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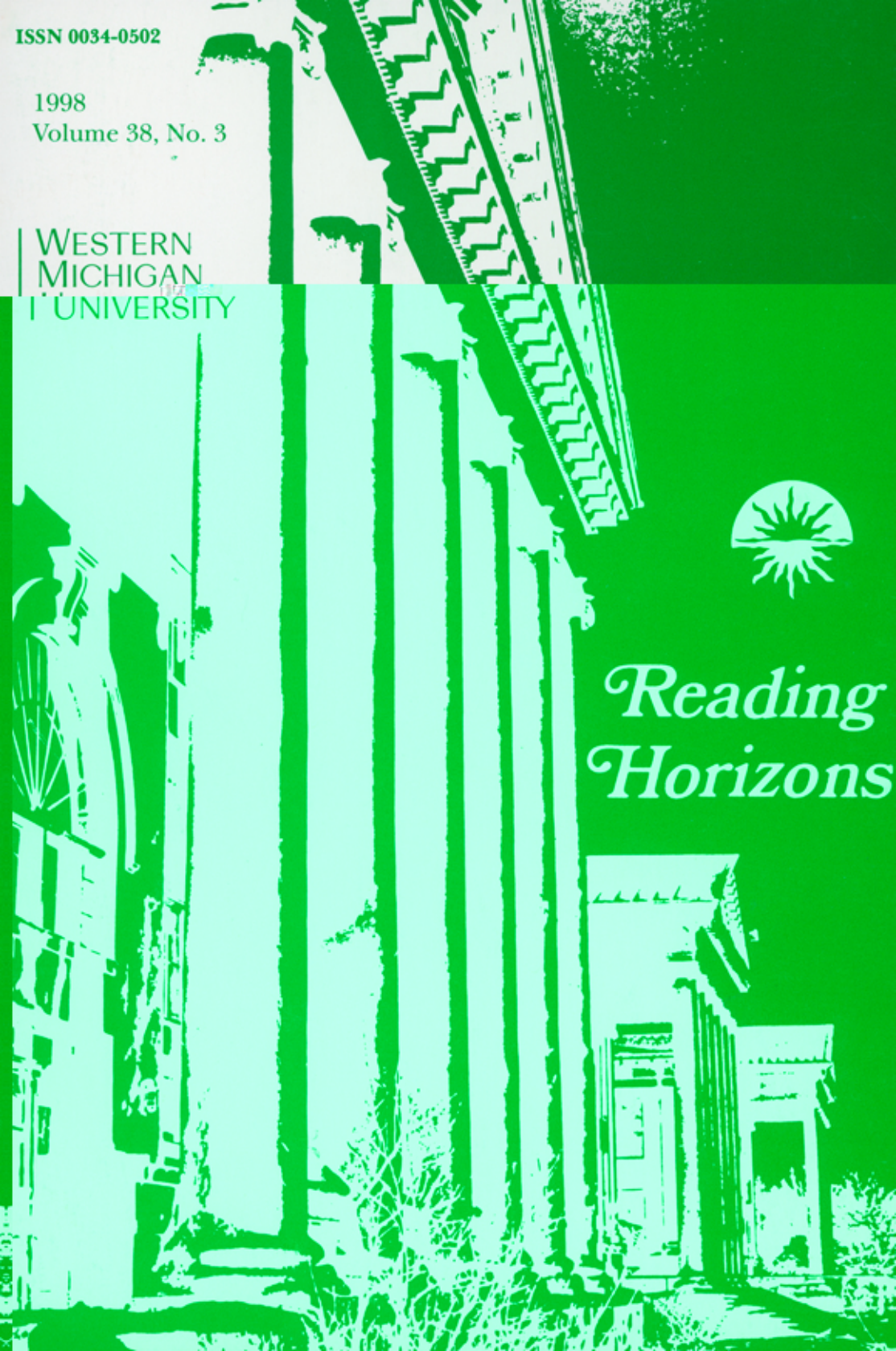
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Reading Horizons





READING HORIZONS:
A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Editors: Paul T. Wilson & Karen F. Thomas
Executive Assistant: Susan Standish

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Early book sharing: What teachers should know

Sherry Kragler

Ball State University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe strategies that caregivers use while reading books with young children. Research indicates that caregivers: a) use strategies that simplify or extend book language, b) use prosody, and c) use management strategies so the book reading event is meaningful for children. Then, how teachers of preschool children can use these same strategies to plan meaningful book sharing events for children in preschool settings is described.

"Read me a story mommy," pleads Brendan as he climbs upon his mother's lap. Amy gently wraps her little boy in her arms and opens his favorite storybook. Reading storybooks with a caregiver is an important event in children's lives, as with Brendan, and profoundly affects children's early literacy development (Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988; 1995; Bus, IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini, 1995; Durkin, 1966; Reese, 1995; Snow, 1983; Teale, 1984).

Because these early book sharing events are crucial for literacy development, preschool teachers should understand and consider the types of early book sharing experiences children have had at home. The purposes of this paper are to describe what is known about effective caregivers' book sharing strategies, and to tell how teachers can use this information to plan meaningful book sharing events for children in preschool settings.

CAREGIVERS' DECISION MAKING

Research has indicated the optimum characteristics of effective and positive home environments supporting literacy development (McGee and Richgels, 1995). In this research, one dominating characteristic described how caregivers interacted with their children

in book reading on a daily basis (Cochran-Smith, 1986; Morrow, O'Connor, and Smith, 1990; Sulzby, 1985). During these interactions, caregivers constantly reflected on which decisions to make about how they would proceed through the books with their children (Altwerger, Diehl-Faxon, and Dockstader-Anderson, 1985; Bruner, 1978; Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988; Martin and Reutzel, 1996). From this research, several strategies are detailed below describing how caregivers interact with their children.

(1) Caregivers Discuss

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learning takes place through discussion with more capable language users. While reading with their children, caregivers used dialogue to strategically manipulate language to accommodate conceptual and linguistic development of their individual children (Bruner, 1978; Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988, 1995; Martin, 1998). Bruner (1978) termed this caregiver behavior as "scaffolding." To scaffold, Bruner (1978) stated that a caregiver focuses a child's attention on familiar information ignoring what the child may not understand. Then the caregiver provides a model of the expected dialogue from which a child can extract selectively what is needed for filling a role in discourse. This conversational nature of book reading invites caregivers to scaffold book language for children (Altwerger, et al., 1985; Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988).

(2) Caregivers Simplify Books

Caregivers simplify books for children in various ways. DeLoache and DeMendoza (1987) asserted that at times caregivers reduce the complexity of language by conceptually simplifying words. Eliminating words with constant clusters for simpler forms of the same word is another example of simplifying books (Moskowitz, 1985). "Tummy" may replace the word stomach. To accommodate a child's conceptual understanding, a tiger may be called a "kitty." Once children are comfortable with a format, Bruner (1978) stated that this simplified communication level becomes a "launching platform" for teaching children new concepts. If children are given too much information while exposing them to new concepts, the caregivers simplified the process again, thus regaining the children's attention (Bruner, 1978; Martin, 1998).

(3) Caregivers Elaborate and Extend Books

As children acquired more sophisticated oral and print language skills, caregivers would not only read the print, but elaborated on concepts introduced during book reading (Altwerger et al., 1985; Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988; Martin, 1998; Moerk, 1972; Snow, 1983). For instance, while reading *The Three Little Pigs*, a caregiver may talk about why the house of bricks didn't come down when the wolf blew. Some of the concepts that caregivers use to extend a book come from

the illustrations. In sharing a book about farm animals, a caregiver can point out a cow's udder and explain the purpose of the udder.

(4) *Caregivers Make Connections and Predictions*

Parents spend time connecting and relating their children's experiences to related concepts in books (Altwerger et al., 1985; Bus and IJzendoorn, 1988; Martin and Reutzel, 1996). For example, while reading a story about a teddy bear who falls in a well, the caregiver carefully pointed out the well in the illustration and said, "Do you remember when we visited Uncle Dave's farm and you saw the well? Uncle Dave gets water from it. Remember? This is the same type of well."

While making these connections and reading with their children, caregivers frequently asked their children what was going to happen next in the story. Sometimes, the caregivers would even ask their children higher level questions about the story. For example, while reading *One Teddy Bear Is Enough!* which is a story that explores friendships and sharing, a caregiver asked her child if she has ever felt jealous. In addition, while using predictable text, caregivers ask their children to predict the repeated word phrases. While reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, caregivers may want their children to predict what phrase they will see next.

(5) *Caregivers Use Prosody Effectively*

Caregivers also use the prosodic features of the voice, the melodies, and rhythm of language to draw attention to the drama of the story (Altwerger et al., 1985). For example, while reading *The Three Little Pigs*, caregivers may use a low pitch to characterize the wolf, "Little PIG, little PIG let me IN!" They may use a high pitch to characterize the pigs answer, "Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!"

These prosodic features of the caregivers' voices are often the first linguistic variations to be learned by children during oral language acquisition (Buss, 1984; Fernald, 1984). Buss (1984) also contended that the prosodic features of the voice may also be the first linguistic variations to be acquired as children learn about book language (p. 297). Prosodic language cues may be a precursor to literacy development (Schreiber, 1980, 1987; Snow, Coots, and Smith, 1982).

(6) *Caregivers Manage*

Caregivers used various management techniques to maintain their children's engagement during book sharing (Murphy, 1978; Ninio and Bruner, 1978, Ninio, 1980; Martin and Reutzel, 1996; Martin, 1998). For instance, they pointed to words or illustrated concepts and asked questions. Caregivers would also help their children point to objects in the pictures or to point to words. They shared control of the book sharing event by allowing their children to hold

the book and turn pages. Additionally, caregivers maintained physical contact with their children without restricting the children's movements. Most caregivers knew to end the book reading when their children lost interest in the book.

Because these early book reading strategies are important in homes where sharing books with children is common, teachers of preschool children should also consider using these same strategies as tools to guide and continue children's development of book language concepts in classrooms. The following is a preschool classroom scenario describing a teacher's use of these early book reading strategies while reading with his students.

CLASSROOM APPLICATION

Mr. Smith's class of four-year-olds starts each day in a similar fashion. As they enter the room, there is a personal welcome to each child. The day starts with play time for the children. Mr. Smith's class has a variety of centers: blocks, art, books with related book props and puppets, writing center, drama, and housekeeping. Each of these centers includes literacy materials. For example, in the housekeeping center, there are magazines, newspapers, pads of paper for grocery lists, pens, and other materials one would find in a house. Mr. Smith also has a center whose content changes depending on the children's interests or the seasons of the year. At this time, the rotating center is the post office.

There is also a place in the room for Mr. Smith to share books with children. During the day, Mr. Smith gathers small groups of children (3-5) to read at different times. He realizes his children get more involved with books if they are in small groups. They have more opportunities to talk about the books than when he shared books with the whole class (Dickinson, DeTemple, Hirschler, and Smith, 1992; Morrow and Smith, 1990). Mr. Smith lets the children point to pictures and turn the pages. He wants to share control of the book reading with the children.

Getting Ready to Read

On this particular day, Mr. Smith has decided to introduce the story, *The Snowy Day*, by Ezra Jack Keats to the children. Since Mr. Smith is teaching in a preschool located in the south, he needs to spend time thinking about how to connect the topic of the book to his children's experiences. Mr. Smith has decided to do several things to introduce the children to the concepts of snow and cold as a whole class activity. He will share the following items he has brought to school:

- pictures of snow and other winter-related pictures;
- other winter items; such as, heavy coats, hats, mittens, boots, and a snowsuit;

- shaved ice for the children to experience the feel of cold and to see what happens to the ice in the warm room; and a
- short video on snow and winter for the children to see and hear the sounds of winter.

Since Mr. Smith knows the children have all walked and made tracks in sand, he will use this experience to help his children understand what it is like to walk and make tracks in snow. At this time, Mr. Smith will share the book with a small group of children while the others are at the various centers.

Engaging the Children in the Snowy Day

Mr. Smith will have the children do a picture-walk to make predictions and connections with their previous experiences.

Mr. Smith is ready to read the story to the children. He realizes that he doesn't need to simplify the text for the children since he has already made the earlier connections for them. While reading the story, Mr. Smith has noted several places to extend the children's knowledge of concepts in the book. He is choosing just a few to elaborate. For example, he realizes his children may not understand the concept of a snowball fight even though they all know what it means to fight. Another concept he has chosen to clarify for the children is making a snow angel. This is a special problem because not all children may know about angels. In this situation, Mr. Smith has decided to describe snow angels as a play activity children do with snow. It is a large print in the snow similar to their tracks in the sand. In addition, he will clarify that snow is slick and that snow melts. Finally, the children will check on the ice in the room to see what has happened to it. In this last case, Mr. Smith will extend the idea that snow and ice change.

Mr. Smith did not choose to use prosody while reading *The Snowy Day* since it does not have dialogue. However in other books, this may be a strategy that he will use because of the dialogue.

Mr. Smith will need to use several management strategies while reading *The Snowy Day*. He plans to continually monitor the book reading activity by asking questions and listening to the children's responses. He will also maintain student involvement by sharing control of the book reading. This will be done by allowing the children to join in reading, making comments, or asking questions. Finally, Mr. Smith will point to various objects in the pictures to draw the children's attention to particular aspects in the illustrations.

Mr. Smith is looking forward to sharing the book, *The Snowy Day* with the children. He has carefully thought through the process to create a meaningful book sharing based on his knowledge of his children's experiences and their literacy development. He is aware that this book sharing strategies will change depending on the concepts in the book and his children's literacy development.

SUMMARY

Children come to preschool with some knowledge about books. Preschool teachers can build on and continue this development with appropriate activities in their classrooms (Weinbarger, 1996). In fact, McGee and Purcell-Gates (1997) state that "children learn to read and write successfully if their teachers accommodate their instruction to the children, and they struggle if they do not" (p. 312). Book sharing is one example of a wonderful opportunity teachers have to develop and build children's literacy awareness and language. By using similar strategies caregivers have used, teachers can ease children's transition to school learning as well as continue to support their literacy development.

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Literary and personal criticism for preservice teachers: A pedagogical imperative

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a theoretical framework for designing a children's literature course that requires preservice teachers to critically analyze literature in ways that are personally meaningful. In addition, specific suggestions for challenging preservice teachers in children's literature courses to read intensively rather than only extensively are outlined.

The shift away from exclusively using traditional basals to literature-based instruction in reading and language arts (Harris, 1996; Hoffman, 1996; Huck, 1996; Strickland, 1994-95), as well as the shift to supplementing content areas like math, social studies, and science with trade books or literature in our elementary schools continues to grow (Alleman and Brophy, 1994; Lake, 1993; Tunnel and Ammon, 1993; Van Middendorp and Lee, 1994). These changes heighten the need for inservice and preservice teachers to possess a strong background in children's literature.

While only eight states list a children's or adolescent literature course as a specific requirement for state certification of elementary education teachers, (Boydston, 1996; Mastain, 1991), some teacher education programs, on their own, enforce a requirement through the general education requirements or through some content core requirements to take a children's literature course. In instances where the requirement is not formal, academic advisors for preservice teachers often reinforce the worth of coursework in children's literature by strongly encouraging students to use electives to take such a course. Frey and Griffith (1979) provide the only study available of children's literature within English departments in the United States. They found that 40 of the 115 (37%) responding institutions offered a children's literature course. Eighteen of the 115 (16%) referred the researchers to the Colleges of Education or of Library Science. One other study, provided by Pugh (1972), found that children's literature was not a widespread requirement for preservice teachers in Great Britain. Certainly, one is quick to notice that the very nature of the

way the course is taught may be linked to the college (English, Education, Child Development, or Library Science) in which it is taught. However, a critical issue persists which has yet to be explored in the literature concerning the curricular design of such coursework; that is, the breadth of coverage.

The intent of this paper is two fold: (a) to make a strong rationale for designing a children's literature course that requires students to read and critically analyze a limited number of books using Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literature (1978), and (b) to make specific suggestions for challenging preservice teachers to focus on the depth of children's literature, rather than breadth.

No doubt, the time constraints of a single semester and the trade-off between depth and breadth of coverage influenced my decision to limit the course reading requirements to about eight chaptered novels, rather than the 50 or more books they must read in many of my colleagues' classes. In so doing, I am able to help students to evaluate literature critically and to perceive literature as an experience that aides them personally in the universal struggle for meaning in their lives.

My concern, as the instructor of a literature for young children and adolescents course, is that the children's literature course should take responsibility for providing future teachers with skills related to process rather than overload on content. Preservice teachers need long-term evaluative skills rather than the broad survey or large numbers of children's books. In short, from my vantage point, the course should function more as a literary criticism course and less as a traditional survey course. Furthermore, teacher educators must take responsibility for modeling the powerful notion that critically analyzing literature aids in the personal search for meaning. Many of my preservice teachers sadly enough have yet to discover that literature is not just words printed across a page. Literature, like any art form, has the potential to speak to us about the meaning of life. When this discovery is made, preservice teachers' enthusiasm for discussion and for reading is difficult to quench.

TEACHING LITERATURE IS TEACHING CRITICISM OF LITERATURE

Often, courses in children's literature which target education majors are typically organized as survey courses with the ultimate goal to expose students to as many books as possible, hence the 50 books. In many cases, this focus on breadth of coverage severely limits the degree to which students may explore the depths of great literature. For as Northrup Frye (1964) concluded:

In literature, we have both a theory and a practice. The practice is the production of literature... The theory is what I mean by criticism, the activity of uniting literature with society, and with the different contexts that literature

itself has... The great bulk of criticism is teaching, at all levels from the kindergarten to graduate schools (pp. 127-128).

Literature courses teach criticism of literature or analysis of literature or the "experience" of literature, not literature as a body of literature. The idea that one may not teach literature is of significance to teacher educators because of our shared concern for providing future teachers with the long-term skill necessary to select quality literature for our children, and in so doing we must be committed to modeling this notion that books are more than summaries, synopses, and book reports.

Some of my undergraduates enrolled in children's literature enter the course believing that literature exists for the sole purpose of torturing them with questions and reports as follow-ups. However, literature exists primarily because humans are intuitively involved in the struggle to make meaning out of the apparent chaos and arbitrariness of our lives.

HELPING PRESERVICE TEACHERS FIND PERSONAL MEANING THROUGH LITERATURE

In Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), the basic premise is that much of a traditional literature remains alive because "...our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives (p. 3)." Further, Bettelheim acknowledges the demands for literature based upon our human need:

...it must stimulate his imagination, help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions, be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems that perturb him (p. 5).

Similarly, Joseph Campbell (1988) examined another form of traditional literature in *The Power of the Myth* as being rooted in the search for the experience of being alive. All of these philosophers were keenly aware of the link between the complex nature of literature (even seemingly "simple" literature) and its important contributions in our personal struggle for meaning.

Five areas of personal meaning have been identified by the Viennese psychologist Viktor Frankl. From his professional experiences as a psychologist and from his life experiences as a survivor of World War II death camps, Frankl (1984) developed logotherapy. Logotherapy is the idea of therapy through the ongoing, never-ending quest for meaning. The five areas of meaning that Frankl (Fabry, 1980, pp. xiv-xix) suggested are: (1) Situations in which we discover

a truth about ourselves (even vicarious experiences); (2) Situations in which we see choices, limited as they may be (learning from past experience); (3) Situations in which we experience our uniqueness (personal relationships and artistic activities); (4) Situations requiring responsibility; (5) Situations requiring self-transcendence.

If we accept a definition of reading as an active and creative process and one that uses our past experiences, the first, second, and third areas of meaning-making are especially important. Not surprising to teacher educators, Frankl felt education can play a major part in guiding the young to find meaning through literature. (No doubt, bibliotherapy could be considered a subset of logotherapy.) Once again, in unison with Northrup and others, literature is viewed not as content to be taught, but as an experience to be acted upon.

Throughout the following examples, literature at its best holds meaning for our everyday lives. Michael Steig's (1989) *Stories of Reading* contains a great account of Marian's very personal response to *Wuthering Heights* (p. 58) and Patrick Shannon's book (1995) *Text, Lies, and Videotape: Stories About Life, Literacy, and Learning* provides many authentic examples of teachers, students and teacher educators negotiating life's meaning in both their lives and in texts (p. xii). Likewise, preservice teachers quickly make the very lucid discovery that books intended for children such as *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) or *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952) hold intense meanings for their lives today. When this serendipitously happens as we explore and critically evaluate themes, preservice teachers are ripe for accepting Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of response to literature which states, "This becomes part of the ongoing stream of his experience, to be reflected at any angle important to him as a human being (p. 12)." The transactional theory of literature accepts the experiencing of literature as a coming-together of readers and text where past experiences and present personality plus present interest and preoccupation impact the meaning derived by each individual.

"The reading of a text is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment in the life history of the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978, pp. 12-13)." As students themselves, preservice teachers are refreshed and relieved by Rosenblatt's statements which validate the meaning they take from the text. As readers negotiating meaning from the text, they are truly empowered by Rosenblatt because her theory allows their critical evaluations and personal interpretations to be legitimized. As the creators of their own meaning, preservice teachers are in a position to foster their own "intellectual autonomy" (Pappas, et.al., 1995, p. 35). As future teachers guiding the reading process, they see the potential for exploring diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas around a piece of literature in their classrooms.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING A CHILDREN'S LITERATURE COURSE

The content and the processes of a children's literature course can take many avenues depending on the course objectives. The following sections outline several considerations for providing opportunities for literary and personal criticism within a children's literature course for preservice teachers.

While my course curricula assume college students possess the technical vocabulary of story structure and stylistic devices, the course requirements include Rebecca Luken's (1990) *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* so that students may be aware of these literary elements particular to children's literature. Another excellent resource, Glenna Sloan's (1991) *The Child as Critic*, models that teaching literature is teaching criticism of literature, no matter what the age of the audience. Her book contains a useful listing of the kinds of literary understandings preschool, primary and middle grade students can develop. Once these strategies are shared, preservice teachers who have become classroom teachers have reported to me that the very kinds of tasks modeled and performed in the children's literature course can be successful with their elementary students.

With the intent of making these literary elements come alive for preservice teachers, I decided to limit the reading requirements for the whole group of about 30 students to five chaptered books (*Charlotte's Web*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *A Solitary Blue*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*). Additionally, as part of individual or small group projects throughout the semester, each student reads three more novels and the whole group is assigned to read many folktales, picture books and poetry selections. While the instructor of such courses could choose any combination of chaptered novels, these particular books were chosen by the instructor so that preservice teachers could experience outstanding examples of certain literary elements (tone/mood, use of symbolism, author's style, integral setting, characterization and theme) and so that clear comparisons and contrasts across the use of these elements could be made.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CHALLENGING PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO ENGAGE IN LITERARY AND PERSONAL CRITICISM

Beginning with *Charlotte's Web* (which is often a book that college students have read as a child), preservice teachers are offered a unique experience to embrace transactional theory of literature because quite often the "preoccupations" (Rosenblatt, 1978) of the reader as an elementary student are not the "preoccupations" of the preservice teacher. Therefore, the strong themes that now surface often stand in stark contrast to the themes that were experienced by the child reading the same lines of black and white print years ago. In addition, preservice teachers begin plotting evidence of Wilbur's

character development as well as Fern's parallel development throughout the book. Through questioning and journalling, many students write about the fresh parallels with their own lives as they struggle with the independence of college life. In analyzing the development of these characters, preservice teachers are requested to create links between Wilbur's growth and development and the integral nature of the farm as the chosen setting. Later, they will create even more links to the related theme topics, such as the cycle of life or the importance of friendship, and what messages E.B. White offers them personally.

Many times in small groups, preservice teachers are required to create story maps (webs, models, and diagrams) which reflect the rising action as it is tied to the character development or to different themes found within the same book. Other times, preservice teachers are challenged to create T-grids contrasting the traits of main characters such as Jesse and Aaron in *Bridge to Terabithia* and to connect these opposing traits with someone in their own lives who would be considered very different from themselves, yet deeply valued.

As we move through to more complex novels such as Cynthia Voigt's *A Solitary Blue*, preservice teachers begin to analyze the author's craft of highlighting the main characters' traits through secondary characters who serve as character foils. Preservice teachers start this process by listing all the flat, secondary characters in the novel and then discussing with a partner why the author would choose to include this character in the book. Identifying to what purpose or purposes a secondary character serves allows preservice teachers to appreciate the intricacies of how authors develop theme. Often, these character foils are ranked by preference or by importance; Melody's boyfriend, Max, is generally selected as most important to the themes and characterization in *A Solitary Blue*, and not coincidentally, the most hated. Again, questioning techniques in small groups or in journalling opportunities allow preservice teachers to find links with particular "characters" in their own lives and how they serve as their personal "foils."

Other meaningful activities include asking preservice teachers to discover the many and diverse similes employed by Katherine Paterson in *Bridge to Terabithia* as well as in excerpts from *The Master Puppeteer* and to discover the common threads in all of these similes as they relate to setting, themes, and certainly author's style. Paterson's keen ability to create extended similes which are in perfect sync with the culture at hand, whether rural West Virginia or China, is readily detected by preservice teachers as a result of this activity.

By contrasting the similarly spunky female protagonists of Cassie in Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and Meg in L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, preservice teachers easily capture the intensity and significance that using different points of view can bring upon their reading. While both books present spirited and confident female protagonists, readers usually feel more intensely the hardships

that Cassie has to endure by virtue of having read the personal pronoun "I" over and over throughout the book. Preservice teachers, many of whom are women, often personally identify with the power of using "I" to communicate strong messages.

In like fashion, preservice teachers are requested to analyze the dialogue in Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* for important references that form a pattern related to a particular theme. For example, after reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, preservice teachers are asked to brainstorm what characters, places, incidents, and symbols exemplify the separate themes of independence, of injustice, of family relationships and of friendship (see grid below).

<u>Themes</u>	Characters	Places/Settings	Incidents	Symbols
Independence				
Injustice				
Family relations				
Friendship				
When to fight				

Using this grid to guide them, small groups begin the personal process of creating theme statements that could be derived from the book. Framing all of these activities in such a way that we push through and beyond purely literary criticism to personal connections allows the possibility for each person to learn more about him/herself, more about each other, and more about his/her perception of the world.

LESS IS MORE

Thus, with fewer books being required and more experiences for both literary and personal criticism, preservice teachers can analyze the many layers and shades of both universal and personal meaning inherent in good children's books. Alan Purves and Dianne Monson (1984) add this salient point:

Our experience, what we have done, what we have seen, what we have read, separate us. At the same time, the text brings us together and gives us a chance to explore how we resemble each other and how we differ from each other (p. 8).

Knowing that the role of children's literature is changing to be the basis of instruction and integration across the curriculum in meaningful ways (Alleman and Brophy, 1994; Harris, 1996; Hoffman,

1996; Huck, 1996; Lake, 1993; Strickland, 1994-95; Tunnel and Ammon, 1993; Van Middendorp and Lee, 1994), teacher educators must prepare preservice teachers to use literature in powerful ways. Rather than going through the stale motions of only reading extensively, literary and personal criticism allow the future teacher to read intensively with literature as a personal transaction. Purves and Monson's (1984) perspective of literature has the power not only to strengthen the intellectual and aesthetic autonomy of our preservice teachers, but to serve as the continuing model for future transactions between the literature our preservice teachers will offer their students in our public schools.

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ESL learners: Process writing and publishing good literature

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to report on our examination of books written by children who are ESL learners, and compare the books with criteria for meritorious literature (Norton, 1995), and to discuss the implications of the results relevant to process writing instruction with second language learners. The books examined were written by students in grades K through 5 in a rural elementary school. They had been in the United States for a short period of time. Their familiarization with process writing was due to its being a part of their daily curriculum. The school's writing program embraces those contexts purported to promote writing development, specifically, that feedback be focused primarily on content and secondarily on writing conventions and language form. The results of our inspection indicate an unexpected adherence to criteria for literary genres. Because each author's book was written in English and translated into his native language, there was a validation of the primary language as fundamental to achievement, and the links between languages and cultures were maintained. Also noteworthy, in subsequent written and oral communications by the children, a growing facility with the English language was observed. Implications of these findings would serve teachers of ESL students looking for ways to better prepare themselves for instructing a population of diverse learners.

Research on second language acquisition in young children has focused on strategies for promoting the primary language (Cummins, 1989; Freeman and Freeman, 1993), theoretical positions on second language/first language learning (Fitzgerald, 1994; Krashen; 1982), and the interaction of reading and writing in the language acquisition process (Ernst and Richard, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1993; 1994; Perrotta, 1994). The benefits of literature-based instruction as related to writing products of ESL learners have been enumerated by researchers whose focus is trained on the influence of literature on language

development (Peregoy and Boyle, 1997). Literature is viewed as the best material for reading instruction (Cullinan, 1989; Huck, 1977), and promotes opportunities for talk. The talk related to reading literature addresses a linguistic benefit for ESL learners, and is viewed as a rung on the scaffold of mastering the conventions of the English language (Allen, 1994). Cultural benefits accruing from a literature-based approach include a story structure similar across all cultures.

Though the reading/writing connection has been examined in light of its importance in the language acquisition process, there is no indication in the review of literature that the writing products of students have ever been inspected against criteria for meritorious literature. Analyzing the written works of ESL children compared with criteria seemed important to us, given the curricular concentration in the school on reading good literature and process writing. To uncover a heretofore ignored benefit of process writing would give added support to the program and reaffirm the notion that children's writing is affected by what they read. This inquiry serves as a way of establishing an objectivity that is generally absent because teachers are so close to the children and co-own their success. It also stands in contrast to the practice of analyzing writing samples based on holistic rubrics or state standardized mandates.

Norton's (1995) criteria for selecting good literature across genres is widely accepted as a reference document. It follows that these criteria are valid not only for selection, but for authoring, too. Our inquiry was guided by the question: When process writing is used to teach ESL children, how do their writing products stand up against meritorious literature? The results suggest Norton's criteria as important and useful for ESL teachers.

Participants

The authors you will meet here are all second language learners, and students in grades K through 5, attending a small city elementary school in a university town in a Mid-Atlantic state. They have been in the United States from one to three years. Because process writing is a part of their daily curriculum, they are familiar with each step of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Though literature is used in teaching reading, the students were not directly instructed to write according to the criteria we used to evaluate their written books.

The School's Writing Program

Traditional models for educating ESL children have emphasized pull-out approaches (Shirmer, Casbon, and Twiss, 1996). The children are removed from the classroom for certain periods of the day for intensive instruction in English. When they become proficient enough to integrate fully into general classroom instruction, the pull-out sessions are stopped. Innovative literacy practices for ESL learners at this school include a combination approach to the traditional

pull-out program. The Title I reading specialist visits each classroom each day (push-in), and underachieving readers needing additional help, regardless of their native language, visit the specialist's classroom for short periods of individual instruction (pull-out). The materials used during the pull-out sessions are frequently student-authored. Every student in the school participates in authoring a book every year. In the primary grades, authoring is a group effort. Beginning in the 3rd grade, each student authors at least one book every year. Early on in the program, the students dubbed their publishing enterprise the Students as Authors Project (Nedeff, Brady, Maxwell, Oaks, and Seckel, 1994). It embraces those contexts purported to promote writing development (Peyton, 1990); activities to promote self-esteem and risk taking; integration of writing with reading, listening, and speaking; opportunities for blocks of time to write; support for talking about and reflecting on their writing; and editing conferences with peers and the teacher to provide feedback that focuses primarily on content and secondarily on writing conventions and language form. Nedeff et al. (1994) reported benefits in these areas and expressed hope for continued improvement in reading comprehension, process writing, critical thinking skills, and an increase in student self-esteem. Successes attributed to this approach are supported in the research (Ernst, 1993; Hudelson, 1986). For us, there remained an unanswered question; How do these books stand up to criteria for meritorious literature?

Selection of Works for Evaluation

The selection criteria for the books reviewed are: (a) the author is an ESL learner; (b) the final version of the book is a result of process writing; (c) the assistance of a more capable other is limited to teacher/student conferences during the editing phase. Following are summaries and evaluations of eight books, and the criteria offered by Norton (1995) for the specific genre. The selections include four fantasies, two information books, one realistic fiction book, and one picture storybook.

First Fantasy

LuLu is from China. Her book, *The Beautiful Princess*, reveals LuLu's schema for fairy tales. This is the story of a beautiful princess, Rena, who lived in a large castle with her beautiful unicorn named Sparkle. Rena was in love with a handsome prince, Prince Charming, and this was a source of jealousy for the ugly prince named Bad Prince. So jealous was Bad Prince, he decided to capture the beautiful Princess while she played in her garden. Sparkle observed the kidnapping and ran to Prince Charming to ask him to rescue the Princess. This he did. Rena and Prince Charming were married and lived happily ever after... with their unicorn, Sparkle. See Appendix A

The Beautiful Princess evaluated against criteria (Norton, 1995):

1. The story uses the basic literary elements found in story structure.

2. The framework developed by the author is founded on a story structure which includes a beginning, events leading to a problem, a climax, resolution, and conclusion. Every action in this story is consistent with this framework. The identification of the beautiful princess, Rena, is established, along with the setting and introduction of other characters. The villain creates the problem, the good prince executes the rescue, and they live happily ever after.

3. The author's use of characterization allows children to suspend disbelief. Though the characters do not begin a real world, the setting is typical of fairy tales and fantasies familiar to children; a castle. The presence of a pet unicorn is a further fanciful element in a fanciful world. The beautiful princess is in love with a good prince, and there is a rivalry for her affections between the good prince and the bad prince. This mixture of fantasy and reality spares the reader being overly worried about the fate of the beautiful princess. The language used in the story furthers its consistency with modern fantasy. "Once upon a time" begins the story, and "they married and lived happily ever after" ends it.

4. Details of the setting provided in the text are sketchy. However, the illustrations are sufficiently detailed and appropriate to carrying the message of the text. The bad prince is described as ugly, and the illustration features a skull and crossbones motif in his chamber. When the text indicates that the bad prince captured the beautiful princess, the illustrations provide the reader with the method of kidnapping by showing the bad prince plotting to put a paper bag over the beautiful princess' head. Events in the story happen over time. The text seems to leap from one event to another without complete details. It's necessary for the reader to bring a good bit of background knowledge to the story related to capture and rescue.

5. The theme can be construed as good conquers evil. This is a worthwhile theme for children. The goodness of the beautiful princess is established early in the words and illustrations describing her genteel life. The impending menace against this goodness is portrayed by the bad prince. He is soundly overpowered by the good prince.

6. The author encourages readers to suspend disbelief via a consistent point of view. The story is told in the third person, and a matter-of-fact march through the events is maintained throughout the story. The writing is economical, yet descriptive. The illustrations provide added details, thereby balancing the text and enriching the fantasy.

Norton's (1995) criteria for evaluating modern fantasy

1. Does the author use basic literary elements?
2. Is every action consistent with the framework developed by the author?
3. Does the author's characterization allow children to suspend disbelief? Do characters begin in a real world before they travel to the world of fantasy? Does a believable character accept a fanciful world, characters, or happenings? Does the author use an appropriate language or create a believable language consistent with the story?
4. Does the author pay careful attention to the details in the setting? If the author develops several time periods, are the settings authentic and integral to the story?
5. Is the theme worthwhile for children?
6. Does the author encourage readers to suspend disbelief by developing a point of view that is consistent in every detail including sights, feelings, and physical reactions?

Figure 1

Second Fantasy

Wayne, a native of China, wrote a modern fantasy that begins in the land of reality, and quickly moves to the fantastic, and an unlikely outcome that would be the envy of any fifth-grader. In *Wayne and Tony*, the main character, Wayne, rescues a cat-like robot, Tony, from an encounter with a rat, and is rewarded by the robot's creative ability to teach him what he was having trouble learning in school. His trouble in school stemmed from inattention to IQ.

Wayne and Tony evaluated against criteria:

1. This modern fantasy uses basic literary elements found in story structure.
2. The "once upon a time" framework of this fantasy begins in a land of reality, quickly moves to introduce a fantastic character, and ends with an unlikely outcome that would be the envy of any fifth-grader. The beginning of the tale is confusing. The characters of Wayne and his robot friend, Tony, are introduced in a leapfrog manner; providing a skimpy background for the reader. Once the logical structure of the story begins, the fantasy rolls smoothly and incorporates the literary elements of story structure through the conclusion.
3. Wayne is the main character; a fifth-grader having trouble with his schoolwork. He doesn't pay close attention in school, and has trouble completing his homework because of it. Wayne begins in a real world, allowing the reader to suspend disbelief. The quick and early introduction of Tony, the cat-like robot, catapults the reader into

a world of fantasy. Despite this abrupt change, the transition is palatable because it's so ridiculous. The language is believable and consistent with the characters and story line. The author avoids the use of glorified terms, maintaining a childlike rendition of what might be. The detailed illustrations enhance the sense of adventure and Wayne's carelessness stated in the text. Tony's use of a magic flashlight to teach Wayne the evolutionary stages of any given object almost backfires when Wayne abuses this "magic." The conclusion is abrupt, leapfrogging from a rather narrow escape with a dinosaur to Wayne becoming "a top student in class." See Appendix B.

4. The details of the setting are sparse. However, the illustrations throughout the story are true to the text and enhance the sense of adventure and carelessness stated in the text. The depictions of all characters are simplistic, yet sufficient in detail. Tony's magic flashlight is described in both the text and illustrations with bolts of lightning emanating from the light, revealing the evolutionary stages of the object shined on.

5. The belief in magic as the answer to good grades might be mistaken as the theme of this tale. However, underlying the pranks and "happily ever after" nature of Wayne's future academic success, the message of using power with care and avoiding reckless abuse is a subtle, though important, thread in the message. When Wayne shined the light on the rat to discover its evolutionary forefather, a dinosaur appeared. Wayne thought that was pretty funny, but his laughter didn't last long.

The dinosaur was running toward him. In a hurry Wayne pushed another button, but this time nothing happened. Before he had another try, the dinosaur knocked off the flashlight. "Help! Help!" Wayne yelled and ran as fast as he could"

Tony saved the day by picking up the flashlight and pushing the right button just in time. This he did despite his fear of rats.

6. Further encouragement to suspend disbelief is provided for the reader by a consistent point of view. The story is told in the third person. The sights, feelings, and physical reactions are consistent with the characters as the story develops. The conclusion is abrupt, however, leapfrogging from a rather narrow escape with a dinosaur to Wayne's becoming "a top student in class."

Third Fantasy

An equally adventurous modern fantasy was written by Nan Wu, also featured as the main character. In *The Green Dragon*, Nan Wu alternates between the believable and unbelievable as the events unfold. The story begins in the world of reality; with Nan Wu innocently putting his book bag down on his desk; and quickly moves into the world of fantasy when a dragon walks out of the picture on the

wall. Sandwiched between the peaceful beginning and a peaceful conclusion are four events; the dragon walks out of the picture, breaks the house into bits, is pursued by the police, and finally meets his demise. Nan Wu is the clever hero of the story. When he shows the dragon its photograph, all the story's events are reversed, and peace is restored. See Appendix C.

The Green Dragon evaluated against criteria:

1. This is a modern fantasy and uses basic literary elements found in story structure.

2. The story begins in the world of reality. The framework set up by the author is maintained throughout the story. The events alternate between the believable and the unbelievable as the story unfolds. For example, when the dragon breaks the house into pieces, the police shoot at the dragon; that's believable (never mind the presence of a dragon). The police call an airplane to combat the dragon, and the dragon bites the airplane in two; that's unbelievable.

3. The believable main character, a young boy napping after a long day at school, accepts the fantastic event of a picture of a dragon coming to life. Initially taken in by the dragon's gentle nature, the boy quickly realizes the dragon must be controlled because of the destruction and havoc it is causing. The language used to reveal the events is simple and straightforward.

4. The setting is carefully described and beautifully illustrated. The illustrations enhance the text in that more information is provided, giving the reader a clear image of location, character, and situation. Early on, the author implies that the rest of the story will be born out of a dream. The story line is very brief. There are four main events; the dragon emerges from a photograph, breaks the house into bits, is pursued by the police, and meets his demise. The little boy is the hero of the story. He runs for the photograph, shows it to the dragon, and "the dragon shrank and went into the picture." Events then reverse themselves, the photo breaks into pieces and the house comes back together again. The story ends abruptly with the little boy going inside the house and locking it.

5. There is no apparent theme in the story. It is a tale of adventure that would be pleasurable for children. Because of the unbelievable nature of the events, children would be willing to suspend disbelief and imagine themselves saving the day against a mighty force. Perhaps it could be stretched to encompass a theme of seeing things for what they are, and not being taken in by initial charm.

Fourth Fantasy

Lucy Yi wrote *Why the Sky is Blue*, a lovely example of a modern fantasy. The framework set up by Yi at the beginning of the story prepares the reader for a dream. Suspension of disbelief is further encouraged by introducing the main character's query, "She wondered why the sky was blue." The sky had lived a life of darkness until the

sun and the angel painted it. This made the sun happier, too, because now he could read his books better and his light could shine through. Through no fault of his own, the sky was always dark. He explained, "I was born that way." Sky willingly let his friends help him become a better sky. Logical closure is brought to this tale when Samantha awakens from her dream and returns to the world of reality. See Appendix D.

Why the Sky is Blue evaluated against criteria:

1. This modern fantasy uses the basic literary elements found in the story structure.

2. The framework set up by the author at the beginning of the story clearly prepares the reader for a dream. Logical closure is brought at the end when the main character, Samantha, wakes up and is once again in the real world. While in the real world, her actions and language are consistent with reality. When in the world of her dreams, or fantasy land, the actions of the characters are unrealistic.

3. The author facilitates the suspension of disbelief by introducing the query, "She wondered why the sky was blue," while Samantha was in the real world. When she lies down for a nap, Samantha transitions to fantasy. She is a believable character and she readily accepts the fantasy world. The characters in Samantha's dream are angels, an enthroned "star gardener," and the planets. The language of the fantasy world is figurative, and images of the heavens are carried in the illustrations. For example, when the angel lifts Samantha up to the sky, she sees "an odd-looking man... sitting in a chair by his star garden. ...He had a long nose and long hair made out of sunbeams." The illustrations supporting this text is a mix of the real and the fantastic. Samantha's house is partially in view and she has hold of the hands of a smiling angel. The star gardener sits amid his "flowers" and welcomes their arrival with a smile.

4. Careful attention is paid to the setting in the real world, beginning with Samantha gazing at the sky and wondering why it is blue. She is accompanied by her cat, who is sitting comfortably on a pillow looking out over the rolling hills marking the horizon. The final scene is equally detailed. In the fantasy world, the settings are the focus of the illustrations. They are simplistic, yet fully representative of the text. They enhance rather than detract. For example, the cloud castle by Mars, Star market, and the black, then newly painted blue sky, are integral to the story. The Star Market setting straddles the real and the fantastic. There happens to be such a market in the author's neighborhood.

5. It is reasonable to say there is an intertwining of themes in this story: friendship and happiness that comes with a bright outlook. These are worthwhile themes for children. Though subtle in presentation, the implication is clear. For example,

"I feel good," said the sky, because I am bright and colored. The sky had lived a life of black until the sun and the angel painted it. This made the sun happier, too, because now he could read his books better and his light could shine through."

Sky willingly let his friends help him become a better sky.

6. The point of view developed by the author is consistent in the expression of sights, feelings, and physical reactions, with one exception. There is a foreshadowing of evil or impending harm at the beginning of Samantha's adventure. "The angel put Samantha on the clouds and stayed with her, because she needed to guard Samantha from evil." It is implied that perhaps the odd-looking man is evil, but not so. This is not followed through.

Norton's (1995) criteria for evaluating informational books

Taken from recommendations made by the National Science Teachers Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

1. All facts should be accurate.
2. Stereotypes should be eliminated.
3. Illustrations should clarify the text.
4. Analytical thinking should be encouraged.
5. The organization should aid understanding.
6. The style should stimulate interest.

Figure 2

First Informational Book

Co-authored by Susan and Lisa, both from China, *Picture Dictionary* is an informational book featuring the English and Chinese spelling for words naming objects typically found in school. Each word pair is accompanied by an illustration and the Chinese character. This book is a straightforward approach to teaching ESL students the vocabulary words they will most frequently hear and use in their American school. The entries are presented in alphabetical order, use large print, and avoid stereotyping in the illustrations. See Appendices E and F.

Picture Dictionary evaluated against criteria:

1. Accuracy of facts: Eighteen entries make up the entire book: book, boy, chalkboard, clock, computer, desk, door, girl, glue, map, paper, pen, pencil, school, scissors, tape, teacher, window. Each word is translated into a Chinese character, followed by an illustration. The only exception to accuracy is found in the illustration for "glue." It

appears to be a chicken with two small dashes, presumably glue drops, coming out of its mouth. Unless this depicts a typical glue dispenser used in schools, this illustration is more misleading than informative.

2. Stereotyping is avoided. Adults and children are engaged in activities that are common but not stereotypical. For example, the teacher is a female, the girls have two ponytails, and the boy is wearing a baseball cap.

3. Illustrations clarify the text except in the example for "glue," mentioned above.

4. It cannot be reasonably defended that critical thinking is encouraged.

5. Entries appear in alphabetical order. This is an aid to understanding and further facilitates learning. However, only nine letters of the alphabet are represented.

6. The style of the book stimulates interest in that it is very colorful and uses large print. Given the format of the book (pages held together by rings) more words could be added over time. The intricacies of the Chinese characters are beautifully depicted and would be interesting to non-ESL children, too.

Second Informational Book

To: My Dear Friend was written by Brenda, a native of Taiwan. This is a collection of letters written to her friend back home highlighting traditional American holidays and what it's like living in a different cultural environment. All of the facts presented are based on the author's personal experiences and provide details to explain various American holiday traditions. Illustrations clarify the text, explicate inferred meanings, and include elements of correct letter writing. See Appendices G and H.

To: My Dear Friend evaluated against criteria:

The criteria for informational texts are used because many facts are stated about American traditions, though couched in narrative, friendly letter style. This piece does not fit the criteria for biographies since neither the development of characterization is of primary concern, nor are the research methods of the author under scrutiny.

1. All of the facts are accurate. They are based on personal experience and provide details to explain various American holiday traditions. For example: "On my first Halloween, I dressed up in my dance costume and went to the mall to trick-or-treat... I never had gotten so much candy before." Additionally, comparisons are drawn between Taiwanese traditions and American traditions. For example: "In Taiwan, I never heard of Thanksgiving Day, so Thanksgiving Day is special to me. On that day I ate Thanksgiving dinner with my family. When I ate the turkey, it tasted good." A second example: "In Taiwan, just the parents give children the gifts on Christmas Day. In America, Christmas Day is very interesting, because children have to

give their parents gifts, and the parents always give their children gifts too."

2. Stereotypes are eliminated. The comparisons drawn between American and Taiwanese traditions are stated without judgment.

3. Illustrations clarify the text and include elements of correct letter writing: multiple pages, stamps, elements of a letter, and an addressed envelope. The illustrations provide details inferred in the text. For example, in her letter describing the New Year, Brenda says, "I saw the big Apple in New York fall down on TV, which was so pretty." If taken literally, the reading might think a huge piece of fruit originating in New York crashed down on the television set. The illustration cleverly shows a television, antennae and all, tuned into New Year's Eve in Time Square. The big apple is descending the stories of a tall building.

4. It cannot be justifiably stated that this book stimulates critical thinking. However, since letter writing is generally viewed as a means of friendly communication for the sake of keeping in touch, versus a catalyst for critical interpretations by the reader, this component of the criteria can be waived.

5. The organization of the book aids understanding, in that the holidays featured are in chronological order. The book begins and ends with a letter featuring the differences in American and Taiwanese schools. In her last letter, the author looks forward to celebrating Chinese New Year in America. This illustrates the holding on to customs of the homeland, and adopting those of the new home. The author uses the traditions of her homeland to mark her progress in her new home. "The coming Chinese New Year will be my first time in America."

6. The style of the friendly letter stimulates reader interest. Embedding facts in this style facilitates the readers' taking an efferent and/or aesthetic stance to the book.

Realistic fiction

Virginia is from Taiwan and authored a book entitled *Thunder*. This is the story of the Steven's family vacationing in the Colorado woods near the Arkansas River. The Steven's children, Mark, 14, and Sarah, 10, wander away from the campsite and are unable to find their way back for several days. Their ingenuity and the bravery of a little dog, Thunder, eventually leads them back to the campsite and their parents. The plot is believable, the characters overcome their problem through resourcefulness, and the events unfold in a natural versus contrived manner. The author develops the characters as the story evolves. Initially bickering siblings, Mark and Sarah become partners in reaching a common goal, they complement each other in talents, and their fear of the woods is eradicated. *Thunder* is a story of problem solving and adventure, each worthwhile and appealing themes for children. See Appendix I.

Norton's (1995) criteria for evaluating realistic fiction:

1. The content is honestly presented: sensationalizing and capitalizing on the novelty of a subject is avoided.
2. The story exposes personal and social values central to our culture, at the same time revealing how overt expression of those values may have changed.
3. The story allows readers to draw personal conclusions from the evidence; the author respects the readers' intelligence.
4. The author recognizes that today's young readers are in the process of growing toward adult sophistication.
5. The language and syntax help reveal the background and the nature of characters and situations.
6. The author writes in a hopeful tone; the story communicates in an honest way that there is hope in this world.
7. The story reflects sensitivity to the needs and rights of girls and boys without preference.
8. If violence is included in the story, the author treats the subject appropriately.
9. The story satisfies children's basic needs and provides them with increased insights into their own problems and social relationships.
10. The story provides children with enjoyment.

Figure 3

Thunder evaluated against the criteria:

1. This is a story about something that could really happen. The plot is believable in that numerous stories have been featured in the news about hikers and campers being lost in the woods and surviving for many days before being rescued.

2. Personal and social values central to our culture are not central to this story.

3. The climax of the story, Mark's dream of geography class and realization that they should head downstream, seemed natural rather than contrived or insulting to the readers' intelligence. They were in a situation that called for logic and their using all their knowledge of the wilderness. It's feasible that Mark's subconscious would take over during sleep and fill in the gaps of his thinking that daylight and the stress of "what next" would prohibit.

4. The characters seemed real and identifiable to middle grade readers. The author gave us an idea of Mark's and Sarah's personality as the story evolved. They bickered about where to go on vacation, Sarah's apprehension about bears in the woods was revealed early on, and there was no indication of a sibling rivalry that would make their setting out from camp together unbelievable. The difference in their

ages was mentioned, but no implication was made regarding differences in strength of character. Mark and Sarah shared in the decision making while they were lost.

5. The characters seemed to grow as the story evolved. Their resourcefulness was tapped, they became partners in reaching their goal, their talents were complementary, and each overcame a fear of the woods.

6-7. A sense of hope in this world is communicated through the collaboration of the two main characters in their struggle to find their way back to camp. Their strengths and weaknesses are shown and the reader sees the value of optimism.

	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<u>Mark</u>	Use of backpack items for food fire, fishing Responded to Sarah's exhaustion and worry Knowledge of geography Brave	Unaware of Thunder's usefulness
<u>Sarah</u>	Resourceful with friendship bracelet for fishing line Recognition of Thunder's worth Brave	Initial low stamina level for walking great distances

Figure 4

8. There is no violence in the story.

9-10. The author wanted to tell a story of problem solving and adventure. This is a worthwhile theme for middle elementary school children. They are in the process of growing toward a stage of maturity that abhors patronizing. The language used in this story represents a hopeful tone and avoids preference, bias, and negative stereotyping of males and females. This story provides enjoyment and insights into problems and relationships typical of the intended readers.

Picture Storybook

There Was a Rabbit Named Bunny, was written by Brenda shortly after she arrived in America from China. This is a hello and good-bye tale. The reader is introduced to Bunny and told about the things she likes and dislikes. The absence of a complicated plot does not detract from the appeal this story would have for children. They will be able to identify with Bunny by the very ordinary nature of the tale. That is, Bunny has a family, goes to school, and plays with friends. She does not like to go shopping with her parents or to clean

her room with her brother. The author's style and language are appropriate and uncomplicated. The repetitive text assists in the readability and makes this story appropriate for beginning readers. The main emphasis in evaluating picture books is on the complementary relationship between words and pictures. The illustrations in *There Was a Rabbit Named Bunny* enhance the characterization of Bunny, correspond accurately to the content of the story, and are highly detailed and colorful. The text, illustrations, format, and typography are in complete harmony. See Appendix J.

Norton's criteria for evaluation of picture storybooks

1. The illustrations are accurate and correspond to the content of the story.
2. The illustrations complement the setting, plot, and mood of the story.
3. The illustrations enhance characterization.
4. Both the text and illustrations avoid stereotypes of race and sex.
5. The plot appeals to children.
6. The theme is worthwhile.
7. What is the purpose for sharing this book with children or recommending that they read it?
8. The author's style and language are appropriate for the children's interests and age levels.
9. The text, the illustrations, the format, and the typography are in harmony.

Figure 5

There Was a Rabbit Named Bunny evaluated against the criteria:

1. The illustrations are accurate and correspond to the content of the story. It might be argued that some of the illustrations are cluttered vs. complex. Backgrounds and clothing are very detailed. However, no extraneous objects or background ornaments are included. All components serve the story line.

2. Illustrations complement the setting, plot, and mood of the story. Each statement of Bunny's likes and dislikes is complemented by an illustration that carried the message and the mood. Illustrations depict each setting: the mall, school, her room. When Bunny's sad, she's shown with a frown; when happy, a smile.

3. Illustrations enhance the characterization of Bunny. She is portrayed as having friends from various ethnic backgrounds, disliking going out with her parents and doing chores with her brother, and liking school. These are typical problems and relationships of the intended readers.

4. Animals are used as the main characters, encouraging the symbolic nature of their activities to human life. Stereotyping of race and sex are avoided. Bunny's friends, though shown with different colored skin, are engaged in non-stereotypical activities, like playing ball and going to school.

5. This story is short on plot. It's a hello and good-bye tale. The reader is introduced to Bunny and told about the things she likes and dislikes. The absence of plot does not detract from the appeal this story would have for children. They will be able to identify with Bunny by the very ordinary nature of the tale. That is, Bunny has a family, goes to school, and plays with her friends.

6. There is no defined theme in this book. It might be suggested that a possible theme could be meeting a new friend, or introducing yourself to a new friend and telling about your life.

7. This story can be shared with a child or recommended for a beginning reader. The text is repetitive, fostering word recognition skills; and the illustrations clearly carry the message of the printed word.

8. The author's style and language are appropriate for the interests and age levels of young children. The text is uncomplicated and straightforward, using language that sounds natural. The repetitive text assists in readability.

9. The text, illustrations, format, and typography are in complete harmony. The text is uncluttered by extraneous words. The format is predictable and judiciously segmented so that one new bit of information is offered on each page. The book is constructed of a combination of sturdy paper layers and then laminated. Illustrations are brightly colored, reinforce the text, and are consistent in size and detail. The typography is exceptionally appropriate. The story is handwritten in clear, black printing, suggesting a pen pal familiarity between the author and reader.

Discussion and Implications for Teaching ESL Learners

The results of our inspection of books authored by ESL learners indicated an unexpected adherence to criteria for literary genre. Because each author's book was written in English and translated into his native language by parents and grandparents, there was a validation of the primary language as fundamental to achievement. The links between languages and cultures were maintained via the translations. Also noteworthy, in subsequent written and oral communications by the children, we observed a growing facility with the English language.

Teachers of ESL students are constantly looking for ways to better prepare themselves for the challenge of instructing a population of diverse learners. Strategy workshops, professional development opportunities, research articles, observations of master teachers; are a part of their repertoire of resources. The literary achievements revealed through the inspection of these books may be pointing to a

resource right at ESL teachers' fingertips; the possibilities for success using process writing with ESL learners. The objectives of a process writing program do not ordinarily specify instruction in genre criteria. Rather, the focus is on instruction in the stages of the writing process, writing for meaning, and careful attention to a sense of story. As these young authors have demonstrated, there is a conformance to literary genre in their writing. It is reasonable to presume this is based on the synergistic effects of using literature and writing in combination to teach ESL learners. Teaching reading with good literature and promoting writing within the recursive format of process writing, is mutually enhancing to the second language acquisition process (Farnan, Flood and Lapp, 1994).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
From *The Beautiful Princess* by LuLu



Once upon a time there was
a beautiful Princess named Rena.
She had a beautiful unicorn
named Sparkle, because she was

Appendix B
From *Wayne and Tony* by Wayne

In a little town lived a naughty boy, Wayne.
One day on his way home from school, Wayne heard someone
calling "Help!". A big rat was running after something.
He ran over and drove the rat away.

This was a cat-like robot named Tony. Tony
was afraid of nothing but rats. Wayne helped Tony
get out of trouble, so they became good friends.

One afternoon, Wayne started his homework assigned
by his science teacher, Mrs. Buchman.

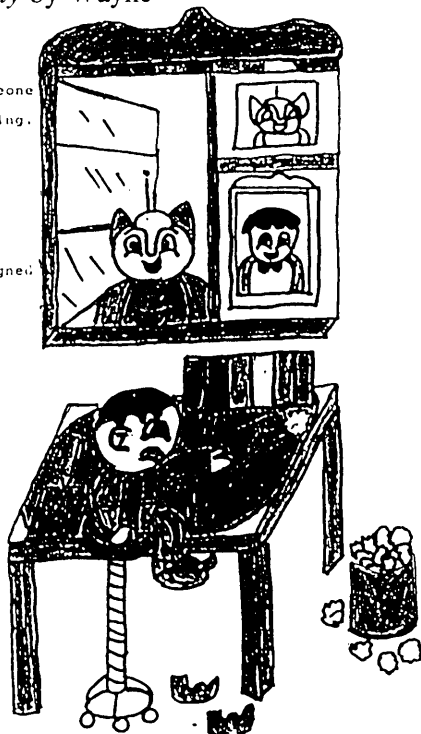
"Where does a pencil come from?" she had asked.
Wayne tried hard, but he couldn't remember what the
teacher said in class. He was not stupid, but he
never listened to the teacher attentively.

When Wayne was worried about his homework, Tony
appeared at the window and asked, "What's up?"

"I can't figure out this question," Wayne
answered. Tony laughed at him.

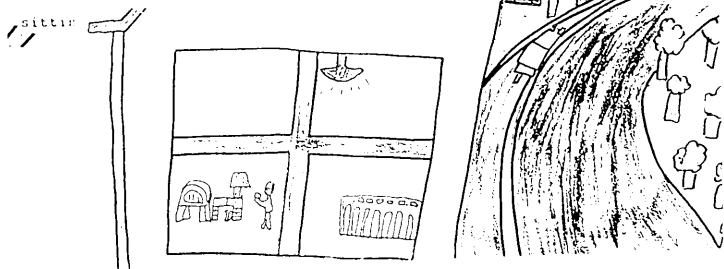
"Because you never listen to the teacher," he
said.

Wayne flared up. "Shut up! It's never too
late to learn. And, I am learning now!"



Appendix C
From *The Green Dragon* by Nan Wu





One day after school I went home. I was tired from walking. I went upstairs to my room to sleep. I put my school bag on the desk. As I put the bag down, I saw a picture of a green dragon. I didn't know who had put it there. I picked it up and looked at it. It was a picture of a dragon



Appendix D
From *Why the Sky is Blue* by Lucy Yi

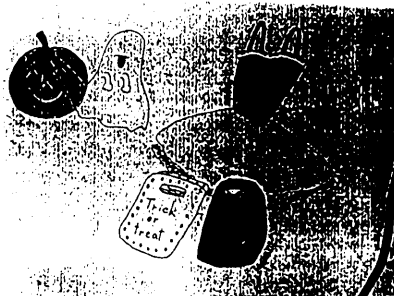


Appendices E and F
From *Picture Dictionary* by Susan and Lisa

glue	胶水	
map	地图	
pencil	铅笔	
school	学校	

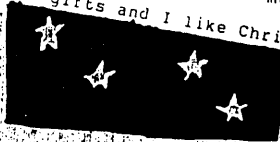
Appendix G
From *To: My Dear Friend* by Brenda

On my first Halloween, I dressed up in my dance costume and went to the mall to trick-or-treat. That was a happy evening. I had two bags of candy. I was so happy, because I never had gotten so much candy before. I like Halloween now.



Appendix H
Christmas letter from *To: My Dear Friend* by Brenda

My first Christmas Day here was different. In Taiwan, just the parents give children the gifts on Christmas Day. In America, Christmas Day is very interesting, because children have to give their parents gifts, and the parents always give their children gifts too. This time my father bought a middle-size tree, so we could put the gifts under it. On Christmas Day my sister and I went caroling. We went to a house to sing Christmas songs. The master gave us some candy. Then we left. When we went back home, we opened the gifts. I was so happy. My mother gave me two Barbie dolls. My father gave me a pair of shoes and a pretty dress. My sister gave me a purse and a notebook. I got a lot of gifts and I like Christmas Day so much.



Appendix I From *Thunder* by Virginia

Thunder on the bank of a river. Thunder had a little scratch on his neck. Mark and Sarah were Scouts, so they knew a little about light scratches. They hurried and scooped some water from the river and washed the scratch. They camped there until the scratch healed.

The children stayed on the riverbank for a few days, just so Thunder would feel better. One sunny morning Thunder felt better, so they decided to move on, following the river downstream.

That night, as Mark ate his only candy bar, he suddenly started to think about their camping spot in the Colorado woods near the Arkansas River. The more he thought about it, the more it made sense. The river must be either the Arkansas River or the South Platte River. Just then Sarah called him and woke him from his thoughts. They were all very tired, so they went to sleep. Mark kept having dreams about his geography class in school. School, Geography, Think, and River kept coming into his mind. Suddenly, he got it. In the coffee shop he had heard Mr. Stevens talking to Sarah about their camping spot, a camping spot near the



Appendix J From *There Was a Rabbit Named Bunny* by Brenda



There was a rabbit named Bunny
Bunny liked to play ball with her
friends.



Preservice teachers, sixth graders and instructors use dialogue journals to extend their classroom communities

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ABSTRACT

The use of dialogue journals has been studied extensively for its positive effect on children's personal adjustment, development of awareness for audience, understanding of others, increased motivation for purposeful writing, improved skill in conversing, and overall growth as writers. This manuscript extends that research to preservice teachers' exchanging journals with sixth graders. As a result of participation in this project, preservice teachers experienced the value of journal-based written and oral discourse activities for understanding and fostering their own social and academic development and that of their younger partners. University and classroom instructors' written observations and reflections shared from their own journals modeled what can be learned about one's students through systematic observations and reflections on them.

When this project began I had mixed emotions about doing it. I didn't really have any idea what I was going to talk to them [sixth graders] about or how I felt having someone model what I did. Also, the idea of sixth graders scared me. I learned quite a bit from this project. It allowed me to see that sixth graders weren't some monsters whose only purpose is to terrorize teachers. They are real kids with real lives. Some of the sixth graders were dealing with problems that were pretty tough to deal with.

I am a former sixth grade teacher now working as an associate professor in teacher education. The opening comments came from students in my undergraduate language arts courses. Because students making such comments generally had limited experiences working with sixth graders, I used an elementary classroom journal exchange in my language arts course as a means to help develop students' awareness of and an appreciation for the world of sixth grade children. The purpose of this article is to share the enthusiasm this project generated for journal writing among participants and the positive relationships developed across these different age-level groups. In addition I describe what I learned regarding instructor roles when conducting a dialogue journal exchange between undergraduates and

sixth grade children; emphasize the value of oral discussion as part of the written dialogue process; note what my students as preservice teachers learned about effective journal communications; and address the dynamic nature of the community that developed as sixth graders and undergraduates negotiated personal discourse beyond their own classrooms.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

As a sixth grade teacher I had consistently used dialogue journals to establish relationships with my students that went beyond what could be accomplished at the more public level of classroom talk. The use of dialogue journals in my university classrooms has been equally positive. I refer to Hall's (1994) definition of interactive writing to clarify my interpretation of "dialogue journals."

... writing involving the participation of two or more friendly correspondents who exchange meaningful and purposeful texts across an extended period of time. (p. 1)

The research literature is rich with examples of how dialogue journal activities contribute to children's personal adjustment (Staton, 1980), development of awareness for audience (Burk, 1989), understanding of others (Bryant, 1989), increased motivation for purposeful writing (Gambrell, 1985), improved skill in conversing (Bromley, 1993), and overall growth as writers (Yellin, 1987). This exploration, however, focuses more on the respondents, my students, and what this journal project taught them about being an effective adult partner in communication. In their study of the teacher's role as journal respondent, Hall, Crawford, and Robinson (1997) address the need for research that extends our knowledge of journal writing to include the area of teacher response.

... most studies of interactive writing have concentrated on what the students do. Such analyses miss much of the richness that comes from the interaction between two correspondents, thus drawing attention away from the task of being a successful adult partner in human communication. A two-sided examination of exchanges offers a more revealing, and ultimately more satisfying, account of interactive writing than one restricted only to the students' words. (p. 24)

In Spring 1992, I established a journal exchange between my undergraduate language arts students and a sixth grade class. Lara, the classroom teacher, had been involved in a similar classroom journal exchange with a fifth grade class when taking my course the previous year.

There were considerably more university students (44) than sixth graders (25), so we paired most of the university writers. Six university students worked one-to-one with sixth graders while 19 pairs worked with the remaining children. Lara and I agreed it was imperative to inform all participants how the journal activity was being carried out in each classroom and that both instructors play an active role as participants in the program. These were key elements we felt had been lacking in Lara's previous journal experience as a student in my class. Therefore, Lara and I exchanged a journal to share our observations and reflections of what occurred during and related to our class journal activities. An excerpt from my first entry on February 1, 1992, restated my interpretation of our planning conversations for content in our journal.

What I would like you to do is use this notebook to note how your children respond throughout this experience. Share anecdotes, trends, comments, attitudes, etc. Equally important share your feelings. How much work is this for you? Is it worth it? Would you do it again? What can teachers such as yourself gain from having your students involved in such an activity? What are your expectations at the outset? How does it feel being on both sides since you once were a journal partner and now are the teacher?

As part of her initial eight page entry of observations/reflections on 2/3/92, Lara shared her expectations.

I expect my kids to be motivated to write; I expect my kids to enjoy writing; I expect my kids to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions through writing; I expect my kids to improve their verbal expression by sharing this experience with family members and other students; I expect my students to improve their ability to respond to another person through writing; I expect my students to look forward to the part of the day when they write in their journals; I expect my students to feel good about themselves because another human being is interested in what they have to say; and I expect my students to look back on this experience years from now and have a positive, happy memory of this stage in their education.

Lara's comments indicated to me that we were consistent in our thinking about the potential outcomes of this project and our commitment to it.

From Plans to Action: Semester One

My class met for 50 minutes three times per week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. After class on Monday, I delivered journals to Lara's class in time for her language arts period. Her class kept the journals for the week and I picked them up before my class on Friday. On Friday, I distributed the journals to my students and provided them time to read and respond. For paired students, one usually wrote during class and the other took the journal over the weekend.

To prepare for our project, I required each individual or pair of my students to: 1) construct a journal (blank book) for use in written dialogue with a sixth grade student (I felt that the challenge of personally designing a book would engender a sense of ownership and convey to sixth graders a notion of what the students may be like); 2) identify themselves with a pseudonym; 3) explain the significance for their moniker; 4) include a brief autobiographical sketch; and 5) share an illustration that told something about them. I hoped that use of a self-drawn illustration would be informative, spark initial discussion with partners, and create artistic empathy in our sixth graders.

In order to encourage my students to reflect on their interactions with sixth graders, I asked them to routinely document their reactions. I collected, read, and responded to their entries in these reflective journals on four specific dates throughout the semester. These journals, my journal with Lara, and my field notes of observations of our in-class writing day became data sources.

The first time Lara received the journals, she allowed her students to browse through them. Then, names were drawn for order of individual journal selections. Lara allowed students to negotiate exchanges on their own terms. The following excerpt from our journal indicates her students' reactions.

Once they had their journals they immediately began thumbing through them, looking at the illustrations, reading the autobiography, and sharing information with their classmates and me. They were very excited! ... this was so fun to watch. (2/3/92)

Four days later my students exhibited an equal level of excitement when they received the journals for the first time and I noted.

My students have just received the journals. The room is buzzing. These students are so excited. After ten minutes, there's a lull as students get down to the business of writing. Now there is quiet talk. Individual students come to me to share things they've enjoyed about their partners. They share with each other as well. I wish you could see this. (2/7/92)

Two days later I added:

I had to stop writing during class because there was too much going on. I needed to let students share their experiences with me and I couldn't do that while writing. (2/9/92)

At the conclusion of the semester, sixth graders shared their perceptions of the journal activity through written essays. The following excerpt represents the early stages of the exchange.

After I finished reading my journal [the first time] I was kind of nervous because I didn't know what to write. For that reason is why it took me a while to write my first entry. As the weeks went by my journal partner and I wrote to each other. Every time it was time to get my journal I would get so excited. I guess it was because I wanted to see what Barbara had written.

During early exchanges, journal days always began with our students scrambling to get their journals. I was immediately struck by my students' high levels of activity, especially the great amount of discussion. Lara and I were no different. I was always eager to get to Lara's entertaining and informative entries regarding her students' journal behaviors. Initially, I read my class an excerpt from Lara's journal to share the atmosphere in her room during their journal time.

As the kids came into class all of them were asking, "Can we get our journals?" They found their journal and went to their seats. They immediately started thumbing through their journals. I observed many students counting how many pages the university students had written in response. Some compared the length of one partner's entry to the other. (Later during the class I shared the information about one responding in class and the other over the weekend). As soon as one little boy started reading, he looked up at me and said, "Ms. Lasater, you like the Cowboys don't you?" When I answered "yes," he said, "so does Amy." The manner in which he said this was like Amy was a friend he'd had for life and not someone who in reality he's never met! (2/10/92)

As I read this portion of Lara's entry to my students I could feel heightened interest. Her incredible attention to detail in her writing effectively characterized individual students and her class. I soon recognized that sharing Lara's written observations from our journal could become a window for my students into the sixth grade

classroom. As the semester progressed, I gradually increased the percentage of her entries I shared with my class. By her April 20th entry, I was reading aloud the entire text. I continued doing so for the duration of the project. the final entry in one of my student's dialogue journal represents the sentiment of nearly all 44 students regarding the value of sharing Lara's entries.

I enjoyed hearing Lara's anecdotes. They helped us make the vital connection between the individual we were writing to and his real life school situations. What I mean to say is that she gave us necessary background information: it made the experience more real. I suppose too, there is a measure of gratification for us to hear what we write mentioned in their class. It was important enough for our partners to take notice. Just hearing Lara talk of her students waiting in anticipation to read what we wrote added a depth to the experience.

Early in the semester, both Lara and I discovered that we underestimated the amount of class time we allotted to our journal activity. On February 10, Lara noted,

I can't believe how much can happen in the course of an hour! This has obviously taken longer than 10-15 minutes at the beginning of class. We spent nearly the entire hour with our journals today.

Students in my class loudly complained throughout the semester about the inadequacy of one 50-minute class period for reading, responding to and talking about their journals. The 38 students who were sharing a sixth grade partner were unhappy about splitting the limited time they could keep the journal with another student. Pairing my students became increasingly problematic. Students tended to overwhelm the sixth grade child with the amount of writing two partners generated and/or the difficulties university partners had getting equal access to a shared journal when we had so little time with them. When my students limited the amount they were writing, sixth grade partners often increased writing or at least became more responsive to what my students had written. In terms of partner relations, uncomfortable issues regarding access were typically resolved on an individual basis. Some students resigned themselves to the fact that working with another within our time constraints required extensive compromise.

Although we valued student talk during journal time we also were unsure how to deal with it. On February 11, Lara wrote,

My students come in, get settled right away, and immediately begin writing. They are used to this routine, but occasionally I have to remind them that this time is for written, not oral language ...

Within a week Lara displayed a changed view toward her students' talk.

There's no telling how long my students would have continued writing, but I couldn't stand it any longer and I wanted to hear from them, so I interrupted them after they had been writing for 25 silent minutes! Chris immediately tells me to wait — he is not ready to stop. When I tell them they can continue writing as everyone has the opportunity to share, all the kids cheer! (2/17/92)

By March 30, Lara reported that students were pulling desks together, or meeting in groups on the floor and elsewhere to discuss and share what had been written in their journals.

In my class, we eventually developed a routine in which I read aloud from Lara's journal. Next, informal and formal discussions developed as we discussed issues of interest to the entire class or to small groups. I described my role to Lara in an entry on February 16.

The major topic of conversation and writing continues to be journals. I have found that I am unable to write in class because there is too much interaction I miss out on when I'm tied to writing.

I never knew before class what form discussions would take or where they might lead. One day, Lara's entry about an angry parent (also a school board member) reacting to a misspelling in one of my student's entries sparked several days of discussion about current beliefs regarding spelling instruction, the politics of teaching, and audience and purpose in journal writing. Another time, elementary students wrote of an explosive argument among a number of sixth grade girls and our discussions turned to social issues of the classroom and the mercurial nature of adolescents. Initially, I was bothered by these intrusions on my instructional plans. However, I learned to appreciate these opportunities for empowering my students in their own learning. Consequently, our classes became more student directed as we responded to issues arising during journal conversations. I was learning to share my classroom, to allow students to control their agenda for learning. In turn, many students expressed an increased ownership in their learning as expressed in the following.

The thought of the journals scared me at first. I was not sure what I would have to say to a sixth grader. I also

worried about whether or not I would have or make time to respond in the journal. I have not, at least in the past, been real big on journals. Another aspect of my attitude that changed was the way I saw journaling itself. Like I said I have not been one to take initiative to do a journal. I believe that because we were not required to write in the journal every day helped. I found myself looking forward to Tuesdays for that very reason. My thoughts about time changed also. I did not know if I would have time; what a shock to me when I found myself staying up till all hours just to write in my journal or putting off other homework to do it first. What I found most surprising about the journal was how free it was. We were pretty much allowed to write whatever we thought appropriate. This was also the way my partner felt, from what I can gather, because he was very open. I enjoyed this part of our activity most I think.

My students and I also learned to better understand community from a performance perspective as a result of involvement in this project. Lewis (1995) challenges the existence of an idealized classroom community that is expected to serve as a unified learning community where students can take risks, ask questions, share and respond in a supportive environment where students can share their voices equitably in talk and writing about texts. Instead, along with Kambrelis (1995) and others, Lewis views community from a performance perspective in which norms and expectations evolve through negotiation among participants. Lewis states,

... contexts (including classrooms) are not static social facts or representations but construction zones or performative inventions negotiated by the participants. As such, they are heterogeneous and negotiable. This is crucial because it is within these construction zones that socialization and learning occur and individuals claim particular kinds of social and cultural practices and identities (p. 150).

Within this construct of community all participants in this journal project learned about the constructive nature of shared community development. The following excerpts from my journal document my observations of students constructing their own knowledge about who their sixth grade partners were as writers.

We continue to learn to differing degrees just what we expect from journaling experiences. More and more of my students are beginning to realize that they have unrealistic expectations. Unlike last week, they seem to be coming to terms with accepting who their writers are and appreciating what they are receiving in the way of entries. They still

question and wonder about length and depth of entries, but after a class discussion of such, they've looked at such problems in a new light. It's really exciting for me to watch right now because my students are so visibly trying to make sense of what they are experiencing — emotions, learning and the insecurity of dealing with the unfamiliar — almost groping their ways through this. It makes it hard to stay in the shadows and not tell them — think this way, share this, and so on. (3/8/92)

We are coming to value your students' entries for what they are, notes reflective of the early stages of developing relationships. We now realize that your students are learning what it means to use the medium of writing to try and test out a friendship. This is not an easy process, especially when limited to our means of communication. In any case, I find it to be very valuable for my students to experience the boundaries of journals — to see how important they are in this setting, yet how potentially beneficial they might be in a classroom setting. (3/29)

My thoughts were supported by students in oral discussions and journal entries such as the following.

I've gotten used to activities that are idealized, and theory based. Our activity [journal project] was a very real experience that I wasn't quite prepared for. I can not say for sure that I influenced my partner's writing, but she definitely affected my writing, and my naive notions. I learned that corresponding with a younger person is hard work. My inexperience with actual students hadn't prepared me for the give and take that is necessary.

At the end of our semester, Lara and I coordinated a picnic so our two classes could meet. Both classes convinced us of the need to do so and it turned out to be a very enjoyable gathering.

Refining the Process: Semester Two

Lara and I were very encouraged by the positive outcomes of our initial semester of sharing journals. Consequently, we decided to continue the project for the fall semester. I made some structural changes to my class schedule to capitalize on what I had learned from our first journal experience. Most exciting for me to realize was that students were more apt to take charge of their own learning due to the way journal experiences brought them into contact with so many real classroom issues. Therefore I changed from three 50 minute class sessions to two 90 minute sessions so I could devote one class day to a combination of writing workshop and journal activities.

Other changes I planned included reading aloud Lara's entire weekly entry in our journal and minimizing the number of my students who would be paired with one sixth grader. Again, my students created journals as they had the previous semester.

Similar to our initial semester, we struggled with sixth graders' initial attempts to write, especially the uneven nature of these attempts as they varied across students and time. The following comment from one of my students and then a sixth grade student demonstrate how learning was negotiated beyond the written text.

I read through the first journal entry that my partner had written ... It lead me to believe that we had nothing in common and I was sure that we would have a hard time writing to one another. My prophesy came true. About halfway through the semester he started writing about his journaling experience last semester and decided that he wanted us to meet. He included his phone number and asked if I was interested in meeting. I was really dreading making that phone call. After all, if we couldn't think of what to write to one another, what were we going to talk about on the phone?! I told him I would call though, and I asked him to warn his family. I was so surprised by our conversation. He talked nonstop for forty-five minutes. We decided to meet at the 7-Eleven next to his school. We decided that we would go to his house and get his kite and then go to the park. Brandan lives with his mother and his grandparents and I was able to meet everyone. Our afternoon together lasted for about three hours and it was great fun! A couple of weeks have passed now since my first meeting with Brandan. Both of our letters have gotten longer as well as our phone conversations. At our last meeting that was held in the park [with our classes] we decided that we would like to continue writing.

About the eighth entry we decided to meet at 7-Eleven on Halloween. This was probably the most exciting moment of the experience. I loved the experience [journaling] so much that Sonya and I are still journaling by bringing our journals back and forth between our houses. During the two months of the journaling I gained a good friend and lots of memories. I am really glad I did the journaling.

Reading Lara's journal aloud was once again an important source of information for my students. The resulting class discussions helped us make sense of this experience and sharing our stories developed our understanding of negotiated community. During the semester, I became more aware of the breadth of our journal community as a number of sixth graders visited with my students outside of the school settings. Beyond the 7-Eleven example,

crossage partners attended each others' sporting events, went to movies, or met for lunch. Parents often read their children's journals and some even took turns writing in them.

I also became more cognizant of the impact of this project on my students' understanding of and attitudes toward writing as the following journal excerpts demonstrate.

I was able to watch Jesse grow in his approach to writing. The mechanical changes in his writing were often subtle, while the changes in length were sometimes dramatic. This experience gave me new insight into the development of a writer. [She spent the rest of the paper specifying these insights in great detail.] This activity helped me to realize the importance of providing meaningful writing experiences where there is no stress, pressure, or grade. To create writers we first have to provide a risk-free comfortable environment and journals do that.

Turning It Over to Students: Semester Three

The project continued during spring semester. Earlier this year, Lara's class asked to coordinate the project by creating the journals. Lara worked with her students during this process and on February 16, I distributed 31 journals to my 31 students. Unlike previous semesters, I did not deliver the journals to the school. Instead, upon their insistence, four of my students shared the job of delivering the journals to the elementary school office on Thursdays after our class. Two of Lara's students took them from there to her classroom. They kept the journals over the weekend and my students picked them up again Tuesday mornings before our class.

Other than greater student control over the management of our journals, there were no major differences in the outcomes of the project. We continued to value the opportunities we were getting to directly learn about sixth graders as represented by the following.

I was very surprised at the intensity of my journal partner's entries. Many of his thoughts were private and personal. Because his entries were so thought provoking I felt an enormous responsibility when writing to him. I had to think carefully before writing because I wanted my answers to be appropriate for the situation. This surprised me more than anything else. It took a considerable amount of time to answer his questions. There was the realization that my journal partner was serious about his questions and deserved serious answers in return.

We broadened our understanding of journals as a vehicle for generating relevant written and oral discourse as the following students noted.

It was nice for me to see first hand that yes, kids can and do enjoy writing. Brandon's writing also reinforced what I had heard in class — that perfect spelling and handwriting are not crucial to communication of thought! I clearly see that the priority must be the communication of thought.

... a real sense of trust developed between us. She got to where she would share her most private thoughts with me. I began to feel like a true friend. I never gave advice or judgment, I just let her talk. My goal was to provide a safe feeling for Terry so she could have somewhere to think out loud in security. I could feel my emotions about the whole project changing the longer it went on. I started looking forward to reading the journal. This experience gave me the chance to get to know a sixth grader and not to become scared of them.

Lastly, once again we became an evolving learning community that extended beyond our classroom environment. This final journal excerpt illustrates how students learned to work with their journal partners rather than trying to impose a preconceived set of standards on them as writers and individuals.

This has been beneficial for me because as a future teacher, I need to be able to read the needs and wants of my students. Ross' entries forced me to get down on their thinking level and realize that they think in a different way than I do. Also, males (old and young) communicate differently than females (old and young). The communication, or lack of, is something for me to work with as I become a teacher.

CONCLUSIONS

The catalog description of *Language Arts in the Elementary School* stated that the course was designed to acquaint pre-service teachers with the theory, assumptions, and methods associated with developing language arts skills in elementary students. When I first began using a journal exchange for this course, I believed that it could play an important role helping my students: 1) understand how journals can foster children's growth as language users; 2) understand the nature of children at a particular grade level; and 3) discover the utility of this medium for establishing a personal student/teacher relationship. I was unprepared, however for the broad impact our journal experience had on my students', Lara's and my understanding about the socio-cultural nature of classroom communities and the important roles oral and written dialogue play in these settings.

My students began to glimpse the world of sixth-grade students — the uneven nature of peer relationships, their interests, attitudes, concerns, differentiated levels of social and academic maturity, and abilities to interact with others. Most notably, the university students were surprised by sixth graders' descriptions of every day occurrences that seemed more challenging than those which they remembered experiencing at that age.

Often, university and elementary students were frustrated as they tried to establish a personal relationship through dialogue journals when no face to face interaction accompanied the activity. Consequently, as Rankin (1992) also discovered, the importance of peer conversations became increasingly apparent to Lara and myself each semester. As this project evolved, I attempted to compensate for this lack of physical contact. I moved from selective sharing of Lara's entries with my students to sharing her entire texts. My students learned much about sixth graders' reactions to journal entries through these oral readings. This filled in the gaps created when sixth graders were less "talkative" in their entries. In addition, Lara's careful recording of observations and reflections became a model of what teachers can learn about students through systematic observations and reflections on them. Lara epitomized kidwatching.

Although not specifically addressed in this article, I found that the value of dialogue journals: 1) for motivation to write; 2) as a source for modeling writing; 3) as a means for learning about student writing abilities as reported in the literature was also evident during this project. More importantly, I have noted that over time, students in elementary and university settings took increasing control of journal activities. Class time allotted for writing and the accompanying discussion became the students' domain as they made clear to their instructors that scheduled and unscheduled blocks of time were preferable to one short time period for writing and talking. I rediscovered the important role of oral language for negotiating and constructing knowledge. The sharing of this oral language across the sixth grade and university communities was mediated through instructors' written accounts shared orally with students.

University students reported that dialogue journals, as experienced in this project, were influential for affecting what they hoped and expected to implement in their own classrooms. Our journal activities provided university students expanded opportunities for learning about the whole child and enhanced opportunities for oral discourse, even when the partners were separated by distance. Undergraduates experienced the value that discourse activities provided for understanding and fostering student social and academic development and constructing a shared community. They learned, as stated by Wells and Wells (1992) that, "In a very important sense, education is dialogue."

During this project, I was continually reminded of the value of student ownership in learning. Although Lara and I provided the

framework for the journal project, it was the students who shaped the personality to the journal activities. Lara's and my written journal exchange and the ongoing oral and written feedback from students resulted in program adjustments which gradually moved Lara and me to the periphery rather than the center of our discourse community. We learned that this was the best place for us to be.

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Educational implications relating neuroanatomical research and developmental dyslexia

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ABSTRACT

Studies on autopsy of the brains of dyslexics and those measuring brain functioning during cognition during the past decade and a half have shed some light on the possible causes of developmental or specific dyslexia. This article briefly reviews some of the most pertinent research and offers some guidelines for the prognosis and treatment of dyslexic individuals and literary options for reading teachers and specialists to use in working with dyslexia.

INTRODUCTION

Authorities have offered a variety of opinions concerning causes of developmental dyslexia as a neurologically based disorder ranging from brain damage to brain maturational lags and everything in between. An early authority, Hinshelwood (1917), a British physician, became interested in dyslexia when he treated a male patient who suddenly lost the ability to read. Hinshelwood learned later that his patient, a school teacher, had a lesion in his left temporal lobe. He then reasoned that children who had difficulty in learning to read might be similarly afflicted, an opinion he propagated in his book, *Congenital Word Blindness* (1917). Those who support brain damage hypotheses include the following causes of brain defects in maternally induced drug or alcohol abuse and anoxia, forced labor, premature birth and high forceps use, during the birth process.

Neurologically based arguments for dyslexia are relative to the acquisition of cerebral dominance. Orton's (1937) well-known hypothesis of "strephosymbolia," or twisted symbols, is related to a condition in which engrams in the two hemispheres vie for recognition thereby causing a reading disability, a position that has been discredited, although dominance enthusiasts still persist.

Rabinovitch (1962, 1968) has maintained that there is some unknown developmental neurological deficit in cases of dyslexia and along with Bender (1957) and DeHirsch and Jansky (1968) has maintained that the case of developmental dyslexia is a delay or slow development of reading related areas in the brain. These hypotheses imply that the ability to read will improve when the afflicted child reaches an optimum age.

Interest in neurologically based causes of reading disability has persisted to the present time. Fortunately, the development of technology has afforded medical researchers the opportunity to study the brain of poor readers in ways never before possible. Current research, then, has provided new insights into the relationship between developmental dyslexia and neuroanatomical finding. The purpose of this paper is to examine some recent medical neuroanatomical findings relative to developmental dyslexia and to present some implications they may have for reading teachers and reading specialists.

More specifically, there are two questions that the paper addresses. First, is there a causal relationship between neuroanatomical disorders and developmental dyslexia? Second, what can the reading teacher or specialist do?

In order to answer these questions we decided to focus mainly on three researchers whose work seem to be particularly relevant. We are aware that there are numerous articles on neuroanatomical findings reflecting keen interest in the topic, but much of the research we have focused on is by Albert Galaburda, M.D., whose work has captured the attention of professionals in several fields (Galaburda, 1989; Sherman, Galaburda and Geschwind, 1985; Galaburda, 1983). We also have focused on the research of Livingstone (Livingstone, Rosen, Drislane, and Galaburda, 1991) and Flowers (1993) because their research has an obvious connection to Galaburda's findings.

In "Ordinary and Extraordinary Brain Development," Galaburda (1989) reported on his findings of 21 human brains, eight of which were from individuals who were alleged to be dyslexics. Significant about Galaburda's research findings is that the eight dyslexic brains shared the same condition in every case, a remarkable incidence of consistency if only for a relatively small number of cases. No definition of dyslexia was offered in the article, although he referred to a definition he used in an earlier article.

Although the wording may vary somewhat, most workers in the field will accept dyslexia as a condition manifested by difficulty with learning to read and write efficiently despite the presence of normal intelligence, adequate educational opportunities, and normal psychiatric makeup. Most definitions exclude individuals with major sensory deficits. Between five percent and fifteen percent of the school-age population in the United States fit this definition (Galaburda, 1985, p. 22)

One can infer that dyslexia has a constitutional basis, a position held widely by the medical community.

Galaburda offered an explanation as to why the brains of dyslexics must be different from the brains of non-dyslexics in an earlier article (1983, p. 46) by describing the process of cell migration during the early development of humans. He pointed out that the development of the cortex or outer layer of the brain takes place in stages. Early in brain development, certain nerve cells develop in clusters, or germinal zones. These immature cells, or progenitor neuronal cells, later migrate to their final positions in the cortex or sub-cortex. Once mature, these cells assume very specific functions vital to normal brain functioning. At the time certain neuronal cells mature, other neuronal cells in the cortex die off in large numbers while the mature cells survive. The net result of the opposing processes of selective cellular drop-out and cellular maturation cause asymmetry in the sizes of the brain cortexes of non-dyslexics. Upon microscopic analysis of dyslexia brains, Galaburda found that the neurons that would normally drop out remain viable. He also noted that large groups, or nests, of neocortical cells were dumped in superficial layers or clumps on the cerebral cortex, instead of migrating in the specific pattern found in non-dyslexic brains. A resultant effect of this aborted migration was the failure of the neuronal cells to exert an inhibitory influence on other nerve cells. If migration had occurred, the traveling neurons would have settled in close proximity to other types of neurons, thereby causing an inhibitory influence on them. He concluded, then, that possibly for this reason the dyslexic brains had more nerve cells than the asymmetric but normal brains of the non-dyslexics.

Galaburda has had reason to rethink the effect of symmetry on dyslexia because of additional research conducted by Steinmetz and Galaburda (1991). The researchers reported that study of eight normal reading left-handed individuals showed symmetry in the brains of these individuals similar to the symmetry found in the brains of dyslexics studied earlier (Galaburda, 1989). Steinmetz and Galaburda concluded on the basis of the new information that planum symmetry alone could not account for the presence of dyslexia. Additionally, Galaburda's (1989) findings also centered on the corpus collosum, the band of fibers connecting the two hemispheres. The corpus collosum in dyslexic brains was much larger than the corpus collosum in non-dyslexic brains. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that in dyslexics the brain tries to adjust for a deficiency in one hemisphere by making extra connections in the other resulting in a larger cell mass in the corpus collosum.

Although, by his own admission, causal conclusions are premature, it appears to be obvious from Galaburda's research that the anomalies found in dyslexic brains are themselves caused by a variety of factors. Sherman, Galaburda, and Geschwind, (1985) reported a possible cause of abnormal development in dyslexic brains. They

noted that immune deficient mice exhibited an abnormal development found in humans with developmental dyslexia. The mice brains were scarred from a condition called lupus, an autoimmune disease that causes inflammation of the blood vessels resulting in swollen vessels and occlusion of normal blood flow. The link between the condition of the mice and human beings is that women with active lupus have given birth to dyslexic children. One child who died with juvenile lupus and dyslexia had the same type of scarring found in immune deficient mice. Furthermore, the same type of scarring was found in the brains of three dyslexic women. The link between these clinical findings is that immune deficiency states may result in autoimmune diseases such as lupus, which are more commonly found in women. Immune regulation, lacking in lupus patients, involves complex processes occurring at the molecular genetic level.

When developmental dyslexia is analyzed from a molecular genetic viewpoint, many possibilities for causes of developmental dyslexia come to mind. Any number of random mutations during or prior to embryonic development could result in the type of arrested neocortical brain development seen in dyslexia. Similarly, mutations of this sort could be transmitted as an inherited trait. Finally, various pathophysiologic processes occurring during the final stages of brain development, ranging from lupus to temporary brain anoxia, could alter or destroy the molecular-genetic blueprint or machinery necessary to complete neocortical development.

The findings of brain abnormalities and deleterious effects of autoimmune diseases on neocortical development do not necessarily explain their connection to developmental dyslexia. Recently, however, the research of Livingstone, et al. (1991) revealed a possible link between the two entities. Livingstone's work reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (1991) involved the sense of vision whose role in dyslexia has been discounted by vision specialists having found no differences between the eyes of dyslexics and normal readers. Livingstone reported that it is likely that dyslexics process visual information more slowly than normal readers. She added that dyslexics also have trouble distinguishing between the order of two rapidly flashing visual stimuli but perform normally on tests with prolonged presentation of stimuli. Autopsies on five dyslexic brains and five non-dyslexic brains concluded that one of the two major visual pathways, the magnocellular system, malfunctioned in dyslexic brains. This system is composed of large cells which carry out fast visual processes and was more disorganized and consisted of smaller cell bodies than the magnocellular system in non-dyslexic brains. The magnocellular systems are used for perceiving motion, depth perception, low contrast, and locating objects in space. The parvocellular system composed of small cells that carry out slower visual processes, were similar in both types of brains. The parvocellular system specializes in color perception, details of forms, perceiving stationary images, and recognizing high contrasts.

The connection between Livingstone's, et al., (1991) work and Galaburda's (1989) may reside in the findings of research scientists who found that animals form antibodies that destroy a protein peculiar to the magnocellular system thereby causing the magno system to respond sluggishly. Galaburda interprets this finding as evidence that dyslexia might be an autoimmune disease acquired congenitally.

Flowers (1993), interested in constitutional causes for dyslexia, reported on the structure and physiological aspects of dyslexia relating her findings to core left-hemisphere language functions. She found that by measuring brain function during cognition, there was a left hemisphere deficit similar to Galaburda's conclusions concerning left-hemisphere deficits in his samples. Unlike Livingstone, et al., (1991), who ascribed the disability to a possible mal-timing in the visual system, Flowers identified patterns for the individuals she studied presenting evidence of disability associated with phonological awareness. Livingstone, et al., (1991) stated that although many authors have argued that dyslexia is a linguistic rather than a visual problem, linguistic defects may be related to perceptual difficulties. However, Flowers' (1993) work may indicate that dyslexic children may also have problems with transitions inherent in auditory phonemic discriminations as well.

CONCLUSIONS OF NEUROANATOMICAL RESEARCH

The findings from the studies we have reported raise several questions. First, do the data show a causal relationship between neuroanatomical disorders and developmental dyslexia? Second, what can the classroom teacher/reading specialist do?

Is there a causal relationship? At the present time we don't know. Even though the evidence of symmetry and disorganization between dyslexic and non-dyslexic brains that have been studied is impressive, we don't know if the pathology reported is the cause of dyslexia or if both the brain abnormalities and the dyslexia are the result of some underlying cause. Furthermore, one might argue that there are too few cases from which to generalize. However, Duane (1989) stated that in the psychological literature, large numbers of cases to interpret phenomena are important; but in neurology, "... a single well-studied brain can provide insights into broad mechanisms of function and dysfunction" (p. 219). Galaburda (1989) analyzed eight dyslexic brains, six males and two females, with all males showing numerous malformations of the cerebral cortex in language relevant regions and to some extent bilaterally. The degree of consistency among Galaburda's findings across the dyslexic brains is compelling, but a direct causal relationship has not been established in spite of these compelling findings. Questions about the causal effect between the possible deficiencies in the visual system of dyslexic children reported in the vision studies by Livingstone, et al. (1991) and the phonological system reported by Flowers (1993) also exist.

WHAT CAN THE READING TEACHER DO?

Although the evidence, including the personal experience of the authors, strongly indicates that the developmental dyslexics have undue difficulty attaining the kind of automatic word recognition that would make them facile readers, the reading teacher or remedial specialist does have some options.

1. The use of multisensory approach is indicated. First, dyslexic individuals usually have difficulty learning under any circumstances; however, the conventional visual-auditory approaches that work for most children do not alone produce the required results — that is, helping the child make the automatic responses to letters and words. It may be that the conditions described by Galaburda (1989), who reported structural and developmental anomalies; Livingstone, et al., (1991) who reported visual processing anomalies; and Flowers (1993) who reported phonological anomalies, are causes of the inability of the dyslexic individual to profit solely from visual-auditory programs. Unfortunately, these programs are the substance of basal programs or literature based programs which supplement with phonics-structural analysis approaches.

One technique that has produced some results is the use of the VAKT technique. VAKT stands for visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile. The technique was first popularized by Grace Fernald (1943) in her text *Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects*. She explained that the task of learning to decode includes the presentation of word forms is made in a variety of ways and is basic to conventional approaches that combine visual discrimination exercises with their auditory counterpart. Auditory methods include learning the sound of the alphabet (although not every proponent agrees on this requirement); repeating phonograms, associating the phonograms with orthographic or visual symbols and so on. It doesn't matter if synthetic or part-to whole phonics is used, the approach is essentially auditory supplemented by visual associations. To the two conventional senses, Fernald adds the kinesthetic and tactile. Fernald (1943, pp. 26-27) points out that if one uses material that the child understands conceptually, the word forms for these concepts can be taught by some kinesthetic technique. Kinesthesia involves eye movements, lip-throat movements, and hand kinesthetic movements. The latter specifically are involved in the tactile use of the fingers in tracing the letters and words. The teacher, at first, guides the child's hand, helps him to draw the letters while looking at the whole word, saying it as he traces it and then repeating the process while writing the word from

memory. In this manner, including all four methods, the child can and does learn to read usually to a more efficient degree than when conventional visual-phonics programs alone have failed to produce positive results.

VAKT is usually used at first in conjunction with an experience approach which draws upon the child's background of experience and the child then learns to recognize the word forms that represent the concepts he already knows. There is no vocabulary control nor lock-step learning involved. In cases of partial disability, VAKT has been especially useful. With cases of developmental or specific dyslexia, VAKT has produced learning to read, even if to a more limited extent than with cases of partial disability, but superior to the results affected by conventional phonics-structural analysis approaches.

2. Another method useful in teaching reading-disabled students is espoused by the Orton Institute. The Institute recommends the Gillingham-Stillman approach (1963) which uses VAKT but presents the technique in a much more formal and incremental way than VAKT alone. Although the approach places a heavy emphasis on VAKT, conventional phonics and structural analysis learning is an important part of the program.

The validity of the two methods described above lies in the fact that reading specialists have used the approaches with positive results with poor readers for over fifty years when conventional methods have failed. Harris and Sipay (1990) stated that some research concerning the effects of the Fernald or VAKT method has produced positive results in individuals who have repeatedly failed to learn to read (pp. 500-502). They added, however, that research on Orton-Gillingham approach is extremely limited (p. 504). For our experience, we found VAKT alone yields positive results without the highly formal instruction and lengthy training required by Gillingham-Stillman. It may be more feasible to use the VAKT although proponents of Gillingham-Stillman strongly advocate their approach.

3. If Livingstone's (1991) work has any meaning for reading instruction, it may be that her research on the visual system has some implications for Irlen's (1991) work. Irlen has had some success with cases of reading disability in using colored filters in conjunction with reading instruction.

4. Another new , albeit controversial remedial approach, is embodied in the work of Tallal. Nash (1996) reported that Tallal has presented data that have linked dyslexia with deficits in the rate with which dyslexic children process rapidly presented sensory and motor information. Tallal suspects that some types of dyslexia

may stem from their inability to process auditory information rapidly enough. Tallal has developed computer-based programs that use animated video games. The basis of the therapy program is a speech processing program that permits the researchers to slow down the speed of auditory clues so that the dyslexic children can process them thereby enabling the children to learn the requisite decoding skills.

It is interesting to note that Livingstone's (1991) work focuses on the visual system while Flower's (1993) work focuses on auditory functioning, because the two remedial approaches reported above by Irlen and Tallal involve visual and auditory training respectively. There may be some credence to the belief that there are different kinds of dyslexias.

Additionally, teachers can tape lessons from textbooks that dyslexic students are required to read thereby enabling them to learn the material despite the fact that they cannot decode the text. Teachers can also pair a dyslexic child with an effective reader who can read to his/her classmate and discuss the requisite material. If a school can subscribe to the services of the Books for Blind Association, any text can be taped for the student and the teacher can select taped texts from among thousands of titles that are presently available. The point is, then, that while the reading-decoding avenue to learning is in the process of improving, children can learn the required content subject information. Certainly, teachers can use oral tests (recorded tests) and untimed tests that are better suited to the reading disabled child.

Perhaps the day will come when science will do more than tell us what is wrong and effect changes in basic human structures like the brain that will prevent conditions like dyslexia. Until that day arrives, we may be the only hope for the dyslexic child — a responsibility we do not take lightly.

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Children's literature: What's on the horizons

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Chapter Books

King, Casey, & Osborne, Linda Barrett. 1997. *Oh, Freedom!: Kids Talk About the Civil Rights Movement with the People Who Made it Happen*. Illustrated by Joe Brooks. NY: Scholastic. ISBN: 0-590-67529-X. 138 pp.

Oh, Freedom! is a non-fiction book that offers children a wealth of information as well as the impetus for initiating their own inquiries and gathering stories from their own communities.

As Rosa Parks says in her foreword, it "...is a powerful and intensely personal oral history of ordinary people. It is unique because the voices of the children themselves can be heard as they respond to their elders' moving descriptions of segregation, protest marches, and tragic assassinations." *Oh, Freedom!* chronicles the civil rights movement through a series of interviews done by children with some of the people who actually participated. Each of the book's three parts begins with a preface that offers general background for the experiences discussed in the interviews. The first part entitled "Life Under Segregation," contains nine interviews. Part two entitled "The Movement to End Legalized Segregation" contains eleven interviews. And, part three entitled, "The Movement Shifts: The Struggle to End Poverty and Discrimination" contains eleven interviews. On the pages of each interview there is a photographic portrait of the young person and their interviewee(s) as well as photographs of the times and events described in the interview.

McKinley, Robin. 1997. *Rose Daughter*. NY: Greenwillow, \$16.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-15439-5. 306 pp.

Once again, Robin McKinley takes the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale and uses it to tell an intriguing story of courage and love. The power of love resonates throughout the relationships between and among Beauty, her two sisters Lionheart and Jeweltongue, their father and the beast as she is duty-bound to live in his castle. The story be-

gins with Beauty's family being reduced to poverty and moving to the country. Lionheart finds she has an affinity for horses and disguises herself as a stable boy in order to get work. Jeweltongue realizes she is a fine seamstress and sews for the wealthy of the town. Beauty finds she has an almost magical gift for gardening. Their father is distraught with both his financial loss and the loss of his wife and on one of his trips to the city becomes lost and must seek shelter in the beast's castle. In return for her father's safe passage, Beauty must go and live with the Beast who wants her to restore his garden and to marry him. Through several twists in the story, McKinley does, indeed, add freshness and intensity to this much loved tale.

Stevenson, James. 1997. *The Unprotected Witness*. NY: Greenwillow, \$15.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-15133-7. 170 pp.

In this first person narrative, Pete tells the harrowing sequel to *The Bones in the Cliff*. Following the death of his father who has been in the federal witness protection program, Pete, his long time friend Rootie (short for Rosalie) and his new, rather odd friend Moosh Marshman must escape from the sinister men who are after Pete. These men think Pete's father gave him information as to the whereabouts of a large sum of money. This is a fast paced story of betrayal, intrigue, danger, suspense and friendship. Stevenson does an excellent job of keeping even the most reluctant reader involved and intent on knowing what happens.

Tillage, Leon Walter, 1977. *Leon's Story*. Illustrated by Susan L. Roth, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$14.00 hb. ISBN: 0-374-34379-9. 107 pp.

This is a book that should be required reading of everyone in this country as it powerfully reinforces why we must continue to work diligently to assure an equitable and just reality for all of America's citizens.

Leon's Story is the autobiography of Leon Walter Tillage who was born the son of a black sharecropper on January 19, 1936 in a small, rural town in North Carolina. In sharing his story, Mr. Tillage chronicles his experiences with the hatred and racism that shadowed every aspect of his life growing up as well as his participation in the early civil rights movement when dogs and firehoses were used to discourage the protest marches. While the tone and style of this short memoir are straightforward and matter of fact, the substance is profoundly disturbing and thought provoking. In sharing one experience, he talks of a young white boy who was ordered by his father to kick Leon instead of saying "pardon me" (as he at first had done) as he walked around Leon. "IN fact he kicked me twice. He started walking off and looked back at me with his blue eyes and he had a sad look on his face as though he was sorry. I'll never forget the look

on that kid's face as long as I live." After hearing Leon speak at the school in Baltimore where he currently works as a custodian, Susan Roth encouraged him to tell his story for a wider audience which led to the publication of this book. Her collage art illustrates the chapter title pages.

Zanzarella, Marianne. 1997. *The Good Housekeeping Illustrated Children's Cookbook*. Photographs by Tom Eckerle. NY: Morrow Junior Books, \$17.95 hb. ISBN: 0-688-13375-4. 166 pp.

This is an excellent resource for teachers, parents and kids who want to make cooking an integral aspect of learning in and/or out of the classroom. The photographs and the text work well together to offer children the information they need in a format that is straight forward and interesting. The text is divided into three major sections: Cooking Basics, Recipes, and Glossaries which include both cooking terms and utensils (which are both pictured and named). There is also an index for easy reference.

Picture Books

Lears, Laurie. 1998. *Ian's Walk: A Story About Autism*. Illustrated by Karen Ritz. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$14.95. ISBN: 0-8075-3480-3. 32 pp.

Ian's Walk portrays a sensitive and realistic look at both the life of an autistic child and the lives of his two siblings who live with him. The story follows Ian and his two sisters as they walk to the park and become separated. The detailed watercolor illustrations reinforce the characters' enactment of the plot and their feelings as the sisters search for and find Ian and then walk home with him. The book also includes a preface written by professionals who work with families with autistic children. This book is an excellent story of sibling caring as well as an excellent resource for making children aware of peers who might be autistic or live with an autistic child.

Pomeranc, Marion Hess. 1998. *The American Wei*. Illustrated by DyAnne Disalvo-Ryan. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$15.95. ISBN: 0-8075-0312-6. 32 pp.

This is a book about the naturalization process. Wei Fong is a Chinese boy whose family is going to be part of a naturalization ceremony and he is excited about becoming an American citizen. He is also excited about losing his first tooth. The story follows Wei and his family as they leave their apartment and wend their way to the federal courthouse. Near the courthouse, Wei loses his tooth and many of the other soon-to-be citizens help his family and him search for it. The gouache and pencil illustrations add depth to this delightful story

giving children an emotional as well as a factual sense of what it means to immigrate to the United States and become a naturalized citizen.

Spelman, Cornelia. 1997. *Your Body Belongs to You*. Illustrated by Teri Weidner. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co. ISBN: 0-8075-9474-1. 28 pp.

This is a very simple and straightforward book that reinforces for young children that their bodies are theirs and that they have the right to decide who touches them and under what circumstances. It also differentiates between acceptable and unacceptable touches. The illustrations are soft and inviting and accurately depict the messages in the text. There is a preface addressed to parents which offers suggestions for using the book.

Thomas, Shelley Moore. 1998. *Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace*. Photography by Eric Futran. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$14.95. ISBN: 0-8075-7545-3. 24 pp.

Warm and filled with hope, this book offers a list of things children (and adults) do to bring peace into the world. The list is written in poetic form accompanied by descriptive photographs that both highlight the actions taken and the people involved. The refrain of "Somewhere today" which appears in large, bold type on each page adds to this upbeat look at how much joy there already is. It is also a reminder of how each person has a tremendous impact on whether or not his/her own life is peaceful and how this may (or may not) add to the peace on the planet. This book could also serve as an excellent model for children to create their own books about peace and other connected issues.

Williams, Vera B. 1997. *Lucky Song*. NY: Greenwillow, \$15.00. ISBN: 0-688-14459-4. 24 pp.

Vera Williams' playful illustrations accompany the "lyrics" to this delightful *Lucky Song* about "Little Evie" who, when she wanted to fly her kite, the wind cooperated, and when she wanted to eat her supper, her grandmother had it ready to eat, and "when she wanted her blanket; her sister wrapped it around her." Evie is a lucky little girl and the illustrations and words combine to bring her limitless fun to life.

