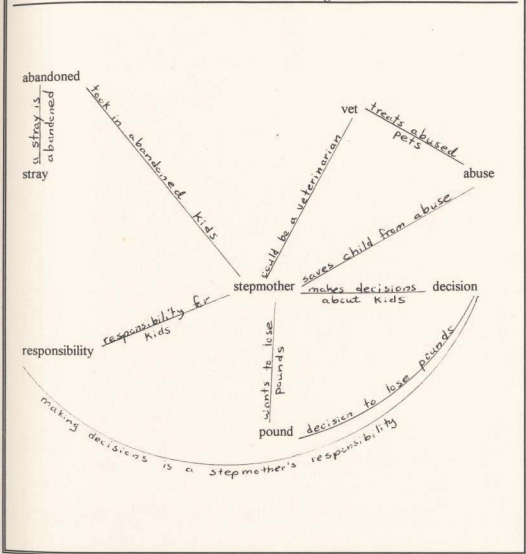
Annette asserts herself as someone who has *responsibility* for Sonia and can be part of *decision*.

Note: Phrase *hopped a freight* is important to Annette's story and her feelings

## Possible "big ideas":

1. What is a stepmother and stepmother's relationship to stepchildren?
2. How do decisions get made in a family?
3. Genre-reverses stereotype of stepmother.

Figure 2  
Connect-2 chart for *No One is Going to Nashville*



- **Involve vocabulary in postreading activities.** Focal vocabulary should be carefully chosen so that it emerges naturally in postreading activities, such as retellings and question responses. When

words are chosen to reflect the main story line in narratives or key concepts in expository text, students must use them in responding to what was read.

- **Reinspect context and probe for meaning if words are still unclear after reading and discussion.** So that vocabulary instruction does not occur mainly before reading, it is necessary that postreading time be provided to help students clarify or expand their understanding of words. One way to help students further analyze vocabulary is to have them locate and reread text sections that give clues to target words. As an example, the teacher who has devised the chart in Figure 2 had students explore the meaning of "pound" as used in the story by having them locate various sentences with that word. Through teacher questioning, students were able to conclude that a pound is a place where stray animals are kept for a temporary period of time.

- **Create varied contexts for vocabulary use.** Further response activities could also require use of the words in artistic, dramatic, or aesthetic ways. As examples, one teacher's group dramatized the book so that story vocabulary was used in dialogue among the characters. Another teacher had students do illustrations of vocabulary from the book in their own style, labelling each with descriptive phrases. Another teacher had students rewrite the ending based on what could have happened if decisions had been made in a different way by incorporating as much of story vocabulary as possible. As indicated by the various ways these teachers conducted extension activities, the students were provided with opportunities to put a stamp of personal expression on how they responded to a literature selection with its vocabulary.

Based on the preceding information, some conclusions that can be drawn are: "that vocabulary must be learned in meaningful contexts with wide reading, that the reader must be active in determining a word's meanings, and that varied use of the word in multiple contexts helps to give the

reader a solid understanding." Thus, the goal of vocabulary instruction should be to provide readers with rich word experiences within a framework of contextual reading, discussion, and response.

Routman (1994) makes reference to research (Herman and Dole, 1989; Nagy, 1988) to support her view that vocabulary development is best promoted through wide reading. She claims that most vocabulary is not acquired through direct instruction or memorization. Vocabulary is best learned within the context of literature when the meaning of the text can be used to determine that which is new. Students can be guided to use what they know and what the author presents to acquire meaning of words. As a general rule, words should not be introduced before reading unless a particular word is critical for understanding the passage. It is during and after reading when important relationships can be made that words should be explored for meaning. Because students learn vocabulary best when they choose the words they want to know more about, a worthwhile practice is for them to personal vocabulary notebooks. Dictionaries should only be consulted when the definition of a word that is needed for understanding cannot be inferred from the passage. For every unfamiliar word encountered by adults in their reading, it is not a common practice to consult a dictionary. Usually adults make efforts to derive meaning, substitute one that makes sense, and go on. So why should this practice be imposed on students?

To conclude, agreement is shared with Stewig and Nordberg (1995) who advise that teachers should avoid the temptation to guide students in choosing books to read strictly on the basis of their reading level. Although there will be students who need help selecting to minimize frustration, interest shown should be given the highest priority in determining what book is read. Since the prime purpose of independent reading should be to foster a love of books, it is important therefore not to restrict

students to a particular reading level. What is important is to encourage students to read books which they are highly motivated to read.

A study was conducted by Brett, Rothlein, and Hurley (1996) to investigate vocabulary acquisition among fourth-grade students under the following conditions: 1) listening to stories with a brief explanation of the unfamiliar target words; 2) listening to stories with no explanations of the words; and 3) having no exposure to the stories or the words. Based on their popularity among young readers as reported by teachers and librarians in the schools involved, the literature selections chosen were *Bunnicula* (Howe and Howe, 1979) and *The Reluctant Dragon* (Grahame, 1953). Neither book had been read to the students during that academic year. Through pretesting that involved nonparticipants at the fourth-grade level, a small group of words was selected as those determined to be most unfamiliar. From the book entitled *Bunnicula*, the words selected were *indulgent*, *reverie*, *imminent*, *disdain*, *sauntered*, *valiantly*, *obscure*, *emanated*, *immerse*, and *exemplary*. From the book entitled *The Reluctant Dragon*, the words selected were *despondency*, *noxious*, *anecdote*, *affable*, *gentry*, *perverse*, *monotonous*, *adversary*, *prevailed*, and *bereft*.

Participants in this study included a total of one-hundred seventy-five 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students from six classes in two urban elementary schools. Each book was read over a period of 5 days to students who were randomly assigned to groups. For both story-with-word-explanation groups, the teachers briefly discussed each word as it was encountered in the book. As an example, these teachers were provided with a definition of the word to be presented to the students. Then they reread the sentence using a substitute word provided to them to show that the meaning of the story was not changed. No further explanation of the target words was presented. For both story-only groups, the teachers

simply read the book with no explanation of the target words. For both control groups, the students had no exposure to the stories or the target words.

All three groups were given a pretest and a posttest of the target words for each book. A delayed posttest 6 weeks later was administered on the target words for each book to find out if word meanings were remembered. The results showed that students who listened to stories accompanied by brief explanations of target words learned significantly more new words and remembered them better 6 weeks later than students in the other two groups. There was no significant difference in the results obtained for students who listened to stories with no explanations of the words and students in the control group.

What the latter finding seems to indicate is that a singular oral presentation of words in the context of a story by itself does not result in significantly increased vocabulary knowledge. Although there is research evidence to show that increased story presentations results in greater word learning (Jenkins, Stein, and Wysocki, 1984; Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986), this study implies that repeated readings of the same story are not necessary for vocabulary acquisition if new words are explained as they are encountered in text. To determine what component of this strategy is critical to vocabulary learning, the researchers in this study conclude that further studies are needed to determine if it is the word definition, the rephrased sentence, story interest combined with using the word in context, or a combination of all these factors.

Invernizzi, Abouzeid, and Bloodgood (1997) report on how a particular approach to the study of words can be used with upper elementary-grade students who are beyond the beginning stages of reading and writing. That is, they are able to read independently, silently, and from books of length,



as well as show a good knowledge of sound-symbol relationships in their writing (e.g., consonants, vowels, blends, digraphs). Word study involves grouping words into categories of similarity and difference. Students categorize words by exploring the relationships of spelling to word meaning and grammar.

According to these authors, the coordination of spelling, vocabulary, and grammar instruction can be achieved through a range of reading and writing activities in a literature-based, integrated language arts program. The integration of social studies with language arts in the upper elementary grades is a common way to explore a variety of subject topics. As an example, the American Civil War may be studied by reading and discussing trade books along with social studies texts. Examples of literature selections that pertain to this era are *Who Comes with Cannons?* (Beatty, 1992), a novel about a young girl who travels north with her uncle to rescue cousin Billy from a military prison, and *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), a picture storybook that can be used as a read-aloud introduction to civil War issues. Within a literature-based unit on this topic, words can be taken from a variety of trade books and social studies texts to be analyzed according to their form and function. Pertaining to this topic, examples of word study activities that can be done follow:

**(i) Vowel-r combinations**

-er	-or	-ar
commander	major	cellar
officer	victor	peculiar
soldier	captor	spectacular

**(ii) Final y**

Noun	Adjective	Adverb
country	sorry	seriously
cemetery	silly	horribly
custody	happy	hurriedly

So what is the importance of word study? As stated by these authors, there are 3 reasons for adopting a word study approach to spelling, vocabulary, and grammar instruction in a literature-based, integrated language arts program. Firstly, this approach makes explicit how spelling patterns and word structures reflect meaning and use. Research supports the idea that students must quickly and accurately perceive word patterns in order to recognize, understand, and produce written language (Perfetti, 1991). Other research shows that accurate, rapid, word recognition is facilitated by opportunities to engage in meaningful reading and to examine its vocabulary both in and out of context (Morris, 1989). Secondly, word study activates the cognitive learning processes of comparing and contrasting categories of word features and discovering similarities and differences within and between categories. This approach to word study whereby students make judgements related to categorizing and classifying can be used not only to learn about language form and function but also to develop comprehension. Thirdly, word study activities are student-centered in that the language used is what has been actually read and written by them rather than from worksheets or drill exercises. As it is known that teacher-taught rules are not greatly retained, the discoveries that students make themselves are more likely to be generalized to their reading and writing vocabulary.

### CONTENT LEARNING

The increased amount of reading required in the content areas of an elementary grade curriculum often creates problems for students. These problems are partially due to the way information is presented in textbooks, some reasons being that the text may be difficult to read, hard to understand, or boring in its presentation. Yet many students enjoy reading contemporary nonfiction literature which can be woven into the various content subjects, either to supplement or

substitute information. In comparison to textbooks, there are tradebooks (commercial literature) that have a number of features from which students can benefit. Firstly, the diverse tradebooks available allow for a broader range of reading levels, thereby accommodating students of varied abilities. Secondly, tradebooks often have more appeal through attractive formats, illustrations, and writing styles. Since tradebooks often reflect the personal thoughts and feelings of the author, it then becomes possible to bring content to life which can further increase the motivation of students. Thirdly, tradebooks allow for greater exploration of subjects in depth because many books on the same topic can be read. By doing so, students can expand such comprehension skills as synthesizing information and comparing/contrasting different viewpoints. Fourthly, tradebooks enable students to read information that is up-to-date and accurate as possible.

∞ ∞ ∞

Young and Vardell (1993) describe a medium, known as Readers' Theatre, which can be used to present information from contemporary nonfiction literature. Readers' Theatre is defined as a presentation of text that is expressively read aloud by narrators and readers who respond. The primary emphasis is placed on reading rather than memorization, actions, props, or costumes. In selecting material for a script, this can be done either by using an entire book (if it is not too lengthy) or choosing excerpts from it. There must be careful selection of a book so that the text is not only informative and interesting, but also lends itself well to script adaptation. One example of informational books that adapts well to a script is *The Magic School Bus Series* (Cole, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990) which deals with a variety of general knowledge topics.

Once a teacher has developed a script and students have had the experience of participating in Readers' Theatre, then both teacher and students can collaborate in the adaptation process.

Guidelines for developing scripts are offered by the authors of this article as follows:

- Begin the scripting process by allowing students to read or skim a book beforehand so that they have input into the selection of material.
  - Choose portions of the text that are particularly interesting and informative.
  - Reproduce the selected portions of the text and delete lines that are less critical to the topic.
  - Rewrite the text in creative ways, using multiple narrators and dialogue as some examples.
  - Add a prologue to introduce the script and a postscript to bring about closure.
  - Label the readers' parts by placing their names next to what reading has been assigned to them.
- Then provide a copy to each participant.
- Provide time for all readers to practice reading their parts before they perform.

With the many excellent new books to choose from, it is now possible to incorporate more meaningful literary experiences in the content areas. Through the development and performance of Readers' Theatre scripts, students are given opportunities to engage in such language events as silent/oral reading and listening attentively to acquire knowledge in a new kind of way. The authors of this article express the opinion that combining Readers' Theatre with nonfiction literature has the potential to enhance students' comprehension by allowing them to have an active role in internalizing and interpreting new knowledge.

In many elementary classrooms today, the curriculum is no longer fragmented into specific time blocks for each subject. A common practice is for teachers to integrate instruction in varied subject areas around particular topics or themes. Routman (1994) presents a framework for an integrated language approach involving the use of literature that can be applied to the content areas

as follows:

- **Planning the unit**

- . Select a topic or theme that is important to the curriculum and suited to the students' age level, needs, and interests.

- . Find out what information students already know and what they would like to know.

- . Decide, in consultation with the students, what concepts or questions of importance should be focused on.

- . Determine, with input from the students, the range of activities and experiences that will help to develop knowledge and understandings.

- . Gather the resources to be used for exploring, researching, reading, and writing (e.g., quality literature and materials from home, school, and community).

- . Make plans to familiarize students with factual forms of writing if this is expected of them.

- . Inform parents about the planned unit of study.

- . Obtain community support by sending out letters of inquiry, inviting in guest speakers, and arranging field trips.

- . Organize the classroom into centers that feature books and materials about the unit.

- **Implementing the unit**

- . Ensure that students are familiar with gathering and compiling information (e.g., researching, taking notes, writing reports).

- . Allow time to read books or other information sources that provide answers to questions determined in the planning stage.

- . Add any important information that arises to what was initially developed.

- . Design activities to include individuals, partners, small groups, and the whole class.
  - . Incorporate varied formats that allow for creation, choice, and collaboration.
  - . Offer teacher guidance and provide mini-lessons as needed.
  - . Encourage impromptu and spontaneous learnings (i.e., questions or discussions that emerge but were unplanned).
  - . Maintain an inquiry approach to learning.
- **Evaluating the unit**
- . Organize information learned with what is already known, allowing for student choice (e.g., oral presentation, written report, drama, debate).
  - . Ensure there is ample time for sharing, reporting, speaking, and listening.
  - . Relate old to new information by discussing and evaluating.
  - . Include everyone for a comprehensive evaluation (e.g., teacher observations, peer checklists, individual surveys).

As stated by Allen and Piersma (1995), units of study built around topics and themes lend themselves well to the use of authentic literature. Students who participate in these units can construct meaning and gain knowledge about literature and content subjects. When students build relationships among all subject areas in the curriculum, they also learn to become successful readers and writers

To elaborate on the points made by Routman (1994) regarding the implementation of a topic or theme unit, further information is presented by Stice, Bertrand, and Bertrand (1995). The authors write that some teachers may initiate a unit by involving students in an activity from which a topic or

theme may be generated. Following this experience, the next step is to brainstorm for ideas in order to determine students' previous knowledge and what they would like or ought to know. Because the brainstorm list allows for the central topic or theme to be subdivided, students may divide themselves into groups based on what part of the unit interests them. With teacher help in planning, students begin involvement in their activities and projects.

In addition to content learning, a reading and writing focus occurs throughout the unit. Each day or several times a day, the teacher and students take part in sharing a book as a whole class. The book chosen includes either a wide range of relevant information or some in-depth aspect of the unit. Also built into the day is silent reading and writing as well as guided reading and writing, one form being for the teacher to model thinking aloud as a book is being read or a passage is being written. The overall goal is to help students use all language processes - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - to move them towards new and exciting insights and understandings.

As stated by the authors, student interest is key to the success of any topic or theme unit. The subject must be broad and flexible enough to allow for considerable student choice and creativity. The resource materials must be plentiful and should include different ability levels suited to the ages of students. Whatever topic or theme is chosen, there must be enough depth to it so that each student can manipulate the central concepts in various ways to gain knowledge and understandings.

In contrasting the use of history texts with historical fiction, Narwot (1996) states that textbooks often treat the study of the past as a list of events while stories involve the reader in events as they unfold. Through historical fiction, the study of history is humanized whereby the reader becomes more involved in the story of people portrayed to be living through these times as opposed

to an objective presentation of events.

By using historical fiction to teach history, Narwot claims that it is an effective way to do so for the following reasons: 1) a story is easier to understand than expository text; 2) a story presents history in a subjective form that is close to the way children understand the world; 3) a story helps children to retain a knowledge of life in a particular period; 4) a story allows children to become emotionally involved which creates lasting impressions; and 5) a story provides a schema that children can apply to factual information for retaining in their memory. Making reference to a particular study (Smith, Monson, and Dobson, 1993), Narwot states it was found that fifth-grade students who were taught with historical novels recalled about 60% more information than those who were taught with traditional history texts.

However, Narwot stresses that historical fiction is first and foremost a piece of literature. Teachers should encourage children to react to the story first before using it as a source of information. The questions regarding history that arise from their reading can become the starting point for a unit of study later. Specific reading and writing activities that can be carried out are presented under the following headings:

- **Develop critical reading skills**

Students can note characters' values, identify the author's point of view, look for evidence of fact and opinion, determine cause-and-effect relationships of various happenings, and so on.

- **Organize and make sense of what was read**

Students can use web outlines to explore vocabulary, depict story elements, or illustrate concepts arising from the story. They can also design charts comparing/contrasting life in the past with the present, or note the advantages and disadvantages of living in a past era. Another suitable



activity is to construct a time line showing the chronological order of events.

- **Engage in writing activities**

Students can prepare factual reports, write a sequel to the story, retell the story from another character's point of view, write newspaper articles about particular events, write diary entries that could have been written by one of the characters, and so on.

- **Extend story with response activities**

Students can illustrate the story in a chronological mural, create a portrait gallery, act out part of the story, debate one of the story's issues, and so on.

As noted by Narwot, there are cautions to be taken in using historical fiction. One is that the stories presented must be historically accurate. Even though most of the characters and events are fictional, the story should reflect the true attitudes and values of the time. There should be no contradiction of the historical record. Another caution is that a balanced viewpoint of history should be presented. If stories deal with history from a single perspective only, then opportunities should be provided to read about the same time period from other points of view.

Having explored some of the recent research on the use of science-oriented trade books as extensions of textbooks (Armbruster, 1992; Butzow and Butzow, 1990; Mayer, 1995; Pond and Hock, 1992), it is reported by Royce and Wiley (1996) that two suggestions are made consistently by researchers. One is that the trade books chosen should clearly relate to subject matter. A helpful guide is often found in reference materials. Particular references include journals (e.g., *Science Activities*, *Science and Children*, *Science Teacher*) that often present a list of books by theme and grade level, as well as the Children's Book Council of the National Science Teachers' Association that

annually publishes a list of "Outstanding Trade Books in Science". The other suggestion is that graphic organizers should be used to clarify the science content of trade books. In this way, visual aids are used to make concepts more concrete and less mysterious to the minds of children. Examples of these techniques are in information presented by Johnson (1990) and McDonald and Czerniak (1994).

Based on their exploration of the research related to the use of science-oriented trade books, Royce and Wiley note there are some cautions that need to be taken. One is that teachers must pay attention to the strategies they are using so that students' interactions with science literature are not prohibited. For example, if a teacher is known to ask questions on the factual aspects of a reading, then the likely result is that students will read mainly for content purposes rather than from a stance of experiencing, thinking, and feeling as they read. Another caution is that the accuracy of science content is sometimes lacking in trade books, so teachers need to recognize the possibility of inaccuracy in literature. Referring to information presented by Mayer (1995), teachers can be guided by a checklist that assists in avoiding the use of children's literature that fosters misunderstanding. Some additional warnings are to ensure that stereotypes are avoided, that illustrations are accurate and labelled, that scientific ways of thinking are encouraged, and that science content is clearly presented in organized form.

By integrating trade books in science studies, this form of literature can become the lens through which content is viewed. This lens has the power to hold readers' attention while transferring content in ways that are easy to understand. However, teachers must become informed about the process of integrating literature with textbook readings so that meaningful learning takes place

## SAMPLE GENRE UNITS

The genres of traditional literature and poetry are presented here for specific reasons. Firstly, children of all ages still enjoy traditional literature in the form of folktales because these stories are usually not lengthy and have fast-moving plots. They are often humorous and end happily. Beyond being entertaining and appealing to children's sense of morality, folktales also kindle the imagination of "what might have been" or "what might be". Secondly, poetry which can move children to reflect on the interesting and moving use of language is often a neglected aspect of the curriculum. Consequently, many children do not get the opportunities to read and share poetry as they should. When teachers present poetry that appeals to children's interests on a regular basis, it then becomes possible for a love of this literature to develop.

oo oo oo

Worthy and Bloodgood (1993), postdoctoral fellow and doctoral students at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Virginia respectively, have outlined a 10-week literature unit on fairy tales. This fairy tale unit, featuring variations of the Cinderella story, can be used with students in the elementary grades. Cinderella was chosen for a fairy tale unit because many books are available that present this story from a variety of cultures making it possible for students to have access to different versions of this story. In addition, the Cinderella story with its universal theme of good triumphing over evil in a family context enables students to make personal connections to the literary events they experience.

Most Cinderella stories have common features that include a beautiful heroine who has been disgraced, mistreatment of the heroine by an evil parent or sibling, a force of magic, and restoration of the heroine to her original status. The literature unit devised by Worthy and Bloodgood was based

on the three-category scheme which focuses on the major difference among stories, that being, the identity of the antagonist who causes Cinderella to lose her position of high esteem. To illustrate, a listing of these books follows:

**Cinderella stories grouped by antagonists**

**Category one: Heroine mistreated by stepmother or stepsisters**

*Walt Disney's Cinderella* (1974)

*Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper* (Brown, 1954)

"The Cinder Maid" (Jacobs, 1916)

*Little Sister and the Month Brothers* (deRegniers, 1976)

*Yeh Shen* (Louie, 1982)

*Naomi and the Magic Fish* (Phumia, 1972)

*Cinderella* (Karin, 1989)

**Category two: Sibling rivalry**

*Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987)

"Makanda Mahlanu" (Sherman, 1990)

*The Talking Eggs* (San Souci, 1989)

*Prince Cinders* (Cole, 1988)

*Ugh* (Yorinks, 1990)

**Category three: Daughter flees unnatural or misunderstanding father**

"Allerleirauh" (Lang, 1892/1978)

*Princes Furball* (Huck, 1989)

"Cap o'Rushes" (Minard, 1975)

*Moss Gown* (Hooks, 1987)

For each category, instructional activities were divided into two sections: pre-reading activities (word recognition, vocabulary, background knowledge) and during-reading or post-reading activities (vocabulary, story structure, literary evaluation, written response). A brief description of these activities follows:

- **Pre-reading instruction**

It was often not necessary to address word recognition, vocabulary, and background information separately because the language of fairy tales is common to most students. As a result, the books in this unit were not found to be difficult to read or comprehend. However, every book was carefully previewed by the teacher in order to anticipate possible difficulties and provide instruction as needed. As an example, potentially unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts were dealt with through discussion and the use of graphic organizers to point out relationships.

- **During-reading and post-reading instruction:**

- (i) **Vocabulary**

During the reading of stories, students read the books for each grouping in pairs or, when necessary, listened to them on tape. Students were encouraged to make wide use of context clues in identifying words determining their meaning. As an example, the word "veld" in *Naomi and The Magic Fish* was lively discussed as to its possible meaning followed by a rush to the dictionary to verify hypotheses.

- (ii) **Story structure**

Comprehension activities were addressed through a repertoire of activities that focused on analyzing story structure. Through mini-lessons, students became familiar with basic story elements that focused on character and plot. Working in cooperative learning groups, students did follow-up activities that included the use of graphic organizers (e.g., compare/contrast charts, sequence diagrams, character webs) to portray information about the characters and events in each story.

- (iii) **Literary evaluation**

Through minilessons, students were introduced to several aspects of literary evaluation in

order to help them examine books critically. Focal points of discussion revolved around questions such as: Does the story hold the reader's interest? Is dialogue among the characters natural? How well is the theme presented? Are the illustrations realistic and attractive? Also discussed were features common to fairy tales such as language ("once upon a time"), themes (goodness triumphs), and motifs (magical happenings).

**(iv) Written response**

Students were required to keep response journals to record their thoughts and feelings about stories before, during, and after reading them. In the beginning, their responses consisted of story event predictions, plot summaries, and answers to teacher-posed questions. Gradually, they began to make comments regarding the content of minilessons that focused on character and plot. Other writing involved making changes to existing stories that took such forms as composing a script to be dramatized by the students, changing the format of the story to a poem or song, or rewriting the story from the perspective of a particular character.

Many benefits from this literature unit became apparent in students' reading and writing through observations and informal assessments. Certain ways that students demonstrated growth in literacy was that their written responses began to explore different aspects of comprehension (e.g., progressing from plot summaries to story analysis). Also, they became increasingly independent and creative in their written responses to stories. Another noteworthy outcome was that previously reluctant readers developed a more positive attitude towards reading which carried over into wanting to read other books. It is the conclusion of these researchers that providing students with thoughtfully chosen literature that can be responded to in a variety of ways can help to make reading and writing meaningful and exciting experiences for them.

Information on a poetry unit that was carried out with a fifth-grade class is presented by Rothstein, Dempsey, and Evans (1997), respectively teacher-librarian, resource teacher, and classroom teacher at an elementary school in Vancouver. The activities were done in the library resource center during 4 periods, each having a duration of 40 minutes. The unit was developed to increase students' appreciation of poetry, as well as to foster vocabulary and comprehension skills related to this form of literature. A sea theme was chosen because the verses found in such poems often possess a rich vocabulary and rhythmic language. One source of poetry related to a sea theme that is suitable for this age group is a collection of poems entitled *The Sea is Calling Me* (Hopkins, 1986). The lessons that were carried out are as follows:

- *Lesson 1: Introduction and brainstorming activities*

For introductory purposes, an inviting atmosphere was created by playing a tape of sea sounds while each teacher read a poem related to this theme. This was followed by a brainstorming session involving the whole class whereby the students were asked to generate words pertaining to good and bad weather. These words were then recorded on two charts, one for good weather and the other for bad weather. Working in pairs, the students next produced a list of descriptive words that could apply to the sea in good weather and in bad weather. These words were then shared and recorded on the charts.

- *Lesson 2: Classification and choice activities*

Previously collected pictures related to the sea were then classified by students as they worked in groups with each having 3 members. Especially appropriate for this type of activity were pictures showing a variety of boats and ships. After classifications were shared among groups, the students worked independently as they used the pictures for a background setting to state their preferred

choices and explain the reasons for them on an attractively designed sheet.

• *Lesson 3: Poetry writing activities*

First, the whole class was involved in orally completing a poem entitled *Sea Fever* (Masefield, 1984) with blanks that could be filled in using descriptive words from the charts. Next, the students worked in pairs to complete this poem on paper by utilizing the weather and sea words produced earlier.

• *Lesson 4: Poetry reading activities*

Using a sea sounds tape for atmosphere, the students gathered in a poetry reading circle to share the poems they had completed from the previous lesson. Following this, the students listened to the poem *Sea Fever* narrated on video by an experienced media person.

By using this approach to poetry, students are actively involved as individuals and group members. Opportunities are provided for students to become familiar with the language of poetry as well as practice thinking skills which in turn enhance both vocabulary and comprehension growth in relation to this genre.

### CLASSROOM/SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Information follows about the use of literature as it has been incorporated in elementary classrooms and schools throughout such countries as the United States, Canada, and Australia. For all three countries where single-and multi-grade classrooms are in existence, information is presented on the various individual approaches that have been taken by teachers in their efforts to implement literature-based programs.



### United States

Scharer and Detwiler (1992) present a case study of the latter's experiences as a sixth-grade teacher trying to implement literature-based language arts instruction. Scharer, a professor who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy at the Ohio State University, collaborated with Detwiler, a teacher who teaches grade 6 in the River Valley School District in Marion, Ohio, over a 9-month period and gathered information through interviews and discussions.

When Detwiler transferred to a particular school in 1990, it was with the understanding that she would become part of a staff committed to implementing literature-based language arts instruction within 5 years. Detwiler became driven to increase the use of literature in her classroom after noticing that students did not like to read and write using basal materials. In making the transition initially, she struggled with the dilemma of how to make decisions previously made by basal publishers. What books would be read? What assignments would be done? How would class activities be organized? How would assessments be carried out?

At the beginning of the school year, Detwiler began to use chapter books but was still following a basal approach by assigning chapters to read and having worksheets completed for each chapter. With the realization that she was "basalizing literature", Detwiler sought to try a new approach after noticing that students enjoyed the high quality books but not the worksheets that accompanied their readings.

In the middle of the school year, Detwiler decided to do a biography unit with her students. After obtaining a large collection of biographies from the local public library and presenting a brief overview of each, students were asked to choose a book and follow it up in the form of a project to be shared with the class. Examples of projects included writing a diary from the famous person's

viewpoint or creating a time line of important events in that person's life. During a typical language arts period, the students either read the books selected or worked on their projects while Detwiler held individual conferences with students to discuss their books and projects. By taking this approach, Detwiler noticed that her students were becoming more involved with her and each other regarding their books and projects of choice. The success of the biography unit encouraged Detwiler to continue expanding her use of literature to content areas, such as social studies and science subjects.

Towards the end of the school year, Detwiler was able to show from various forms of thorough documentation that her students had progressed as readers and writers. In addition, she was able to conclude on the basis of her observations that her students had also developed a more positive attitude towards reading and writing.

To help support teachers in their struggles to increase the use of literature in their classrooms, Scharer and Detwiler make the following recommendations:

- (i) **Time and materials.** Time frames for change should be realistic so that discussions take place in terms of years and not months. Materials should not only include what is needed for students' reading and writing, but also professional books and journals. A key person in the gathering of material is a trained librarian to help in the selection of books for purchasing and the collection of books around a particular theme.
- (ii) **Staff development.** There should be inservice sessions focusing on such topics as recent developments in the use of literature, the reading-writing process, effective classroom organization, and informal assessment procedures. Visiting other schools, attending conferences, and enrolling in university courses should also be strongly promoted.

- (iii) **Opportunities for collegial interaction.** Opportunities should be provided for teachers to meet and talk with each other during small and large group discussions. These may include grade level meetings or general meetings at designated times to discuss issues and concerns.
- (iv) **Evaluation issues.** With broadening methods of grading, teachers should be helped to become more adept in their use of informal tools such as anecdotal notes, checklists, portfolios, and conference reports.

McGee and Tompkins (1995), professors of literacy courses at Boston College and California State University respectively, describe how 3 elementary teachers take different approaches in their use of the same literature selection entitled *Stone Fox* (Gardiner, 1980). In this story, a 10-year-old boy named Willy must care for his grandfather who is in ill health and also care for their potato farm in Jackson, Wyoming. After harvesting the potato crop, Willy finds out that the government will take the farm unless 10 years of back taxes are paid. Willy wins the needed money in a sled race with the sacrifice of his beloved dog, Searchlight, and with the help of a Shoshone Indian named Stone Fox. The focus of these teachers' different approaches is presented under the following headings:

#### 1. **Reading/Writing As Strategic, Interactive Processes**

Norma, a fourth-grade teacher, integrates Social Studies with a core literature unit that includes the story *Stone Fox* to explore the topic of farming. To introduce *Stone Fox*, Norma activates the background knowledge of students by having pairs take part in brainstorm sessions to write clusters of ideas on charts that are to be displayed later in the classroom and discussed. Afterwards, Norma reads the first chapter aloud to the students and follows this with a discussion. Then she models writing a summary of this chapter on the overhead projector while thinking aloud

about why she includes or leaves out certain information. She also starts a word wall from the book by handing out a large sheet of paper on which students write unfamiliar or interesting words that they encounter in their reading. Working in pairs, the students read the remaining chapters, write a summary of each in their literature journals, and select vocabulary for the word wall. After reading each chapter, students meet for group discussions to express opinions, ask questions, and make speculations. To promote vocabulary growth, mini-lessons focus around those on the word wall by using a combination of context and recognition strategies. When the entire story is read, Norma guides the students in an extended discussion to reflect on new information learned and the story's themes.

Both strategic and interactive processes are incorporated in Norma's instructional approach. The strategy of summarizing is used to keep track of the central characters and events across a chapter book so that students take the time for stopping to remember what was read. Interaction involves both reader-based and text-based processes. Norma attends to reader-based processes by ensuring that students have a wealth of prior information before reading the story to enhance their understanding and she attends to text-based processes by helping students to understand words in the context of the story as well as be able to identify words with similar patterns in subsequent stories.

## **2. Knowledge of Literary Forms**

Maria, a fifth-grade teacher, includes the story *Stone Fox* in a literature unit she is doing on heroic tales. Although this type of tale can be a complex literary structure, Maria has noticed that her students are quite fascinated by the underlying heroic theme in cartoons, movies, and video games so she has capitalized on this interest. To introduce the story, Maria tells a little about each character then has students predict who is the hero and what commendable acts take place. As students read

the first chapter independently, they are given the opportunity to begin confirming their predictions. Then they preview the remainder of the book and make further predictions about what will happen based on their knowledge of heroic tales. The remaining 8 chapters are read in three parts to correspond with ordeals in the hero cycle. After reading each of these parts, students meet in groups to discuss the story in terms of its literary content. During discussions, Maria guides the students as they compare and contrast character traits of the two heroes, Willy and Stone Fox, using diagrams. Maria also uses an enlarged chart with examples of descriptive language from the book by pointing out examples of metaphors and similes as well as having students locate expressions of effective language.

The instructional activities developed by Maria focus on a particular structure in order to give students exposure to its conventions. Although experts in the field of literature recommend that children become familiar with literary conventions, they do not recommend that children memorize definitions for such concepts. Rather than focusing on direct instruction, Maria is sensitive to students' interests as a guide for familiarizing them with the world of literature.

### 3. Personal Response

Erica, a fifth-grade teacher, uses a reading and writing workshop approach in her classroom. She has an extensive classroom library with multiple copies of several chapter books, including *Stone Fox*. To explore this book, 5 students form an interest group then meet with their teacher to decide about how often to meet and how much to read before each meeting. Following Erica's recommendations, the group meets 3 times to have "grand conversations" about the book. During these conversations, students read from their response journals, talk about most interesting story parts, and relate their own personal experiences. Erica is present for part of these meetings to share

her oral and written responses to the story so that students will have a model to guide them in their reactions. At the last group meeting, students generate a list of possible response activities. Some of these activities require the students to explore the story (e.g., writing a newspaper account for the day of the races) or to extend their understanding beyond the story (e.g., writing an informational report on dog sledding). After students select response activities, they share their completed projects with the class.

The instructional decisions made by Erica fall in line with theories related to literature response which emphasize there is no one correct interpretation. By encouraging students to engage in response activities, Erica is providing them with opportunities to make personal connections to what they read. After exploring what the story means to them, students can listen to what others think and use these ideas to challenge their own thinking, and hopefully come to a deeper insight than they originally had.

McCormick-Calkins (1997) writes about how teachers in the New York City metropolitan areas are now making independent reading a priority in their literature programs. With this approach, the rest of the reading curriculum grows out of the needs identified during that time. However, independent reading is not just reading. It is also collaborative. To clarify this concept, the author presents information on 2 teachers at work in an independent reading program. For the purposes of this paper, which focuses on the elementary level, information about how a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher carries out such a program is presented as follows:

- Mini-lessons follow a book read-aloud by the teacher during which students are mentored in thinking, talking, reading, and writing in ways that skilled readers do. Students are then encouraged

to use these strategies during independent reading.

- Students are encouraged to create social supports by entering into partnerships with other readers. Together they can talk about the read-aloud book, their self-chosen books, as well as how they feel about themselves as readers. As examples, readers in partnership may look back through a book each has read to talk about funny, touching, or important points; readers in partnership may decide to read books by a particular author so they can continue to enjoy his or her style of writing; or readers in partnership may decide to pursue a particular theme in books so they can discuss issues of interest or concern.
- Observations of students' strong and weak reading behaviors during independent reading time form the basis of individualized or group instruction. As examples, an overheard conversation between 2 students about making pictures in their minds spawned the teacher to gather together the whole class to present their strategy of pausing as they read to envision stories. Or if it is noticed that some readers are moving on too quickly to other books, a gathering of others who do the same may take place to discuss things readers can do when they finish a book (e.g., reread favorite passages, talk about how the book relates to other books).
- Not only is talk important with this approach, but so is time for sustained silent reading. Suggestions made to students include: 1) using two bookmarks for the book they are reading to mark the page they begin with and the page they are reading toward; 2) using sticky notes to mark each period of silent reading so that the teacher can join them in journeying back over sections read; 3) choosing a pile of books for their bedside tables in order to obtain momentum between books; and 4) creating comfortable reading nooks for themselves in the classroom as well as at home.

To sum up in the words of a teacher who has established independent reading as an important

component of her literature program, "If our efforts to teach reading don't affect what happens during independent reading, they probably don't affect kids' lives as readers. And my whole goal is to help kids invent richly literate lives for themselves."

### Canada

As a grade 4/5 teacher at an elementary school in Saskatchewan (exact location undisclosed), Froelich (1995) presents information on one component of the literature-based program she has implemented in her dual-graded classroom. This component consists of an independent silent reading program as supported by research that shows even as little as 15 minutes a day can impact upon students' vocabulary and comprehension growth (Cooper, 1993; Taylor, Frye, and Maruyana, 1990). Each day begins with a 30-minute reading period whereby the first 15 minutes or so are devoted to silent reading, and the remaining 15 minutes are spent on follow-up activities as described below.

Guidelines are introduced at the onset of the school year and are thereafter monitored and reinforced. The first expectation is that students are responsible for choosing books that they can read and comprehend with ease. The second expectation is that there must be a quiet atmosphere where everyone can concentrate on their own reading without being disturbed by conversation or movement around the classroom. The third expectation is that students must keep up-to-date, individual records of their reading in three formats in a reading log (information on title, author, date completed, pages read); a genre chart (information on type of book read); and a response form (information on way response was shared with partners or group members). The fourth expectation is that students must share ideas about their reading in the form of writing notes to the teacher and talking about a book in the comfort of a small circle of peers. The fifth expectation is that students



begin to take note of their reading behaviors and report about their progress by periodically filling in a provided self-evaluation form for submission.

In order to monitor reading time, evaluate individual progress, and address individual needs, Froelich has devised three separate observation record sheets. The first is a daily reading progress sheet that includes information about the amount and type of reading that each student is doing every day. While the students are reading, Froelich follows a set circulation pattern (pattern remains set for period of time) as she briefly whispers with each student about the reading being done. The data always includes the title, author, and page being read at the time. In this way, it is possible to determine how much reading is being done from day to day. If too small or too large quantities are taking place, it becomes a strong indicator that comprehension is not occurring and some intervention is necessary. Other data may include notes on noticeable reading behaviors. The second observation record is a collection of response-type data gathered from an analysis of the students' journal entries. Responses are analyzed according to a hierarchy list that Froelich obtained at a whole language conference. In order of depth, this hierarchy of responses includes *general response 1* (students only indicate what they are reading and where they are in story); *general response 2* (students also indicate whether or not they are enjoying story); *retelling of events* (students recall parts and sequence events); *making connections* (students relate to story by stating personal experiences); *making meaningful connections* (students not only relate personal experiences but add how they would have reacted in similar situation); *judgemental* (students express personal thoughts and feelings about story); and *critical* (students express reactions to story as being worthwhile or not). Students who get stuck in one response type need intervention which is addressed through individual reading conferences. The third observation record is a teacher evaluation form that mirrors the

student's self-evaluation report. Both are filled in at the same time and any notable discrepancies are later addressed during individual reading conferences.

The message is clearly conveyed that it is just not enough to establish a silent reading time. Students must be monitored constantly so that checks can be made on the extent of their progress. By following such a systematic method of tracking students' progress, it then becomes possible for their literacy needs to be adequately addressed.

Edge-Partington (1997), a teacher-librarian at an elementary school in Vancouver, presents information on combining prose and poetry at the grade 4/5 level. In efforts to narrow the gap between these two forms of literature, a suggested link is to make use of the novel *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1985) and the poetry collection entitled *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More* (Worth, 1986). To provide some background information about the authors, Babbitt writes about the Tuck family who are caught in an agonizing situation after drinking water from a spring that has given them eternal life; and Worth portrays the many beautiful images of nature in poetic verse. Activities may be done as follows:

- **Exploring prose**

After reading the book *Tuck Everlasting*, students work in pairs as they extract interesting words or sentences from an assigned passage. These words are then presented to the whole class from which students can take and put in their own word banks. A passage from the book is then read aloud by the teacher as the students close their eyes and listen. This is followed with each student doing an individual interpretation of the language heard using oil pastels.

- **Exploring poetry**

Having already been introduced to poetry, students familiarize themselves with Worth's collection of poems by reading several selections aloud to chosen partners. Each student decides what poem he or she liked best then shares this decision with the rest of the class. As before, interesting words or phrases are noted and added to word banks. To promote inspiration for writing poetry, students are then surrounded with large, beautifully-illustrated nature prints. After choosing one, each student makes an effort to write a free-verse poem about whatever picture is selected. Individual poems are then shared according to the students' preferences (e.g., partners, small groups) for others to guess what picture is being described.

- **Comparing/contrasting prose and poetry**

Students' ideas about prose and poetry are recorded on a chart. With this information, diagrams are then constructed by the teacher to illustrate similarities and differences. To reinforce these points, students work in pairs as they attempt to rework brief passages from the novel into free-verse poems. If so desired, these may be shared with classmates.

By taking such an approach whereby prose and poetry are interspersed, students should come to understand that poetry, like prose, is just another means of communicating thoughts and feelings. With this kind of awakening, it is hoped that students will develop a positive attitude towards poetry whereby they begin to feel comfortable and confident with the words of poets.

### **Australia**

Leaker (1997), a teacher of multi-age elementary students at a school in South Australia, describes how she lays the groundwork of her literature program at the beginning of the academic year. Routines are established for regular reading activities across the curriculum along with

recording and assessment methods in order to identify students needing assistance so that procedures can be put in place for identifying this need. Following is an outline of some of the activities that take place over the first 3 weeks.

- **Reading organization**

So that an initial recording system is in place, students have a home book which is one that is divided into various subject areas. Samples of work completed in each area are kept in this book. Students take this book home to share with parents, ensuring that they are kept informed of their own child's progress. Another section of this book is for the students to record pertinent information about the book they are presently reading (e.g., name of book and author, dates begun and completed).

- **Silent reading**

On the first day, students are brought to the library to choose their own books to read. Through the choices they make, it is possible to observe where their interests lie. At this time, some behavioral expectations for silent reading time are pointed out to the students. This event carries over into a silent reading time that is scheduled after recess each day. The students are also expected to read each night for 20 minutes.

- **Reading activities**

After silent reading each day, 20 to 30 minutes is set aside to do follow-up activities on whatever book is being or has been read. The students are provided with a list of activities to choose from, having observed the teacher model each activity over the first 3 weeks (e.g., character portrait, plot profile, time line).

- **Reading aloud to students**

Time is set aside each day after lunch to read aloud to the students. Selections are carefully made to ensure a balance of genres and authors throughout the year.

- **Listening to students read aloud**

During the first week, each student reads aloud to the teacher so that a check can be made of his or her skill level. Major points are recorded as part of an anecdotal record that is put in the student's home book. Any students needing extra support, either from the classroom teacher or a resource teacher, are provided with the help they need at least 4 times a week. Anecdotal records continue to be written on a regular basis so that the students and parents receive continual feedback.

- **Codebreaking activities**

A letter/sound book is kept by each student to help in the development of word attack skills. The different sounds that a particular letter can make is made note of as students draw upon words that they encounter in print from day to day.

- **Reading attitudes**

At the beginning of the academic year, a brief writing activity is designed in order to find out students' attitudes towards books. The information gained provides useful insights about their reading likes and dislikes, such as what their favorite authors are, if they like others to read to them, what they enjoy most about reading, and so on.

Not only has this teacher planned her literature program in a way that will enable various aspects of reading to be addressed in a balanced manner, opportunities are also provided to respond to students' needs and interests as they arise.

Williamson (1997), a teacher of sixth-grade students at a school in Adelaide, Australia,

describes how she recently dealt with the problem of unmotivated readers in an all-boys class. Realizing that there is often little time beyond school to read books due to pressures from other commitments, Williamson began by providing more in-school time for reading to happen.

One form this took was reading aloud to her students 'dead certainty' books, those that were sure to grab their attention. As an example, the book entitled *Hatcher* (Paulsen, 1991) was chosen because it interestingly portrays the survival experiences of a 13-year old boy named Brian in the Canadian wilderness. While travelling on a bush plane to meet his father, the pilot dies from a heart attack leaving Brian to somehow land the plane in a lake and swim to shore. A hatchet his mother had given him as a parting gift is the means to Brian's survival as he builds a shelter among other things. After living in the wilderness for a few months, Brian is finally rescued when he is spotted from the air by a mapping plane.

In addition to the class novel, the students were guided by Williamson and the librarian in choosing good books to read on their own. To sustain their interest, the students were urged not to select books that were too long or too difficult. A time was set aside each week to talk about the books they were reading. And after each book was finished, the students reflected on their thoughts and feelings in writing through the use of journals. As the school year went on, participation and enthusiasm grew.

Interested in having the students respond from a more critical and creative perspective, Williamson drew up a list of possible activities for students to alternate between as follows.

### **1. Critical reading responses**

- Identify who is the main character. Explain aspects of the story that would have been different if this character had been of the opposite sex.

- Write a profile of the author based on research of his or her life. Comment on how the content of the story may have been influenced by the author's background.
- Imagine that all of the characters are in a life-threatening situation where only one can be saved. Decide who you would save and justify your decision.
- Construct a flow chart plotting important events. Change one event to show how a difference outcome could occur.
- Write a brief description of each character in the story. Classify each according to type (e.g., cowardly or courageous; stupid or clever) and explain why for each classification.
- If a movie version of the story is available, compare and contrast the story in book and in media form.

## **2. Creative reading responses**

- Imagine yourself as the main character in the story. Write a diary entry that might have been written after a key event in the story.
- Write a newspaper article about one of the main events in the story. Points to include: heading, illustration with caption, Who? What? When? Where?
- Redesign the cover of your book. Explain why yours is just as or more attractive as the original one.
- Write a poem about the book reflecting your thoughts and feelings on one of the themes.
- Identify an important episode in the story and retell it from another participating character's point of view.
- Write another chapter to the ending of the book. Tell what further happens to the characters and story line.

- Imagine you are a film maker who wants to do a screen version of the book. Identify where you would choose to do the film and what forms of music would be used.
- Identify your favorite episode in the story and dramatize it by creating a script.
- Construct a story map of the book illustrating key information (e.g., characters, plot, setting).

At the end of the school year, Williamson reports that she was satisfied with the overall outcomes in her literature program. All students had read a variety of interesting books and all began to consider reading with a more positive attitude. Parent response was favorable, confirming that several boys had taken an interest in reading for the first time. As a result, Williamson has formed these two conclusions: to produce more committed readers, there must be more time provided for reading; and to produce more reflective responses, there must be more time provided for reflection.

► With reference to the preceding descriptions of classroom/school programs, the range of activities reflects how authentic literature can be used in challenging and purposeful ways (e.g., to increase vocabulary acquisition, literary understanding, independent reading, and motivation to read). Related to the philosophy of whole language which stresses the interrelationships that exist among the four language modes (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), quality literature has a wealth of potential to bring together these processes. To elaborate on one of these interrelationships, Popp (1996) writes that listening and speaking interrelate as students interact with each other to converse, debate, discuss, persuade, and express themselves. Integrated language learning is promoted when teachers provide many opportunities throughout the day for all class members to listen and speak to each other in pairs, small groups, and whole-class situations. The particulars of how listening and speaking relate to reading is presented by Farris (1993), who describes how these language processes



are similar to and facilitate each other. The process of listening is somewhat similar to that of reading in that critical thinking plays a major role in the development of both language modes. To process auditory information reflectively requires the ability to make inferences and cause-effect comparisons as well as form judgements of the message and speaker. Speaking facilitates reading, particularly in the area of vocabulary acquisition, as students add new words to their speaking repertoires and simultaneously to their reading vocabularies. Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide opportunities for students to engage in various forms of listening and speaking experiences in order to help them to enlarge their vocabularies and develop their thinking skills which aid in comprehension of the spoken and written word.

#### SUMMARY

To summarize the use of literature with students at the elementary level, a brief overview follows of the main teaching and learning approaches covered in this section of the paper - *reading aloud, response journals, literature discussions, vocabulary development, and content learning*. Included is information on the general importance of each as well as selected points to show the relationship of each to the reading process in terms of vocabulary and/or comprehension development. Be advised that many of the points made reflect the views of others as already noted and are repeated in verbatim form as previously stated.

One of the most important activities for building the knowledge and skills needed for vocabulary and comprehension development is reading aloud to students. A read-aloud program that is well-conceived and well-constructed is a very efficient way to convince students books are worth exploring which can influence them to become lifelong readers. So the challenge to teachers is that

as the curriculum gets squeezed by all the demands made upon it, they must not lose sight of the importance of storytime. No longer is it accepted that teachers engage in straight-through storybook readings whereby listeners are relegated to a passive role. It is the verbal interaction with text, peers, and the teacher that helps students to enrich their understandings and develop important reading strategies.

Through literature response journals, students are able to personally engage in text by reflecting on and sharing evoked thoughts and feelings. The content of written responses to literature can be a rich repository of information, allowing teachers to gain insights into how students interact with text. By building on these responses, students and teachers can collaborate with each other in a relaxing format to construct further meaning of a literature selection read. The teacher's response to what is written should focus on the depth of thinking rather than the mechanics of writing. If teachers opt to use questions or prompts to give direction to students' responses, they should be broad and open-ended so that students can develop their own meaning rather than teachers' desired interpretations. It is important to allow students to feel free to deal with their own reactions and then work out through reflection a personal meaning for what they have read. Because young people can be active constructors of meaning, they must be helped to see that a piece of literature does not have a right or wrong interpretation but takes on meaning in light of their personal outlook and experiences.

Literature discussion groups are a forum for students to practice good listening and speaking habits, to think individually and critically, and to work together to uncover new meanings in books that have been read. Students engage in higher-order thinking rather than mere recall, using information from the literature selection to support their views. Models of reasoning and articulated

views show other students how books can be examined from a variety of perspectives. Teachers can support students in developing discussion skills by coaching at the boundaries or intervening to offer various strategies for interpreting the literature text. An important rule for teachers to follow throughout these discussions is to ask questions that have a possibility of answers in order to encourage multiple and diverse interpretations. Although the goal should be to have a lot of student talk and to gradually turn over the direction of the discussion to students, some emphasis should be placed on the role of the teacher as being the "knowledgeable other". The reason is that there do arise appropriate times when the teacher can put forth his or her knowledge to clarify or expand understandings or move talk towards a deeper level of thought. In order to become more adept at coaching students, teachers should get involved in professional development which may take the form of attending conferences or reading teacher resource books and research journals.

The goal of vocabulary instruction should be to provide readers with rich word experiences within a framework of contextual reading, discussion, and response. To give readers a solid understanding of vocabulary, they must be active in determining a word's meanings and there must be varied use of the word in multiple contexts. Although wide reading of literature provides students with many rich contexts for word learning, there is still a place for vocabulary instruction. It is known that contextual reading does not automatically result in word learning, nor does context always provide clear clues to word meaning. Through instructional interventions that draw attention to vocabulary, a deeper processing of words is possible to achieve which can improve comprehension. However, immersing students in the rich language of books either read to them or read by them creates one of the best foundations for vocabulary growth.

Units of study built around topics or themes lend themselves well to the use of authentic literature.

In comparison to textbooks, tradebooks have a number of features from which students can benefit. One feature is that tradebooks allow for a broader range of reading levels, thereby accomodating students of varied abilities. A second feature is that tradebooks often have more attractive formats, illustrations, and writing styles which can increase the motivation of students to read. A third feature is that tradebooks allow for greater exploration of subjects in depth by reading many books on the same topic which can expand such comprehension skills as synthesizing information and comparing/contrasting different viewpoints. A fourth feature is that students can read information that is up-to-date and accurate as possible. One particular caution is that teachers should encourage students to react to the reading selection before using it as a source of information. If a teacher asks questions on the factual aspects of reading, then the likely result is that students will read mainly for content purposes rather than from a stance of experiencing, thinking, and feeling as they read.

It is important that teachers plan their literature programs in a way that will enable various aspects of reading to be addressed in a balanced manner. Opportunities should also be provided to respond to students' needs and interests as they arise in order to maximize their growth in reading.

## REFERENCES

- Allen, D. and Piersma, M.. (1995). *Developing thematic units: Process and product*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.
- Almasi, J. and Gambrell, L. (1994). Sociocognitive conflict in peer-led and teacher-led discussions of literature (Research Report No. 12). Athens, GA: National Reading Research Center..
- Almasi, J. (1995). The nature of fourth graders' sociocognitive peer-led and teacher-led discussions of literature. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, (3), 314-351.
- Almasi, J., McKeown, M., and Beck, I. (1996). The nature of engaged reading in classroom discussions of literature. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 28, (1), 107-146.
- Almasi, J. and Gambrell, L. (1997). Conflict during classroom discussion can be a good thing. In J. Paratore and R. McCormack (Eds.), *Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research* ( pp. 130-155). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Alvermann, D. (1991). The discussion web: A graphic aid for learning across the curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, (2), 92-99.
- Anderson, R., Hiebert, E., Scott, J., and Wilkinson, J. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Armbruster, B. (1992). Science and reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 46, (4), 346-353.
- Barchers, S. (1994). *Teaching language arts: An integrated approach*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co.
- Barrentine, S. (1996). Engaging with reading through interactive read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher*, 50, (1), 36-43.
- Blachowicz, C. (1985). Vocabulary development and reading: From research to instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 38, (9), 876-881.
- Blachowicz, C. and Lee, J. (1991). Vocabulary development in the whole literacy classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, (3), 188-195.
- Booth, D. (1996). *Literacy techniques for building successful readers and writers*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.
- Brett, A., Rothlein, L., and Hurley, M. (1996). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories and explanations of target words. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96, (4), 415-422.

- Brewster, M. (1988). Ten ways to revive tired learning logs. *English Journal*, 77, (2), 57-60.
- Brozo, W. and Simpson, M. (1995). *Readers, teachers, learners: Expanding literacy in secondary schools*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Butzow, C. and Butzow, J. (1990). Science through children's literature: An integrated approach *Science Activities*, 27, (3), 29-38.
- Cooper, J. (1993). *Literacy: Helping children construct meaning*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Cox, C. and Zarillo, J. (1993). *Teaching reading with children's literature*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cunningham, P., Moore, S., Cunningham, J., and Moore, D. (1995). *Reading and writing in elementary classrooms: Strategies and observations*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Danielson, K. (1992). Literature groups and literature logs: Responding to literature in a community of readers. *Reading Horizons*, 32, (5), 373-382.
- Danielson, K. and LaBonty, J. (1994). *Integrating reading and writing through children's literature*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Edge-Partington, C. (1997). Prose and poetry: Bridging the gap. *The Bookmark*, 38, (4), 52-57.
- Edwards, J. and Malicky, G. (1996). *Constructing meaning: Integrating elementary language arts*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Eeds, M. and Peterson, R. (1991). Teacher as curator: Learning to talk about literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, (2), 118-127.
- Eeds, M. and Peterson, R. (1997). Literature studies revisited: Some thoughts on talking with children about books. *The New Advocate*, 10, (1), 49-59.
- Eeds, M. and Wells, D. (1989). Grand conversations: An exploration of meaning construction in literature study groups. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 23, (1), 4-29.
- Farris, P. (1993). *Language Arts: A process approach*. Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark Publishers.
- Fisher, C. and Terry, C. (1990). *Children's language and the language arts: A literature-based approach*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Froelich, E. (1995). Approach to reading instruction: Implementing and evaluating an independent reading program. *Query*, 24, (3), 30-40.
- Fulps, J. and Young, T. (1991). The what, why, when, and how of reading response journals. *Reading Horizons*, 32, (2), 109-116.
- Galda, L., Cullinan, B., and Strickland, D. (1993). *Language and the child*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Gilles, C., Dickinson, J., McBride, C., and Vandover, M. (1994). Discussing our questions and questioning our discussions: Growing into literature study. *Language Arts*, 71, (4), 499-508.
- Gunning, T. (1996). *Creating reading instruction for all children*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hancock, M. (1993). Exploring and extending personal response through literature journals. *The Reading Teacher*, 46, (6), 466-474.
- Hansen, J. (1987). *When writers read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Herman, P., Anderson, R., Pearson, P., and Nagy, W. (1987). Incidental acquisitions of word meanings from expositions with varied text features. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 22, 263-284.
- Herman, P. and Dole, J. (1989). Theory and practice in vocabulary learning and instruction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 89, 43-54.
- Hickman, J. (1981). A new perspective on response to literature. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 15, (4), 343-354.
- Hoffman, J., Roser, N., and Battle, J. (1993). Reading aloud in classrooms: From the modal toward a "model". *The Reading Teacher*, 46, (6), 496-503.
- Huck, C., Hepler, S. and Hickman, J. (1993). *Children's literature in the elementary school* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Invernizzi, M., Abouzeid, M., and Bloodgood, J. (1997). Integrated word study: Spelling, grammar, and meaning in the language arts classroom. *Language Arts*, 74, (3), 185-192.
- Jenkins, J., Stein, M., and Wysocki, K. (1984). Learning vocabulary through reading. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21, (4), 767-787.

- Johnson, C. (1990). Webbing your thoughts. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (9), 699-701.
- Keefe, C. (1996). Literature circles: Reducing reading stress. *Reading*, 30, (3), 29-32.
- Keegan, S. and Shrake, K. (1991). Literature study groups: An alternative to ability grouping. *The Reading Teacher*, 44, (8), 542-547.
- Kelly, P. (1990). Guiding young students' response to literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (7), 464-470.
- Leaker, J. (1997). The first three weeks. *Practically Primary*, 2, (2), 16-19.
- Martinez, M. and Roser, N. (1985). Read it again: The value of repeated readings. *The Reading Teacher*, 38, (8), 782-786.
- Mayer, D. (1995). How we can best use literature in teaching. *Science and Children*, 32, (6), 16-44.
- McCormick-Calkins, L. (1997). Get real about reading. *Instructor*, 106, (8), 37-41.
- McDonald, J. and Czerniak, C. (1994). Developing interdisciplinary units: Strategies and examples. *School Science and Mathematics*, 94, 5-10.
- McGee, L. (1992). Focus on research: Exploring the literature-based reading revolution. *Language Arts*, 69, (7), 529-537.
- McGee, L. and Tompkins, G. (1995). Literature-based reading instruction: What's guiding the instruction? *Language Arts*, 72, (6), 405-414.
- Morris, D. (1989). Editorial comment: Developmental spelling theory revisited. *Reading Psychology*, 10, (2), 3-10.
- Morrow, L. (1988). Young children's responses to one-to-one story readings in school settings. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 23, (1), 89-107.
- Morrow, L. and Smith J. (1990). The effects of group setting on interactive storybook reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 25, (3), 211-231.
- Moss, J. (1984). Focus units in literature: A handbook for elementary school teachers. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Nagy, W. (1988). Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



- Narwot, K. (1996). Making connections with historical fiction. *The Clearing House*, 69, (6), 343-345.
- Pantaleo, S. (1994). Teacher influence on student response to literature. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Pantaleo, S. (1995). What do response journals reveal about children's understandings of the workings of literary text? *Reading Horizons*, 36, (1), 77-93.
- Perfetti, C. (1991). Representations and awareness in the acquisition of reading competence. In L. Rieben and C. Perfetti (Eds.), *Learning to read: Basic research and its implications* (pp. 33-44). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pond, M. and Hock, L. (1992). Linking children's literature and science activities. *Ohio Reading Teacher*, 25, 13-15.
- Popp, M. (1996). Teaching language and literature in elementary classrooms: A resource book for professional development. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Raphael, T., McMahon, S., Goatley, V., Bentley, J., Boyd, R., Pardo, L., and Woodman, D. (1992). Research directions: Literature and discussion in the reading program. *Language Arts*, 69, (1), 54-61.
- Raphael, T. and McMahon, S. (1994). Book club: An alternative framework for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 48, (2), 102-116.
- Reutzel, D. and Cooter, R. (1996). Teaching children to read: From basals to books. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Rothstein, E., Dempsey, J., and Evans, P. (1997). Sea poetry: A grade 5 poetry unit. *The Bookmark*, 38, (4), 48-51.
- Routman, R. (1994). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners*, K-12. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Royce, C. and Wiley, D. (1996). Children's literature and the teaching of science: Possibilities and cautions. *The Clearing House*, 70, (1), 18-20.
- Ruth, L. (1987). Reading children's writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, (8), 756-760.
- Scharer, P. and Detwiler, D. (1992). Changing as teachers: Perils and possibilities of literature-based language arts instruction. *Language Arts*, 69, (3), 186-192.

- Scharer, P. and Peters, D. (1996). An exploration of literature discussions conducted by two teachers moving toward literature-based reading instruction. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 36, (1), 33-50.
- Simpson, M. (1986). A teacher's gift: Oral reading and the reading response journal. *Journal of Reading*, 30, (1), 45-50.
- Smith, J. (1993). Content learning: A third reason for using literature in teaching reading. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 32, (3), 64-71.
- Smith, J., Monson, J., and Dobson, D. (1993). A case study on integrating history and reading instruction through literature. *Social Education*, 56, (7), 370-375.
- Stahl, S. and Fairbanks, M. (1986). The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, (1), 72-110.
- Stahl, S., Richek, M., and Vandeiver, R. (1991). Learning meaning vocabulary through listening: A sixth-grade replication. In J. Zutell and S. McCormick (Eds.), *Learning factors / teacher factors : Issues in literacy research and instruction* (pp. 185-192). Chicago: National Reading Conference.
- Stewig, J. and Nordberg, B. (1995). Exploring language arts in the elementary classroom. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Stice, C., Bertrand, J., and Bertrand, N. (1995). Integrating reading and the other language arts. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Strackbein, D. and Tillman, M. (1987). The joy of journals - with reservations. *Journal of Reading*, 31, (1), 28-31.
- Taylor, B., Frye, B., and Maruyama, G. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27, (2), 351-362.
- Trelease, J. (1989). *The new read-aloud handbook*. New York: Penguin.
- Wells, G. (1990). Creating the conditions to encourage literate thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 47, (6), 13-17.
- Wiencek, J. and O'Flahavan, J. (1994). From teacher-led to peer discussions about literature: Suggestions for making the shift. *Language Arts*, 71, (7), 488-498.
- Williamson, N. (1997). Boys who can read but don't. *Practically Primary*, 2, (2), 20-23.

- Wollman-Bonilla, J. (1989). Reading journals: Invitations to participate in literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, (2), 112-120.
- Worthy, M. and Bloodgood, J. (1993). Enhancing reading instruction through Cinderella tales. *The Reading Teacher*, 46, (4), 290-301.
- Yaden, D. (1988). Understanding stories through repeated read-alouds: How many does it take? *The Reading Teacher*, 41, (6), 556-560.
- Young, T. and Vardell, S. (1993). Weaving Readers' Theatre and nonfiction into the curriculum. *The Reading Teacher*, 46, (5), 396-406.

#### BOOKS CITED

- Babbitt, N. (1985). *Tuck Everlasting*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Beatty, P. (1992). *Who Comes with Cannons?* New York: William Morris.
- Brown, M. (1954). *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper*. New York: Macmillan.
- Cannon, J. (1993). *Stellaluna*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Cole, B. (1988). *Prince Cinders*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Cole, J. (1986). *The Magic School Bus at the Water Works*. New York: Scholastic.
- Cole, J. (1987). *The Magic School Bus Inside the Earth*. New York: Scholastic.
- Cole, J. (1989). *The Magic School Bus Inside the Human Body*. New York: Scholastic.
- Cole, J. (1990). *The Magic School Bus Lost in the Solar System*. New York: Scholastic.
- de Regniers, B. (1976). *Little Sister and the Month Brothers*. New York: Clarion.
- Gardiner, J. (1980). *Stone Fox*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Grahame, K. (1953). *The Reluctant Dragon*. New York: Holiday House.
- Hooks, W. (1987). *Moss Gown*. New York: Clarion.
- Hopkins, L. (1986). *The Sea is Calling Me*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

- Howe, D. and Howe, J. (1979). *Bunnicula*. New York: Avon.
- Huck, C. (1989). *Princess Furball*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Jacobs, J. (1916). *The Cinder Maid*. In Grimm Brothers' version of European Folk and Fairy Tales. New York: Putnam.
- Jukes, M. (1983). *No One is Going to Nashville*. New York: Knopf.
- Karlin, B. (1989). *Cinderella*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co.
- Lang, A. (1892, revised 1978). *Allerleirauh: The Green Fairy Book*. New York: Viking.
- Louie, A. (1982). *Yeh Shen: A Cinderella story from China*. New York: Philomel.
- Masefield, J. (1984). *Sea Fever*. Manchester, GB: Carcanet.
- Minard, R. (1975). *Cap o'Rushes*. In Jacob's version of Womenfolk and Fairy Tales. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Paulsen, G. (1991). *Hatchet*. New York: Pantheon.
- Polacco, P. (1994). *Pink and Say*. New York: Philomel.
- Phumla. (1972). *Naomi and the Magic Fish*. New York: Doubleday.
- San Souci, R. (1989). *The Boy and the Ghost*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Sherman, J. (1990). *Makandu Mahlanu: A Bantu Folk Tale*. Cricket, 17, (6), 5-9.
- Step toe, J. (1987). *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard.
- Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. (1974). New York: Random House.
- Worth, V. (1986). *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Yorinks, A. (1990). *Ugh*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

## USE OF LITERATURE IN JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH GRADES

A variety of information on the use of literature with adolescents is presented in this paper. This information deals with the benefits of using authentic literature to enhance their reading development as well as effective strategies that teachers can use and actual settings where such teaching and learning have been taking place. The topics addressed are as follows: (i) reading aloud; (ii) response journals; (iii) literature discussions; (iv) vocabulary development; (v) content learning; (vi) sample genre units; and (vii) classroom/school programs.

### READING ALOUD

Although there has been a rebirth of interest in reading aloud to young people over the past 15 years due to studies and writings promoting this practice, (Morrow, Rand, Smith, 1995; Trelease, 1989), research by Duchein and Mealey (1993) indicates that read-alouds by teachers begin to decline after the third grade. This is unfortunate because other research by Daisey (1993) shows that read-alouds can promote overall reading development at any age. Recent advocates of read-alouds include Routman (1991) who suggests that this practice should take place daily at all grade levels, including junior and senior high. The learning benefits and motivational power associated with reading fine books aloud have an important place not only with children, but with adolescents as well.

∞ ∞ ∞

Carter and Abrahamson (1991) claim that the literary form of nonfiction is sadly neglected in read-aloud programs for secondary students. To support this claim, they make references to studies (Wood, 1986; Ellis, 1987; Mellon, 1990) that prove as adolescents get older, they have an increased preference for nonfiction rather than fiction books. It follows that in order to respond to student tastes, secondary teachers must include nonfiction in the reading curriculum. The following are some

suggestions from Carter and Abrahamson for incorporating nonfiction in the reading curriculum:

- **Types and titles**

Nonfiction works initially chosen should incorporate some of the comfortable elements of fiction, such as characterization, plot development, and setting. True story narratives popular among secondary students range from eerie tales to unusual adventures to biographical profiles. As one example, Schwartz's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* (1981) portrays an undertaker who changes the physical identities of corpses. A second example is Callahan's *Adrift* (1986) which narrates the experiences of a sailor whose boat capsizes in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean while on a solo voyage from Europe to Antigua. A third example is Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (1987) which delves into the life of this complex man through expository prose written in narrative style.

- **Emotional response**

So that students get caught up in the power of literature by responding to it with emotionalism, nonfiction works should represent "the very stuff of life". As an example, Mandela's *Part of My Life Went with Him* (1984) is a powerful account of one woman's struggles to change an oppressive society over a 25-year period. Whatever emotions are aroused from this book, it never promotes indifference. On the lighter side, young adults may want laughter, wit, or wisdom from books. Bestselling author Fulghum writes several humorous short pieces in *All I Really Wanted to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* (1988). Included in this book are sayings such as "Remember the Dick-and-Jane books in which the first word you learned was *LOOK!*"

- **Enticing excerpts**

Many books lend themselves particularly well to excerpting so that students are enticed to complete the book without hearing it read aloud in its entirety. Otherwise known as "read and tease"

works, one such example is Meltzer's *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust* (1988). Included in this book are several accounts of heroic deeds such as that of a high political official who personally stamped exit visas for over 10,000 Jews trying to escape from France into Portugal.

In conclusion, the message these authors are trying to convey is that it is very important to use reading material that is motivational in trying to develop the reading proficiency of adolescents. It is a well-known fact that adolescents' motivation is a critical factor in their literacy learning. One successful strategy proven to enhance their motivation is that of capitalizing on their interests.

According to deVos (1991), the concept of storytelling should be introduced before telling stories to a group of adolescents for the first time. Because storytelling continues to be regarded as an activity for younger children, often adolescents do not regard listening to stories as an appropriate activity for themselves. Convincing adolescents that listening to stories can be beneficial for them is possible by providing background information on the history of storytelling as the accepted mode of entertaining, informing, and educating the general populace. Also, adolescents should be made aware of the importance and function of storytelling in various cultures today.

In choosing the right story, the first one told to adolescents is of utmost importance. To ensure that the interest of listeners is captured, it is important that the story selected be appropriate for the teller and audience. The teller must have a keen interest in the story in order to tell it successfully. Before telling a story, it should be researched by finding out information about its origin, the culture represented, the characters depicted, and so on. If possible, different versions of the story should be read in order to get a broad-ranging perception that can be transmitted to the audience.

When telling the story, do so in a voice that is natural and sincere. A poorly executed voice will quickly lose an adolescent audience. To enable listeners to experience the story, do not be afraid of silences and pauses within the story. Gestures should be used sparingly so they do not cause distractions. Eye contact with members of the audience is important in order to hold attentiveness. The most important thing to remember when telling stories to adolescents is to expect little response. But do not assume that the story has had little or no effect. Because adolescents are generally hesitant to express themselves in a large group, time must be allowed for individuals to come forward with their views. Allow breathing space between the telling of stories by providing information about the story just told or presenting an introduction to the next one. To prevent loss of concentration, be sure to explain any matters that may cause confusion or misunderstanding.

In the opinion of deVos, it is imperative to remember that it is not necessary to analyze a story after telling it. Most storytellers discourage this practice because too much analysis can kill interest in a story. A variety of genres should be chosen from to include stories that will touch the minds and hearts of young people.

In sharing literature with a class of students in the upper grades, Hart-Hewins and Wells (1992) present information on conducting read-alouds as follows:

- **Making time to read aloud**

A suggested practice is for teachers to read aloud at least twice a day to students. If reading is done first thing in the morning, a positive tone is set for the day. By doing so, the group is brought together to focus, to think, and to share as a community of learners. If reading is done last thing in the afternoon, the day ends on a positive note that strengthens this sense of community. One of the



most important reasons for reading aloud is to create a sense of trust and belonging within the group. In this atmosphere, students are apt to express what they think and feel as well as respect the thoughts and feelings of others.

- **What to read**

A wide variety of literature should be used. If a story is not going well, there should be no hesitation to discontinue its reading and discuss why it was not successful. Non-fiction material is an especially important source of reading in light of the movement towards an integration of language arts and other curriculum areas.

- **Many kinds of writing**

The read-aloud time allows teachers to share many kinds of writing, some that would be too difficult for students to read independently. It is not necessary to explain all unfamiliar words for the content of the story can carry listeners along and students learn to fill in gaps with their own understandings. If a difficult but important word is encountered, efforts may be made to make sure it is understood but there is a better flow generally if the writer's voice is carried on uninterrupted.

- **Poetry and picture books**

Two kinds of read-aloud books that are often overlooked with students as they get older are poetry and picture books. Related to poetry, it is important not to dissect it but to enjoy its rhythm, sounds, and cadences. If too much time is spent looking for "hidden meanings", the magic may be spoiled. By introducing students to the varied styles and forms of poetry, it is hoped that they will begin to read and write poetry for themselves. Related to picture books, there are many to choose from with layers of meaning in both words and pictures. Books like this can not only stimulate lively discussion and imaginative responses, but also develop skills in reflective and critical thinking. One

advantage of a picture book is that it resembles a novel because it has structure, form, plot, character, and setting, yet it can be read in one sitting. Furthermore, a book with a short text and visual stimuli can be an invaluable resource for students who are still struggling to read independently. Both poetry and picture books can be powerful vehicles for encouraging students with text in less time than it takes to work with longer forms of literature.

- **Reading for enjoyment**

It is important that reading aloud be done with a sense of enjoyment. The reader's voice must be expressive and communicate a sense of why this literature piece is worth reading because one of the most important reasons for reading is the sharing of enjoyment. To model a joy of reading is to help students become readers and instill in them a love of books.

- **Shared responses**

The read-aloud time is a catalyst for thinking in that it provides ideas for the class to discuss. If students work together to explore a common text, they become familiar with ways of thinking, talking, and writing about books which they can apply to individual or small group work in the future. Through time spent working as a whole class whereby there are demonstrations of response, students are provided with a range of responses that they can use to best suit the understandings they have found in a book.

It is the opinion of these authors that as teachers explore literature with students as they grow beyond childhood to adolescence, one goal should be to convince them that book reading is a good way to spend their time. During these vital years, teachers should make every effort to keep alive what enthusiasm students have for books. If students lose interest in books at this stage of their lives, it is possible to lose them forever to the pleasurable world of literature.

Richardson and Smith (1997), both junior high school teachers, describe a particular nonfiction book that can be used as a superb read-aloud and serve as an excellent launch into the subject areas of language arts and science. The book is entitled *Lift Off! An Astronaut's Dream* (Mullane, 1995) and presents an account of a U.S. space shuttle launch and its mission. In addition to describing the mission and his role, Mullane provides autobiographical information about his determination to become an astronaut. This mixture of journalism, fact, and autobiography works to keep listeners enthralled. To provide an example, one interesting tidbit of information is that astronauts must wear diapers - during launch, during reentry, and during a space walk. This is information sure to pique students' interests!

Reading and writing activities that can evolve from this read-aloud are numerous. Students may be spurred on to read about the lives of other famous people who strived and succeeded in making a dream come true. Because the book lends itself well to response activities, this may take the form of discussions or writing projects. A discussion could ensue about the most significant message in this book which is how to turn a personal dream into reality through determination and hard work. Using this semi-autobiographical account as a starting point, students could write about themselves and their life ambitions. How the follow-up to this great book can translate into meaningful literacy experiences is only limited by the scope of one's imagination.

Therefore when choosing books to read aloud to students, especially those in the upper grades, it is important that the material chosen not only be of relevance and interest but also be adaptable to activities that can foster literacy skills.

## RESPONSE JOURNALS

Although there is a wealth of information on the use of response journals with students, there is little documented on how this form of responding to what is read might contribute to their reading development. Information follows on the relationship between journals and reading in two junior high settings. Also presented is information on strategies that teachers and students can use to elicit responses that reflect in-depth interaction with a book.

∞ ∞ ∞

In efforts to understand how response journals relate to reading development, Wells (1993) documents how she took a first step towards this as a teacher of eighth-grade students. Leaning on past research that provides insights about how journals might be analyzed (Dekker, 1991; Graves, 1989), Wells describes how she first studied the responses in her students' journals then went through the process of identifying categories of response. She determined that the overall responses of her students fell into five general categories. A brief description of each follows:

- **Ongoing business.** Students make reference to the context in which they are dealing with books. This may include the context of mini-lessons, class requirements, individual goals, reading plans, and making/seeking recommendations.
- **Summaries.** Students supply details of stories through retelling or abstracts.
- **Metacognitive processes.** Students indicate awareness of their reading process by making self-assessment statements, expressing confusion, explaining strategies, and forming predictions.
- **Connections.** Students identify with what they read by making personal connections with characters and situations.
- **Evaluation of text and author.** Students evaluate an author's work by commenting on style,

pacing, point of view, tone, subject matter, leads/endings, plausibility, and comparative aspects.

The process of reading response journals and categorizing responses allowed Wells to form the following hypotheses about how reading development takes place:

1. Students' comments reflect what is going on in the classroom in the form of instruction and discussions. As examples, there may be reference to mini-lessons that focus on literary elements or discussions that revolve around personal experiences similar to what was read. Therefore, journal writing gives students a place to practice what is going on in the class.

2. Students often write in response to comments or questions posed by the teacher, and in doing so they expand upon their original thoughts. Direct and personal teaching can be facilitated because comments or questions are tailored to individual students.

3. Students begin to ask questions modelled after those posed by the teacher. When students ask questions, they reverse the usual teacher-as-questioner role that often exists in many classrooms and consequently expand their ways of thinking.

4. Students are able to express their uniqueness by focusing on different areas. As examples, some students may use journal writing as a means for explaining how personal connections are made with characters or situations while other students may like to retell stories or write plot abstracts. So individual readers find different ways to make journals meet their individual needs which is an important factor in reading development as well as learning in general.

In writing about the use of response journals, Routman (1994) presents information that can be applied also to students at the junior and senior high levels. She states that there is no one right or best way to use the literature response journal. Her words of advice are to vary the way that the

journal is used and adopt what works well. To help students get started, teachers need to show students how to respond by talking aloud and responding for them to observe. Rarely is one demonstration sufficient. What has proven to work well is choosing one question or format for a particular day's response. With a probing, comprehensive approach, important points are apt to surface.

Routman presents strategies for use with literature response journals as follows:

- **Respond to an open-ended question**

Bearing in mind that a limited question will elicit a limited response, the one chosen by the teacher or student should reflect an overall idea or emotion. By asking questions that go beyond the literal level, students are encouraged to focus on a higher level of thinking. Some examples of questions that work well are:

What do you consider to be most important about what you just read?

What do you think the author is trying to tell readers?

What do you hope to find out as you continue reading?

- **Reflect on your personal reactions while reading**

Based on varied life experiences and points of view, a piece of literature affects each individual differently. Written responses may be written down during or after reading. Some suggested prompts for personal responses are:

Did you wonder about anything as you read?

Were you surprised by anything you read?

Was there anything in your reading you did not understand?

- **Choose several unknown vocabulary words**

When encouraging students to highlight vocabulary, use discretion based on their needs and ages. This procedure needs to be modelled by the teacher because students often have trouble making such choices. A typical exercise is to have students choose a small number of words whose meaning they would like to know. For each word, they note exactly where in the story it is found, its context, and what its meaning may be. For any discussion that follows, this preliminary activity with words can lead up to an interesting discussion. Some prompts to help in the selection of words are:

What words does the author use to portray a character's personality?

What words present a vivid picture of the setting?

What words in particular appealed to you?

- **Illustrate a part of the text**

It is important to allow time for artistic expression as another means of response. Not only does this allow for a welcome change, it provides an opportunity for students who are not proficient in reading and writing to take part more. This is considered an excellent activity because it causes students to go back to the text and pay attention to what they read in a selective, critical manner.

Some prompts to aid this type of response are:

Draw a particular character as described by the author.

Create a different design for the cover of the book.

Choose a favourite part of the story and illustrate.

- **Examine the author's style and motives**

Some examples of questions that may be posed to encourage students to think about the author's craft are:

Why do you think the author included certain minor characters?

How does the author use humour in a particular situation?

What do you think of the format used by the author?

- **Freewrite**

Encouraging students to write with freedom of expression provides a format for thoughts and feelings to emerge. Having the freedom of expression provides an opportunity for everyone's voice to be heard.

- **Imagine another point of view**

Some examples of prompts that may be used to encourage students to adopt another point of view are;

What would you do if you were the main character?

Write a diary entry from the viewpoint of a particular character.

Write a letter to the author expressing a certain point of view.

- **Make up one or more questions for discussion**

Students are capable of formulating high-level, open-ended questions, especially if the teacher has done lots of modelling. One way to encourage this is to have students come to literature discussions with questions already noted in their response journals. Following discussion, group members can focus on what questions worked well and why. As an example, a question that would not lend itself well to discussion would be of the factual type because it has only one right answer.

- **Respond to a final question when the book is completed.**

Having students draw their own conclusions after a book has been read is very meaningful in terms of learning because it encourages them to produce responses that are thoughtful and insightful. Although it is possible that the same question will elicit different responses from different



students, all responses are of importance if they have helped individuals to appreciate and understand the text more. Perhaps the greatest value of the response journal is that the student comes to realize that what he or she has to say is considered valid and important.

According to Routman, an important part of response is guiding students to construct their own questions. A point to remember is to formulate questions that do not have a right answer but have a possibility of answers. Although an important question goes beyond the text, it should also be able to bring the reader back to it. In order to become truly literate, students need to be asking questions that cause them to think about what they read - before, during, and after reading.

Leaning on research by Beach and Marshall (1991), it is reported by Anson and Beach (1995) that a number of different strategies may be used by students in their literature response journals: (1) engaging (range of subjective reactions); (2) retelling/recounting (summary of key text); (3) inferring/explaining (significance of actions or events); (4) connecting (personal experiences or related texts); (5) constructing cultural worlds ( norms representing cultural attitudes); (6) interpreting (larger meaning of issues); and (7) judging (actions or quality of text). Following is a sampling of questions that can be used as prompts to elicit these different response strategies:

- **Engagement**

- . What are your reactions to the text?
- . Did you identify with any of the characters?

- **Recalling/recounting**

- . What are the characters' traits?
- . What is the setting of the text?

- **Inferring/explaining**

- . What are some reasons for the characters' beliefs?
- . What are some reasons for the characters' plans?

- **Connecting**

- . What personal experiences does this text remind you of?
- . How are these experiences related to the text?

- **Constructing cultural worlds**

- . What are the norms of the cultural world (e.g., family, community, race) in the text?
- . What are the characters' relationships to these norms?

- **Interpretation**

- . What meanings do the characters' actions represent?
- . What ideas are being addressed in the text?

- **Judgement**

- . How would you assess the characters?
- . How would you evaluate the quality of the text?

As stated by the authors, journal writing has the power to engage critical reflection and provide students with many ways to examine information presented in text. The age-old notion of acquiring knowledge by accumulating and regurgitating information is being replaced by a new mode of thought and practice in the classroom. To truly know something means synthesizing and integrating it into existing knowledge, and then examining it and bringing it to a level of critical awareness. Through this process, students construct their own knowledge. One way to achieve this goal is by responding to text in journals.

As a teacher of seventh- and eighth-grade students, Berger (1996) describes how a particular approach to writing journal responses caused her students to experience a deeper involvement with literature which led to their increased understanding and enjoyment. In an attempt to move students away from the habit of summarizing when responding in their journals, Berger devised a formula for students to follow as a guide. This formula revolved around 4 questions: What do you notice? What do you question? What do you feel? What do you relate to? These questions are supported by research findings that show how important it is to *notice, question, feel, and relate*. When readers notice, attention may be paid to story conventions (e.g., title, beginning, ending), the significance of details, emphasis on certain aspects, and so on. Attending in this way can be very important to understanding a literary work (Beach, 1993). When readers question, they may find explanations for uncertainties or confirm speculations. By asking questions as they read, they are engaging in self-monitoring of their understanding which leads to independent comprehension (Hammond, 1983). When readers feel, they allow their feelings to play a prominent part which is likely to involve them deeply in a literary work. There is value in doing so because engaging in literature like this can lead to improved understanding (Beach, 1993). And when readers relate, they make connections of meaning to a literary work that is based on facets of their own lives. Each reader brings to his or her reading experiences a different personal background that influences how meaning is interpreted (Bonnycastle, 1991).

Following is a set of guidelines, as quoted from Berger's article, which illustrates its use to help students vary and enrich their responses:

**What do you notice?**

Examples: Do you notice any changes in the personality of your protagonist or antagonist? Do you notice any emphasis on an object or minor character that might later be important? Do you notice any repeating patterns in the book? Do you notice the significance of the title in the chapter you are reading? Is there anything unusual about the book's beginning or ending?

**What do you question?**

Examples: Do you question any of the decisions that a character has made? Do you wonder what a certain passage in the book might mean? Do you question whether the author realistically presented a certain part of your book? Do you question if something that happened in the author's life might have influenced the writing of this novel?

**What do you feel?**

Examples: Does any part of this book make you feel scared, annoyed, sad, frustrated, happy, or horrified? Which part and why? Do you feel differently about a character or situation in the novel now than you felt before? Why have your feelings changed? Do you want to read another novel by this author? Why or why not?

**What do you relate to?**

Examples: Does anything in this book remind you of something from your own experience, or a movie, a TV program, a song, or another book you have read? Talk about that relationship.

Based on her students' successful experiences with this guideline, Berger writes that the responses of all can be enriched. Because the questions are general enough for everyone to employ, these guidelines have the potential to work well for the most advanced to the least competent reader in a class.

## LITERATURE DISCUSSIONS

There is much value in organizing small groups of students to discuss a literature selection common to members of a group. There are a number of reasons for this. One reason is that this approach enhances the motivation of students by allowing some choice in what they read, bearing in

mind that this freedom is within parameters set by the teacher who preselects the range from which they may choose. A second reason is that the use of literature within a group context is a valuable support for many reluctant readers and can provide an incentive to finish reading assignments, especially if the group sets these limits. A third reason is that small groups are less threatening for many students who hesitate to express themselves in front of a class but are more willing to do so with less of an audience. A fourth reason is that the nature of small groups allows the teacher and students to engage in more personal discussions which helps to build a bond of closeness among each other not possible through reading books alone or as an entire class.

∞ ∞ ∞

To provide further information on conducting literature discussions, salient points are taken from the writing of Routman (1994) and presented under the following guidelines:

- **Grouping**

As new books are discussed, it is recommended that group membership change on order to promote maximum and varied peer interaction. Allowing students to choose the group in which they would like to participate may be done on the basis of book preferences. The teacher may give a short talk on individual books followed by students signing up for their first, second, and third choices.

- **Seating arrangement**

The seating place of the teacher has a dramatic effect on discussion. Having the teacher seated away from the center of the group sends a message to students that there exists a democratic community of readers and thinkers rather than an autocracy where one is the dominant leader. With this arrangement, the teacher sits among students as a contributing member of the group willing to be an equal voice in the conversation.

- **Using the books**

Not only does each student need to have a personal copy of the book, so does the teacher. Using it as a teacher's edition, the book becomes a guide whereby the teacher makes notes about concepts to be learned or points to be discussed.

- **Establishing procedures for independent work time**

So that the discussion group can function without interruption and with the teacher's total involvement, it is important to establish expectations for students not in the group. This may be done by placing responsibility on students to formulate a set of rules. Although this may be time-consuming initially, the results are worthwhile. Students are apt to take rules more seriously if they have had input. Once a set of rules is agreed upon to everyone's satisfaction, they are posted to serve as reminders. The final write-up should consist of rules that are stated briefly and positively.

- **Time allowance for discussion**

Usually everything important that needs to be discussed comes out in twenty minutes or so. So it is possible to meet with three groups in an hour. The norm is for teachers to try to meet with groups daily or three days a week. Depending on the length of the book, a discussion group can last anywhere from a day to several weeks.

- **Students not in group**

Typical activities for students not involved in a discussion are reading, responding in their journals, and working on book-related activities individually or with others (e.g., letter to author, additional chapter). The usual span of time for independent activities is thirty to forty-five minutes.

- **Allowing time in class to read book**

Time for silent reading must be valued. Students who cannot read the text easily should be

paired with a better reader or provided with a tape to follow along. Even if a student cannot read all the words, what needs to be emphasized is the importance of being given the opportunity to take part in discussion. Rather than read a whole book that may take considerable time to finish, it is advisable to assign small chunks at a time to be read. With discussion taking place while students are reading, the focus of comprehension tends to be as it is occurring or just occurred.

- **Being prepared**

A very effective management technique is to send students back to their seats if they have not completed the reading and journal assignments. Students do not like to be left out of a group if they are missing discussion that is lively and interesting. After missing participation a few times, it is rare for a student not to take responsibility for being prepared.

- **Setting rules for discussion**

To ease students into discussion language, teachers may post phrases on a chart for easy viewing (e.g., I'd like to add ..., I agree/disagree because ..., I don't understand what you mean ...). As in normal conversation, students are not expected to raise their hands but to make their points by allowing the previous speaker to finish and then intervening with their comments.

- **Using the journal in discussion**

Students have their journals open and make reference to them to confirm or disprove when someone else is commenting. Any question posed in a student's journal may serve as a catalyst for discussion.

- **Reading orally**

Students or teachers may read orally from a section to back up a point or highlight the author's use of language. A section may be reread orally if it is obvious that comprehension has not

occurred.

- **Teachers making their points with statements**

Without being chief director by asking questions that imply a particular answer is being sought, teachers can still bring out important points by speaking conversationally. In this way, the teacher offers what he or she thinks by making clarifying statements or redirecting discussion. Such modelling will eventually pay off so that students can lead a discussion in a similar manner when the teacher is not present.

- **Allowing for periods of silence**

As there may be wait time with the silence hanging heavy, teachers should refrain from jumping in with their comments. Instead, teachers should allow for silences up to ten seconds after which they may say something like, "This is your discussion so carry on." With this approach, students will get the message eventually that they bear responsibility for the course of discussion.

As stated by Routman, genuine literature discussions do not just happen. Ample time is needed for both teachers and students to adjust to a more democratic discussion format. Moving from leading the discussion to a less central role can be a big adjustment for teachers who have been entrenched for years closely following publishers' manuals. Students who are not accustomed to in-depth interaction with a book also need lots of time and modelling before they feel comfortable expressing their views. Through reflective questioning and responding, students are encouraged to reach the highest levels of critical thinking and evaluation in their interactions with books and other students.

Simpson (1995) describes how a literature discussion program used initially in an elementary



classroom was translated successfully to a high school classroom. To start the program, the teacher selects several novels which are believed to be appealing to the class yet will offer variety and challenge. Some important considerations for a teacher are to offer texts that deal with issues students care about as well as portray different genres to which they should be exposed. Before introducing these novels, it is necessary that the teacher read each one so that the students can be informed about the content before making choices. Each student can be asked to nominate his or her top choices and then groups consisting of 5 to 6 members can be formed around what was chosen. The aim is to complete four books over the course of the school year, making allowances for group members to change with the next choice of text. The general plan is for group members to meet once a week for approximately 45 minutes to discuss what has been read, and to determine the next week's reading assignment.

Once the groups are established, the teacher presents guidelines on how students should conduct themselves and invites them to come up with their own rules for appropriate behaviour. During discussions, the teacher takes a back seat role and only intervenes if it is felt that the group has missed an important point or is straying from the issues. Each group meets at different times throughout the week so that while one group is engaged in discussion with or without the teacher, the rest of the class is reading and/or writing responses. To aid in the weekly discussions, students are encouraged to jot their thoughts while reading on to sticky notes and attach these to relevant pages in the book. It is important that students be assured these notes are not to be used for evaluation but serve only to remind them of what they were thinking as they read which they can share later with group members. Other student activities include writing two forms of response. First is the weekly submission of a one-page length written response covering the book section dealt with

that week. The other is a final response to the book, reflecting on it as a whole.

Benefits of this literature discussion program reach both the teacher and students. Through observations of group discussions and examinations of written responses, the teacher gains insights into students' comprehension and literacy behaviours. The teacher also discovers more about individuals' strengths and weaknesses which can be used to promote their language development in a way that is not possible when everyone reads a different novel or the whole class reads the same novel. Students are apt to become more skilled at noting their own responses and examining these in light of other readers' responses. As one student commented, "I think when you talk about a book to others, you understand more of the book yourself. It's like reading a book twice, only not as boring."

Based on their experiences with book clubs, Lapp, Flood, Ranck-Buhr, Van Dyke, and Spacek (1997) have found that the following practices are beneficial for enhancing the quantity and quality of students' discussions:

1. *Begin with picture books and videos.* Students are apt to feel more comfortable participating in a discussion about something that is concrete rather than a text which may be looked upon as something requiring more understanding and interpretation.
2. *Keep the procedures simple.* Allow students to become comfortable with the process of book clubs by focusing on the talk that takes place rather than the assignment that is to be completed.
3. *Model discussions for students.* Prior to being asked to take part in book club discussions on their own, students should be given the opportunity to see and hear what this process is all about.
4. *Use a phase-in, phase-out model.* Providing as much teacher support as needed in the beginning,

slowly relinquish control of the book club process to students.

5. *Reward students for talking about text.* So that students learn what is expected of them during the discussion process, provide them with simple and immediate feedback while they are participating in book talks.
6. *Select literature carefully.* Select a wide range of literature to which students can relate in some way (e.g., interests, needs, knowledge, experiences).
7. *Be patient, be observant, and change as needed.* Pay close attention to what is going on during discussions in order to make necessary modifications based on these observations.
8. *Pair and group students strategically.* Match students based on their strengths and weaknesses. Try different arrangements to determine groupings that do or do not work well together.
9. *Arrange the classroom in a way that encourages discussion.* To prevent students from interrupting others during discussion period, arrange tables and chairs to allow student groups to be as far from one another as possible.
10. *Develop rules of operation prior to discussions.* Students are more apt to be active participants and follow procedures if they have some input regarding the operation of book clubs. Rules should be kept to a minimum so every one can follow them. Also, there should be a spirit of cooperation among students in helping each other accept and follow the rules.

Agreement is shared with the authors who state that book clubs provide a powerful venue for student conversation because it is possible for every member of the group to speak and be heard. Although discussions focus on a piece of literature, the main focus is on the reader and his or her personal reactions to the text. It is through these shared insights that readers are provided with the opportunity to view their world and other worlds in many different ways.

Having written a brief guide to several strategies for teaching literature in the high school English classroom, McAlpine and Warren (1997) devote one section to reader-response discussion groups. In general terms, they write about the formation and operation of such groups at this education level.

Initially, the teacher may decide to organize groups according to specific preferences. The simplest method is to do so according to preferred genre or author. After this initial organization, students themselves may want to choose which way to group. This can be done by having students brainstorm ways to form groups which should result in some creative suggestions (e.g., books made into movies, books with a certain theme). The literary selection for a particular group should be one that is chosen by all members. After everyone has finished reading the selection and responding to it in their journals, the group meets according to a certain time frame. For a novel, meeting times may extend over a period of 3 to 4 weeks.

Once groups are formed and functioning, there should be enough latitude to hold a free-flowing discussion without much intervention from the teacher. On a group rotational basis, the teacher may choose to act as a "participant observer" whereby he or she participates with the students rather than directs them but still monitors them in a nonjudgemental role. In this way, students learn for themselves how to conduct discussions by treating each other as thinkers and negotiating issues raised from the literary work read.

In order to prepare students for working in groups, the teacher may hold an information session to outline group work rules and individual activities. To fill certain roles, students may be assigned or asked to volunteer on an alternating basis. Two important roles are those of *encourager*, one who makes sure that everyone has a chance to talk, and *summarizer*, one who brings the

discussion to an end and talks about any advance preparation for the next meeting.

To involve students who hesitate to speak, the teacher may request that group discussions begin with all members reading from their journals. Students may also be requested to complete a rating scale with descriptors of their literature selection (e.g., realistic...unrealistic; humorous...not humorous), followed by each asking the other to explain individual responses. Another technique might be to provide students with headings to which they respond in writing (e.g., passages that surprised me, passages that bothered me), followed by discussions in pairs. With enough creativity on the part of the teacher, it is possible for everyone's voice to be heard.

Most important is the idea that teachers must be willing to relinquish control to students in literature discussion groups so that they can gain rich understandings of what they read in the context of social interactions with their peers. By doing so, students are encouraged to share ideas with each other and ask questions of one another in a way that is not possible in a whole class discussion directed by the teacher.

### VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Blachowicz and Fisher (1996) have organized the vast quantity of research that exists on vocabulary development (Bannon, Fisher, Pozzi, and Wessel, 1990; Buikema and Graves, 1993; Carr and Mazur-Stewart, 1988; Fisher, Blachowicz, Pozzi, and Costa, 1992; Nagy, Herman, and Anderson, 1985; Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986; Stahl and Vancil, 1986). They write that vocabulary learning takes place under the following conditions: • when students are immersed in words (wide reading and discussions of words); • when students are active in discovering how words are related to experiences and to one another (active role taken to construct word meanings); • when students

personalize word learning (new words are related to past experiences); • when students use multiple sources of information (variety of contextual information used); • when students control their own learning (self-selection and self-study processes); • when students develop independent strategies (evolved from explicit and well-planned instruction); and • when students use words in meaningful ways (long-lasting with many experiences using words meaningfully). Information on vocabulary development that elaborates on these points follows.

∞ ∞ ∞

Chase and Duffelmeyer (1990) describe a technique for helping students understand literary elements through vocabulary study. To explore this technique, Chase, a teacher of tenth-grade students, collaborated with Duffelmeyer, a Faculty of Education university professor. What this technique involves is student teams selecting from their reading a word that they feel is important to the meaning of a passage. Rather than the teacher, it is the students who choose the words they wish to explore as they read.

In conjunction with a study of novels, this technique was explored with students who were grouped on the basis of reading the same literature selection. Of the four novels chosen, one was entitled *The Chocolate War* (Comier, 1974) which is an interesting story of a secret organization of boys called the Vigils who run their school. The story deals with issues of morality that all adolescents must encounter. It conveys the message that all is not good in the world, as shown in the character of Brother Leon. In connection with this novel, one of the words that a student chose to explore was *ingratiating* in reference to Brother Leon. On a vocabulary study sheet, each student marked down the word and the sentence it came from. Then each student indicated his or her personal knowledge of the word: unknown (don't know), acquainted (some idea), or established

(know for sure). The strategy for determining the word's meaning was indicated next: experience (sharing of group knowledge), context (predicting from sentence in passage), or dictionary (looking up definition). To be exact, the dictionary definition was noted. This was followed by a guided discussion of the word in relation to literary elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot). To conclude, each student then noted what was learned. To illustrate, a sample vocabulary study sheet follows:

Word	My knowledge	Group strategy	Context
<i>ingratiating</i>	Unknown <u>X</u> Acquainted <u>  </u> Established <u>  </u>	Experience <u>  </u> Context <u>X</u> Dictionary <u>X</u>	<i>On the surface, he was one of those pale, ingratiating kind of men who tiptoes through life.</i>
<b>Definition</b>	<b>What was learned</b>		
to work oneself into someone else's good graces	Brother Leon uses people. He puts on an appearance to get his own way.		

Although Chase and Duffelmeyer did expect that some words chosen would not be as good as others in serving as springboards for discussion related to literary elements, they were willing to tolerate a certain amount of content unproductiveness in exchange for the motivational benefits associated with self-selection. Furthermore, it is misleading to think that such words proved to be of no value for the students were enthusiastic and expanding their vocabularies which could help them in later reading.

A study was conducted by Dole, Sloan and Trathen (1995) to apply particular concepts of vocabulary knowledge to students' word learning. One is known as "procedural knowledge" whereby students have shown that they benefit from *knowing how* to use key words in a given context to figure out unknown words (Nagy, Herman, and Anderson, 1985). The other is known as "conditional

knowledge" whereby students have shown that they benefit from *knowing why* certain words are important to their literature selections (Pressley, Goodchild, Fleet, Azjchowsk, and Evans, 1989). To carry out this study, Sloan, a teacher of forty-three 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students, collaborated with Dole and Trathen, English university professors.

A 10-week alternative vocabulary unit was developed to provide these students with procedural and conditional knowledge about words. This was contrasted with a traditional vocabulary unit of the same duration that was used by Sloan in previous years. The alternative unit was taught to one class of students and the traditional unit to the other class. All students were considered to be similar in ability as they came from middle- to upper-income families with a history of 95% attending college or university upon completion of their high school education.

An overview of what was common to both vocabulary units has been extracted to show the following information:

**Overview of materials, instruction, and test**

Phases	Books read	Who provided support	Who identified important words	Tests
Weeks 1-4	<i>The Spy Who Came in From the Cold</i>	Teacher	Teacher identified important words	Vocabulary and comprehension
Weeks 5-8	<i>The Call of the Wild</i>	Group	Student groups identified important words	Vocabulary and comprehension
Weeks 9-10	<i>Tarzan of the Apes</i>	None	Individuals identified important words	Comprehension

In Phase 1 of each unit, all students read Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1963). For each chapter, the teacher selected the same words considered important for students in



both classes to learn. Each day they reviewed and discussed these words. Upon completion of this book, a comprehension test was administered. In Phase 2 of each unit, all students read London's *Call of the Wild* ( 1903). Working in groups, students chose their own words to study with teacher support provided to help groups clarify their choice of words. Upon completion of this book, a comprehension test was administered. In Phase 3 of each unit, all students read Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). Students worked independently to select their own words and discussions took place without the teacher. Upon completion of this book, a comprehension test was administered.

With reference to the alternate vocabulary unit, specific activities were arranged. During Phase 1, the teacher modeled for students how to select important words relevant to the selection and how to learn these words in depth. Each day the teacher listed a group of important words that would be encountered in the upcoming chapter and explained why these words were chosen. Students were told to use three criteria for selecting words: a) the word must be unknown to them; b) the word must be taken from the selection; and c) the word must describe a key character, event, idea or theme in the selection. When reading assigned chapters, students were requested to underline listed words and to make attempts predicting their meaning from the context of the story. They were also requested to look up these words in the dictionary, to choose the definition which best suited the context, and then to bring these definitions to class. During class the next day, students read these words aloud in context and the definition chosen by them. Then these words were discussed in relation to the character, plot, and theme of the story. Following discussion, the teacher assigned the next day's reading along with a list of words to explore in terms of their meaning to the story. During Phase 2, groups of students were expected to take on more responsibility for vocabulary activities. Working together, the students selected their own important words and justified them to each other as well as

the teacher. To aid the students in this process, the teacher provided support by helping them to justify their chosen words. During Phase 3, students worked independently without teacher support or peer guidance in selecting words and providing explanations for words chosen.

With reference to the traditional vocabulary unit, activities similar to the previously discussed unit were arranged with three exceptions. First, no criteria were presented to students for the selection of words. Second, students were not required to find definitions matching the context of the literature selection. And third, words were not discussed within the literature selection. During Phase 1, the teacher presented important words to be encountered in the upcoming chapter each day. In addition to reading the assigned chapter for homework, students were requested to look up these words in the dictionary and to write original sentences using whatever definition was chosen. The following day students read their definitions and sentences aloud. Because the context of the literature was not used, multiple definitions and contexts of the word were presented. After a presentation of the words in this way, the teacher led a general discussion about the reading for that day. During Phase 2, students worked in groups to choose their own words of importance from each chapter. Then they were required to find important passages containing these words and to discuss the importance of these passages in the story. During Phase 3, students worked independently of the teacher and peers to choose their own important words but no discussion took place as to why these words were chosen.

A vocabulary test and a comprehension test were administered to both groups following completion of each unit. It was found that students who took part in the alternative vocabulary unit outperformed those who had taken part in the traditional instructional unit on both tests. This improved performance was attributed to three factors: 1) students in the alternative unit were

provided with a structure for word learning within the context of their reading which enabled them to experience the relationship between learning words and understanding a selection better; 2) students learned the meaning of new words as they were used in the selection which prevented the isolated learning of words and demonstrated to them how all word learning should be contextualized; and 3) students received practice using the words within the context of the literature selection leading to deep processing of the words which has been shown to contribute to word learning and comprehension improvement.

In writing about vocabulary development within a literature-based context, Blachowicz and Fisher (1996) present information on a particular approach involving cooperative literature discussion groups. Working in cooperative groups where each member is assigned a different role, a book is discussed from different perspectives. Cooperative groups for literature discussion operate on a basic configuration whereby on the first day, a book is chosen and procedures are explained by the teacher. Group members decide how many pages have to be read for each meeting in order to complete it in four sessions. On each of the following days, every person is responsible for taking a different role. One role may be the vocabulary researcher who chooses a number of words from the reading passage that may be unfamiliar to the group. The words are introduced to the group by locating it in the story, discussing its possible meanings, and checking its definition in the dictionary if needed. Following these sessions, each group shares its book with the whole class in the form of a summary and personal reactions.

The authors state that although cooperative literature discussion groups can be used when all students are reading the same book, they are ideally suited for situations in which different groups

of students are reading different books in relation to a particular topic or theme. The advantage of having students select their own words is that it gives them the opportunity to develop their vocabulary knowledge genuinely. Based on research (Fisher, Blachowicz, Pozzi, and Costa, 1992), students will generally select challenging words to learn and to teach each other. So teachers in general need not be concerned that students will avoid words that stimulate vocabulary development.

Another approach that may be taken to develop vocabulary with literature discussion groups is described by Fredericks, Blake-Kline, and Kristo (1997). In order to get acquainted with the author's choice of words in a particular book, the teacher asks students to record interesting and challenging words, phrases, or sentences that they encounter in their reading by writing them on sticky-notes as they read through the book. When group members meet, there is a discussion of words from each individual's list in terms of its use within the context of the book. Following these sessions, the teacher asks students to record in their response journals some of these words in sentence context. To reinforce these words, students are asked to choose a small selection to be part of their spelling contract for the week.

As so often happened in the past, vocabulary study should not carry with it negative overtones. A common practice then was to do vocabulary exercises in which students were given a random list of words to be defined and used in a sentence. For the time and effort expended in this activity, there was probably very little carryover for future use. When word study is tied to relevant reading, students vocabulary is broadened in ways that are meaningful for them. Because students have ownership over vocabulary that is learned, the words are more apt to be remembered and applied in future contexts.

## CONTENT LEARNING

There are numerous reasons for using tradebooks in content subject areas, according to Palmer and Stewart (1997). A first reason is that use of a single textbook tends to restrict students' thinking, learning, and participation. By using a variety of tradebooks, students can explore a single topic or a range of topics in depth while synthesizing information and applying critical reading/thinking skills (Stewart, 1994; Wood and Muth, 1991). A second reason is that a single textbook often limits students' reading of informational material. To become proficient at reading to learn, students need extensive practice which can be provided by a variety of tradebooks (Cullinan, 1993; Pappas, 1991). A third reason is that lifestyles today have changed the readership of students in that they lose attentiveness and become bored easily. Rather than being encyclopedic in approach, tradebooks are focused, informative, and entertaining. Not only can tradebooks accommodate a variety of interests and reading abilities, but their visual attractiveness and appealing writing style can entice young people to pick up a book and read for information (Fuhler, 1992; Giblin, 1991). A fourth reason pertains to the present information-rich age in which we are living. By reading a variety of tradebooks, students can address the need of becoming proficient with many information sources, (Chan, 1979; Lehman and Crook, 1989). A fifth reason is that the use of tradebooks can break the stronghold of using a single source to investigate a topic of information. Rather than always referring to the encyclopedia and regurgitating information, tradebooks can become models for students and guide them towards a deeper understanding of what they are investigating (Atwell, 1990; Freeman, 1991).

oo oo oo

Irwin (1990) writes that the integration of quality literature and textbook instruction can take

place through shared literary experiences. Two of the most popular ways are: (1) the teacher reading aloud to the class; and (2) the students reading books selected from a list related to the topic or theme.

• **Teachers reading aloud**

Choose a good book to read to an entire class following recommended read-aloud techniques. The literature selection can serve to build interest before reading the textbook or to elaborate and extend the content and concepts during and after reading of the text. After a read-aloud session, students should be encouraged to respond in order to maintain their interest. Permit students to share their reactions without dwelling on comprehension questions. However, explanations may be offered by the teacher if it is sensed that students are having difficulty understanding.

• **Students reading from a list**

When using this approach, the teacher prepares a list of titles and authors indicating where each book may be obtained (e.g., school or public library). Each book should have a brief annotation so that students know something about its content. On a designated day, students may read this book in class for a period of time (e.g., 30 minutes or so) in order to get them off to a good start. Students are then encouraged to finish the book on their own outside of class. A recommendation is for students to carry this book with them so that any extra time in class can be spent on reading. A date is set by which all books should be completely read and brought to class. This is followed by having students meet in book groups to share their reactions to the books read and to connect them to the unit of study. Activities within the group may be open-ended or structured. A general arrangement is for each student to introduce his or her book by talking about it (e.g., summary and personal reactions). After a book talk, group members are encouraged to ask questions or share their views.

In sharing the authors' views, authentic literature can be a valuable resource for teaching content area courses because it is usually written in a more interesting manner. Generally, textbooks contain passages of information with narrative aspects omitted. By focusing on the stories of people who made events happen, quality literature can breathe life into the information found in textbooks.

Based on an observational study of two multi-aged social studies classrooms in a grade K-9 school where elementary and junior high grades were blended, Palmer and Stewart (1997) have drawn up the following assertions:

- *The nature of assignments in content areas may need to change in order to make full use of the extensive information found in contemporary literature.*

Many teachers structure assignments in constrained ways so that the information being sought is usually best obtained from encyclopedias. To make thorough use of tradebooks, teachers need to withdraw from a "cut and dry" approach and encourage students to engage personally and deeply with their topics. In this way, students take an active role in determining what should be drawn from the literature being explored.

- *Care must be taken to ensure that literature works are not treated as another textbook or an encyclopedia.*

The rich potential for meaningful reading of tradebooks can be lost for two reasons. The first of these, the nature of assignments, has already been discussed. The other reason is that if adequate information sources are not available, students may use tradebooks to skim and scan for particular information that meets the requirements of the assignment.

- *Mentoring of teachers and students is required for effective use of informational literature.*

It is important that teachers emphasize, not the product, but the process of learning that takes place to achieve the end result. To have equity in the classroom so that all students obtain rich information and deliver it in personally meaningful ways, teachers need guidance and support in order to model this desired goal. Just as teachers need assistance, students too need to learn how to extract information from tradebooks and apply it to their learning in ways that make an impact on them.

- *A librarian is essential to the development and implementation of literature-based content units.*

A partnership needs to develop between teachers and librarians. In this way, teachers are given valuable direction in the use of books that are available and librarians come to know the needs of classes which allow library collections to grow in coordinated and informed ways.

Based on these assertions, Palmer and Stuart make the following recommendations for teachers, administrators, and university teacher trainers:

- Provide for adequate time, resources, and expertise to build literature-based content units before implementing them in the classroom.
- Take an inventory of library books before building these units to make sure that there is enough literature available on specific topics and on a variety of reading levels.
- Allow input from the librarian and students in constructing a unit so that different perspectives are included.
- Make provisions for options so that all students do not receive the same assignment.
- Ensure that students do sufficient preliminary reading before they finally choose a topic to explore. If not enough information is available, then another topic should be chosen.
- Train students how to read, collect, and synthesize information from the books they have chosen.



- Assign activities and projects that promote critical thinking so that copying from references is discouraged.
- Select tradebooks that have a newer format with in-depth coverage rather than those with a textbook or encyclopedia format.
- Choose general themes so that a broad range of literature can be used. Narrowing a theme may restrict students' sources of information to a few tradebooks.
- Encourage students to read both fiction and nonfiction tradebooks during leisure reading time.

With new developments that include the increasing popularity of thematic units, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary teaching, textbooks no longer need to be the primary source of information. They can be supplemented or supplanted with the variety of fine literature that is now available. Many teachers are starting to become enthused about the use of fiction and nonfiction literature in content subject areas because they offer a context for instruction and a reason to read.

As a university trainer of senior high teachers, Daisey (1997) encourages them to integrate biographies into their content area instruction. A strong connection exists between this literary form and content subjects because biographies are case studies of human experiences that are representative of a time in history, a geographical location, a social class, a race, a gender, and so on. Unlike textbooks, biographies have the power to present the lives of noteworthy people in a format that attracts students with diverse interests and motivates them to invest their time in such reading. By providing teachers-in-training with personal and persuasive experiences, it is hoped that they will pass on their knowledge and enthusiasm to future students.

To spawn the interest of preservice teachers, Daisey presents them with her own examples

of a biography project that revolved around the book *Witch Doctor's Apprentice: Hunting for Medicinal Plants in the Amazon* (Maxwell, 1990). This book is an autobiography of Nicole Maxwell, a botanist and adventuress who hunted for medicinal plants in the Amazon during the 1940s and 1950s. On display are other books that have been read about plant collectors; laminated posters with illustrations of plant collectors, maps of their routes, and plants they have collected; plant collecting tools; and the list goes on. The point Daisey tries to make is that if information is presented in a humanized context, then students are likely to be motivated to study the content that is behind the book as she did.

To involve preservice teachers in a biography project, they are requested to select and read a biography of someone noteworthy and respond to the book by choosing a creative project from a list of suggestions provided. Some of the ideas suggested are as follows:

- Explore information you would like to know more about after reading the book.
- Write several paragraphs about how the world portrayed in the book is different from your world.
- Make a collage using pictures and phrases photocopied from the book.

Then these student teachers are expected to make a brief presentation to the class. During these presentations, they show a transparency of their biography character, summarize that person's lifestory, and talk about or display their project.

In the words of some participants, it was later said, "I feel that this kind of project would be good for a class because the students control who they learn about, and they bring individual interests and talents to the project." Another said, "I think that a project like this allows students to take ownership of the material." And another said, "This project allows the students to be creative and have some sense of accomplishment." Daisey concludes by writing that the best way to prepare

teachers for the classroom is to model how to construct knowledge rather than transmit information. In this way, aspiring teachers can take the same approach with their students which further empowers them to make meaning of what they read.

The use of nonfiction tradebooks in classrooms is becoming increasingly popular because they often compensate for the weaknesses of content area textbooks. Considering that nonfiction tradebooks are most suitable for use with secondary students, information is taken from the writing of Eanes (1997) who presents certain criteria for their selection. These criteria are cited by Moss (1991) and are quoted as follows:

- **Integrity of authors**

- . To what extent do they reveal their point of view and communicate to the reader their motivation for writing?
- . To what extent do they encourage a questioning attitude in the reader?
- . To what extent do they reveal their sources?
- . How clearly do they distinguish and label facts, opinions, and theories?
- . Do they present different viewpoints objectively?
- . Do they support generalizations with facts?

- **Tone of book**

- . Does the author have a distinctive and effective communication style?
- . Does the author use an informal, yet informative tone of "voice"?
- . Does the author seem to be communicating with the reader or just transmitting facts?

- **Content of book**

- . How well is the material organized?
- . To what extent are the ideas presented in a logical and coherent fashion?
- . What kinds of reading aids are provided (e.g., index, bibliographies, appendices, reference notes, graphics, and glossaries)?
- . Is the content presented in well-designed layouts with effective illustrations?

To conclude, agreement is shared with Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham (1994) who state major reasons for providing students with access to literature to aid content learning.

Doing so offers students • depth of information (reliance on single source, such as textbook, not comprehensive); • motivation to read (students read books of personal interest); • distinctive points of view (textbooks tend to present traditional perspective); • materials that fit their abilities (students do best on tasks within their limits); • a sense of ownership about what they are learning (students more apt to try harder if given choices); and • opportunities to make decisions and solve problems (textbooks tend to emphasize information recall as opposed to literature that promotes various thinking processes).

### SAMPLE GENRE UNITS

As students in the upper grades begin to explore more books on their own, they often become enchanted with a particular genre. A favourite one is literature of the imagination which involves fantasy of the science fiction sort. The appeal of imagination is that it can take us anywhere and help us adapt to any circumstance. Because imaginative literature has huge potential for growth in reading and writing development, there should be multiple opportunities for readers to explore this genre. One subject to which students in the upper grades receive considerable exposure is the study of history. As teachers are beginning to realize, the use of literature can enrich the study of history by combining historical fact and literary verve in presenting a story that not only informs but also captures the interest of their students. Information follows on how the genres of fantasy (i.e., science fiction) and historical fiction can be turned into interesting units of study.

∞ ∞ ∞

Greenlaw and McIntosh (1987) present information on a fantasy unit involving science fiction that was conducted over a 12-week period in a junior high school. First they refer to a theoretical

framework used to develop these units which provides a means to engage the minds and hearts of readers in creative and productive ways. The 18 points of this theoretical framework upon which these units were developed are summarized as follows:

- **Paradox.** Making statements that are seemingly contradictory, but may nonetheless be true.
- **Attribute.** Describing distinctive quality or feature belonging to person or thing.
- **Analogy.** Forming correspondence in some respect between people or things otherwise dissimilar.
- **Discrepancy.** Referring to divergence between facts or claims.
- **Provocative questions.** Answering questions intended to stimulate thinking.
- **Examples of change.** Demonstrating how dynamic things are or can be.
- **Examples of habit.** Avoiding habit-bound activities that are nonproductive.
- **Organized random search.** Developing structure to lead randomly to another structure.
- **Skills of search.** Using methods to search for information.
- **Tolerance for ambiguity.** Creating multiple interpretations to describe ambiguous situations.
- **Intuitive expression.** Making guesses based on hunches or feelings.
- **Adjustment to development.** Focusing on development rather than adjustment to situations.
- **Study creative people and processes.** Exploring processes of creative people.
- **Evaluate situations.** Forming conclusions based on consideration of consequences and inferences.
- **Creative reading skill.** Using text to create idea or product.
- **Creative listening skill.** Responding to oral text in new ways.
- **Creative writing skill.** Expressing thoughts and feelings in writing.
- **Visualization skill.** Forming mental images with new perspective.

### Science Fiction Unit

As authors construct a world in which scientific principles are explored, a host of topics arises. Whether their story creations deal with robots, spaceships, or futuristic settings, the nature of science fiction allows for it to be explored using categories of themes. It is possible for students to work in groups, with each exploring a different theme; or as a whole class, with everyone pursuing some of the themes. These categories and a sampling of activities that can be done in each thematic area are described as follows:

(i) **Theme: Search for Other Worlds.** There is a fascination with possible or actual forms of life in other worlds. Some books that explore this theme are:

*An Alien Music* (Johnson and Johnson, 1982), *Calling B for Butterfly* (Lawrence, 1982), and *The Stars Will Speak* (Zebrowski, 1985).

**Activity: Attributes.** Imagining that earth has reached its capacity to support human life, prepare a list of the attributes necessary for a world that could be inhabited by people or a list of the attributes people would need to inhabit new worlds.

(ii) **Theme: Conflict of Cultures.** The concept of differences that lead to misunderstandings is often pursued by reflecting on such tendencies and describing attempts to bridge these conflicts in an alien society or on earth. Some books that explore this theme are *The Delikon* (Hoover, 1977), *Devil on My Back* (Hughes, 1985), *Dreamsnake* (McIntyre, 1978), *Moon-Flash* (McKillip, 1984), and *The Moon and the Fact* (McKillip, 1985).

**Activity: Adjustment to development.** Using a book of choice, describe the conflict and how the protagonist develops or changes as a response to it. Also, describe a similar conflict in the real world and tell how one may develop or change because of it.

(iii) **Theme: The Potential of Science.** It is the responsibility of those who use scientific discoveries to decide whether to put such creations towards good or evil purposes, one example being genetic manipulation. Some books that explore this theme are *Anna To The Infinite Power* (Ames, 1981), *Caught In The Organ Draft* (Asimov, 1983), and *Joshua, Son Of None* (Freedman, 1973).

**Activity: Discrepancy.** Considering that discrepancy exists in the field of science because it has enhanced the quality of life but has also brought us to the edge of disaster, choose one category of science and explore both its benefits and harmful aspects.

(iv) **Theme: Mind Control.** Control of others through the powers of the mind, such as mental telepathy and ESP, is often expressed as the protagonist's struggle to gain self control or a struggle with an outside force to gain control of the protagonist's mind. Some books that explore this theme are *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* (Aaron, 1985), *Mind-Call* (Belden, 1981), *Worldstone* (Strauss, 1985), and *Psion* (Vinge, 1982).

**Activity: Visualization.** Based on a book read, visualize a situation in which someone has control of your mind. Describe this situation and how it would be possible to regain control.

(v) **Theme: Search For Eternal Life.** The phenomenon of living forever is a topic of much intrigue. Stories presented often tell its good and bad sides. Some books that explore this theme are *Earth Song* (Webb, 1983), *Earthchild* (Webb, 1982), *Ram Sons* (Webb, 1984), and *Welcome Chaos* (Wilhelm, 1985).

**Activity: Provocative questions.** Describe your reaction to the concept of eternal life by responding to such questions as: 1) Would you be willing to convert the secret of eternal life to your own? 2) What would be the consequences of living forever and ever? and 3) How would this be both a positive and negative experience?

(vi) **Theme: Nuclear Power.** Nuclear power is of concern to all segments of society because not only does it have positive potential but it also has very destructive possibilities. Some books that explore this theme are *Out Of Time* (Chambers, 1985), *The Danger Quotient* (Johnson and Johnson, 1984), *Children Of The Dust* (Lawrence, 1985), *Wolf Of Shadows* (Stieber, 1985), and *Brother In The Land* (Swindells, 1985).

**Activity: Skills of search.** Select a fictional treatment of one topic and compare it to informational sources. Also try to locate differing opinions in the informational material used.

(vii) **Theme: Probing Sequels And Series.** Intriguing stories are often continued to attract an audience of readers. Some books that fall into this category are *Day of the Starwind* (Hill, 1981), *Deathwing over Veynaa* (Hill, 1981), *Galactic Warlord* (Hill, 1980), *Planet of the Warlord* (Hill, 1981), and *Young Legionary* (Hill, 1983); *Dragondrums* (McCaffery, 1979), *Dragonsinger* (McCaffery, 1977), *Dragonson* (McCaffery, 1976); and *The Great Science Fiction Series* (Pohl et al., 1980).

**Activity: Attributes; Studying creative people and processes.** Determine the attributes of the character or other that compelled the author to continue the story. Locate an essay that describes the author's writing and comment.

By drawing on these themes and activities, opportunities are provided for readers to develop their imagination as well as exercise their abilities to speculate and improvise. Doing so can help in the development of in-depth reading skills so necessary to improve one's ability to comprehend.

Charles and Leppington (1997), respectively history and library consultants for the York Region Board of Education in Ontario, present information on a unit of historical fiction that can be



carried out with junior high students. It is possible that this unit related to Canada's past could also be carried out with senior high students. As an introduction, Charles and Leppington stress the importance of partnership between teachers of history and teacher-librarians. The combined skills of the history teacher, knowledgeable about historical matters, and the teacher-librarian, knowledgeable about literary works, help lead to the selection of a wide range of literature that is informative and enjoyable to read. One important point to consider in the selection is that there must be an authentic reconstruction of the past. At the same time, the factual basis of the literary work chosen must not be overwhelming so that story appeal is lost.

To develop and implement a unit that should lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canada's past, Charles and Leppington present a list of contemporary literary works that may be explored. These historical novels which support the study of Canadian history up to 1915 are briefly described and grouped under heading as follows:

• **First Nations Historical Communities**

*Blood Red Ochre* (Major, 1989) - Newfoundland Beothuk, 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Breed Apart* (German, 1985) - Fur trade, 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Copper Sunrise* (Buchan, 1972) - Newfoundland Beothuk, 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Dream Carvers* (Clark, 1995) - Newfoundland Osweet, 10<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Storm Child* (Bellingham, 1985) - Métis, 19<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Sweetgrass* (Hudson, 1984) - Siksika Nation, 1837.  
*White Mist* (Smucker, 1985) - Chippewa, 19<sup>th</sup> century.

• **17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

*Flight* (Crook, 1991) - United Empire Loyalists, 1790s.  
*Hand of Robin Squires* (Clark, 1980) - Oak Island, Nova Scotia, 17<sup>th</sup> century.  
*Hiding Place* (Cook, 1994) - New France.  
*King's Daughter* (Martel, 1980) - New France.  
*Last Ship* (Downie, 1980) - Not disclosed.  
*Loyalist Runaway* (Smyth, 1991) - Nova Scotia, 1700s.  
*Meyer's Creek* (Crook, 1995) - United Empire Loyalists, 1790s.

*Rachel's Revolution* (Perkyns, 1988) - United Empire Loyalists, 1790s.

### • Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century

*1812: Jeremy and the General* (Ibbitson, 1991) - General Brock, War of 1812.

*Honor Bound* (Downie, 1980) - Not disclosed.

*Laura's Choice* (Crook, 1993) - Laura Second, War of 1812.

*Quarter - Pie Window* (Brandis, 1985) - Upper Canada, 1830.

*Shadow in Hawthorn Bay* (Lunn, 1986) - Not disclosed.

*Sign of the Scales* (Brandis, 1990) - Not disclosed.

*Son of the Hounds* (Sutherland, 1988) - War of 1812.

*Tinderbox* (Brandis, 1982) - Upper Canada, 1830.

*Tom Penny and the Grand Canal* (German, 1990) - Ottawa River, 1830s.

### • Rebellions of 1837

*Questions of Loyalty* (Greenwood, 1984).

*Boy with an R in his Hand* (Reaney, 1961).

*Rebel Run* (Turner, 1989).

*Rebellion* (Brandis, 1996).

### • Mid - 19<sup>th</sup> Century

*First Spring on the Grand Banks* (Freeman, 1978) - Newfoundland fishing grounds.

*Harbour Thieves* (Freeman, 1984) - Toronto, 1870s.

*Ocean Between* (Edwards, 1993) - Huguenot to Montreal immigration, 1874.

*Root Cellar* (Lunn, 1983) - U.S. Civil War, Ontario, 1860s.

*Shantymen of Cache Lake* (Freeman, 1975) - Ottawa Valley, 1870s.

*Spy in the Shadows* (Greenwood, 1990) - Fenian raids, 1866.

*Trouble at Lachine Mill* (Freeman, 1983) - Quebec, 1880s.

*Underground to Canada* (Smucker, 1977) - Underground railroad.

### • Late 19<sup>th</sup> to Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

*Curses of a Third Uncle* (Yee, 1986) - Vancouver, Chinese community, 1900s.

*Days of Terror* (Smucker, 1981) - Mennonite emigration.

*Nellie L.* (Crook, 1994) - Nellie McClung.

*Rebellion* (Scanlan, 1989) - Métis uprising, 1869.

*Tales from Gold Mountain* (Yee, 1989) - Chinese in New World.

*Ticket to Curlew* (Lotteridge, 1992) - Alberta immigration, 1915.

*A Very Small Rebellion* (Truss, 1990) - Métis uprising, 1869.

*White Jade Tiger* (Lawson, 1993) - Chinese immigration, CPR, 1880.

The authors continue on to present a list of suggested activities for a historical novel as follows:

- **Letter writing**

Students may write to a character from a novel about their response to a decision, action, or reaction that took place with this person. They may also write letters between two characters from the same novel or historical period.

- **Storytelling**

Students may select an item or artifact that has an important role in a novel and from the viewpoint of one of the characters, orally tell why it is of such importance.

- **Interviewing**

Students may create an interview between a main character in a novel and a newspaper reporter of the day to investigate reasons for taking a certain stance. If so desired, the interview may be conducted in period dress and videotaped.

- **Role-playing**

Students may come together to play the role of certain characters during a climatic scene in the book, alternating figures to present a variety of perspectives.

- **Readers' Theatre**

Students may act out a particular episode from a novel while a narrator reads aloud the related passages in a well-rehearsed manner.

Through the context of a historical novel, students can learn about the political, economic, and social circumstances that surrounded particular events in the past. By reading a wide array of historical literature, students become exposed to information about the past from different

perspectives which cannot be encountered in a single textbook. The unfolding plot of a historical novel offers opportunities for critical analysis as readers are transported to an earlier time with imaginary companions.

### CLASSROOM/SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Information follows about junior and senior high programs in the United States, Canada, and Australia that promote a wide use of literature. It is possible that what is being promoted with younger adolescents could also apply to older adolescents and vice-versa, so this perspective should be taken on the information that is presented.

#### United States

How literature is used in a junior high school in Crestwood, Kentucky is described by Smith and Johnson (1993). Smith, a professor at the University of Louisville, and Johnson, a teacher at South Oldham Middle School, present information on how adolescent literature is used to create an integrative curriculum. With this approach, literature is used to examine a theme, issue, situation, or topic that can be interwoven into other subject areas. As claimed by Smith and Johnson, one skill that has great potential for development is comprehension because students are reading literature that allows them to become actively involved in their learning. As students acquire knowledge, their search for meaning is enhanced by engaging in activities that promote reflective thinking and problem solving.

According to Smith and Johnson, the success of an integrative literature unit can be accomplished by team members through the following stages:

*Stage 1: Identify focus of theme*

Student members of the team gather information on issues of interest or concern through surveys created by the team teachers. After the survey results are assessed, they are placed in thematic clusters. Students and teachers work in collaboration to determine the name of whatever theme is to be pursued.

*Stage 2: Select literature*

From an assortment of books appropriate for young adolescents, the team teachers select a piece of literature that best explores the theme. This literature selection serves as the primary text.

*Stage 3: Brainstorm development of theme*

Team teachers and students work together as decision-making partners in defining skills, discussing objectives, and determining learning outcomes.

*Stage 4: Develop instructional plans*

Team teachers develop instructional plans to help students acquire skills, meet objectives, and fulfill learning outcomes. Each teacher uses his or her specific expertise to become a resource and guide person for other team members. One recommendation is that a unit schedule be created at this time, ranging from 3 to 6 weeks in duration.

*Stage 5: Establish evaluation criteria*

To ensure the attainment of skills, objectives, and outcomes, team teachers and students need to determine assessment methods before implementing the unit.

*Stage 6: Collect and organize resources*

The team collects and organizes whatever resources are needed to carry out the unit. It is recommended that unit planning should be completed at least 1 month prior to implementation so that

each teacher has adequate time to follow through on his or her duties.

As a teacher at a junior high school in Crystal Lake, Illinois, Fuhler (1994) describes how poetry became a part of her curriculum in an eighth-grade classroom. Not having had many memorable encounters with poetry and feeling intimidated by this genre over the years, Fuhler began her delve into poetry with mixed emotions.

Feeling far from accomplished in the area of teaching, reading, and writing poetry, Fuhler first turned to some of the experts for advice. To broaden her knowledge base, she began reading simple books of poetry and pursuing several pertinent journal articles. Before presenting poetry to her class, Fuhler felt compelled to savour a true taste for this type of literary work so she indulged in this type of reading as much as possible. In this way, she was able to influence her students with feelings of genuine enthusiasm for poetry.

To help her students begin appreciating poetry which in turn would familiarize them with the various ways vocabulary can be used and aid their comprehension of this literary form, Fuhler began with read-aloud sessions. Poetry was read aloud so that students were actively involved, one example being that she read aloud lines which were then echoed back to her by the group. To foster students' active involvement, a rich resource was an ample supply of beautifully illustrated story poems as found in many picture books. During mini-lessons, there was a focus on such poetic elements as alliteration, imagery, and rhythm. Poems were analyzed but not to the point of destroying students' interests.

For the next step, Fuhler enlisted the help of local librarians in her quest to assemble collections of poems by individual authors. Students were also encouraged to bring in such poetic

works. In this way, students could become exposed to several different formats in order to help them begin penning versions of their own. Initially, the composing of poems was done by teacher and students working together. Then Fuhler took steps to ensure that students felt comfortable attempting compositions of their own. This was done by providing for a loose enough framework to allow for creativity. Realizing that writing is not a command performance and to make it so only causes writers' stress, students were given ample time to compose. When a poem was completed, it was shared with the teacher. As confidence grew, students began to share their poems with other members of the class.

A successful year was experienced with poetry as the students worked diligently writing, seeking critical feedback, revising, and rewriting. A number of poems were put in personally illustrated books. Some appeared on bulletin boards or were published in the school newspaper while others were sent off to be submitted for publication.

As proponents of "collaborative learning" whereby grouping techniques are employed in the classroom according to the needs and interests of students, Wood, McCormack, Lapp, and Flood (1997) present information on how this approach can be used with younger adolescents. McCormack, reading consultant for Plymouth Public Schools in Massachusetts, collaborated with Flood, Lapp, and Wood, professors at San Diego University and professor at the University of North Caroline respectively. They describe a setting in one classroom where a literature selection entitled *War Comes to Willy Freeman* (Collier and Collier, 1990), a story about a freed African-American slave girl during the Revolutionary War, was being used in conjunction with a social studies unit.

To aid the teacher in following a systematic plan for the use of this literature selection,

reference was made to a model that included 5 components: 1) Get Ready; 2) Read; 3) Reread; 4) Respond; and 5) React. An example is presented (See Figure 1) to more clearly illustrate, accompanied by a brief description of each component.

- **Get Ready**

While reading the book *War Comes to Willy Freeman*, the same pace was kept by all students so that 1 chapter or 15 pages was read each day. Before reading a section, the entire class met with the teacher to prepare for the next reading assignment. Previous chapters were discussed in order to create a transition into what was going to be read, then the background knowledge and experiences of students were activated. In this way, students were presented with a focus for their upcoming reading. This was followed by an exchange of information on vocabulary (e.g., technical terms, historical expressions) to ensure students' understanding of key words. These prereading activities which were carried out in a whole class format allowed all students to acquire information through listening, questioning, and discussing.

- **Read**

Students did their assigned reading silently: While reading, they were expected to make note of any ideas that could be used in their discussion partnerships or groups.



Figure 1

**Take Five Reading Lesson Plan**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chapter/Pages: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Get Ready**

- Access and build background knowledge: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Vocabulary: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Set Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Questions: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Strategy/Concept Mini-lesson \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Read**

\_\_\_ Read Aloud \_\_\_ Silent \_\_\_ Pairs \_\_\_ Other

**Reread**

Set Purpose \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Read Aloud \_\_\_ Silent \_\_\_ Pairs \_\_\_ Other

**Respond**

Oral Response: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Written Response: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**React**

\_\_\_ Whole Class \_\_\_ Groups \_\_\_ Pairs \_\_\_ Other

\*Extra Help: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*Enrichment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Developed by R.L. McCormack)

- **Reread**

Students were encouraged to form peer arrangements in order to read again all or part of the selection. A suggestion made was to find a two-to-three-page excerpt that could be turned into dialogue for theatrical reading. Through repeated readings, students were helped to improve their comprehension and recall.

- **Respond**

Working in partnerships or groups, students exchanged ideas and wrote responses in their journals. Responses took the forms of reacting to prompts, personal thoughts/feelings, and specific guidelines of the mandated curriculum.

- **React**

In small group and whole class discussions, the students and teacher reacted to each other's oral and written responses. These discussions alternated between being teacher-facilitated and student-led. Not only did students get a chance to practice social interaction strategies (e.g., listening without interrupting, taking turns), they also were provided with opportunities to practice reading strategies (e.g., seeking clarification, extending one another's interpretations).

For less able readers, additional support was made available by the teacher in gathering these students and guiding them through the reading of the selection. When it was time for these students to respond in their journals, they discussed their ideas first then wrote their responses in cooperation with a peer or teacher. At rereading time, they often paired up to read a small excerpt. This kind of additional support aided their ability to participate in the same reading and writing activities pertaining to a literary work that was being read by their peers.

Through the use of this model, students are able to work in a wide range of grouping

situations. The make-up of groups is flexible in that there are different arrangements from day to day and book to book. Most importantly, students are given opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers and the teacher. According to research (Flood, Lapp, Flood, and Nagel, 1992; Opitz, 1992), students at all ability levels can benefit from the experience of collaborative learning.

### **Canada**

As a teacher-librarian at a junior/senior high school in Vancouver, Parungao (1997) writes about a literature-based program that has been developed for grade 8 students. The purpose behind this program is to encourage students to read in variety of areas and to help them develop an appreciation of literature.

Known as a "reading passport program", it involves the use of a passport issued to each student. On each page of this passport is a brief description of a category of literature, 12 categories in all. A particular page is stamped after a student finishes reading a book belonging to the related category and fills in a review card with rating information. The picture of the stamp depends on the category of the book read. Illustrations are provided (See Figures 1 and 2) in order to get a clearer perception of how these ideas work.

Figure 1

Adventure	The characters go through an exciting and/or unusual experience.
Art Books	Non-fiction books that show painting, drawing or sculpture.
Biography	A written account of a person's life.
Canadiana	Books written about the country we live in or written by an author from our country.
Fantasy	An imaginative or fanciful story that involves supernatural or unnatural events or characters.
Folklore	Traditional stories of a people.
Humor	Involved comical situations.
Multicultural	Stories from or about other cultures.
Mystery	The plot involves a crime or other event that remains puzzling until the end of the story.
Personal Choice	A book that does not fit into any other category.
Poetry	A composition in verse characterized by great beauty of language or expression.
Romance	Depicts romantic, heroic or marvellous deeds in a historical or imaginary setting.
Science Fiction	This a form of fiction that draws imaginatively on scientific knowledge.
Sports	Involves athletics.

Figure 2

CRITIC'S REVIEW CARD				
1.	Name of book _____			
2.	Author of book _____			
3.	Type of book (circle one) _____			
	Adventure	Canadiana	Multiculture	Poetry
	Art Book	Folklore	Mystery	Romance
	Biography	Humor	Personal Choice	Science Fiction/Fantasy
				Sports
4.	Your rating (circle one)			
	Poor	Fair	Average	Good
				Excellent
5.	Would you recommend this book to other students? Give reasons for your answer.			
Critic's signature _____				
Teacher _____				

The information on each review card is made available to others by posting it on a bulletin board in the library or classroom. In this way, any books that are of special interest become known to others. Any student who succeeds in reading a least one book from each category qualifies to receive the award of having his or her name printed in the school newsletter.

To monitor students' progress, individual conferences may be set up (if time permits) with the classroom teacher or the teacher-librarian to have brief book talks before stamps are issued. For

further evaluation purposes, periodic checks are made by either teacher to ensure that students are making attempts to read from all categories. A student evaluation form is also completed periodically to get input from the students regarding what books they have read and their reaction to the program.

It is conceivable that taking such an approach to reading will enhance the interest and motivation of students. When students are interested and motivated, they are apt to put more effort and time into their tasks. Reading is no different. So any ideas that have the potential to increase students' involvement with literature should be strongly considered and put in a plan of action as was done at this school.

Lund (1997), a teacher at a senior high school in Red Deer, Alberta, describes a new dimension he added to his students' experiences with literature. Termed "Literary Links", it involves the students in making personal contacts with the authors of literary works that they have read.

The first step for the teacher is to examine the curriculum for literary works that will best fit into this type of activity, preferably Canadian authors of short stories, novels, nonfiction, and poetry. During or after completing a unit of work in connection with a piece of literature, students take the plunge into making attempts to locate the author. In the case of a deceased author, information may be obtained by contacting the publisher, editor, or family. Costs (e.g., telephone calls, postage expenses) may well be covered by departmental or school budgets if it is recognized that there are vast learning opportunities by bringing books to life in the classroom.

Lund recounts the experiences of his students in their attempts to make personal contact with the authors of two literary works, one Canadian and the other American. After reading the book *The Sacrament* (Gzowski, 1980), a true story about the experiences of an individual who survived an

airplane crash, students became interested in finding out why the book was never made into a movie. After obtaining Gzowski's CBC office telephone number in Toronto, the connection was made. As it turned out, Gzowski had been approached to make a movie but the sensitive nature of events caused family members to shy away from its publicity. He also offered considerable background information about researching and writing the book. This was followed by an interesting development - one of the characters in the book who was involved in the dramatic search and rescue happened to be from Red Deer! It took only a short time to contact him with the result being a class visit which turned into a spellbound account of events. After reading the book *Something for Joey* (Peck, 1983), a true story about the lives of the famed football player named John Cappelletti and his younger brother Joey who was suffering from leukemia, students wanted to make a personal connection. They were able to make written contact with Ann Cappelletti who was living in Pittsburgh and became enthralled with her passionate account of her son Joey's battle with leukemia, the movie adaptation of the book, and her son John's famous football career. His California address was offered and students wrote to him about his role in the events that transpired. Elation resulted - some weeks later, the students received a warm, personal letter and an autographed sports card.

The results from this innovative approach to literature have been very positive, specifically increased interest and motivation on the part of the students. In the words of one student, "It made me feel so important to be discussing literature with a famous writer." It should be clear with this approach that it is possible to include instruction and practice in all areas of literacy development which encompasses listening, speaking, reading and writing.

**Australia**

Satrapa and Rickwood (1992), teachers at a junior/senior high school in Canberra, Australia, describe an innovative English program that adapted literature-based whole language ideas. The program is literature-based in that it encourages wide reading as well as independence in reading and writing by allowing students to make decisions about what and how they will learn. There is, however, a curriculum framework. Any new programs developed by teachers must be approved by school board personnel according to district/national objectives.

Classrooms used exclusively for this program are kept separate and allocated to teachers who share them. Desks are arranged to allow maximum space for grouping. Shelves around the room contain hundreds of literary works. The walls are covered with print that includes student work, posters about books/authors, and information to support and extend student activities. Floor cushions and the like are also present to create a comfortable and relaxing environment.

A structured schedule is followed. Each class meets for 5 periods during a 7-day cycle. A period ranges from 45 to 75 minutes. Each period always starts off by using the first 10 to 15 minutes for teacher-talk so that the students can get a focus before they begin their activities. During the remainder of these periods, 25% of the time is devoted to silent reading and writing; 45% to independent projects and cooperative learning activities; and 15% to sharing work orally.

During focus time, teachers may engage in these activities: 1) reading aloud which usually takes the form of serializing a well-written novel; 2) modelling responses to literature and aspects of writing; 3) explaining in terms of assignment expectations, and so on; and 4) sharing a noteworthy book or author. A large portion of this time is devoted to a focus on modelling the activities in which the student will be engaging.



All students are expected to read widely and write reflectively in their literature journals about what they read. At least three journal entries per cycle must be written. The work that students complete is basically self-chosen, but within the guidelines in their contracts that they have negotiated with the teacher. During each semester, students are required to produce three polished pieces of written work as well as to do three sharing presentations.

Examples of poetry projects follow:

- Collect an anthology of between 12 and 20 poems related to a particular theme. Describe the theme and how the poems relate to it.
- Find three poems with a similar theme that are linked to a novel, play, or movie. Write an essay about why these poems were chosen and how they link to the book, theatre, or screen version.
- Read a long poem (at least 150 lines long) and write a minimum of five reflections on the poem as you read it. At the end of each semester, students receive a letter grade with status information that indicates the quality of their participation and work.

Taking this approach whereby students are put more in control of their own learning and teachers take on the role of supporting and challenging them has proven to have particular benefits. In this situation, students generally became more enthused about reading and discipline problems began to diminish.

As a teacher-librarian at a junior/senior high school in Sydney, Australia, Jenkins (1997) writes about her experiences with literature discussions involving adolescent males. Based on what she has experienced in the past, it is this segment of the school population who often makes up the most reluctant readership. After attending a 1995 conference whereby one of the presenters was

Anne Simpson, Senior Lecturer in Literacy and Language Education at the University of South Australia, Jenkins became inspired to apply the ideas put forth to her school setting. A summary of these ideas has already been presented in this section of the paper (Simpson, 1995), so the details will not be repeated,

The working arrangement is that for each class, the teacher-librarian and the classroom teacher work together in facilitating and observing groups who are participating in discussions. Groups re-form three times throughout the school year. The sheets on which students initially indicated their top book choices to read are kept and referred to when it comes time to be issued a new book for discussion. As before, the formation of a group depends on who has chosen what book.

At the time of this writing by Jenkins, 18 classes from year 7 to year 11 have participated in the program. To gauge their reactions to this program, written responses from the students were gathered through survey forms. The general response from students has been enthusiastic. Some interesting developments have been that boys previously disinterested in books have begun reading sequels to those that were of particular enjoyment, and that they are taking the initiative to read books described as good reading by others. There has, however, been some opposition to the idea of using stick-it notes to jot down ideas as a literature selection is being read. The most common objection expressed is that their use disturbs the flow of reading. It has been decided to continue with their use because they serve as a means to slow down students' reading and make them pay attention to literary aspects such as plot details, use of language, and so on.

Jenkins concludes by writing that a love of reading is starting to emerge with these students. If this trend continues, she feels that goals will be reached in the library's mission statement: 'To promote information literacy, an excitement of learning, and a love of literature.'

► With reference to the preceding descriptions of classroom/school programs, the range of activities reflects how authentic literature can be used in purposeful and challenging ways (e.g., to enhance content learning, literary understanding, ability to respond, and positive attitudes toward reading). To elaborate on one of its uses, quality literature has a wealth of potential to be woven into the content curriculum. In support of this view, reference is made to particular research. According to Cox and Zarillo (1993), the key to success in weaving literature into content learning is remembering that books can be read for enjoyment or to learn new information. Both purposes are important to nurture the relationship that is possible between good books and content learning. An approach recommended by these authors consists of two readings, the first being strictly for enjoyment and the second to identify information related to the unit of study. Brozo and Simpson (1995) recommend that a good beginning is for the teacher to read aloud a literature selection relevant to the unit of study followed by students independently reading related books chosen by the teacher or themselves. To begin a unit of study by reading aloud a good book not only sparks interest in the subject matter but also makes information easier to relate to for students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to remember that effective learning takes place when reading is done from both an aesthetic stance whereby the focus is on experiencing the piece and an efferent stance by which the emphasis is on obtaining information from the text.

### SUMMARY

To summarize the use of literature with students at the junior and senior high levels, a brief overview follows of the main teaching and learning approaches covered in this section of the paper -

*reading aloud, response journals, literature discussions, vocabulary development, and content learning.* Included is information on the general importance of each as well as selected points to show the relationship of each to the reading process in terms of vocabulary and/or comprehension development. Be advised that many of the points made reflect the views of others as already noted and are repeated in verbatim form as previously stated.

The learning benefits and motivational power associated with reading fine books aloud have an important place, not only with children but with adolescents as well. Because storytelling continues to be regarded as an activity for younger children, often adolescents do not regard listening to stories as an appropriate activity for themselves. Convincing adolescents that listening to stories can be beneficial for them is possible by providing background information on the history of storytelling as the accepted mode of entertaining, informing, and educating the general populace. Also, adolescents should be made aware of the importance and functions of storytelling in various cultures today. In choosing the right story, the first one is of utmost importance to ensure that the interest of listeners is captured. It is very important to use reading material that is motivational in trying to develop the reading proficiency of adolescents for it is a well-known fact that motivation is a critical factor in their literacy learning. One successful strategy proven to enhance their motivation is that of capitalizing on their interests.

Journal writing has the power to engage critical reflection and provide students with many ways to examine information presented in text. To help students get started, teachers need to show students how to respond by talking aloud and responding for them to observe. Rarely is one demonstration sufficient. An important part of response is guiding students to construct their own questions. A point to remember is to formulate questions that do not have a right answer but have

a possibility of answers. In order to become truly literate, students need to be asking questions that cause them to think about what they read - before, during, and after reading. Through this process, students construct their own knowledge. To truly know something means synthesizing and integrating it into existing knowledge. One way to achieve this goal is by responding to text in journals.

Genuine literature discussions do not just happen so ample time is needed for both teachers and students to adjust to a more democratic discussion format. Teachers need to adjust in moving from traditionally leading the discussion to a less central role and students who are not accustomed to in-depth interaction with a book also need lots of time and modelling before they feel comfortable expressing their views. In order to prepare students for working in groups, the teacher may hold an information session to outline group work rules and individual activities. Once groups are formed and functioning, there should be enough latitude to hold a free-flowing discussion without much intervention from the teacher. Most important is the idea that teachers must be willing to relinquish control to students in literature discussion groups so that they can gain rich understandings of what they read in the context of social interactions with peers. By doing so, students are encouraged to share ideas with each other and ask questions of one another that is not possible in a whole class discussion directed by the teacher.

Vocabulary learning takes place and is long-lasting when students are immersed in words, are active in discovering word meanings, personalize word learning, use multiple sources of information, control their own learning, develop independent strategies, and use words in meaningful ways. When word study is tied to relevant reading, students' vocabulary is broadened in ways that are meaningful for them. A common practice in the past was to do vocabulary exercises in which students were given a random list of words to be defined and used in a sentence. For the time and effort expended in this

activity, there was probably very little carryover for future use. The advantage of having students select their own words is that it gives them the opportunity to develop their vocabulary knowledge genuinely. Because students will generally select challenging words to learn and teach each other, teachers need not be overly concerned that students will avoid words that stimulate vocabulary growth. If students have ownership over vocabulary that is learned, the words are more apt to be remembered and applied in future contexts.

The major reasons for providing students with access to literature to aid content learning are that doing so offers students the following benefits: • depth of information (reliance on single source, such as textbook, not comprehensive); • motivation to read (students read books of personal interest); • distinctive points of view (textbooks tend to present traditional perspective); • materials that fit their abilities (students do best on tasks within their limits); • a sense of ownership about what they are learning (students more apt to try harder if given choices); and • opportunities to make decisions and solve problems (textbooks tend to emphasize information recall as opposed to literature that promotes various thinking processes). To build literature-based content units before implementing them in the classroom, there must be provision for adequate time, resources, and expertise. For the effective use of informational literature, a partnership needs to develop between teachers and librarians and there should also be input from students in constructing a unit so that different perspectives are included.

As teachers explore literature with adolescents, one goal should be to convince them that reading books can be a very pleasurable and rewarding experience. Any ideas that have the potential to increase students' involvement with fine literature should be strongly considered so that they become or remain enthused about reading.

## REFERENCES

- Anson, C. and Beach, R. ( 1995). *Journals in the classroom: Writing to learn*. Norwood, MA: Christopher- Gordon Publishers.
- Atwell, N. (1990). *Coming to know: Writing to learn in the intermediate grades*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bannon, E., Fisher, P., Pozzi, L., and Wessel, D. (1990). Effective definitions for word learning. *Journal of Reading*, 34, 301-302.
- Beach, R. and Marshall, J. (1991). *Teaching literature in the secondary school*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Beach, R. (1993). *A teacher's introduction to reader-response theories*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Berger, L. (1996). Reader response journals: You make the meaning...and how. *Query*, 25, (3), 33-38.
- Blachowicz, C. and Fisher, P. (1996). *Teaching vocabulary in all classrooms*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bonnycastle, S. (1991). *In search of authority: An introductory guide to literary theory*. Lewiston, NY: Broadview.
- Brozo, W. and Simpson, M. (1995). *Readers, teachers, learners: Expanding literacy in secondary schools*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Buikema, J. and Graves, M. (1993). Teaching students to use context clues to infer word meanings. *Journal of Reading*, 36, (6), 450-457.
- Carr, E. and Mazur-Stewart, M. (1988). The vocabulary overview guide: A metacognitive strategy to improve vocabulary comprehension and retention. *Journal of Reading*, 28, 648-669.
- Carter, B. and Abrahamson, R. (1991). Nonfiction in a read-aloud program. *Journal of Reading*, 34, (8), 638-642.
- Chan, J. (1979). *Tradebooks: Uses and benefits for content area teaching*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 189 578).
- Charles, M. and Leppington, S. (1997). The case for historical fiction. *FWTAO/FAEO Newsletter*, 15, (3), 40-45.

- Chase, A. and Duffelmeyer, F. (1990). VOCAB-LIT: Integrating vocabulary study and literature study. *Journal of Reading*, 34, (3), 188-193.
- Cox, C. and Zarillo, J. (1993). *Teaching reading with children's literature*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cullinan, B. (1993). *Fact and fiction: Literature across the curriculum*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Daisey, P. (1993). Three ways to promote the values and uses of literacy at any age. *Journal of Reading*, 36, (6), 436-440.
- Daisey, P. (1997). Promoting literacy in secondary content area classrooms with biography projects. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40, (4), 270-278.
- Dekker, M. (1991). Books, reading and response: A teacher researcher tells a story. *The New Advocate*, 4, 37-46.
- deVos, G. (1991). *Storytelling for young adults*. Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited.
- Dole, J., Sloan, C., and Trathen, W. (1995). Teaching vocabulary within the context of literature. *Journal of Reading*, 38, (6), 452-460.
- Duchein, M. and Mealey, D. (1993). Remembrance of books past...long past: Glimpses into literacy. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 33, (1), 13-28.
- Eanes, R. (1997). *Content area literacy: Teaching for today and tomorrow*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers.
- Ellis, W. (1987). To tell the truth or at least a little nonfiction. *ALAN Review*, 14, 39-40.
- Fisher, P., Blachowicz, C., Pozzi, L., and Costa, M. (1992). Vocabulary teaching and learning in middle school literature study groups. Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Flood, J., Lapp, D., Flood, S., and Nagel, G. (1992). Am I allowed to group? Using flexible patterns for effective instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, (8), 608-616.
- Flood, D., Flood, J., Ranck-Buhr, W., Van Dyke, J., and Spacek, S. (1997). "Do you really just want us to talk about this book?": A closer look at book clubs as an instructional tool. In J. Paratore and R. McCormack (Eds.), *Peer talk in the classroom: Learning from research* (pp.6-23). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



- Fredericks, A., Blake-Kline, A., and Kristo, J. (1997). Teaching the integrated language arts: Process and practice. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.
- Freeman, E. (1991). Informational books: Models for student report writing. *Language Arts*, 68, (6), 470-473.
- Fuhler, C. (1992). The integration of tradebooks into the social studies curriculum. *Middle School Journal*, 24, (2), 63-66.
- Fuhler, C. (1994). Putting poetry in its place. *Middle School Journal*, 25, (5), 12-15.
- Giblin, J. (1991). Exciting nonfiction. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 7, (3), 47-54.
- Graves, D. (1989). When children respond to fiction. *Language Arts*, 66, 776-783.
- Greenlaw, M. and McIntosh, M. (1987). Science fiction and fantasy worth teaching to teens. In B. Cullinan (Ed.), *Children's literature in the reading program* (pp.111-120). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Hammond, D. (1983). How your students can predict their way to reading comprehension. *Learning*, 12, (4), 62-64.
- Hart-Hewins, L. and Wells, J. (1992). Read it in the classroom: Organizing an interactive language arts program, grades 4-9. Pembroke Publishers.
- Irvin, J. (1990). Reading and the middle school student: Strategies to enhance literacy. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Jenkins, Y. (1997). Literature circles and adolescent boys. *ACCESS*, 11, (1), 26-27.
- Lehman, B. and Crook, P. (1989). Content reading, tradebooks, and students: Learning about the Constitution through nonfiction. *Reading Improvement*, 26, (1), 50-57.
- Lund, D. (1997). Literary links: Really connecting students with contemporary literature in the classroom. *Alberta English*, 35, (1), 25-30.
- McAlpine, G. and Warren, J. (1997). Reader-response approaches to teaching literature. *Fastback*, No. 417, 17-23.
- Mellon, C. (1990). Leisure reading choices of rural teens. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 18, (4), 223-228.
- Moore, D., Moore, S., Cunningham, P., and Cunningham, J. (1994). Developing readers and writers

in the content areas, K-12. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers.

- Morrow, L., Rand, M., and Smith, J. (1995). Reading aloud to children: Characteristics and relationships between teacher and student behaviours. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 35, (1), 85-101.
- Moss, B. (1991). Children's nonfiction tradebooks: A complement to content area texts. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, 26-31.
- Nagy, W., Herman, P., and Anderson, R. (1985). Learning words from context. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 20, (2), 233-253.
- Opitz, M. (1992). The cooperative reading activity: An alternative to ability grouping. *The Reading Teacher*, 45, (9), 736-738.
- Palmer, R. and Stewart, R. (1997). Nonfiction tradebooks in content area instruction: Realities and potential. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40, (8), 630-641.
- Pappas, C. (1991). Fostering full access to literacy by including information books. *Language Arts*, 68, (6), 449-462.
- Parungao, P. (1997). Reading passport program. *The Bookmark*, 38, (3), 75-78.
- Pressley, M., Goodchild, R., Fleet, J., Zajchowski, R., and Evans, E. (1989). The challenges of classroom strategy instruction. *Elementary School Journal*, 89, 3, 301-342.
- Richardson, J. (1994). Great read-alouds for prospective teachers and secondary students. *Journal of Reading*, 38, (2), 98-103.
- Richardson, J. and Smith, N. (1997). A read-aloud for science in space. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40, (4), 308-310.
- Routman, R. (1991). *Invitations*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Routman, R. (1994). *Invitations: Changing as teachers and learners, K-12*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Satrpa, J. and Rickwood, J. (1992). Literacy in the secondary school. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 15, (1), 59-68.
- Simpson, A. (1995). Not the class novel: A different reading program. *Journal of Reading*, 38, (4), 290-294.

- Smith, J. and Johnson, H. (1993). Bringing it together: Literature in an integrative curriculum. *Middle School Journal*, 25, (1), 3-7.
- Stewart, R. (1994). A causal connective look at the future of secondary content area literacy. *Contemporary Education*, 65, (2), 90-94.
- Stahl, S. and Fairbanks, M. (1986). The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, 72-110.
- Stahl, S. and Vancil, S. (1986). Discussion is what makes semantic maps work in vocabulary instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 62-69.
- Trelease, J. (1989). *The new read-aloud handbook* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Penguin.
- Wells, M. (1993). At the junction of reading and writing: How dialogue journals contribute to students' reading development. *Journal of Reading*, 36, (4), 294-302.
- Wood, K., McCormack, R., Lapp, D., and Flood, J. (1997). Improving young adolescent literacy through collaborative learning. *Middle School Journal*, 28, (3), 26-34.
- Wood, K. and Muth, K. (1991). The case for improved instruction in the middle grades. *Journal of Reading*, 35, (2), 84-90.
- Wood, L. (1986, August 22). How teenage book tastes change. *Publishers Weekly*, 39.

#### BOOKS CITED

- Aaron, C. (1985). *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Ames, M. (1981). *Anna to the Infinite Power*. New York: Scribner's.
- Asimov, I. (1983). *Caught in the Organ Draft*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Girous.
- Belden, W. (1981). *Mind-Call*. New York: Atheneum.
- Bellingham, B. (1985). *Storm Child*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.
- Brandis, M. (1985). *Quarter-Pie Window*. Erin, ON: Porcupine's Quill.
- Brandis, M. (1996). *Rebellion*. Erin, ON: Porcupine's Quill.

- Brandis, M. (1990). *Sign of the Scales*. Erin, ON: Porcupine's Quill.
- Brandis, M. (1982). *Tinderbox*. Erin, ON: Porcupine's Quill.
- Buchan, B. (1972). *Copper Sunrise*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic.
- Burroughs, E. (1912). *Tarzan of the Apes*. New York: Ballantine.
- Callahan, S. (1986). *Adrift: Seventy-six Days Lost at Sea*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Chambers, A. (1985). *Out of Time*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Clark, J. (1995). *Dream Carvers*. New York: Viking.
- Clark, J. (1980). *Hand of Robin Squires*. Markham, ON: Penguin.
- Collier, C. and Collier, W. (1990). *War comes to Willy Freeman*. New York: Scholastic.
- Cook, L. (1994). *Hiding Place*. Toronto, ON: Lester.
- Cormier, R. (1974). *The Chocolate War*. New York: Dell.
- Crook, C. (1991). *Flight*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart.
- Crook, C. (1993). *Laura's Choice*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Windflower.
- Crook, C. (1995). *Meyer's Creek*. Don Mills, ON: Stoddart.
- Crook, C. (1994). *Nellie*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart.
- Downie, M. and Downie, J. (1980). *Honor Bound*. Toronto, ON: Oxford.
- Edwards, M. (1993). *Ocean Between*. Toronto, ON: Napoleon.
- Freedman, N. (1973). *Joshua, Son of None*. New York: Delacorte.
- Freedman, R. (1987). *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. New York: Clarion.
- Freeman, B. (1978). *First Spring on the Grand Banks*. Toronto, ON: Oxford.
- Freeman, B. ((1984). *Harbour Thieves*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.
- Freeman, B. (1975). *Shantymen of Cache Lake*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.

- Freeman, B. (1977). *Trouble at Lachine Mill*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.
- Fulghum, R. (1988). *All I Really Wanted to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. New York: Villard.
- German, T. (1985). *Breed Apart*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.
- Greenwood, B. (1984). *Question of Loyalty*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic.
- Gzowski, P. (1980). *The Sacrament*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.
- Hill, D. (1981). *Day of the Starwind*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hill, D. (1981). *Deathwing over Veynaa*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hill, D. (1980). *Galactic Warlord*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hill, D. (1981). *Planet of the Warlord*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hill, D. (1983). *Young Legionary*. New York: Atheneum.
- Hoover, H. (1977). *The Delikon*. New York: Viking.
- Hudson, J. (1984). *Sweetgrass*. Edmonton, Alberta: Tree Frog Press.
- Hughes, M. (1985). *Devil on My Back*. New York: Atheneum.
- Ibbitson, J. (1991). *1812: Jeremy and the General*. Don Mills, ON: Maxwell MacMillan.
- Johnson, A. and Johnson, E. (1982). *An Alien Music*. New York: Four Winds.
- Johnson, A. and Johnson, E. (1984). *The Danger Quotient*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lawrence, L. (1982). *Calling B for Butterfly*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lawrence, L. (1985). *Children of the Dust*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lawson, J. (1993). *White Jade Tiger*. Victoria, BC: Beach Holme.
- Le Carré, J. (1963). *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan.
- London, J. (1903). *The Call of the Wild*. New York: Macmillan.

- Lotteridge, C. (1992). *Ticket to Curlew*. Toronto, ON: Douglas and McIntyre.
- Lunn, J. (1983). *Root Cellar*. Markham, ON: Puffin.
- Lunn, J. (1986). *Shadow in Hawthorn Bay*. Toronto, ON: Puffin.
- Major, K. (1989). *Blood Red Ochre*. New York: Doubleday.
- Mandela, W. (1984). *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. New York: Norton.
- Martel, S. (1980). *King's Daughter*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre.
- Maxwell, N. (1990). *Witch Doctor's Apprentice: Hunting for Medicinal Plants in the Amazon*. New York: Citadel.
- McCaffery, A. (1979). *Dragondrums*. New York: Atheneum.
- McCaffery, A. (1977). *Dragonsinger*. New York: Atheneum.
- McCaffery, A. (1976). *Dragonsong*. New York: Atheneum.
- McIntyre, V. (1978). *Dreamsnake*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- McKillip, P. (1984). *Moon-Flash*. New York: Atheneum.
- McKillip, P. (1985). *The Moon and the Face*. New York: Atheneum.
- Meltzer, M. (1988). *The Story of How Gentiles Saves Jews in the Holocaust*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Mullane, M. (1995). *Lift off! An Astronaut's Dream*. New York: Silver Burdett.
- Peck, R. (1983). *Something for Joey*. New York: Bantam.
- Perkyns, D. (1988). *Rachel's Revolution*. Hantsport, NS: Lancelot.
- Pohl, F. et al. (1980). *The Great Science Fiction Series: Stories from the Best of the Science Fiction Series from 1944 to 1980 by 20 All-Time Favourite Writers*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Reaney, J. (1961). *Boy with an R in his Hand*. Erin, ON: Porcupine's Quill.
- Scanlan, W. (1989). *Rebellion*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart.

- Schwartz, A. (1981). *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. New York: Lippicott.
- Smucker B. (1981). *Days of Terror*. Markham, ON: Puffin.
- Smucker, B. (1985). *White Mist*. Toronto, ON: Irwin.
- Smucker, B. (1977). *Underground to Canada*. Toronto, ON: Irwin.
- Smyth, D. (1991). *Loyalist Runaway*. Halifax, NS: Formac.
- Strauss, V. (1985). *Worldstone*. New York: Four Winds.
- Strieber, W. (1985). *Wolf of Shadows*. New York: Knopf.
- Sutherland, R. (1988). *Son of the Hounds*. Richmond Hill, ON: Scholastic.
- Swindells, R. (1985). *Brother in the Land*. New York: Holiday House.
- Truss, J. (1990). *A Very Small Rebellion*. Toronto, ON: General.
- Turner, H. (1989). *Rebel Run*. Toronto, ON: Gage.
- Vinge, S. (1982). *Psion*. New York: Delacorte.
- Webb, S. (1983). *Earth Song*. New York: Atheneum.
- Webb, S. (1982). *Earthchild*. New York: Atheneum.
- Webb, S. (1984). *Ram Song*. New York: Atheneum.
- Wilhelm, K. (1985). *Welcome Chaos*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Yee, P. (1986). *Curses of a Third Uncle*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.
- Yee, P. (1989). *Tales from Gold Mountain. Stories of the Chinese in the New World*. Toronto, ON: Douglas and McIntyre.
- Zebrowski, G. (1985). *The Stars Will Speak*. New York: Harper and Row.

## CLOSING RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaning on the views of Routman (1996), following are broad recommendations for enhancing the reading development of students:

- *Match students with appropriate books.* Consideration must be given to text difficulty as well as personal interests and experiences. It is difficult to make progress in reading when students are continually given books that are too difficult to read.
- *Read aloud every day at all grade levels.* Because reading aloud promotes vocabulary and comprehension development, students should be provided with daily opportunities to hear and respond to literature selections. A variety of books should be chosen to expose students to different genres, authors, and writing styles.
- *Provide daily time for free-choice reading.* Time spent reading books is an excellent predictor of reading achievement. Students are apt to read more when they see others engaged in the act of reading.
- *Respect students' rights as readers.* Teachers should be respectful of certain conditions quoted as follows: "the right to not read, the right to skip pages, the right to not finish, the right to reread, the right to read anything, the right to browse, the right to read out loud, the right to not defend your tastes."
- *Use most of language arts time to read.* More reading or rereading is often the best means for becoming a better reader. Independent reading can be done individually, with a partner or a small group.
- *Provide all students with opportunities to discuss fine literature in small groups.* Because large-group discussions do not ensure that everyone's voice will be heard, opportunities should be provided



for students to discuss what they have read in small groups. Even struggling readers can understand and discuss a book that is above their instructional reading level if they are provided with support through books on tape or partner readings.

- *Engage in guided silent reading.* The basis of this reading is a teacher and students reading a book together silently with periodic discussion. Since most of the reading adults do is in silence, students need to be trained to do this too.
- *Arrange individuals and small groups for explicit instruction.* Instruction that arises from authentic assessment (data gathering and observation) and evaluation (decisions based on assessment) is important in order to teach students how to use a range of strategies when they read. Working with the whole class is okay occasionally but it is difficult to get to know students as readers and thinkers in this way.
- *Ignore most oral reading miscues, especially if meaning is not altered.* If a student can read most of the words and shows understanding by being able to recall the text, there should not be a focus on word-perfect reading. Any patterns of miscues in oral reading that consistently interfere with fluent reading can be used as teaching points for the future.
- *Do shared reading regularly at all grade levels.* Shared reading is defined as a beneficial reading situation where listeners see the text, observe a reader (usually the teacher) reading it with fluency, and are invited to read along. This form of reading is great for building a sense of community, supporting struggling readers, and enjoying literature selections together.

As a result of the extensive reading I have done in connection with the use of literature to help young people become more literate, certain thoughts have taken shape. It is my strongest belief that

if individuals are to become lifetime readers, they must be turned on to books. This can happen if *knowledgeable* use is made of the excellent literature that abounds. So teachers need to become informed as much as possible about the variety of instructional approaches and learning activities that have proven to be successful. With guidance and direction from a teacher who is operating from a strong base of knowledge, there is every likelihood that students will have beneficial and pleasurable experiences with books. To support teachers in this endeavour, administrative personnel have an important role to play. Certain budgeting provisions should be made. Apart from sponsoring workshops and the like, there should be an ample supply of research-based publications made available to teachers so that they can keep abreast of information related to literature-based programs.

In relation to the use of literature, what are some of my other beliefs that apply to individuals at different age levels and of different abilities? One belief is that since the skills of language (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) are interrelated, it follows that the development of one enhances the other. Good literature serves as a rich resource for overall language development. One of the best ways to promote all facets of language is through sharing experiences that can take a variety of forms. Another belief is that the skills of reading and writing should be taught within the context of a literary work that is in current use. In this way, activities are being done with words or concepts that are actually being encountered rather than ideas taken from workbooks that have little or no relevance at that point in time. Another belief is that ample time needs to be provided in school for independent reading. This is especially beneficial for those who do minimal reading in their free time beyond school hours. The more one reads, the more benefits there are to gain. It is, therefore, important to make available a wide array of fine literature to entice young people to read which can influence them to become lifelong readers.

## REFERENCE

- Routman, R. (1996). *Literacy at the crossroads: Crucial talk about reading, writing, and other teaching dilemmas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

## PORTFOLIO NOTES

Manuscript received: December, 1997  
Revisions requested: February, 1998  
Revisions received: August, 1998  
Manuscript accepted: September, 1998





