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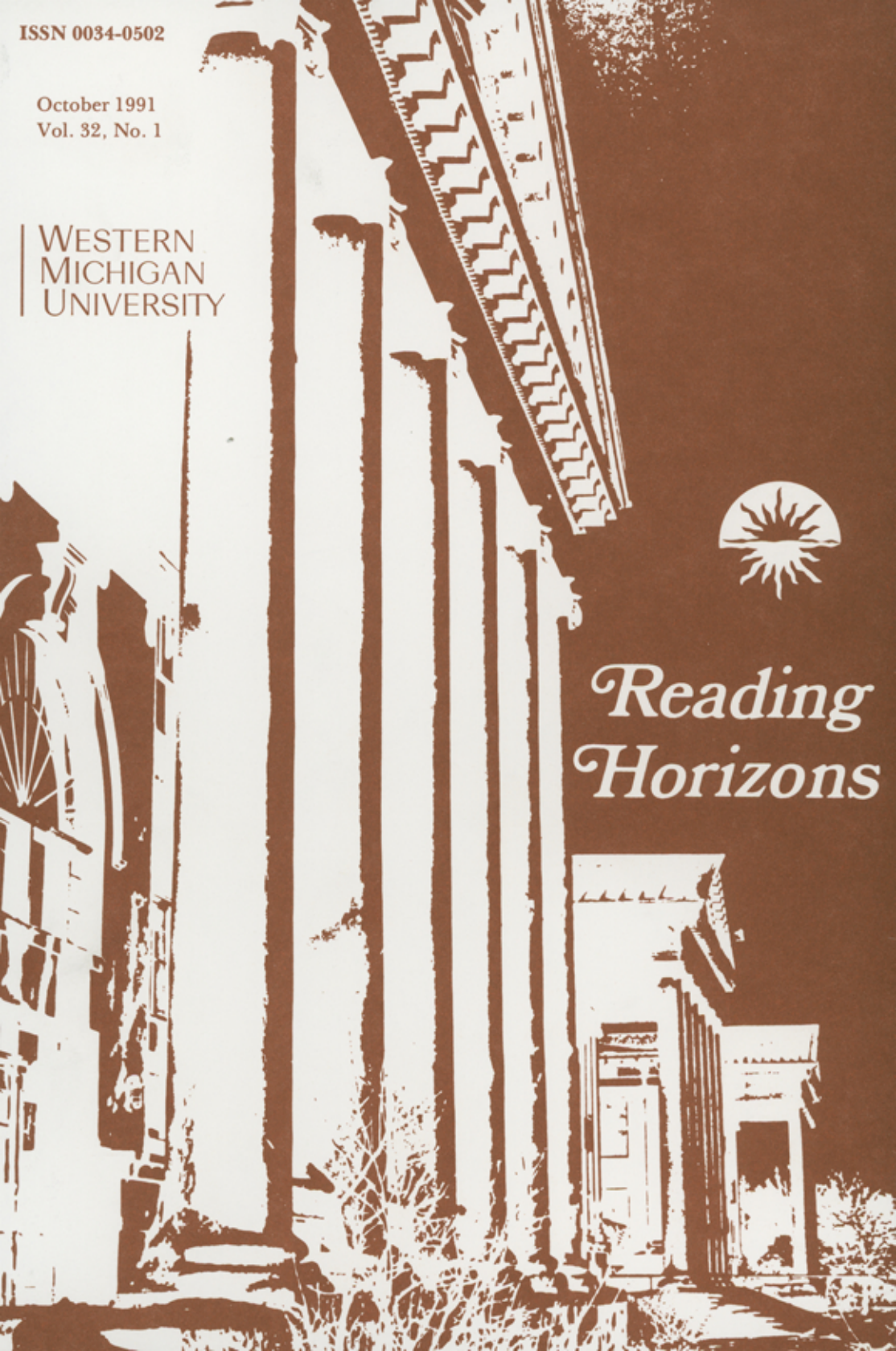
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READING HORIZONS has been published since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo Michigan. As a journal devoted to teaching reading at all levels it seeks to bring together, through articles and reports of research findings, those concerned and interested professionals working in the ever widening horizons of reading and related areas of language.

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COMMENTARY

A Pledge of Responsibility for Children by Teachers of Reading

Richard D. Robinson

We accept responsibility for children

*...who think reading is the greatest activity in the world,
...who want to read just one more book before they go to bed,
...who only want to read about Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.*

And we accept responsibility for children

*...who know more about drug addiction than you know
about the double vowel rule, ...who never write anything true in
their journals because they're ashamed of what they would
write, ...who never bring something to share during reading
because they have nothing to share.*

We accept responsibility for children

*...who would rather watch the video than read the book,
...who turn over the corner of the pages to mark where they
have quit reading, ...who only want to read books that have big
pictures.*

We accept responsibility for children

*...who never answer how they feel about what they have
read because they believe no one cares how they feel, ...who
after they have read "Why the Daffodil Loves Spring" are
unable to write a short essay because they have never seen a
daffodil nor do they know what the word love means, ...whose
parents believe reading is something you only do in school.*

We accept responsibility for children

...who believe being a member of the "high group" in reading is the best status symbol of all, ...who after reading about Paris, London, and Freezewater can tell you all about them because they have been there, ...who when they hear you say, "let's go to the library," think you are talking about their personal collection of books at home.

And we accept responsibility for children

...whose only experience stories are based on beer commercials, gang names, and TV sitcom adventures, ...who don't participate in sustained silent reading at the end of the day because they are scared to go home to an empty house, ...who can't tell about a circus or a birthday party because they have never been to a circus or had a birthday party.

We accept responsibility for children

...whose only goal in reading is to read more books than Mary Jane, ...who in first grade are concerned about how well they have read so they can go to medical school, ...who in class discussion about what they have read can quote from Ranger Rick, National Geographic, and the Wall Street Journal.

And we accept responsibility for children

...who say we "love to read" when they have only known failure, fear, and disappointment with reading, ...who have never had a book of their own, ...who have never experienced the joy of reading.

For those who have never had a teacher who understood and cares ...for those who smile with eagerness when you say "let's read" ...we accept all of these children.

The idea for this commentary is based on *A Pledge of Responsibility for Children* by Ina J. Hughs, original source unknown.

Richard D. Robinson is a faculty member at the University of Missouri, in Columbia Missouri, and a member of the Reading Horizons Board of Editorial Advisors.



Making Wordsmiths

Beth Weir

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean..."
(Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1872)

Templeton (1991) uses the term "wordsmith" to refer to language users conversant with and excited about their use of words as tools. Becoming a "wordsmith," developing a working knowledge of the English language and an interest in it is no mean feat. The Oxford English Dictionary lists 600,000 words as being employed by English speakers since the twelfth century; currently 450,000 are used. By way of contrast, the French language employs a third of this number and Russian, one quarter (Claiborne, 1989). Such a large corpus of English words, derived from the Indo-European, Germanic, French, Latin and Greek languages makes it possible to convey nuances and subtle shades of meaning through speech and writing. Most ideas have a number of forms of expression, each with a slightly different implication. For example, *ask*, *question* and *interrogate* respectively suggest an increasingly aggressive stance on the part of the speaker.

Three questions among many that suggest themselves to a language teacher when reflecting on making children comfortable using this rich storehouse of words are addressed here. Why is it important to have a rich vocabu-

lary? How does vocabulary development take place? What can happen in class to foster vocabulary growth?

Why is it important to have a rich vocabulary?

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the factors consistently associated with ability to comprehend text readily (Anderson and Freebody, 1985; Davis, 1968). In other words, the larger the vocabulary of a learner, the better that learner's chances of becoming a fluent and competent reader. Conversely, the child with the impoverished vocabulary tends not to comprehend difficult text as readily (Hargis, Terhaar-Yonkers, Williams and Reed, 1988).

Given the positive nature of the relationship between word knowledge and facility with the reading process, it would appear the language teacher has only to instruct students in difficult vocabulary prior to reading to increase comprehension. However, research in vocabulary instruction does not support this commonsense assumption. For example, Nagy (1988/1989) in a review of studies in this area states:

Imagine an experiment with two groups of students who are about to read a selection from a textbook. One group is given typical instruction on the meaning of some difficult words from the selection; the other group receives no instruction. Both groups are given passages to read and are tested for comprehension. Do the students who received the vocabulary instruction do any better on the comprehension test? Very often they do not. (p. 1).

Pikulski (1989) offers three reasons why preteaching vocabulary may not improve comprehension. First, students do not have to know all the words in a selection to enjoy or understand it. Students who are not offered preteaching of vocabulary are thus not necessarily at a

disadvantage. Second, teaching a word is often redundant since the context of the story frequently allows the individual to ascertain the meaning. Third, instruction is sometimes superficial because too many words are introduced at once and the learner is not provided with any meaningful information about the vocabulary. Other authors (e.g., Blachowicz, 1987; Durkin, 1990) note that students are not frequently encouraged by the teacher to see the connection between the vocabulary activities and the act of reading. Thus, from the child's point of view, preteaching words is frequently an abstract and isolated exercise. Some insight into instructional approaches that will foster word knowledge and create wordsmiths can be gained from an understanding of how vocabulary development occurs.

How does vocabulary development take place?

When students leave high school at approximately 17 years of age they know up to 80,000 words (Miller and Gildea, 1987). The average child, therefore, learns at the rate of 5000 words per year or 13 words per day. As no one teaches a child 13 words each day, much learning must be indirect. Although this vocabulary acquisition process is not fully understood, insights from research studies (e.g., Manzo and Sherk, 1971-1971; Miller and Gildea, 1987) suggest many words are acquired incidentally as a function of experience with them in intelligible contexts.

Words are labels for concepts. Initially, children learn words as labels for objects in their environment; *chair*, *bed*, *dog*, *rain*, for instance, are terms learned through experience with the item or event. Such understandings form the basis for knowledge about classes of objects or events; *chair* and *bed* lead to an awareness of the more inclusive notion of furniture, *dog* to an understanding about animals, *rain* to weather, etc. Commensurate with refinement of

understanding about conceptual hierarchies is an awareness of the interrelationship that exists between them. Thus, when the concept of corn is related to something else such as harvesting, what is known about harvesting corn is now a part of what is known about edible plants and agriculture. Ultimately, of course, vocabulary associated with concepts facilitates further conceptual growth and concomitant language growth (Eisner, 1991). For instance, understanding of the concepts of *judge*, *court*, *crime* is a prerequisite to awareness of the more abstract ideas of *justice* and *due process of the law*.

The process of learning can be characterized, therefore, as one of simultaneously refining, elaborating and labeling understandings about the world. Smith (1978) calls this *implicit knowledge* because it is not possible to make explicit the rules which govern the classification system developed. However, knowledge of conceptual hierarchies, also referred to as semantic networks, exists because they can be utilized and described. Adoption of the premise that our knowledge of language is governed by our conceptual understandings, coupled with evidence noted previously that considerable vocabulary is acquired informally, has consequences for the kind of instructional program put in place in an elementary classroom.

Fostering vocabulary growth

Provision of varied activities that permit opportunity for students to gain the necessary experience to support conceptual growth and vocabulary knowledge is an obvious starting place for fostering word knowledge. The word *kneading*, for instance, as in *kneading bread*, is going to be learned much more readily if the child is permitted to undertake the activity. However, practical considerations, particularly at the higher grades, often confound the ideal of

matching direct experience and vocabulary. Classroom activities are frequently limited by time, safety and opportunity. Further, many concepts are abstract; *ecology* is not readily amenable to direct experience, for instance.

Given the difficulty of providing hands on activities, how is the teacher to help students add concepts and vocabulary simultaneously to their knowledge base? A number of approaches are available, all of which can be implemented across a regular class day; some can be used concurrently. While all activities are designed to foster word knowledge they are also aimed at helping children become wordsmiths — people who are interested and excited about the language.

Instruction. It is possible to teach words directly, particularly within the context of a reading lesson, and still embrace the principle that the concept supporting the word be introduced concomitantly with the vocabulary. Such a dictum requires understanding of how words should be selected for study and awareness of how to relate vocabulary to the concepts available to the student.

While it seems trite to say words selected should be meaningful, inasmuch as study of them yields some new understanding, studies suggest that in practice this is not always the case. For example, Stallman, Commeyras, Kerr, Reimer, Jimenez, Hartman and Pearson (1990) report students already know 70% of the words designated as “new” in the basals prior to reading the texts, suggesting that much preteaching of vocabulary is of marginal value.

How are words of relevance to the students to be selected for study? Authors (e.g., Pikulski, 1989) suggest one criteria the teacher may use is that the vocabulary exam-

ined enhances the meaning of the story. Pikulski notes, as an example, that in Russell Erickson's (1974) story *A Toad for Tuesday*, the toad finds it very "dreary" in the owl's home, lights a candle, and feels much better when the place has a warm glow. While children often infer from context that *dreary* means *dark*, the understanding is incomplete. *Dreary* is thus an ideal candidate for instruction.

An alternative to teacher selection is that of allowing students to select problematic or interesting words themselves for discussion and review. Noble (1981) reports such a strategy is particularly effective with students who have a limited reading vocabulary, probably because the child finds the words chosen appealing. This is a very significant factor as the empathetic response of the learner to a word is the best indication of how well a student will learn that word (Postman, Bruner and McGinnies, 1948).

Developing understandings about words that may be partially understood, and words which influence comprehension, should occur after a story reading has occurred. Primary among the reasons for such a practice is that the child then has access to a rich conceptual base — that used to comprehend the story — to identify new vocabulary. This permits deep cognitive processing; a careful definition of the word in the context in which it was used; and relating the meaning of the word to other meanings and own experiences. All of these factors are associated with retention of information and learning (Stahl and Vancil, 1985). To return to *dreary* as a word for discussion to illustrate this process, post reading vocabulary activity could consist initially of asking the children for synonyms in context:

"As long as I am here, I would like to make myself comfortable," said Wharton. "Do you mind if I light some candles? It seems very dreary in here."

As previously noted, *dark* is an obvious substitute. However, children could be encouraged to experiment with alternatives such as *dull* or *sad*, that also represent the meaning of *dreary*. Students could then be encouraged to contrast the feeling of the house before and after candle lightings, to emphasize the fact that *dreary* is descriptive of atmosphere as well as physical characteristics. Finally, the students could be asked to apply the word to other contexts (e.g., a dreary day, dreary colors), describing what they think is intended by the expressions. Any personal recollections relating to the word *dreary* should be solicited also.

Such related activities go beyond the accurate or definitional response to words typical of traditional instruction (Blachowicz, 1987). They help students gain a deep understanding of the word by folding it into a conceptual base. Additionally, the student is permitted to see the coherence of a reading lesson, as the value of the word study is self evident. Finally, such lengthy discussion adds to appreciation or understanding of the narrative itself and may have the unintended but positive effect of clarifying meanings of other words not under review.

Story time. An informal approach to vocabulary development is story telling. Recent evidence (Elley, 1989; Bracey, 1989) suggests oral story reading, particularly multiple readings of the same story with younger children, is a significant source of information about words. Such is the case regardless of whether the stories are accompanied by teacher explanation of word meanings or read without comment. Greater increases in word knowledge occurs, though, when discussion of the narrative does take place.

Older children should be provided opportunity to read silently on a regular basis. Studies (e.g., Nagy, Herman, and Anderson, 1985; Nagy, Anderson and Herman, 1987) suggest students acquire a large number of words from context in normal reading; a typical fifth grader learns about 1,000 words in this fashion, for example.

Modeling. One of the more powerful vehicles for introducing children to new words is teacher modeling of vocabulary (Haggard, 1980). Modeling involves provision of a word unknown to the students in social discourse. For example, when the class gerbil vigorously chews on some hard material the teacher may comment on how the animal likes to *gnaw*. Eliciting the word from the children in ongoing conversation will help establish the concept and the commensurate label. Subsequent use of the word in other contexts throughout the day will allow students opportunity to begin to own the word themselves.

A second approach to modeling is to elaborate on comments made by children during instruction. For instance, during reading or storytelling, discussion may center on the traits of the main character. If the character has been described in the narrative as "mean" or "bad tempered," this is how the children will be likely to characterize him if asked. A teacher can extend such comments with a remark like "He certainly was an irritable, unpleasant man; I agree with you." While children may not immediately pick up on the new vocabulary (*irritable*, *unpleasant*) they are being provided with one of the multiple exposures to a word required for acquisition of new vocabulary (Deighton, 1960; McKeown, Beck, Osmanson, and Perfetti, 1983). Some words employed by the teacher are adopted by students because they sound adult or have an appealing sound. Curiosity is piqued, leading to

purposeful learning of the vocabulary on the part of a child. This is particularly the case when dealing with upper elementary grade children (Haggard, 1980). Haggard cites the words *deign*, *foibles*, and *fickle* as being learned by students for these reasons. Such a finding is justification for the teacher to use, within an appropriate, meaningful context, vocabulary that may seem on the surface to be too difficult for the given student(s).

Use of cultural and academic trivia. A practice that could be incorporated while modeling words, although it does stand alone as an approach, is to provide what Manzo and Sherk (1971-72) characterize as cultural and academic trivia to support the learning process. For example, many English words can be traced to the myths from the ancient Graeco-Roman world. Two examples follow; one for use in general vocabulary development, the other in science.

In Greek mythology, Pan, the god of the flocks, fashioned and played a reed flute. He was half man and half goat and despite being a minor character in the pantheon of gods was well known. He could cause unreasonable fear in people, making them do things that were self-destructive. The word panic is derived from Pan.

Arachne, according to Greek mythology, was a very skilled weaver who was challenged by the Greek goddess Athene to a weaving contest. Athene became enraged during the course of the competition at the beautiful scenes her opponent was creating and declared herself the winner. Arachne was humiliated and hanged herself, but Athene spared her life by turning her into a spider (arachnid). It is in this form that creatures named for Arachne continue to weave today.

Such an approach which involves formally describing the etymology of words to students presupposes a signifi-

cant background knowledge on the part of the teacher. However, given that the teacher's attitude toward vocabulary improvement is a contagious and vital factor in improving student vocabulary (Rausch, 1969) such an approach has much merit. There are a number of publications available (e.g., Morris, 1988) that could serve as resource material both for the student and the teacher.

Dramatization. Authors (Eisner, 1991; Gardner, 1985; Ward, 1981) who write in support of dramatization as a curriculum offering argue this physical/kinesthetic, visual/spatial mode of communication is frequently more appropriate for learners than the traditional linguistic mode. In other words, children ascribe meaning to experience more readily when they can physically act upon it in some way, rather than just talk about it. This is particularly the case for younger learners. In addition to providing children with another way of knowing, drama incorporates and facilitates traditional ways of knowing. "Through drama, the action and visual elements support and reinforce verbal language, creating a multiple imprint on the learner's memory" (Brown, 1990, p. 27). Vitz (1983) reports a review of empirical studies that support this claim, indicating that oral language and reading skills are improved significantly when linked with dramatic activity.

How is drama used for vocabulary acquisition? For this purpose drama is to serve the players, not an audience. Thus, the activities should require no special talent, be informal and spontaneous, and provide the students with an opportunity to express meaning. Stories that contain many verbs are an obvious medium for work in this area; *The Giant Who Threw Tantrums*, by David L. Harrison (1977) is one such narrative. It is a tale of a giant who wrecks havoc because he is frustrated by his inability to whistle. Words

from the story that warrant investigation in a dramatic mode are *whirled*, *puckered*, *slurping* and *bounced*. Children could simply be asked to very quickly act out, either individually or as a group, the various verbs named during the time devoted to vocabulary development or during ongoing discussion of the story.

Informal dramatization of whole stories for an audience also provides opportunity for vocabulary growth. For example, preparation for visual/spatial interpretation of a character and that character's activities would entail consideration of the traits to be portrayed. This could involve the teacher introducing terms during discussion; *miserly*, *loquacious*, *overbearing*, *opinionated*, for instance, that describe the characteristics to be represented. If players are using dialogue, often a previously unknown term such as *embarrassed* or *splendor* can be incorporated into the presentation in such a way as to be meaningful for the participants. This is important since retention is associated with use of words (Eicholz and Barbe, 1969).

Dramatic experiences provide the teacher opportunity to enhance the audience's awareness of vocabulary as well. Through the performance, the children have a model for many of the terms introduced. Thus they can benefit from hearing the vocabulary in discussion after a play has been presented since reference to (and perhaps replay of) the events can be made to support the word. Frazier (1973) claims that for experience to have been fully experienced, it must be worked through in terms of language. Certainly drama is one experience that can be extended and clarified with language.

Writing. Duin and Graves (1987) report a study in which intensive and elaborated vocabulary instruction was

offered prior to writing. Learners were then encouraged to use the target words in their compositions. The authors report significantly higher gains in both the knowledge of the words and the quality of the writing for those students who were exposed to in depth word processing procedures as compared to those students who were offered traditional instruction in vocabulary. Of equal importance is the very high interest in learning in general and enthusiasm for learning words in particular exhibited by the experimental group.

Summary and conclusions

Making children wordsmiths should be a significant curriculum focus. Attention to having children gain in knowledge of and excitement about words can be justified simply on pragmatic grounds. A positive relationship exists between the quality of the vocabulary exhibited by a learner and reading competency. More important, though, is the fact that learning about words creates an enthusiasm not only about vocabulary but about the learning process itself.

Reports suggest current teaching approaches do not support the instructional climate needed to create wordsmiths. Direct instruction of a vocabulary within the context of a reading lesson is often ineffective. In depth processing of a few key words selected by both the teacher and the student after reading are suggested as appropriate teaching strategies.

However, since so few words of the total vocabulary acquired by a child are learned directly, an additional role played by the teacher is that of creating an environment that will facilitate the informal learning process. One way this can be achieved is by provision of different activities that permit students to process word meanings in relation to a

conceptual base. Many approaches with this aim, e.g., reflection on the etymology of a new word and dramatic response to a story, enhance existing classroom activity and do not entail structural changes to a program. They are thus easily implemented. The return on such additions to the learning process is considerable as children begin to recognize words as intellectual tools — in short, begin the process of being a wordsmith.

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College Students As Readers

Jan LaBonty

The statistics on the reading habits of adult Americans are grim: 10% of the population reads 70% of the books while most adults never read for pleasure. Of the 159 members of the United Nations, the United States ranks a mediocre 24th in book production and 49th in literacy. The 27 million adult Americans considered functionally illiterate and the additional 35 million who have less than minimum survival skill comprise approximately one-third of the adult population. Their ranks are increased by 2.3 million each year (Larrick, 1987). Unfortunately, the data on the personal and professional reading habits of adults in education are also disheartening. Surveys of preservice and practicing teachers reveal inadequate and unimpressive figures in three areas: personal reading (or reading that is done for pleasure), professional reading, and an awareness of children's literature.

The lack of enthusiasm for, and involvement in, reading by those who teach it and stress its importance is serious, particularly since a frequently stated goal of reading instruction is the development of a lifetime habit of reading (Mour, 1977). Teachers have considerable potential for influencing the attitudes of their students toward reading. The acknowledged power of adults as role models for children is a fact that drives the companies who

select athletes and rock singers to sell their products. Teachers serve as role models for the kinds of benefits and rewards that reading promises (Manna and Misheff, 1987). Children are certain to be affected by the teacher who shows excitement and enthusiasm toward reading and just as likely to be influenced by the teacher who shows apathy (Mueller, 1973).

Research concerning the personal reading habits — novels, newspapers, magazines — of teachers is relatively scarce. Comparisons among studies are hazardous since both attitude and behavior are measured, typically with intact groups, and the methods for reporting results vary considerably. While some studies survey both undergraduates and practicing teachers, most focus only on the habits of teachers in the field. Nevertheless, those studies conducted had consistent results: as a group, teachers are not avid readers and the most prolific readers are the older teachers.

Personal reading

Mueller (1973) gathered information about reading habits from two intact education classes, one of graduate students and one of undergraduates. Using a forced choice instrument where 42 respondents compared activities, only 23% of the undergraduates and 50% of the graduates preferred to spend an evening reading rather than watching television. Both groups reported that reading ranked fourth or lower as a leisure activity.

Using a stratified random sample of 224 graduate students employed in education, Mour (1977) conducted a survey and found that only 22% reported reading even one, two, or three books per month. In this study, the bulk of the reading was done by 25% of the subjects. In fact, 162 of the

professionals involved in the survey read two or fewer books per year. In a survey of 170 teachers taking graduate classes, Worden and Noland (1984) found, as did Mueller (1984), that television watching was a favorite leisure activity. Among their respondents, 67% ranked television watching as their favorite recreational activity. While 58% read the newspapers selectively, only 21% reported that they read at least one book a month. Gray and Troy (1986) surveyed 80 college juniors and seniors to determine what kind of reading they were doing on their own time. When asked if they were reading a book at the present, 64% indicated that they were not.

In an effort to discover what affects attitudes toward reading in the developmental stages, Manna and Misheff (1987) examined journal entries from 50 randomly selected subjects, 25 undergraduates and 25 graduate students. They hypothesized that by encouraging their students to reflect upon their own development as readers, they would then be able to discuss experiences that led to their present attitudes toward reading. Participants were asked to write an autobiographical narrative that described the people, places, and events that influenced them as readers. It was hoped that this introspective experience would sensitize them for their critical roles as reading models.

Among the responses given to their open-ended questions, many of which were intense and emotional, the researchers found that members of their sample named more positive influences from outside of school than from within school settings. The power of this information must be interpreted in light of the research of Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) which has shown that most students spend few minutes outside of school in reading. Recommendations from those surveyed included fervent

requests that teachers serve as role models, that they be aware of students' preferences in reading, and that children be exposed to a variety of types of reading by an enthusiastic instructor (Manna and Misheff, 1987). Those who felt they lacked a solid literary heritage considered themselves to be disadvantaged.

Professional reading

The reading habits of teachers and education students in relation to professional materials has also been the subject of survey research. Two types of publications may be considered professional reading: professional journals and teacher magazines. Professional journals contain articles that are peer reviewed; these journals are connected with either a professional organization or an educational institution. For example, *The Reading Teacher* is published by the International Reading Association and *Reading Horizons* is published by Western Michigan University. By contrast, teacher magazines are not connected with either professional organizations or educational institutions. They rely on advertising to cover cost of publication and articles are not juried. An example of a teacher magazine is *Instructor*.

The very nature of our work demands that teachers be not only capable practitioners but also competent scholars (Cogan and Anderson, 1977). Keeping abreast of the many issues on which teachers need information – mainstreaming, parental involvement, accountability, bilingualism, censorship, and teaching methodology – requires ongoing professional growth, often through reading. The research in the professional reading habits of teachers consistently shows that teachers do little professional reading and the publications read are typically ones that contain practical teaching suggestions, such as

teacher magazines, rather than professional journals. As in personal reading, older teachers tend to read more widely than their younger colleagues.

Cogan and Anderson (1977) surveyed teachers in 100 elementary schools in Minnesota, using a stratified random sample, to determine what type of professional reading they did. In the schools selected, a teacher from each grade level participated in the survey. The two most popular publications read were teacher magazines: *Instructor* and *Teacher*. There was a strong positive correlation between the journals read and those that were available in the building library. Age was again a factor in determining professional reading habits, much as it had been in determining personal reading habits. Respondents between the ages of 20-30 read less than did teachers over 50 years old. Cogan and Anderson (1977) concluded that, in general, teachers do not do much professional reading. Mour's (1977) conclusion was similar. He reported that less than half of a sample of 224 graduate students read professional material on a regular basis. The publications read were teacher magazines: *Instructor* and *Teacher*. Worden and Noland's (1984) survey of 170 full-time teachers had similar results: the most popular publications were *Instructor* and *Teacher* and teachers with 11 years of experience or more were people who read more extensively.

An awareness of children's literature

The classroom teacher is the most dynamic model of reading in the instructional world of the child. It is teachers who must translate their own knowledge and enthusiasm about reading to children by exposing them to books and providing opportunities for recreational reading (Mangieri and Corboy, 1981). An intensive study of how children

spend their time outside of school showed that, on the average, only four or five minutes a day was spent reading (Anderson et al., 1988). Therefore, the importance of in-school experiences that promote enjoyment in reading is magnified. At every level, teachers should devote their efforts to leading students into the exciting world of literature (Gray and Troy, 1986).

Even though we know that personal recommendation is a most powerful tool for instigating reading, it is doubtful that teachers are able to guide children and students in their selection of reading materials. Mangieri and Corboy (1981) surveyed 571 elementary teachers and administrators in three states to determine their knowledge of children's literature and recreational reading activities. Ninety-one percent of the respondents could not name three children's books written in the past five years; 71% could not even name a single book. When asked to name a children's book published within the past seven years according to literary genre, 98% could not name a biography, 91% could not name a fictional title, and 97% could not name a poetry anthology. Only 11% could name three or more classroom activities that would promote recreational reading.

The results of a survey conducted for this paper support these findings. One hundred fifty-eight undergraduate educational students from two universities were surveyed concerning their reading habits. The findings reported above were confirmed. Eighty-five percent of the students did no professional reading on a regular basis. In one class of all senior students, 80% indicated they did not do any professional reading. Of the remaining percentage who did read a professional publication, their reading choices were teacher magazines: *Instructor*, *Teaching K-8*, etc. Even though all of these students were

either taking or had taken a course in children's literature, 59% did not have a favorite children's poet and 39% did not have a favorite author for children.

The need for change

The research findings on the personal and professional reading habits of teachers in the field are clear. Teachers' lack of knowledge of children's literature is also supported by research. Among the recommendations for a remedy for this situation is a call for change in the content of education courses. Teachers should be encouraged to read professionally through university courses (Mour, 1977; Worden and Noland, 1984). Gray and Troy (1986) emphasize the need for teachers to be readers: "The teacher at all levels should devote ...efforts to leading students into the other worlds that can be found in the pages of a book" (p. 179). They go on to recommend a change on the part of teacher educators in order to acquaint them with children's literature and instill in future teachers the desire to read and to see the importance of reading in their own lives as well as the lives of their students. Manna and Misheff (1987) concluded their research of the personal development of a reader with a call for studies involving the subjective and transactional nature of reading.

The project

Undergraduate and graduate students in reading-related classes were asked to set their own reading goals in two areas: personal reading and professional reading (either professional journals or teacher magazines and children's literature). The participants in this project were 65 undergraduates (54 females and 11 males) and 62 graduate students (50 females and 12 males).

To introduce the activity, the instructor prepared a bulletin board of magazine, journal, and book covers and shared her own reading goals for the course. A discussion that summarized research on the reading habits of educators was conducted. Students discussed their own preferences for reading. Many of them indicated that since college they had done little or no reading that was not required in a class. The instructor emphasized the importance of the teacher as a role model and the need for that person to be an enthusiastic reader. As part of the requirements for the course the students were then asked to set their own reading goals for the quarter/semester.

Reading goals were separated into two categories: personal goals and professional goals. For personal reading each student had to select at least one book and either a magazine or newspaper. Professional reading had to include at least one professional journal or teacher magazine and children's literature. The exact number of books, magazines, and journals was an individual choice but students had to read the newspaper daily and at least the three issues of the journal or magazine that would be published during the course. After the students wrote their reading goals the goal sheets were given to the instructor for perusal and then returned to the students for their anecdotal comments throughout the duration of the course. Goal sheets were collected at the end of the course.

Among the 65 undergraduates participating, reading goals varied. Thirty-six students chose fiction to read. Twenty-five chose non-fiction which included biographies and self-help books, and four read classic literature, or good literature that had stood the test of time. Twenty-two students read from more than one teacher magazine, with *Instructor* being the favorite choice. They chose from fifteen

different professional journals. *The Reading Teacher*, a personal recommendation from the instructor, was the second most widely read professional publication.

All of the undergraduates read at least one magazine or daily newspaper for their personal goals. Preferences in children's literature varied considerably, with the majority of the students choosing to read favorite authors or books appropriate for a specific age student.

The preferred professional publication of the graduate students was also *Instructor*. The second most widely read publication was *Phi Delta Kappan*. Students read in 20 different publications with 23 students reading more than one during the course. Fiction was read by 32 students, 15 read non-fiction, and 10 read classic literature. Magazines and newspapers were also selected and read.

The goal sheets contained the personal reactions of the students to the assignment. Comments regarding the attitudes and experiences of the students have relevance to this study. Many graduate and undergraduates reported an enjoyment in reading for pleasure that had nearly been forgotten:

I enjoyed the opportunity to set my own reading goals and work toward achieving them.

This assignment was great! It gave me an excuse to read.

This assignment made me re-evaluate my reading habits. I haven't read much for personal enjoyment for a long time. I thoroughly enjoyed the two novels. I had the first one read in three days.

Thank you so much for this assignment. I haven't read a novel for years. My daughter cut three new molars during this

session of summer school. I read my novel and rocked my baby.

I think the most useful thing I gained from this assignment was the self-awareness that I had been slipping into aliteracy.

The emotional involvement with literature was reflected in the responses of the students:

I've never had a great fondness for anyone from Texas (just because I don't know anyone) but after reading Texasville I missed the characters for days. I'd think of them while doing the dishes.

Of Mice And Men left me speechless.

At least three novels I read had main characters and descendants with red hair. Is there something I should know?

I thoroughly enjoyed Beaches. I purchased the paperback during a trip and read it till I finished it. I cried, laughed, and went through emotions I never realized I had.

The best thing I did this summer was read The Count of Monte Cristo. I loved it!

I was spurred on to read a short Kurt Vonnegut play, "Happy Birthday Wanda June." Now I want to read another of his novels.

I would have missed something had I not discovered J.D. Salinger.

No one can compare with Mark Twain.

I read The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby (the drama version of Dickens' novel). I am now exploring the possibility of cutting this play down to a two or three hour show for production at the high school.

Both undergraduates and graduates indicated that they had been affected by their professional reading:

I had never heard of metacognition or deconceptualizing or activating a student's schema. I was so surprised by all the things I didn't know that I decided to remedy the situation by subscribing to a least one educational journal.

The back issues of Instructor have solved my art class problem.

In The Middle (by Nancie Atwell) provided me with inspiration for teaching my literature course.

I loved the journal, Young Children.

All teachers should read The Hurried Child.

One issue of The Kappan made me realize we need some changes in our use of in-school suspension.

I spent a good deal of time with The English Journal – a fine publication.

The Reading Teacher is a great professional magazine. I will continue reading it even after I graduate.

The third area for personal reading, children's literature, was also reported:

I became obsessed with children's books this summer. When reading Beat The Turtle Drum I had a difficult time putting it down. I knew something tragic was going to happen. When Joss died, my first thought was never to let my daughters climb trees. And we don't even have any.

You were right; Sara Plain and Tall is wonderful.

The Indian in the Cupboard was outstanding, one of the best books I have read. In fact, I read it out loud to my fiance and he couldn't wait to hear the next chapter each day.

I can't believe all the great books I missed growing up.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that we value literacy. It is also clear that any behavior we value in college students needs to be modeled by instructors. If education students are to become effective role models of reading and competent guides for their students then they must leave college with these skills. Inspiring education students to become active readers so that they can, in turn, instill those attitudes in children cannot be left to chance. Research on the reading habits of adults, and in particular, teachers, clarifies a need for change.

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Readers Theatre: Bringing Life to the Reading Program!

Terrell A. Young

Readers Theatre is a presentation of prose, poetry, or content area material that is read aloud by several readers. Readers Theatre is similar to a play; however, the participants read their parts rather than memorize them. Therefore, Readers Theatre is both less threatening and less time consuming for students than involvement in conventional children's drama since it is easier to read rather than memorize the script.

The benefits of Readers Theatre for students are many. Readers Theatre has been found to be an activity that builds confidence in the participants (Anderson and Lapp, 1989; Cox, 1988; Groff, 1978; Larson, 1976), allows stories to come to life (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988), reinforces oral language (Stoodt, 1988; Tiedt, 1983), and animates the content areas (Moffett and Wagner, 1983; Post, 1979). Moreover, Readers Theatre allows students with differing reading abilities to participate (Anderson and Lapp, 1989; Busching, 1981). Since movement is kept to a minimum, even physically handicapped students can take an active part (Monson, Taylor, and Dykstra, 1988).

Equally important, students can improve their reading by participating in Readers Theatre. Readers have the opportunity to practice oral reading since Readers Theatre is a meaningful way to involve students in reading text more than once (Busching, 1981; Swanson, 1988). Thus, students may develop larger sight-word vocabularies, increased reading rate, and improved reading fluency. As readers learn how to use their voices to alter their delivery, tone, pitch, and loudness, the quality of their oral reading and transition of meaning also improve (Bromley, 1988). Additionally, comprehension may improve since the focus is on interpretation rather than performance (Cox, 1988; Temple and Gillett, 1989).

Many benefits also exist for the audience. Listening to Readers Theatre performances can be enjoyable and entertaining, as the audience is exposed to many genres. Since characterization is conveyed by the readers and the narrator rather than by costumes, action, and props, the audience listens critically and appreciatively (Norton, 1989). Thus, listening skills and comprehension improve.

Selecting the text for a Readers Theatre script

In choosing suitable text, poems, short stories, books, or portions of stories or books can be adapted to Readers Theatre scripts. To begin Readers Theatre, the teacher may select one of the class's favorite stories or books (Tway and Lundsteen, 1989). The selection should have extensive dialogue, intriguing characters, rich and rhythmic language, and storylines which are suspenseful, and perhaps humorous (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). Since picture books are written to be read aloud to children and use words and phrases that follow the rhythmic pattern of conversation, they allow for effective scripts (Sloyer, 1982). Some examples of picture books that make good Readers

Theatre scripts are *Miss Nelson Has a Field Day* by Harry Allard and James Marshall, *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish, *You Look Ridiculous Said the Rhinoceros to the Hippopotamus* by Bernard Waber, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig, *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper, *Bread and Jam for Frances* by Russell Hoban, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe, and *Alexander and the Terrible Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst.

Generally, teachers need to consider several factors when making a text selection. If an episode of a book or a story is used, the teacher needs to ascertain if the episode is self-contained; that is, whether or not knowledge of events before and after the episode is necessary to understand and enjoy the script (Swanson, 1988). If a story is chosen that is not self-contained, the teacher or students could write or create a prologue or epilogue. In addition, the text should be the right length for the age group. Lundsteen (1989) suggests that an eight page typewritten script is appropriate for fifth graders. Eventually, it is important to involve students in the selection of texts since the students need to feel a sense of ownership in this activity if it is to be successful (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). Besides, students are able to maximize their learning by selecting, adapting, and writing texts for Readers Theatre scripts.

Adapting text to Readers Theatre scripts

After a text is selected, the teacher is ready to adapt it to a Readers Theatre script. The teacher should make a photocopy to mark since it takes less effort than writing or typing the text (Swanson, 1988). Next, the teacher should delete lines that 1) are not critical to the further development of the plot, 2) are peripheral to the main actions of the story, or 3) represent complex imagery or figurative

language that is difficult to express. Also, *said*, *replied*, and any other reference that a character is speaking should be removed (Cox, 1988; Swanson, 1988). Descriptive lines that could easily be spoken by a character can be changed to help the flow of the story (Cox, 1988).

Narration can also enhance the flow of the script and should be added to introduce the story in a story-telling manner (Moffett and Wagner, 1983) and identify the time, place, scene, or characters as needed. Narrator parts can describe essential aspects of the story that are not covered in the dialogue (Groff, 1978) and can provide effective transitions from one scene to another (Sloyer, 1982). One student can be the narrator for the entire script, or more than one narrator can be used to add variety (Busching, 1981; Cox, 1989). However, narration should be kept to a minimum, so it does not dominate the script (Anderson and Lapp, 1988).

Since most dialogue requires no rewriting for the Readers Theatre script, the teacher can label character parts by adding the character's name in the left-hand margin, followed by a colon. It is permissible to offer advice to a character regarding the speaking of a particular line. These voice directions should be placed within parentheses following the character's name (Swanson, 1988). As a teacher is preparing the script, it is useful to ask others to read the script aloud. Sometimes listening to the script makes it easier to add voice directions, revise narration, etc. (Swanson, 1988). Also, a practice session with a small audience can aid in revising the script (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988).

The teacher is not the only person who can adapt text to Readers Theatre scripts; students can also be involved.

For example, a group of students may choose a book, poem, or story and then work together to adapt it to a Readers Theatre script (Swanson, 1988). This is an excellent exercise in synthesizing and adapting text. Furthermore, they can also write scripts based on their experience and imagination (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988; Monson, Taylor, and Dykstra, 1988).

Rehearsal

Before rehearsing the script orally the students should first read it silently. The students need to read the text silently to become familiar with it and to increase their chances for successful oral reading. After the silent reading the students discuss the way the characters talk and feel and methods in which they can express this as they read the character's parts (Anderson and Lapp, 1988). Students may then choose parts or be assigned parts by a teacher (Norton, 1989). The teacher may want to have some lines read by a group, especially if there aren't enough parts for each child to participate. Students can also alternate reading parts, so everyone can participate.

It is important to allow students to experience a variety of ways in script presentation. Allowing them to practice reading different parts and to experiment with changes in voice modulation maximizes effectiveness. It is valuable for all participants to share the same idea of the story's meaning and understand the characters.

A teacher or a child may serve as a director to make suggestions about pacing, clarity, and varying the rhythm, pitch, and volume in speaking (Tiedt, 1983). The students can stand or sit in a semicircle. This placement allows the student to make eye contact with others in the cast in order to heighten the dramatic effect of the reading (Monson,

Taylor, and Dykstra, 1988). Students can step forward when entering a scene or turn their backs to the audience when exiting a scene (Groff, 1978). It is important that students enunciate and project their voices, so they are easily understood and clearly heard (Sloyer, 1982).

Performing

Performing the script for others provides purpose and motivation for the planning and rehearsal (Johnson and Louis, 1989). When performing, it is necessary that the audience see the faces of the readers. While the readers do not memorize their parts, they should know their parts well enough that they can look up from their reading from time to time. The readers will generally use two types of focus, either a direct focus or an onstage focus. A direct focus occurs when the readers look directly at the audience (Coger and White, 1982; Sloyer, 1982) or over the heads of the audience at a spot on a back wall (Moffett and Wagner, 1983). It is used when a character is providing background as a transition or thinking to himself. The onstage focus is used when readers look at each other as they speak or react. For example, if dialogue is addressed to a particular character, then the reader should look at that character (Sloyer, 1982).

It is important for teachers to keep in mind that the Readers Theatre performance is to be fun. Teachers shouldn't expect perfection, but they should encourage the students to relax and enjoy themselves. The students can perform for more than one audience. While costumes and props are not generally associated with Readers Theatre, simple props and sound effects may be used to enhance the performance (Busching, 1981; Cunningham, Moore, Cunningham, and Moore, 1989). Students may wear nametags or hats to identify themselves as specific

characters. Teachers may create interest by adding platforms and lighting (Post, 1979) and by videotaping the performance so students can watch themselves.

Conclusion

Clearly Readers Theatre is an appealing activity for students and teachers alike. Students are provided with a meaningful context for oral reading where they can experience good literature, and participating in Readers Theatre can improve both reading fluency and comprehension. The audience not only enjoys the activity, but also learns to listen critically. Because of its motivational quality, Readers Theatre can lead to more reading. In addition, students develop confidence in themselves and learn to work well in groups.

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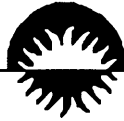
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The Thinking-Writing Connection: Using Clustering to Help Students Write Persuasively

**Jeannie L. Steele
Patty Steele**

Understanding what you know, think or believe about a topic is essential if you are to write clearly about that topic. Yet it is often difficult for young writers to know what they think and, certainly, even more difficult for them to organize their thinking. Simply telling students to write more clearly or to make their point more effectively will not make them able to do so. They must be taught how to become aware of their thoughts and feelings and how to organize them to effectively communicate them through their writing.

The purpose of this article is to describe a thinking/pre-writing procedure which can be used to help writers clarify their thinking which, in turn, increases their ability to express their thoughts either orally or in writing. First, we present the procedure: clustering, as a thinking/pre-writing procedure. Second, we describe a classroom experience where clustering is used to teach students how to write a persuasive piece on a controversial topic, a type of writing required by both their local and state writing assessment

programs. Finally, we discuss other classroom applications of clustering.

The clustering process

Rico (1983) defined clustering as a “nonlinear brainstorming process akin to free association” (p. 28). It is a powerful technique which allows students to discover or “uncover” what they think about a subject; it provides organization to thought without slowing the flow of thoughts; it can help the thinker assess the quality of thought and serve as a guide for writing. Indeed, after clustering ideas, one can move directly to writing in paragraph form. Thus depending upon purpose, clustering may be used for thinking (cluster as an end product); or as a prewriting strategy (cluster as an organizational guide for writing). However it is used, clustering is a dynamic process best understood by experiencing it first hand.

The reader can gain first hand experience with clustering in a few minutes. These are the rules: 1) Begin with a blank sheet of paper. Write the nucleus word(s) in the middle of the page leaving the rest of the page for writing. Circle the word(s). 2) What comes to mind when you think of that word or words? Write whatever associations come to mind. Avoid judging or choosing. Let the words radiate outward from the nucleus word and draw a circle around each of them. Draw lines connecting the words or concepts that seem related. 3) Continue jotting down associations and ideas triggered by the nucleus word(s) for a minute or two. There is no correct way or one best way to do the activity. No one will be judging, so let yourself go — let the words and associations come without worrying about them. 4) If you get stuck, doodle until you are sure you have all the ideas out.

It is particularly important that you do certain things to make the process work. First, once you begin clustering, do not stop or put the pencil down until you feel you have got all your ideas out. Write quickly and, if you cannot think of anything to say just doodle in the margin of the paper. Second, make no judgments about the ideas as they come to you; just write them down. Do not say "I should not be thinking this" or "this is not on the topic." Third, do not worry about how to spell a word. Just let the ideas flow freely.

To get the best understanding of how this process works, try the process before you read on. Begin clustering and cluster for two or three minutes or until you have exhausted your ideas on the topic. Be sure to draw a circle around each idea before you move to the next idea.

As you examine your completed cluster you will notice that the ideas are arrayed on the page reflecting their association with one another. If you now wish to write about the topic or person, the cluster will serve as a guide for your writing. Usually a group of associated ideas forms a paragraph. As students write they mark off each idea as that idea is included in their writing. The finished writing tends to be organized and complete, because the process of clustering triggers awareness of thoughts and ideas and, since the process is nonlinear, allows the ideas to flow and be written down as they are associated one to the other.

Clustering for improved writing

Clustering as a prewriting activity for writing reports has proved extremely beneficial. If you have your students write expository reports and ask them to go to the library to do research before writing, what do they do? If your students are like mine, they typically look up their topic in the encyclopedia or other source book and copy. When

students are asked why they copy directly from the text they often respond with the belief that they cannot say it as well as the sources they are reading. To get around this problem, I have students go to the library to do research with only a 3x5 card upon which to write ideas. They can only write words or phrases to help them remember information; copying full sentences is not allowed. When they return to the room the students cluster on their particular topic. They then use the clusters to write their reports. The results are organized, interesting reports written in the students' own words.

Clustering gives students a way to organize thinking for writing. With practice, they also grow more confident and comfortable expressing their own thoughts in writing. These are important goals for young writers for two reasons. First, being able to express thoughts in writing clearly is an important life skill. Second, organizing thinking through clustering can enhance student performance on assessments which require organization and self-expression. Using clustering, both goals can be accomplished while students come to understand and enjoy the writing process.

In recent years writing assessment has changed from indirect measures, usually multiple-choice questions which assess declarative knowledge about writing, to direct measures, examining samples of student writing (Applebee, Langer, and Mullis, 1989; Illinois State Board of Education, 1989). Direct measures assess writers' procedural knowledge of writing; i.e., how they actually write as opposed to what they know about writing (Hillocks, 1987).

In Illinois, beginning in 1990, assessment of language arts included assessing student writing samples in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. For this assessment, students write in

response to one of three different prompts. The three prompts require students to write in either persuasive, expository, or narrative modes. Many teachers in the Moline, Illinois school district, who are involved in Project M.I.L.E., the Moline Improvement in Literacy Education Program (Steele and Meredith, 1991), incorporate teaching strategies which result in improved writing for their students. What follows is an account of how one Moline teacher, Patty Steele, and her fourth-grade class responded to the testing initiative by mastering clustering. In the process they also took a stand on an important issue, communicated their beliefs clearly and concisely and brought school and community closer together.

Clustering in the classroom

We had an inservice in our building about the upcoming third- and sixth-grade Language Arts Assessment. When I heard what the testing involved I said to myself, "Patty, aren't you glad you teach fourth grade instead of third or sixth?" Yet, I knew I had a responsibility to prepare my students for these upcoming tests. I listened to the inservice and read through the information provided by the state, realizing that, even though we do a lot of writing in my classroom, we still needed to do more.

I decided to try one of the writing prompts from the state testing materials. Fourth graders seem to have difficulty taking a stand on a position. They tend to ride the fence, finding supporting arguments for both sides of an issue. We needed to work on the persuasive prompt. I read the following prompt to the students:

The mayor of your town recently made the following statement. 'It always strikes me as a terrible shame to see young people spending so much of their time staring at television. If we could unplug all of the TV sets in

America, our children would grow up to be healthier, better educated, and more independent human beings.' The newspaper wants to print the four best student responses to this statement.

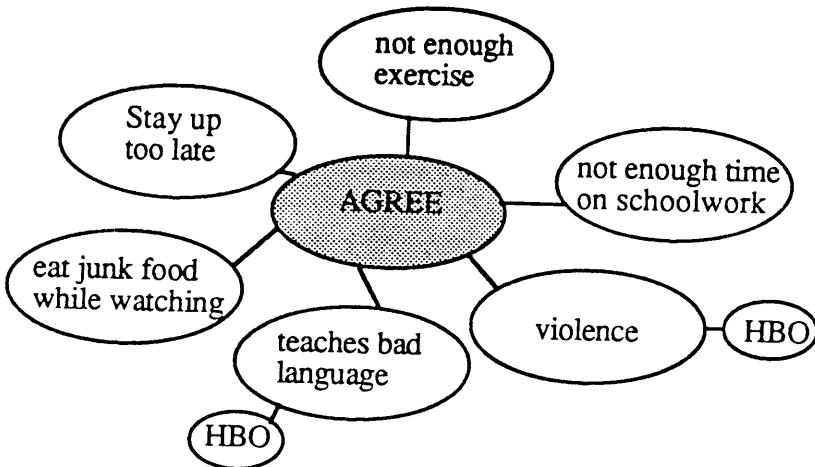
The students were then asked to think about this statement and decide whether they agreed or disagreed with the mayor. They were told to begin their paper by stating their position. They then were to explain fully the reasons for their point of view being sure to use examples of TV programs that supported their position.

They were overwhelmed! To calm their anxieties I reminded them of the fact that all year we have been writing using a technique called clustering. We would use that technique to guide their thinking and writing.

We began by facing the issue squarely. I told the students, "First, decide whether you agree or disagree with the mayor." As you can imagine, most of the students disagreed with the mayor's statement, but most thought the mayor had a few good points. It was difficult for them, but they each finally decided whether or not they agreed or disagreed with the mayor.

Next, they were told to write "I agree" or "I disagree" in the middle of their paper. They then clustered their ideas about why they agreed or disagreed. You should have seen those pencils fly! The few brave souls who decided to agree with the mayor came up with some great ideas.

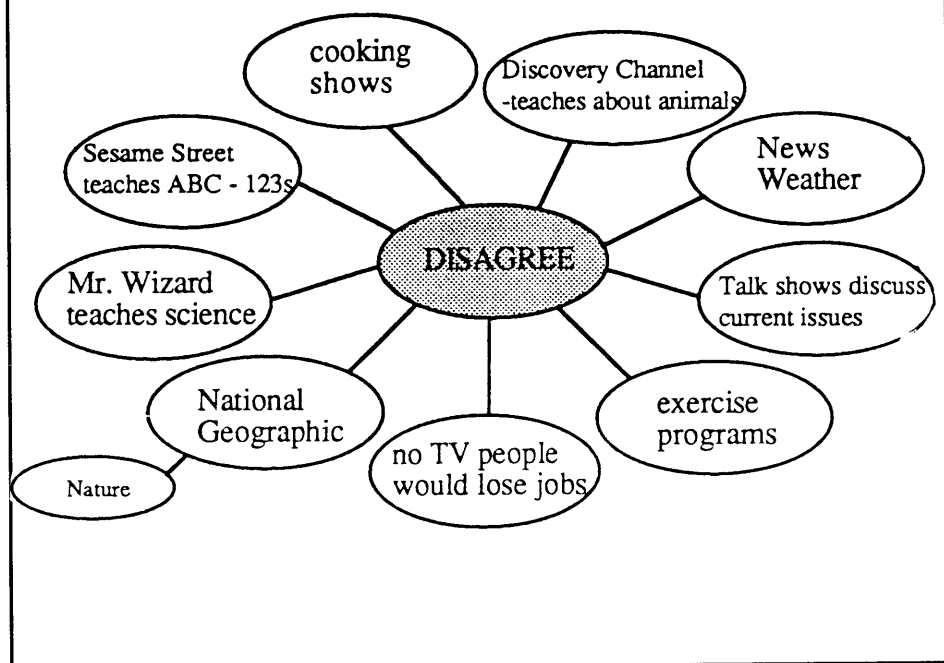
Figure 1 shows an example of a cluster written by Jason, who agreed with the mayor. Most of the students disagreed with the mayor. The cluster in Figure 2 shows ideas from students who disagreed.

Figure 1

Now they were organized! We needed a main idea sentence and then we would be ready for the next step in the writing process. Since they had used clustering before the students understood that the writing process had already begun. We came up with these main idea sentences: "I agree that all TV sets should be unplugged" or "I disagree with the idea that all TV sets should be unplugged." To have a fully focused paper, which included taking a definite stand and backing up the stand with specific details about why they felt as they did, the students were to announce their reaction to the prompt. Now my students used their cluster to present their arguments. They went on to write, without the moans and groans that traditionally accompany writing activities. The clustering had helped

them to organize their thoughts. Their finished papers were well-thought out and well-constructed.

Figure 2



Finally, the children did paired editing. They exchanged papers with a partner and helped each other find places where corrections or rewritings were needed. The final drafts were then prepared. It was time for lunch. This activity took up quite a bit of our morning. If we wished, we could have done this task over several days instead. The students, however, were too intensely involved in their work to interrupt so we continued. I had given up the normally scheduled reading and language activity, but I believe we

really spent all morning with reading, language, spelling, writing, and critical thinking.

When I saw our principal I asked if she would come to class after lunch and do some role playing. She was thrilled. At about one o'clock she walked in and said, "The mayor is here to listen to your views." I had informed the children she was coming (as our mayor) and that she would listen to their views. They could hardly wait.

We began by reading the mayor's statement. Then those students who agreed with the mayor were allowed to read their ideas. I put a big "AGREE" on the board and each time a new idea was brought up the child could add it to our group cluster. The children who disagreed with the mayor were then given their chance. They, too, made a group cluster on the board under "DISAGREE." The mayor then reviewed both clusters and made her decision. She proved herself to be a true diplomat, suggesting that both sides had come up with some outstanding arguments supporting their ideas. Therefore, she had decided not to unplug the TV sets. However, TV viewing time was to be carefully regulated. Both sides were happy with her decision. Later, our class received a letter from "the mayor," thanking us for the invitation to visit our classroom.

I believe the next time my students are asked to write a persuasive paper my students will be ready. They have experienced taking a stand and supporting their beliefs in writing. The issue was important to them and they found the power that comes from taking a stand and expressing their views in an organized presentation through written language. They are learning to love to write and to use their writing as another voice through which they can speak their mind and share their beliefs.

Clustering to connect new to known

As powerful as clustering is as a thinking or prewriting activity, it is equally powerful when used before or after reading. Having students cluster before reading brings knowledge, thoughts, and feelings to an awareness level. It is an effective method for activating prior knowledge. Knowing what they know about a topic allows readers to make connections between their existing knowledge and the new knowledge they will gain from reading or learning experiences.

Clustering after reading also helps students integrate new information into their knowledge base and provides teachers with observable evidence that students are making sound connections between themselves and their learning experiences. Clustering after content lessons can be particularly valuable for comparing “before learning” clusters with “after learning” clusters. It is informative to see how much has been learned but also to see if ideas, thoughts, and feelings on a topic have changed as a result of the learning experience. To document learning, we often place students' before and after clusters in learning portfolios.

Finally, clustering is a flexible strategy. It may be done individually or as a group activity. As a group activity, it can serve as a framework for the group's ideas, which provides students with exposure to the associations and relationships other students draw from the prompt. Whether done in groups or individually, it is important to remember the three rules: a) never stop writing during the specified time, b) do not make judgments about what you are thinking, and c) do not be concerned with spelling. We have found individual clustering to be a nice break from group brainstorming since it is quick and permits all students, not just the

ones who always put their hands up first, to engage actively in the thinking process. Experience has taught us, however, that when clustering individually the topic should be one students know a fair amount about since they will not have the shared experience of the group from which to draw information. After completion, individual clusters can be shared in pairs or with the entire group.

Clustering has worked for students in Moline, Illinois. We see young writers ready to write, confident that they have a story to tell, and possessing the skills to communicate their message effectively. They are positive about the writing process and show little reluctance to share their thinking with others in the nonjudgmental atmosphere of clustering.

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Primary Teachers Involved in Change: A Special Kind of Learning

Kathy Dulaney Barclay

I read the first half of the book you suggested and became so excited I went to school on Sunday and worked all afternoon! First, I put away all my kindergarten readiness workbooks. (Diane Fox)

For the past year, I have been the privileged recipient of a number of responses of this kind, as teachers in our area have begun to create whole literacy environments in their classrooms. In this article, I offer a glimpse into the classrooms of seven teachers, describing, in their words, some of their successes, as well as their struggles, as they attempted to make changes in their classroom environments and their instructional procedures.

The only common bond that these teachers share, other than a positive mind-set and an openness to new ideas, is that they all have taken the same graduate course, under my direction at Western Illinois University, during the past year. *Reading 569: Reading in Early Childhood* is an elective course designed to acquaint teachers of preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades with the planning and design of developmentally appropriate programs aimed at facilitating the acquisition of pre-reading and reading abilities. Emphasis is on how early guidance and instructional

programs can attend to *all* aspects of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Facilitating change

Many change efforts focus on an entire school or school district, rather than on the designation of the teacher as the focus of the change effort. When teaching is the focus of change, Gallagher, Goudvis and Pearson (1988) suggest consideration of two key issues: the voice individual teachers have in determining the course of their own professional development, and the anticipated outcomes of the professional development activities.

In an effort to promote and support changes in beliefs and in teaching practices, the course requirements were flexible, allowing for teacher choice and creativity. The core text used for this course was *When Writers Read* by Jane Hansen (1987). In her book, Hansen discussed how recent approaches in the teaching of writing can be applied in the teaching of reading. She uses authentic examples to demonstrate the essential features of this approach; one which results in students taking responsibility for their own learning.

The introductory information from the study/application guide for *When Writers Read* is included in Figure 1. The directions for this first required reading assignment helped to ease teachers into considering some new ideas and teaching behaviors. Teachers were asked to select from among a list of study/application activities that includes a number of "try this in your classroom" ideas. Figure 2 lists sample study/application activities from *When Writers Read*.

Figure 1 Study/Application Guide

Directions for reading this book:

Take some time to consider your classroom/school situation. Make a list of what you would like to be able to do differently, and how you might get started.

NOW turn to the beginning of the book and read as quickly as possible through the book ... much as if you were reading a novel... or listening to the author tell you this information in person. Don't allow yourself to get "hung-up" when the author's proposed way of teaching differs from your own methods. Strive to get a global picture of the type of classroom environment and instruction that this author is advocating. This is a resource book for you ... for our class. It will challenge us to THINK... to be OPEN to new ideas about how children learn... and will perhaps MOTIVATE us to try some new methods of teaching in our own classrooms. This is not a HOW-TO book. The author describes to us a philosophy that has been put into action in classrooms. HOW such a philosophy is implemented depends on each individual teacher and/or administrator.

The teachers' share

As can be seen from the study/application activities included in Figure 2, the teachers enrolled in this course were to implement some of the specific teaching ideas that were described in the Hansen text. After trying out a particular strategy, the teachers were to turn in to me, the professor, a description of what they did, how it worked, and what they might continue to do, or do differently in the future.

Three basic ideas weave in and out of most of the communications I received from these seven teachers. The three predominant insights that these teachers gained were: 1) let the children choose their own books, 2) let them write about the books they have chosen, and 3) let them share their books and their writing with others.

Figure 2

Sample Study/Application Activities

- At least twice a week for two weeks use the Author's Chair idea in your classroom. Write a one to two page description of what you did, how it worked, and what you might continue to do, or do differently in the future.

- Assign your students to use the "writing to learn content" form suggested on page 152 with at least one narrative and one expository book. Write a one to two page description of what you did, how it worked, and what you might continue to do, or do differently in the future.

- For at least two weeks, provide some time every day for your pupils to read books other than the basal. These books should be self-selected by the pupils. Allow time each day for the pupils to respond to what they read during informal share sessions, and/or during free writing periods. Write up the results in a one to two page paper. Include the types of books selected by the pupils (challenge, books requiring help, easy), what they learned during the week that they probably would not have learned if you had not chosen to try this activity, what you will continue to do, or do differently in the future.

- Try teaching reading without the basal or basal workbooks for one week. Make daily "What we learned today in reading" lists with your students. In a one to two page paper summarize what you did, how it worked, and what you will continue to do, or do differently in the future.

- For one week do not use any worksheets, skillsheets, or workbook pages; instead assign writing and drawing as a means for students to demonstrate their decoding and comprehension skills. In a one to two page paper tell what you did, how the pupils responded, what they learned, what you will continue to do, or do differently in the future.

- Try the book choice idea for at least one week. Help each pupil choose a Challenge book, a book that they will need some help with, and at least one easy book. As much as possible, encourage the pupils to help each other learn to read these books. Use the teacher conferences and "response sessions" to help you evaluate what pupils are learning. Discuss the results of this activity in a one to two page paper telling what you did, how it worked, what the pupils learned, and what you will continue to do, or do differently in the future.

Let children choose their own books. Sue Bensch is a first grade teacher with twenty students. She

recently started providing some time for her students to read books of their choice. Here are some of her comments concerning this idea:

I was used to a quiet working group of students. This was a big change for me! At first the kids were very chatty. They liked their new freedom, but weren't sure what to do with it. A few thought this was a good time to talk about anything. I would have to guide them back into reading and talking about books.

In the beginning, some of the children chose books that were very difficult for them, while others chose books that were too simple. Most of the children judged the books not by their covers, but by their pictures! During another time of the day, we would talk about how to choose a book. They decided it was all right to get help from their friends if there were some words they didn't know.

Animals are a favorite topic with first graders. The children devoured books about baby animals, dinosaurs, and make-believe animals. Joke and riddle books are also popular.

As can be seen from Sue's comments, she managed to work through some initial problems, and is feeling encouraged by the response of her students to this new "freedom of choice" book selection policy.

A second grade teacher, Aleta Sunley, also decided to let her students self-select some of their own reading materials. She shared with me a description of what took place the first day she implemented this new procedure.

On the first day, I took my class to the library and told them to pick several books that they would like to read. I explained that the books could be easy or challenging. I wasn't going to monitor their selection as I usually did. I told the class we would be reading the books during our reading class. The

students chose books from just about every section of the Dewey Decimal system!

Let children write about the books they have chosen. Donetta Bruner, a Chapter I teacher, made some changes in the way she asks students to respond to literature. In the past, her students were required to answer five detail questions from each book they selected to read. She discovered that in order for children to learn to read, they *must* write.

After students select a book, I ask them to write a prediction, or what they think will be included in the book. Sometimes I write some added thoughts to their predictions. After they read the book, they are to write a response to their prediction and anything else they want to tell about the book.

Individual conferences with each child are very important. They usually read what they have written – that's when they discover omissions, or corrections that need to be made. We also discuss the content of the book or written work, and we may discuss some mechanics in writing. I have also begun to write notes about what we talked about on the inside of their folders. This should be a big help during parent-conference time.

Since Donetta also works with first grade students, she shared the following information about what happened when she began to encourage these youngsters to respond to their books in writing.

In first grade, I tried to keep students together. We would read a book and then we would all write our thoughts. But I wasn't sure what to do with the ones who finished early. I decided to take a risk and set my first graders free to choose what they wanted to read and how they wanted to respond to it in writing.

The first day they were happy about the change, and worked well. The second day, it was hard for them to get

started again at the point where they had stopped the day before. I found it difficult to explain things to the whole group as they acted uninterested. I was beginning to wonder if I had made the right decision. I gave up on the group discussions and told them to read. By the third session, I was beginning to see it take shape. They began to write responses to their reading. As each one began to write I tried to be available to discuss with that child how to go about it. That worked better.

When Vinnie finished reading he told me he had to now do the pencil work for his book. What a lovely way of putting it!

Charleen Johnson, a third grade teacher, decided to omit the use of worksheets, skillsheets, and workbook pages from her classroom for one week. She voiced a concern that the students would not “pick up the necessary skills to pass the Unit tests in our regular basal series.” When she talked to her principal about what she was trying, he asked her to report back to him at the end of the week.

This is a portion of what Charleen shared at the end of that week:

The children worked with a reading partner. One day I listed several questions on the board and asked the children to select one question to answer. They read all of the questions. There was discussion between children as to which question each student would answer. Not one set of reading partners answered the same question. Where were the students that looked across their neighbor's desk to fill in the blanks on the worksheets?

This experiment really made me evaluate the large amount of time that we spend on worksheets, and the validity or non-validity of these worksheets. After the week was up, I discussed the project with my principal. He asked me if I would be willing to teach the remainder of the year without worksheets. I have not given him an answer yet, but I would really like to try it. It appears that I have relied too heavily on worksheets in the past. I hope I will be more selective with the

use of this type of activity in the future, and will teach for concepts and ideas – not for activities.

As can be seen from their comments, these teachers are gradually moving away from worksheets and isolated drill exercises toward more open-ended writing experiences for their students.

Let children share their books and their writing with others. Learning is a social process. For this reason, teachers want to provide many opportunities for students to interact with each other – to talk about what they are reading, writing, and learning. All of the teachers mentioned in this article have come to this same realization, and are attempting to provide more pupil-to-pupil interaction time in their classrooms.

When Sue Bensch started providing time for her students to self-select books, she also began to encourage them to talk to each other about what they were reading.

I encouraged them to share the books with others in the room, and they did. Now I am delighted to see the children helping each other read new words. Instead of running to me, they will ask a classmate for help. If the classmate doesn't know the answer, the two of them usually go ask a third child. Seldom do they ask me!

After Sue's students demonstrated their ability to share their books with a small group of peers, Sue wanted to try whole class conferences.

At first it was difficult to get the children to share with the whole class. They didn't know how to ask questions. Instead they wanted to share with just two or three classmates or with me. I would walk around the room, sit down with a group, and listen. We still haven't mastered the whole group sharing

sessions yet. I need to learn more about conducting big group conferences for sharing reading and writing.

Sue's experiences resembled those of Debra Bonmarito, a fellow first grade teacher, and Judith Sterns, a second grade teacher. Both Debra and Judith describe their experiences in implementing the Author's Chair (Graves and Hansen, 1983) as a way of encouraging the students to share their books and their writing with one another. Debra tried the Author's Chair concept in her first grade classroom for three weeks. The students in her classroom had been sharing some of their own writing with each other, but Debra had not promoted an interaction between the writer and the audience. She shared what happened when she began to encourage this particular type of sharing.

Author's Chair started off a little slowly in my classroom of first graders. Most were a little shy about getting in front of others to share. When some did use the Author's Chair, the audience really did not know how to respond to them. I did a lot of modeling during the first two weeks. The comments I made or the questions I asked were said in order to give the other students an idea of how to respond to the author.

In addition to being hard for the students, it was difficult for me. I was used to taking charge of the discussions in my room. I wanted the students to take control of this and to fade myself out. I had to caution myself to listen attentively to the students and to let them determine the direction the discussion was going to take – even if it was not the direction I would have chosen.

During the second week, I had an average of four students a day using the Author's Chair. The students discovered that they loved sitting in the chair and reading something they wrote to the class. Some of the students read what they had written in one day, while others read what had taken them three days to write. Some of the students shared a favorite part out of a book they had read. I really enjoyed this

because I noticed that the books that were shared were taken from our classroom library more often.

By the end of the third week, the students were becoming better at voicing their comments to the "author." They were talking about the writing piece and were starting to ask more specific questions. I was pleased to see this progress in only three weeks.

Like Debra, Judith found as the weeks went by that more and more of the students participated in the Author's Chair. In Judith's second grade classroom, the students prepared during the week in order to have a good presentation for their classmates on Friday. Judith shared with me some reasons why she found the Author's Chair to be a very helpful activity in her primary classroom.

After several weeks of using this activity, the students began to accept and support other students that might be struggling with reading aloud or writing something for the week. The class started to work like a real team.

Better listening emerged with the use of this idea. Children learned to associate certain types of writing with certain authors, such as the child who wrote scary stories, or the child who wrote funny experiences that happened at home. Each Friday they would listen for a new scary story from the child who was finding success with this type of writing. As better listening skills developed, better responses were made.

Judith mentioned that she had begun to "look at the children as authors and teachers all day long." She concluded her comments about the Author's Chair with this statement: "Using this chair, I learned a very humbling fact: when a teacher steps back, a special kind of learning takes place."

Not the end... but the beginning

These seven teachers were challenged. They were challenged to think, to open themselves to new ideas about how children learn, and to try some new methods of teaching. They accepted the challenge.

Each of these teachers opened themselves, as well as their classrooms, to changes in both philosophy and classroom practice — and they have only just begun. In the words of Charleen Johnson, “This is a letting go, a restructuring process that leaves the teacher feeling helpless at times, but the gains are so great that the teacher never desires to go back.”

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Guiding Illiterate Parents in Assisting Their Children in Emergent Literacy

**Pamela J. Farris
Mary Denner**

As the number of illiterate adults continues to grow, increasing numbers of children have parents with limited reading and writing skills. Such children are deprived of the joys of reading, for their parents do not read to them at bedtime nor do such parents peruse the morning paper. According to Schickedanz (1986), "Although schools may have capable and dedicated teachers, schools are by their nature isolated from the larger world. Children learn from everything they see and do -- at home, at school, and everywhere else" (p. 128).

The importance of promoting literacy in the home environment is emphasized by Leichter (1984) who wrote that "it may be that children can learn to become literate on their own without formal instruction, but when experiences with literacy take place in family environments, the emotional reactions of the parents can affect the child's progress significantly" (p. 46).

If the nation's goal is to break the cycle of illiteracy, teachers need to aid illiterate parents in building the desire

to read and write in their children by providing them with the tools of literacy. The purpose of this article is to provide suggestions for parental meetings, home visits, and resource sharing as a means toward attaining this goal.

Review of the literature

The number of illiterate adults is quite large. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, one out of every five adults (20%) in this country is functionally illiterate while another 34% are marginally literate, i.e., able to address an envelope (U.S. Department of Education, 1975).

What Works (U.S. Office of Education, 1986) states that "Parental involvement helps children learn more effectively. Teachers who are successful at involving parents in their children's schoolwork are successful because they work at it" (p. 19). Potter (1989) argues that parents should not only be involved but participants in their children's school. Potter emphasizes that there is a subtle difference between *involvement* and *participation*, with the latter term meaning a greater in depth relationship.

Children from literacy rich home environments are often read to by their parents. As part of the reading session, questions are asked by both parent and child (Durkin, 1966). Morrow (1983) found that children in literacy rich homes possessed an average of 80 books, which were kept in various rooms throughout their homes. Such children typically have library cards and visit libraries on a regular basis.

Parents who foster literacy by providing a literacy rich home environment also seem to know intuitively how to adapt their reading and sharing of books with their children so that the youngsters find the experience to be both

enjoyable and meaningful (Ninio, 1980). Literate parents who promote literacy in their homes tend to talk with their children about written language as they write together. Such parents respond to questions about how to make letter forms and how to spell words (Gundlach, McLane, Scott, & McNamee, 1985). Children of illiterate parents do not receive this kind of literacy support.

Ways to reach parents

Illiterate parents can cultivate literacy in their children if teachers are willing to devote the time and patience to assist such parents. Teacher-parent interactions require that the teacher be sensitive, understanding, and responsive to the needs not only of the children but of the parents as well. The following suggestions are ways that the teachers can facilitate literacy in homes where one or both parents are illiterate.

Parent sessions. Illiterate parents may be overly sensitive about not being able to read and write. In addition, such parents are more frequently members of the lower socioeconomic level and may have language and/or other differences including differences in cultural background. In order not to single out illiterate parents, the teacher needs to schedule parent meetings which focus on ways not only to nurture literacy, but also to promote its value. Presentations should be positive and enjoyable sessions so that the parents are willing to make concerted efforts to return again and again.

Parent meetings should be scheduled at the convenience of parents, not at the convenience of the teacher or school. Also, the provision of special services such as babysitting and transportation to and from meetings and other special events encourages parent attendance

(Fredericks and Rasinski, 1990). Serving coffee and cookies or fruit to the parents will help to make for a more relaxing atmosphere. A follow-up phone call a few days later serves to reinforce a presentation.

Story telling. Parents may feel intimidated by books but they should be encouraged to share stories with their children. While they may have a limited repertoire of fairy and folktales, they are familiar with stories of their own family. Thus the family history can be shared by telling stories during bathtime or while driving to the grocery store. Children can gain new insights into their own relatives by hearing stories about a grandparent's first job and how grandma and grandpa met. Family traditions can also be shared through such storytelling.

Children's literature. Children's literature offers a wide variety of books which illiterate parents can share and enjoy with their children. Most nursery schools, preschools, and kindergarten classrooms have a library within the classroom which contains a large number of children's books (Morrow, 1982). Such a library can be used with illiterate parents to promote literacy in the home environment.

Rather than giving parents a bibliography of such books, handouts should serve as visual aids which require little reading. For instance, photocopying the covers of pattern and predictable books such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, *Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill, and *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins will enable the illiterate parent to be able to find and locate the book through pictorial clues rather than looking for a specific title and author.

It is particularly important for the teacher to include books which can be readily found in a variety of stores where they are likely to shop. Some books are sold in bargain stores and large multipurpose stores, and illiterate parents are likely to feel more at ease in purchasing books from these sources than from more traditional bookstores. Golden Books offers inexpensive paperback books and read-along cassettes which parents may purchase. Some of these are "watered-down" versions of fairy and folktales; however, they do provide children with a common literary heritage, albeit via a simplified, controlled vocabulary approach.

Wordless picture books. Another parent session could focus upon the uses of wordless picture books, by having the parent tell the child the story and later having the child retell the story to the parent. Again, a handout with the photocopy of appropriate titles would be helpful so that the parent could use the picture to identify the book in a book or toy store. Such books as *A Boy, A Dog, and a Frog* by Mercer Mayer, *Anno's Counting Book* by Mitsumasa Anno, and *Deep in the Forest* by Brinton Turkle are appropriate.

Content area books. Too often, early childhood and primary grade teachers emphasize narrative books and overlook content area books. There are several good picture books which depict simple scientific and social studies concepts that require little or no reading.

For science, a teacher may wish to suggest such books as *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle, *Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins, *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, *Rain* by Peter Spier, and *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett. Some readily available titles for social studies are *Find Waldo Now* by Martin Handford, *The*

Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein, *Katy and the Big Snow* by Virginia Lee Burton, and *People* by Peter Spier. These books present concepts on an uncomplicated level. The illustrations provide stimulation for parents and children to discuss the actions taking place.

Home visits. Home visitation is an especially important component of a literacy promotion program with illiterate parents. Such parents often avoid the classroom and parent meetings so the teacher must reach out to them via home visitation.

During a home visit, the teacher should attempt to model behaviors which the illiterate parent can easily imitate and perform with a child. For example, the teacher may take along a wordless picture book and encourage the child tell the story. The book can be left with the family to be returned later. Egg carton games which involve matching (e.g., matching upper and lower case letters; pictures of mother and baby animals) can also be left with the family to enjoy together.

Supplies for making simple puppets out of lunch bags, tongue depressors, or socks, along with a sample puppet that can be used as an example will help the parent in making puppets which the child can use for storytelling. A ziplock bag containing a small spiral notebook, colored index cards, two pencils, and a hand-held pencil sharpener will encourage the child to write. On another visit the teacher might leave a magic slate or stationery to promote writing.

Resource sharing. The teacher should build a classroom lending library to promote literacy, much like the popular toy lending libraries. Because it is often

inconvenient or uncomfortable for parents to take their children to public libraries, the classroom should offer materials that can be checked out on a regular basis.

Children's books and read-along cassettes.

Parents should be encouraged to check out books and read-along cassettes for their child to enjoy at home. Here the teacher may include good children's literature read by professional actors as well as by volunteers from the local community. Inexpensive cassette recorders may be purchased and lent to those families which don't own one.

Books made by the entire class during a language experience lesson provide encouragement for reading, as the child has contributed to the group effort in compiling the story. The focus can be on the child reading the book to the parent so that the child is sharing the book rather than the parent reading it. Also a child's own language experience story that was dictated to the teacher may be sent home for the child to share, thereby reinforcing literacy.

Children's videos. Part of the lending library should consist of videotapes. For instance, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Snowman* and the series of award winning children's books available from Children's Circle (Weston Woods, Weston, Connecticut 06883-1199) are all good possibilities. The Children's Circle collections includes *Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats, *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen, and *A Story, A Story* by Gale Haley, as well as other outstanding pieces of children's literature. Often video rental stores include selections from Children's Circle which can be rented for a nominal fee.

Sesame Street and Walt Disney videos are available which focus upon the letters of the alphabet, folktales, and

children's songs. Since children are readily familiar with Big Bird and Mickey Mouse, as are their parents, these are typically welcomed in all homes. The Walt Disney "Sing Along" videos are especially appealing to children in that they include songs from favorite cartoon and film classics, for example, "Heigh Ho," "The Bare Necessities," and "Old Yeller." The words appear at the bottom of the screen as a portion of a filmclip is presented along with the song so that literacy is promoted in a positive, upbeat way.

Because some parents will not have ready access to a VCR, the teacher should plan to have set days and times each week, such as a couple of afternoons each week, when a video is played. During this time, parents may come and watch the video with their child. The teacher may wish to laminate a picture of a character appearing in the video and place it in a prominent location to alert parents of the contents of the upcoming video session.

Magazine packs. Most teachers subscribe to a variety of magazines. Once read, many magazines are thrown away. To recycle the magazines, a teacher may have children take turns taking home a "magazine pack." For example, a teacher may send home *People*, *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Our Big Backyard* in a colorful backpack. Then each member of the family has a magazine to browse through and enjoy (Farris, 1987).

Reading every article in the magazines word for word is not essential since these magazines have lots of pictures and illustrations. Due to the large number of pictures, lots of conversations can evolve between parent and child on a wide variety of topics, including current events.

Conclusion

Illiterate parents may be embarrassed about their lack of reading and writing skills; however, many such parents have a strong desire for their children to become literate. These parents need a caring, understanding teacher who is willing to gently nudge them in the right direction so their children will acquire literacy and be able to share in the rewards and joys of being able to read and write.

Anthropologist Colin Turnbull (1983) wrote, "in all cultures, at all times known to us the children are a source of wonderment for they are the supreme example of the human potential for creation" (p. 25). If teachers believe this, they will make every attempt to help illiterate parents to assist their children in becoming literate.

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Themed Issue, Volume #32

Our theme for the fifth issue of Volume 32 will be on **alternative methods of grouping for language arts instruction**. Dr. Mary Hauser, Department of Education and Professional Development, Western Michigan University, will be our guest editor.

If you wish to submit an article for the themed issue, the deadline for submission is **February 1, 1992**. Please follow the standard instructions for submission of articles printed on the second page of the journal, and send your articles to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008.



REVIEWS

Professional Materials

Clear Thinking: A Practical Introduction.

Written by Hy Ruchlis with Sandra Oddo.

Prometheus Books, 700 East Amherst Street, Buffalo NY 14215.

ISBN: 0-87975-594-6. 271 pp. 1990. US\$15.95.

Reviewed by Ronald A. Crowell
Western Michigan University

Among the plethora of books on thinking and thinking skills that have been published in the past few years, *Clear Thinking: A Practical Introduction*, by Hy Ruchlis with Sandra Oddo, is a welcome addition. This is a completely revised and updated version of the book originally published in 1962.

As the wonderfully insightful foreword by scientist and author Isaac Asimov points out, we all can think but we all cannot *think clearly*. The point of this useful book is how to use your mind to think clearly and effectively when confronted by a world where thinking stereotypically and emotionally seems to be the norm.

The ability to reason and to think critically is essential to our everyday living, especially in this complex, transitional period in the late twentieth century. Yet as young people try to cope with the realities of forging a productive, fulfilling life in a technological age, they are confronted with mountains of information through that technology. We are all presented with a huge amount of information, often deliberately distorted, which must be sorted, selected and reasoned about if we are to think clearly.

Ruchlis and Oddo offer a practical guide to help readers overcome their muddy or stereotypical or emotional thinking in the face of so much information. The book is in the mold of several books of earlier vintage which focus on the reasoning process and common errors in reasoning, including jumping to conclusions, drawing false analogies, and conforming to others' opinions and prejudices. The chapter on the nature of facts and how they are verified is a short but especially good foundation for the succeeding chapters on the reasoning process and language and reasoning, and the six chapters on errors in reasoning. The style, the up-to-date examples, and the anecdotes make the book pertinent in today's world.

Clear Thinking is a refreshing review for anyone interested in this important topic. The author and his colleague have done an excellent job of making a good older book current. It should prove to be a helpful resource for anyone who wants to think about their own thinking, and, in particular, for teachers who want to supplement their course content with examples and activities for students.

Books for Children

Cherries and Cherry Pits.

Written and illustrated by Vera B. Williams.

Greenwillow Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-10478-9. 1991. Softcover. US\$3.95.

Reviewed by Sue Coker
Western Michigan University

Cherries and Cherry Pits is a treasure. Bidemmi, an industrious young artist, has a vision – a colorful vision of families, the many ways of caring, and of hope for her future. Bidemmi shares her imagination in intimate detail. The brightly

colored, simple drawings of fathers, brothers, neighbors and friends sharing good times (and cherries) captivate and enchant the reader. This book makes one want to do three things: 1) go *immediately* to the store to purchase a huge bag of cherries, 2) buy a brand new set of multi-colored markers, and 3) settle in with a child to carefully read this book together.

SONGBOOKS

Down By The Bay. Written by Raffi.

Illustrated by Nadine Westcott. Crown Publishers, Inc., 225 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10003. ISBN: 0-517-56644-3. 1987.

In A Cabin In A Wood. Adapted by Darcie McNally.

Illustrated by Robin Michal Koontz. Cobblehill/Dutton Publishing, New York NY 10003. ISBN: 0-525-65035-0. 1991.

The Lady With The Alligator Purse and Skip To My Lou.

Both adapted and illustrated by Nadine Westcott.

Little, Brown and Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston MA 02106. ISBN: 0-316-93135-7 and 0-316-93137-3, respectively. 1989.

The Wheels On The Bus. Adapted by Maryann Kovalski.

Little, Brown and Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston MA 02106.
ISBN: 0-316-50256-1. 1987.

Reviewed by Kathy H. Barclay
Western Illinois University

The language of song is a natural, joyful language. When combined with literacy development, through the use of song-picture books, the process of beginning reading and writing is as natural and joyful as a song. Here are five popular song-picture books for integrating rhyme, reason and song into the entire early childhood curriculum.

Down By The Bay is but one of many of Raffi's wonderfully creative songs that have been published in book form. Nadine

Westcott illustrates the whimsical verses with the detailed drawings and pastel colors that have become her trademark in recent years. *Down By The Bay* will delight children as they read and sing the nonsensical rhymes about the animals that live "down by the bay." Like so many song-picture books, *Down By The Bay* can be a springboard into writing as young children are encouraged to develop additional verses for the song.

The adaptation of the familiar song/fingerplay, *In A Cabin In A Wood*, is a delightful combination of old and new. The lyrics "In a cabin in the woods, a little man at the window stood..." are included in the song-picture book, but the reader is in for a surprise as more and more animals come "banging at the door." Finally, in desperation, the little man paints a black stripe down the back of a cat and lets the "skunk" in. Naturally, all of the other animals quickly decide to depart from the little man and his home. The illustrations are cleverly done, as each page gives a picture clue for the animal that will next visit the little man.

Older readers will quickly recognize the well-known song and jumprope jingle "in came the doctor, in came the nurse, in came the lady with the alligator purse" when they read Nadine Westcott's new version of *The Lady With the Alligator Purse*. The illustrations are absolutely delightful... right down to the purse that is drawn to resemble a real alligator! Young children will love the fact that in this version, the lady with the alligator purse overrules the doctor and the nurse with her prescription for pizza... a "medicine" that immediately cures the sick child in the story. Also illustrated by Nadine Westcott is the traditional version of *Skip To My Lou*. The detailed illustrations portray life on the farm while the young boy is in charge during his parents' brief absence. The animals invade the farmhouse, wreaking havoc everywhere they turn. Everything goes topsy-turvy, including the sheep, who decide to unzip their wool suits and take a bath in the bathtub. Finally, "It's a quarter 'till two," and the animals help get everything back in order, just in the nick of time! Like most song-picture books, the sheet music is printed on a separate page in the book. This is a delightful book for kids of all ages.

Who doesn't remember singing while performing the motions to *The Wheels On The Bus*? In this delightful version of the popular old song, two sisters are on their way home after a shopping trip with grandma. As they wait at the bus stop, they sing the familiar tune. Unfortunately, they get so involved in their song that they miss the bus! Oh, well, not to worry... they simply take a taxi, instead.

Three Recommended Children's Books

The Black Snowman.

Written by Phil Mendez; illustrated by Carole Byard.

Scholastics, 730 Broadway, New York NY 10003.

ISBN: 0-590-40553-5. 1989. Softcover. 46 pp. US\$4.95.

Earth Alive! Written and compiled by Sandra Markle.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-09360-4. 1991. Hardcover. 38pp. US\$14.95.

When the Woods Hum

Written by Joanne Ryder; illustrated by Catherine Stock.

Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-07057-4. 1990. Hardcover. 28 pp. US\$13.95.

Reviewed by Mark Neidlinger

Western Michigan University

Heritage and tradition speak loudly in *The Black Snowman*, a modern folktale written by Phil Mendez. The Black Snowman comes to life holding a brilliantly colored African cloth. This cloth, known as a kente, holds magical strength from the long ago dispersed Ashanti tribe. The cloth enables young Jacob to develop his sense of worth, and create his survival strengths in a world where he feels himself to be different. The illustrations are composed in colored chalk. Textures and colors are electric with energy, lending richness and depth to this story. There is a clear sense of African American heritage in this handsome book.

Earth Alive! is a fascinating look at the Earth's surface. Exciting photographs and interesting research have led Sandra Markle to create a book that in many aspects is a work of art. How exciting for children and adults to see the changes that are so slowly occurring in our earth — the effects of erosion which are clear and undeniable after viewing this book. Though the study of geology may heretofore have seemed like drudgery, *Earth Alive!* has made science come alive, and enabled us to sense clearly the rhythms of the earth.

When the Woods Hum speaks to its audience about the love of nature and the families that live within the boundaries of the woods. This story takes us through the development of the cicadas — through the birth and growth of families of these insects and through the life span of their generations. The scientific structure blends beautifully with Catherine Stock's very detailed watercolor illustrations. There is a sense of pattern in this book that provides us with a glimpse of the natural flow of life. Like so many new books on the market, *When the Woods Hum* provides an extension of the text through an author's note, as well as an ending graph which provides a synopsis of the text; these enriching features are welcome.

Materials reviewed are not endorsed by *Reading Horizons* or Western Michigan University. The content of the reviews reflects the opinion of the reviewers whose names or initials appear with the reviews.

To submit an item for potential review, send to Kathryn K. Welsch, Reviews Editor, *Reading Horizons*, Reading Center and Clinic, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008.

Content Area Literature for Young People

reviewed by Jeanne M. Jacobson
Western Michigan University

Galaxies and Earthquakes.

Both written by Seymour Simon.

Galaxies: Mulberry Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-10992-6. 1991. Softcover. 32 pp. US\$5.95.

Earthquakes: Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09633-6. 1991. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$14.95.

Clearly written text in *Galaxies* accompanies, or is superimposed upon, elegant color photographs, some of which include labels and measurement guides — literally a stellar presentation of scientific concepts. Maps, graphs, and dramatic photographs illuminate both scientific explanations and history in *Earthquakes*. Outstanding text sensibly concludes with a note on safety precautions.

What Neat Feet!

Written by Hana Machotka.

Morrow Junior Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-09474-0. 1991. Hardcover. Unpaginated. US\$13.95.

Intriguing foot photos are followed by photographs and descriptions of the animals to which the feet belong — a delightful way to increase understanding of animal adaptations.

The Discovery of the Americas.

Written by Betsy and Giulio Maestro.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.

ISBN: 0-688-06837-5. 1991. Hardcover. 48pp. US\$14.95.

Once again the Maestros show themselves truly masters in the presentation of history for younger readers. *The Discovery of the Americas* places Columbus' expedition within a historical context stretching back into prehistory — when a land bridge linked what are now the continents of Asia and North America — and including preceding and subsequent expeditions in time periods ranging from the sixth century A.D. to the colonization of America. Beautiful illustrations include maps, and pictures of artifacts from the old world and the new.

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