ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXT THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION

by

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Abstract

This study explores the issue of engagement with text through social interaction. It is a qualitative research project consistent with the practical and theoretical tenets of action research. It stems from a social constructivist view toward learning. In this investigation, the school’s ESL teacher, who is the teacher-researcher, works in collaboration with the classroom teacher of a Grade 4 class.

The central question of the study is: How does collaborative thinking facilitate engagement with text? The question is examined through two teaching strategies: literature circles and classroom drama. The study is an exploration of stated assumptions related to student learning and inquiry. Themes that emerged from the study include: questioning, personal identification with story characters, personal experience related to text, intertextuality, awareness of author and illustrator, collaborative thinking, language power, and quality of engagement with text. Implications from the study indicate that students and teachers benefit from opportunities for collaborative learning and talking about text.

In order to maintain anonymity throughout the study, the students and classroom teacher chose names from children’s literature or from the authors of children’s literature.
Acknowledgements

As I reflect about all of the people who have supported this study, I am keenly aware that social interaction has been a major influence in engagement with text. I acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of the students who have willingly participated in this venture and work. I have tremendous respect and admiration for the classroom teacher with whom I collaborated. She was open to trying new teaching strategies, to talking about daily experiences related to the study, and to reflecting about her own professional growth.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to explore engagement with text through social interaction as experienced in an elementary language arts program. Embedded in the work is a descriptive analysis of classroom interaction within the field of qualitative research, an action research project that encompasses reflective teaching as expressed by the teacher-researcher in a collaborative teaching project with the classroom teacher, and a social constructivist view of learning.

The focus of the study links the modes of engagement with text described by Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) with literature circles as a strategy for collaborative thinking about text and classroom drama as a strategy for collaborative thinking in role about text.

Emergence of the Study
Over the last twenty-five years, I have found that peak experiences, which have triggered surprise and new areas for investigation, have had a long-lasting and profound effect on my teaching. These peak experiences, which most often occurred as the result of coursework or conference sessions, were often the result of reflection about my current beliefs and practices. Daily teaching routines, interactions with students, conversations with others about teaching, and professional reading have
formed the bedrock of this study.

While my teaching experience has ranged from working with students from Grade 1 to Grade 8, I have maintained a keen interest in language learning at every level. The work of Kenneth Goodman (1987), Gordon Wells (1986), Jerome Harste, Virginia Woodward, and Carolyn Burke (1984), and Frank Smith (1979), have led me to respect the child as language learner and informant during the early years, prior to coming to school.

Furthermore, I have had the opportunity to put into practice and to experiment with teaching strategies that reflected my beliefs about language learning. The students with whom I worked, the parents who supported the program, the administration who respected and encouraged professional inquiry and continuous learning, and my colleagues who discussed current experiences in the classroom all contributed toward my involvement and learning. Although there have been some "potholes" and some "unexpected curves" in my road of learning, I have been able to make connections and develop convictions in my beliefs which may otherwise have been less determined.

Of special significance in my recent discoveries has been the notion of expecting the unexpected -- of surprise -- in one's writing, teaching, and learning as described by Donald Murray (1989) and Donald Cordell (1989). These moments of surprise give us fresh insights, the opportunity to articulate or clarify our understandings, and the momentum to keep going; surprise during our conversations with others or during our writing, as we make explicit previously tacit knowledge, provide opportunities for reflection-in-action (Schön 1983). This experiential awareness may take place within our zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1962), the optimal area of learning. In this thesis, I will relate the element of surprise in learning to engagement with text.
Another strand of thought to be found in this thesis is the relationship between language and drama. Some fundamental principles are shared by language and drama: the search for meaning is common to both language and drama; various levels of meaning occur in language and drama; in the unity of thought, language, and drama, meaning becomes multidimensional; talking, reading, and writing are dominant modes of communication in language and drama; communicating nonverbally and communicating multimodally are significant to language and drama; natural language in a social context is paramount in language development and in drama; human experience and imaginative thought as expressed in nonfiction and fiction, are vital to language and drama; and absorption and concentration, which Slade considered fundamental in play (1954), can also be found in effective language use.

The theoretical foundation of the thesis lies within the field of social constructivism, which has as one of its central tenets education for understanding. This study highlights the significance of social context and social interactions in the process of developing understandings about text. As Wells writes (1995), learning occurs through the dialogue that takes place between individuals, in contrast to individual thought alone.

At the 1991 convention of the International Reading Association, which was held in Las Vegas, I became particularly interested in a series of sessions related to the teacher-as-researcher movement in education. This opportunity to listen to the narratives and accounts of others and to engage in discussion stimulated further reading and personal writing related to my own teaching experiences in language and drama. In a very real sense, I consider that this thesis is an extension of reflective
teaching as experienced through action research. It is a description of student learning and inquiry in dialogic relationship to teacher learning and inquiry (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992).

The central question of the thesis is: How does collaborative thinking facilitate engagement with text? The study is an exploration of the assumptions that follow. It is an attempt to make explicit in writing what I hold to be tacitly true in the action of practice. In contrast to a more radical change in perspectives, gradual professional growth has occurred, a conviction of beliefs has developed, and one voice has joined with many others in “interwoven conversations” (Newman 1991). A shift has occurred from that of consumer of research to one who constructs meaning through doing research (Wells et al. 1994).

While there are implications for teaching strategies and curriculum implementation, the study itself focusses on student interaction in the classroom. Engagement with text is considered within an integrated language arts program which has the components of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and representing.
Assumptions

1. Learning is a meaning-based process that takes place in a social context.

2. We all learn from more experienced others; children learn from each other as well as from the teacher.

3. Understanding of text relates to the personal, social, and cultural experiences of both the reader and the author of the text.

4. Understanding of text relates to the learner's past experiences in literacy.

5. In Western culture, there are several modes of engagement with text (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992).

6. When text is seen as potential, our understandings about text are ever changing (Harste, Woodward, and Burke 1984).

7. Personal and social commitment to the topic of study relates to engagement with text.

Therefore:

8. Opportunities in which students engage in talking about text will enable students to deepen their understandings of text.

9. Teaching strategies which highlight talking about text, both in role and out of role, will strengthen students' opportunities to engage in the re-creational and epistemic modes.

10. Experiences in which students engage with text in the classroom will influence their inclination and personal investment to engage in future literacy experiences both in school and outside of school.
Chapter 2, describing the background of the study, is in two parts. First, the conceptualization of engagement with text through social interaction is laid out. Secondly, the area of the language arts program is placed within the context of social constructivism. A review of the literature is an integral part of Chapter 2. Chapter 3, the methodology, relates how reflective practice in this study has evolved as an example of qualitative research. Here the concept of teacher as researcher is recognized and elaborated. In Chapter 4, the data of the study are presented under several headings: potent questions, personal identification, intertextuality, awareness of author and illustrator, collaborative thinking (prism or puzzle piece?), language power, and quality of engagement with text. In Chapter 5, the data are interpreted and analyzed. Chapter 6 sets forth implications of the study for students, parents, the school, and the school board; the conclusion places the study within an extended educational context.

The appendices include a transcript of the interviews with the classroom teacher, a transcript of a literature circle, a list of children's books by theme for text sets, and role descriptions for a classroom drama unit.
Definitions

The following definitions relate to the use of these terms within this study. An extension of the meaning of several of the terms can be found within the body of the work. Further descriptions can be found within the references cited.

Action research:

"Research [that] is rooted in the subjective, lived experience of particular classrooms, and intended first and foremost to contribute to the personal and professional growth of the individual teacher-researcher" (Wells et al. 1994, 25).

Collaborative thinking: Thinking that is constructed interactively, between individuals.

Community of inquiry; community of learners: A social group for whom “knowledge is co-constructed through action, reflection and collaborative talk” (Wells et al. 1994, ix).

Demonstration:

An opportunity to see how something is done; every act and artifact contain several demonstrations. Demonstrations also convey how we feel about the things that are done (Smith 1983, 95 - 106).

Drama (in Education): The personal and social process of creating meaning in an “as if”, imaginative, pretending context.

Engagement: The active and intentional cognitive encounter of the language user during a literacy event.

Literate:

“To be fully literate...is to have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, feeling, and thinking in the context of purposeful social activity” (Wells 1990, 14).

Literature circle: A group of students who come together to talk about the selection(s) they have read. Students prepare for the discussion, actively engage in dialogue about the text, and create responses as a result of the dialogue. In literature circles, opportunities are available for thinking deeply and collaboratively about text.
Modes of engagement:

“Intellectual functions that written language has gradually come to perform” (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992, 138). The described model includes these modes: performative, functional, informational, re-creational, and epistemic (Ibid, 138-142).

Participant observer: The stance taken by the teacher or teacher-researcher who is a full and active participant in the classroom experience, with all of the subjectivity that results from this viewpoint.

Reflection-in-action:

To reflect during the action of events; gained insights constructed in an experiential context. A term first used by Donald Schön to accent reflection that takes place in practice.

Reflection-on-action:

To reflect about events, external to the actual experience. A term first used by Donald Schön to distinguish reflection during an experiential context from reflection about the events.

Story drama: A form of educational drama in which story intersects with the art form of drama.

“Drama helps children wander in the story garden, reconstructing symbols, images and narrative sequences through action. They re-examine the story’s ideas, experimenting with them, learning to ‘play’ with the narrative and then, in reflection, coming to an understanding of both the story’s possibilities and the artform used to create it” (Booth 1994, 40-41).

Teacher-researcher: A teacher who decides on an inquiry for exploration that has evolved from his or her practice.

Text: The reader or writer situated in a print setting.

“When text is viewed as object, literacy is seen as a process of information transfer....

When text is viewed as an event, literacy is seen as a psychological and sociological partnership. Meaning is not something inherent in the print, but created in and through interaction....

Text as potential is meant to capture not only the notion that text is an in-head phenomenon but that it is ever changing” (Harste, Woodward,
Text sets: In literature circles, selections for reading that are related by genre, author, or topic; or, several copies of the same selection.

Zone of proximal development:

A term first used by Vygotsky which refers to:

"...the 'gap' that exists for an individual (child or adult) between what he is able to do alone and what he can achieve with help from one more knowledgeable or skilled than himself....For Vygotsky, then, co-operatively achieved success lies at the foundations of learning and development" (Wood 1988, 24-25).
Chapter 2
Background

Influence of Social Constructivism in Language Arts Programs

Through an examination of the contributions of several constructivists and classroom researchers, I will address the notion that the main goal of education is to “teach for understanding”. This issue will be critically analyzed within the field of teaching language arts in the elementary classroom.

Several writers have made contributions to the theoretical foundation of constructivism. Dewey wrote that knowledge occurs best when the learner is involved in meaningful experiences (1938). In contrast to the emphasis that Dewey places on learning that takes place within individuals, Wells and Chang-Wells write that collaborative thinking takes place during transactions between individuals (1992). Vygotsky’s contribution of the “zone of proximal development” is realized when individuals have the opportunity of working with more experienced others, and learning therefore takes place in the upper limits of their developmental thinking (1962). Gardner advocates “education for understanding” in which learning is not restricted by a single mode of knowing or representation (Gardner 1991). According to Applebee and Purves, “What scholars in this tradition share is a view of knowledge as an active construction built up by the individual acting within a social context that
shapes and constrains that knowledge but does not determine it in an absolute sense” (In Jackson 1992, 738).

Constructivism offers differing perspectives from the traditionalist view of knowledge and learning. First, in contrast to a prescribed body of knowledge which is transmitted to the learner, knowledge is viewed as current, tentative understandings which are personally constructed by the learner. Secondly, learning is seen as a process in which the individual engages in discourse through meaningful activity with more experienced others. Thirdly, learning takes place holistically, with the full range of the intelligences, not in sequential packages of factual information within a selected discipline of study.

"Teaching for Understanding" and the Language Arts Curriculum

In the field of language arts, the prime significance of “teaching for understanding” permeates the literature related to curriculum. Models of curriculum are not restricted specifically to literacy but rather reflect learning across the curriculum. Characteristically, an emphasis is placed on learning as a social process, the dynamic forces and interactions in experienced situations, and the classroom as a context for students and teachers to challenge each other as they probe for deeper understandings. Jerome Harste writes,

...A curriculum is not a course to be run. Rather, curriculum is a meaning-making potential where knowledge is created, acted upon, and recreated at the point of experience. It provides opportunities for both teachers and students to experience themselves as learners, engaged together in inquiry in order to create, critique, and transcend their present realities (Harste 1993).

Kathy Short and Carolyn Burke have developed a model for “understanding curriculum as a social learning process” (1991, 32). They describe the relationship
between the natural learner, a community of learners, and the collected learner (Short and Burke 1991, 10-31). The inclusion of the collected learner adds another dimension to the discussion concerning the individual and a community of learners. Distancing from the present provides a fresh perspective for verbal and written discourse. Broad connections are made over time. In contrast to predetermined content to be mastered, learning is seen as a continuous process with the natural learner in relationship to a community of learners. Current understandings promote further questions, tensions, and the development of continued learning and inquiry.

Connelly and Clandinin stress the importance of the teacher's personal practical knowledge in the development of curriculum (1988). Any current situation reflects past classroom situations and is influenced by expected future situations. A teacher's mental picture of the dynamic multiple interactions occurring in a classroom at any one time can represent curriculum as experience.

Recently, research in the field of literacy learning has been related to inquiry-based instruction and evaluation. At any level of education, inquiry is a learning-centred, meaning-based process in which an individual's personal questions of significance are explored, analyzed, interpreted, and reflected upon. The learner is engaged in posing questions as well as in probing them (Short and Armstrong 1993). Questions develop when what the learner knows and what the learner experiences create an anomaly. Successful inquiry generates new understandings or insights and further questions for inquiry in an ever-developing cycle of learning (Patterson, Stansell, and Lee 1990). The value of this process is that the learner is the one who selects the questions, who decides how the questions will be explored, who presents the findings for others, who reflects upon the learning, and who then poses new questions as a result of the inquiry. Hence, the process is internally rather than externally motivated.
The cultural and social context influences the process as well as the product of the inquiry. Knowledge is constructed through interactive linguistic discourse with others. Student-led inquiry is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed, not transmitted from experts to novices.

Because all of the disciplines are available to gain perspectives during the inquiry (Harste 1993), the curriculum is experienced holistically (Miller 1993), in contrast to fragmented bits of information. Knowledge is held to be tentative, rather than as culturally-valued transmissions of society. As a result of future engagements, experience, and inquiry, the knowledge that learners have now may be replaced with new personal understandings. In the classroom, knowledge is made from transactions between individuals, not simply from individuals working independently.

Transactions in linguistic discourse include written language as well as spoken language. According to Louise Rosenblatt, the reader or writer takes an efferent or affective stance toward text and this stance affects further engagements in the inquiry (1978). For example, if the text is read from a scientific viewpoint, an efferent stance is taken, while, in contrast, if the same text evokes a poetic response, an affective stance is taken. Teachers can help students to explore both efferent and affective stances as a means of broadening and deepening their understandings related to text.

Within a community framework of social diversity, an inquiry-oriented curriculum offers personal understanding and empowerment for all participants (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992). Collaborative co-construction of meaning leads to non-hierarchical, empowering relationships between students and between students and the teacher. Reflection through interactive linguistic discourse, inner dialogue, and reexternalized linguistic discourse, both spoken and written, is an integral part of the inquiry process. Schön suggests that there is a difference between reflection-in-action, in the midst of
doing an activity, and reflection-on-action, in thinking about the activity (Schön 1983); opportunities for both of these are available during inquiry. Inquiry-based evaluation relates to valuing and revaluing intent, engagement, and artifact (Crafton and Burke 1994). In contrast to the familiar evaluation of the mastery of content in traditional programs, evaluation of the learner focusses on the development of understandings, as communicated, for example, during collaborative talk during the inquiry.

For teachers, an inquiry-oriented curriculum requires a paradigm shift from more familiar classroom experiences (Short and Burke 1996). Short and Armstrong write, “Inquiry and research are as much processes of finding questions as they are finding answers, yet we had fallen into the traditional school emphasis on problem-solving” (1993, 191). Students need time to explore a topic, to talk about it informally with others, and to develop a personally meaningful question or problem. In the past, teachers and students tended to jump into problem-solving without having taken the time for the problem to evolve.

By its very nature, inquiry must be open (Harste 1993). In some situations, the teacher may set the stage by introducing a broad theme to the class and inviting the students to become immersed in talking and reading about it. Various centres around the class may stimulate experimentation or activity related to the theme. During class discussion the teacher's talk will serve to provide a source of vocabulary for the students as well as an opportunity to think aloud with respect to what he or she is wondering about. Such interaction with the whole class can also influence the interactions between students in their own collaborative talk during subsequent engagements in the inquiry process. Through a shared activity or discussion with the class, the teacher also demonstrates that he or she does not already have the answers to the questions that will be developed; students and teacher co-construct the
knowledge in a supportive, encouraging environment for risk-taking. In contrast to offering a set of prepackaged questions and answers, the teacher monitors the kind of talk that occurs, making immediate decisions whether to intervene by helping students to make connections to prior learning, to probe for deeper understanding, or to celebrate the progress made so far. When schools are challenged to meet the needs of diverse populations, student-led inquiry is an alternative to organizing curriculum. As Wells and Chang-Wells write:

Where the aim of the teacher is to facilitate each individual's construction of knowledge through literate thinking and collaborative talk in the context of student-chosen topics of inquiry, all learners will be empowered, whatever their social or ethnic background (1992, 90-91).

It is no happenstance that the literature about classroom inquiry is grounded in reality. Excerpts of student talk reflecting co-construction of meaning (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992), narratives of experiences with science (Short and Armstrong 1993), narratives of teacher-student interactions about reading response journals (Swartz in Wells et al. 1994), and narratives of teacher-student interactions about writing (Atwell in Goswami and Stillman 1987) provide unique examples of how the inquiry process has occurred in specific social contexts. Teachers who learn about inquiry are engaged in doing inquiry with students; they report that as a result of their own research they themselves have changed. As a result of the classroom inquiry, the students have changed. The cycle continues for teachers and students -- new insights and personal understandings inevitably generate new tensions or possible questions for further inquiry.

To summarize, the language arts curriculum as described here, from my perspective, is solidly within the framework of constructivism. An emphasis is placed on the social process of learning; knowledge is created and recreated through the point of
experience. Recent research in the field of literacy learning includes inquiry-based instruction and evaluation as a means to develop significant questions of personal relevance to the learners and to deepen as well as broaden personal understandings. Central to the research and classroom practice is the issue that the main goal of education is “teaching for understanding”.

Teaching for Understanding: Inside the Language Arts Classroom

Language and literacy learning at every stage is a meaning-based process. At an emergent stage of reading, young children, who are not yet mapping the words they produce orally to the print on the page, may rely on the pictures to help them create their own narrative. As young children listen to stories read aloud to them again and again they become familiar with the language of books. Long before children come to school, the writing they produce, often in combination with their art work, is a representation in distilled form of the meaning that they want to convey (Harste, Woodward and Burke 1984).

In an elementary classroom, children are engaged in reading independently, with a partner, and in a small group. Each day the teacher also reads aloud to the whole class. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and representing are integrated in a holistic language arts program.

For independent reading, students choose from a variety of selections, including picture books, novels, magazines, poetry, and short stories from student anthologies. Reading widely, they discover a multiplicity of topics in both fiction and nonfiction. Making a connection between the present text and previous texts is an instance of intertextuality. With narrative selections, readers may identify with a character in the story; both the cognitive and affective aspects of reading transact in the meaning-
making process. Comprehension is affected by past experiences in literacy as well as by personal life experiences that readers bring to the text.

In literature circles, students talk about their reading in small groups (Harste and Short with Burke 1988). They may share different viewpoints about the same selection, read several selections by the same author, read several selections in one genre, or read a variety of selections about one topic. During their conversations about text, they often use a range of language functions, including persuading, informing, question ing and instructing. As students think collaboratively, they have authentic purposes to negotiate meaning, reread parts of the text to support their viewpoints, clarify, extend, and develop understandings. While students read widely during opportunities for independent reading, they learn to read deeply during experiences in literature circles (Peterson and Eeds 1990).

The language arts program nurtures learning to read and reading to learn. As students talk, read, write, and think collaboratively about text, they may be working within their zones of proximal development. Challenging each other through talking about text, they continuously reflect about their own understandings metacognitively and construct new meanings. A supportive social context stimulates risk-taking and inquiry.

In an inquiry-oriented language arts program, the teacher's role is that of a coach or facilitator. Some situations call for more direct instruction; in other instances the teacher is also engaged in the learning tasks. Through a myriad of demonstrations the teacher conveys the conventions of language, how learning takes place, as well as how it feels to be engaged in learning (Smith 1981). The teacher's own reading responses during the time that a selection is read to the whole class indicate whether
he or she values both the efferent and affective responses toward reading. Similarly, through the attention that the teacher gives to nurturing all of the intelligences, the teacher demonstrates the value that he or she places on multimodal responses in learning. As a more experienced language user, the teacher can work toward collaborative thinking with students within their upper limits of cognitive development. While none of us is successful all of the time, the teacher's task is to provide a learning environment conducive to inquiry, to engage in dialogue during the learning, and to reflect with students about their learning. Personal writing conferences are examples of brief encounters in which students relate how their work is progressing and where they could use assistance. At times, the teacher must decide whether students are progressing well on their own or whether the individual or group would benefit from teacher intervention.

Through an examination of the contributions of several constructivists and classroom researchers, I have addressed the notion that the main goal of education is to “teach for understanding”. This issue has been analyzed within the field of an elementary language arts program.

The work of Dewey, Vygotsky, Wells and Chang-Wells, and Gardner in theory and in practice has led me to concur with the statement, “What scholars in this tradition share is a view of knowledge as an active construction built up by the individual acting within a social context that shapes and constrains that knowledge but does not determine it in an absolute sense” (Applebee and Purves in Jackson 1992, 738).

While curriculum has different meanings for different people and is constantly revised and refined by our own personal practical knowledge, the insights expressed by Harste, Short, Burke, Connelly and Clandinin provide perspectives for viewing
curriculum as the continuous development of personal and social understandings.

Through an examination of the writing of classroom researchers including Wells and Chang-Wells, Harste, Short, and Burke, I have demonstrated that the language arts curriculum is solidly within the framework of constructivism. An emphasis is placed on the social process of learning; knowledge is created and recreated through the point of experience. A curricular anchor in the day to day activities of a language arts classroom is that the main goal of education is to “teach for understanding”.

Engagement with Text in the Language Arts Program

What does engagement mean in a broad school context, within the curriculum? Why is it that some students seem to be deeply involved in their learning and others scarcely interested at all in class activities? What can teachers do to develop content, community, and choice (Kohn in Brandt 1995) which will invite student engagement in learning? Following is an examination of the role of engagement within the wider frame of curriculum. I shall describe what it means to become engaged in learning, consider five modes of engagement with text, and draw connections to curriculum studies generally.

For this study, I shall define engagement with text as the active and intentional cognitive encounter of the language user during a literacy event. Usually, this encounter is simultaneously associated with a positive affective component in the learning process. Briefly, I shall consider the more general characteristics associated with the affective side of engagement; then, I will focus more specifically on the cognitive aspect of engagement. For the meaning of text, I refer to the seminal work of Harste, Burke and Woodward:

When text is viewed as an object, literacy is seen as a process of information transfer. Readers and writers are viewed as more or less faulty vessels....When text is viewed as an event, literacy is
seen as a psychological and sociological partnership. Meaning is not something inherent in the print but created in and through interaction....Text as potential is meant to capture not only the notion that text is an in-head phenomenon but that it is ever changing. What is out there is a "text potential"; what we create in our minds is "text" (1983, 168-169).

Schlecty notes that “students who are engaged exhibit three characteristics: (1) they are attracted to their work, (2) they persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) they take visible delight in accomplishing their work” (In Strong et al. 1995, 8). Strong, Silver, and Robinson have developed the acronym SCORE to represent the goals of those who are engaged in their work: Success, Curiosity, Originality, and Relationships --all of which are expressed through Energy (ibid., 9). While students express engagement individually, they do so through relationships with others; that is, commitment to learning occurs both personally and socially.

**To Become Fully Literate**

Research in the past quarter century has challenged the understandings that many teachers have about what it means to be a literate person (Smith 1973; Harste, Burke and Woodward 1983; Wells 1986, 1990). Traditionally, teachers have believed that being literate means knowing how to read and write. Because an emphasis was placed on correctness of form and a literal interpretation of text, there was often little time left in the curriculum to nurture critical and imaginative thinking about text.

While, for most investigators, “language is the prototypical system of symbolization” (Gardner 1991, 58), it is no longer considered the only kind of literacy of importance. Other systems of symbolization include numeracy, media literacy, musical literacy, and visual literacy. One who is “computer literate” has access to knowledge with any of the above-mentioned literacies through the use of another medium. Clearly, we have
extended our views of literacies in recent years. At times, when one kind of literacy overlaps or is used concurrently with another, communication occurs multimodally (Harste, Burke, and Woodward 1983). Central to all of these forms of literacy, however, is the meaning which the producer(s) of the message and the receiver(s) bring to the event.

One of the challenges of schools today is to help students to become fully literate. Although I appreciate the literacies ascribed to various systems of symbolization, I shall primarily focus on the form of literacy associated with print. That is, with reading and writing in a social context. It is my belief that to become fully literate with printed text, one must not only know how to read and write but express a personal inclination to engage with text critically and imaginatively, and to express one's ideas socially. As Wells writes, “to be fully literate...is to have the disposition to engage appropriately with texts of different types in order to empower action, feeling, and thinking in the context of purposeful social activity” (1990, 14).

Modes of Engagement with Text
To an extent, the type of written text determines the mode of engagement with the text. The classified section of a newspaper, for example, tends to elicit reading for a very specific purpose; the reader tends to scan a great deal of material in order to locate the information that is required. Poetry, in contrast, may elicit a more thoughtful, contemplative mode of reading. Wells and Chang-Wells have described five broad categories, or modes of engagement with text (1992). While there is some overlap between the modes, and other categories might be added, it is certainly helpful to consider the following modes of engagement with text which Wells and Chang-Wells suggest are prevalent in Western society.
1. Performative mode: occurs when the reader (or writer) is focusing on the code itself. This is especially the case with beginning readers who are focusing on the mechanical aspects of early reading, before they have gained fluency in reading. Proficient writers engage in the performative mode when they are learning a computer word-processing program for the first time; readers engage in this mode when they locate information from the telephone book, from the menu on the computer, or from the index of an encyclopedia. If the language user has achieved competence in this mode, then the activity is often below the level of consciousness and is best seen as a means of engaging in other modes.

2. Functional mode: occurs when the person reads (or writes) in order to act or achieve a specific purpose. Environmental print includes, for example, the print found on cereal boxes, instructions in a manual, road signs, and newspaper flyers. We use the information in order to determine the nutritional value of the cereal, how to program the VCR, and what the specials are at the grocery store. As we read this material, we engage in the functional mode.

3. Informational mode: occurs when the language user communicates with accuracy and clarity. Here the reader (or writer) wants to determine the facts, to complete the questionnaire, to learn the procedures. The accent is on knowing the facts, in contrast to debating the significance of the issue. In this mode, questions related to how, what, when, and where, take precedence over why and what if.

4. Re-creational mode: occurs while reading for pleasure or while writing to communicate personally. A child who is enraptured by the imaginative story of a picture book would be engaged in the re-creational mode. Classroom teachers are often committed to developing "lifelong readers" -- people who read for the sheer
enjoyment of reading.

5. Epistemic mode: (after the Greek word for knowledge) occurs while the reader considers the intentions of the writer, looks at the text in a tentative way that promotes interpretations of it, and uses the text to extend meaning -- which may include relating the text to future experiences in reading and writing. For example, teachers draw on recent theory, practice, and research as well as their own observations of learning in the classroom as they relate their experiences, question their own beliefs, and put forth their current understandings and narratives (Connelly and Clandinin 1988; Goswami and Stillman 1987). Students, too, engage in this mode when they read challenging passages, converse informally with others about their reading, reflect, analyze, draw parallels, and synthesize or apply what they have read during further literacy events. While many types of text could elicit this mode of engagement, some are more likely than others to promote such transactions between writer, text, and reader.

Understanding the Relationship of Text to the Modes of Engagement

The meaning of text as object, event, or potential can be related to the modes of engagement in literacy. Frequently, engaged in the performative mode, we are likely to consider "text as object". It is the squiggles on the paper itself that are of significance in the performative mode. A young child learning to read may be engaged in the performative mode. While the language user is attempting to construct meaning (using the semantic cueing system), in the performative mode the graphophonic and syntactic cueing systems are highlighted in the transactions that occur between the reader and the text. Once the reader gains control of the "mechanical" aspect of the reading process, then the performative mode is so automatic that other modes of engagement are more prominent.
Looking more closely, however, we note that several sections of the newspaper could promote engagement in the re-creational and epistemic modes, depending on previous experiences with text, the personal, social, and cultural experiences of the reader or writer, as well as the purposes of the language user during this particular situation. Thus it is not necessarily the text itself, but the transactions that occur between the writer, text, and reader that determine the mode of engagement. That being true, I can only suggest that it is more likely that the re-creational and epistemic modes relate to the meaning of text as potential. An inevitable question arises: if teachers believe that the re-creational and epistemic modes of engagement should receive the most attention in the classroom, then how is this reflected in the language program? What opportunities are presented for students to become engaged in the re-creational and epistemic modes?

Linking Theory and Practice

It is at this juncture that I believe teachers need to take stock of the significance that social context bears for engagement with text. Several theorists have sought to explain their views of learning in a social context. The foundation for much of the current theory and practice stems from the work of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky. According to David Wood:

One of Vygotsky’s main contributions to educational theory is a concept termed the ‘zone of proximal development’. This he used to refer to the ‘gap’ that exists for an individual (child or adult) between what he is able to do alone and what he can achieve with help from one more knowledgeable or skilled than himself....For Vygotsky, then, co-operatively achieved success lies at the foundations of learning and development (1988, 24-25).

Barnes makes a distinction between school knowledge and action knowledge (1975). In contrast to the transmission style of teaching, in which the teacher tells the students what they are expected to learn, action knowledge is learned by mutual activity in a
shared experience. Students who talk together informally not only inform each other about what they know and do not know, but they also inform themselves; their current understanding is thus challenged and developed during interaction with peers. The teacher may enter the group to find out what progress has been made, to ask questions for clarification and extension, and to help the students to push their learning further or to form a temporary closure for their work.

In a similar vein, Tierney and Rogers suggest that literacy learning takes place both cognitively and socially. They write that “An emerging perspective is that literacy learning is both a cognitive and a social process, and that the social contexts and the mental contexts involved in literacy instruction interact to affect the kind of learning that takes place” (in Bloome 1989, 251).

Although engagement with text is often considered from the perspectives of reader and writer, Harste, Burke, and Woodward stress the fluidity and interrelatedness of the strands of language. The visual concept of the linguistic data pool (1983, fig. 16.4) illustrates that encounters including listening, speaking, reading, or writing, may be entered into a data pool from which any one or more of these encounters can exit. That is, if a language user has been engaged in reading, then that event can influence future encounters which may involve listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing. This has some very practical implications for the classroom. “Growth in a given expression of language must be seen as a multilingual event; in reading, for example, hearing a set of directions read, encountering written language with others, listening to a book, talking about a newspaper article, or attempting to write one’s own story, all support growth and development in literacy (ibid., 210).
Classroom Practice and Engagement with Text Through Social Interaction

In the classroom, the teacher can select from a wealth of possibilities to provide opportunities for language expression as multilingual and multimodal events, for nurturing the re-creational and epistemic modes of engagement with text, and for considering the meaning of text as object, event, and potential. One such area in which the student, the story, the imagined context of the story, and the real context of the classroom unfold to create text potential is through story drama.

In story drama, the learner interacts with others to clarify, extend, and develop understandings. The learner participates simultaneously in the dramatic context of the story as well as in the social context of the classroom. Experience in story drama is influenced by the learner’s past personal and cultural experiences as well as past experiences in literacy that relate to the text.

Story drama is representative of the power and engagement with text in the re-creational and epistemic modes. Students are called on to identify with a character in role, to negotiate meaning with others in problem-solving situations, to consider alternatives, to look at a situation from different perspectives, and to create imagined contexts. Story developed together socially in drama can be extended through encounters in reading and writing (Booth 1994). In story drama, one literacy event leads to another -- reflection in role and out of role, writing in role and out of role, and reading and re-reading related stories. These combined private and social experiences enhance engagement and re-engagement with text. While acknowledging the maintenance function of text, story drama highlights the generativeness of language and text. It is not only during the given event of the story drama that the students are making sense of text; they add to their personal human experiences and experiences with text, thereby extending their potential in the
processes related to the texts in the future.

In literature circles students can also engage in the re-creational and epistemic modes as they become actively involved in talking about text. Literature circles provide a forum for students to talk about the story in a small group, challenging each other, clarifying meaning for themselves and others, and revising their understandings about the text. Here the students, as well as the teacher, ask questions that are important to them. This is different from the classrooms in the past where the teacher asks the questions and the students try to give correct answers. As the students, throughout the dialogue, return again and again to the text, they develop contrasting interpretations of the text and use the text to extend meaning. Through collaborative thinking and exploratory talk, the students outgrow their current understandings; conditions are cultivated for learning in their zones of proximal development. Students experience the meaning of text as object, event, and potential.

Establishing a Curricular Framework

What curricular framework is most supportive of the theory and practice that relates to this view of engagement with text through social interaction? Consideration must be given to the individual as one who actively constructs knowledge in a supportive social context, to the classroom as a community of learners, and to the wider society, or "collective learner" (Short and Burke 1991). When learners are given freedom of choice, time to work together as well as alone, and opportunities to learn from others who may have more expertise in an area, they develop ownership and empowerment as they use their current understandings to make sense of their present experiences.

...People learn most successfully when they have the freedom to make choices about the activities in which they engage and are given support, through co-determination, of what to learn, and how best to do so. At the same time, for all of us -- children, teachers, and researchers -- the construction of knowledge requires goal-directed engagement with new information, through direct
experience and exposition, through discussion and deliberation with others, and through communing with self in writing and reading. (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992, 117).

From this view of curriculum it is clear that students and teachers are learners together, that they learn with and from each other, and that through their activities and relationships they develop a sense of community. Knowledge is constructed by each learner, not transmitted from an expert to a novice. Risk-taking and openness, tension and challenge, encouragement and support accompany freedom to learn.

**Summary**

I have placed engagement with text within a context of the curriculum. Engagement in language learning has been defined as the active and intentional cognitive encounter of the language user during a literacy event. Five modes of engagement were cited: performative, functional, informational, re-creative, and epistemic. Text reflected three perspectives: as object, as event, and as potential. In classroom practice, story drama and literature circles were presented as two examples of text through social interaction. I have emphasized that knowledge is actively constructed by each learner, who is often assisted by more experienced others. Characteristics of a community of learners that were highlighted include risk-taking, reflection, and collaboration.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Teacher Reflection Related to Action Research
My own classroom practice, conversations with other educators, and a review of the literature have confirmed for me the assertion that action research leads to educators being more reflective. The following questions will provide the focus for the issue. What elements and processes of action research lead to educators being more reflective? How does Donald Schon's work describing reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action relate to action research? What are some examples in the field of action research that recognize the quality of reflection in educational practice? What images or metaphors can be related to action research?

Within the past decade, several volumes of work have emerged relating teachers' stories of professional and personal growth and change (Booth 1994; Wells 1994; Patterson et al. 1993; Newkirk 1992; Pinnell and Matlin 1991; Goswami and Stillman 1987). Gradually, the development of teachers' stories as a form of narrative research has gained respect within the profession (Wells 1994, 1). Kathy Carter writes, "Story has become, in other words, more than simply a rhetorical device for expressing sentiments about teachers or candidates for the teaching profession. It is now, rather, a central focus for conducting research in the field" (1993). As a way of probing deeper into personal professional knowledge with the goal of change, Thomas Newkirk comments that teacher-researchers need to consider the silences in stories of
teaching, the uncomfortable aspects of teaching that have been omitted (1992).

Reflection Through Ownership of the Study
The purpose of action research is to develop personal understanding pointing toward change in classroom practice. Evolving from classroom contexts, action research can provide alternatives for change directly affecting the participants in the specific settings. This is in contrast to traditional forms of research in the field, developed hierarchically, which often take years to "trickle down" to classroom use. The dialogic relationship between student and teacher inquiry in the study often leads to empowerment for all of the participants (Wells 1994).

For some teachers, involvement in university course work or professional organizations is an impetus for action research; others discover that conversations with colleagues leads to a collaborative venture in which they form supportive groups or partnerships for classroom research. The stimulus for the inquiry may be a specific question that the teacher has already formulated and wants to explore, or it may begin with uncertainty, puzzlement, curiosity or a wondering about a situation (Wells 1995; Short and Armstrong 1993; Kutz 1992).

The teacher-researcher takes ownership for the selection of the issue, gathering of the data, and analyzing and interpreting the data. Talking with others, trusting oneself as a writer, and reflecting about the writing are necessary for revision. In writing, in teaching, in action research and in other complex activities, experience is gained in living with ambiguity and surprise. A continuum of tension exists between the predictable and the unpredictable, practice and theory, action and reflection.

And it is in making the connections between practice and theory, as this relationship is constructed and made explicit through the cycle of research, that the practitioner adopts the stance of reflectiveness, which is the hallmark of the
Teacher-researchers become keen observers in their own classrooms, collecting data through audio- or videotapes, making field notes, writing in journals, and collecting samples from other modes of representation (such as art work, music, and experiences with drama). With ownership of every aspect of the study, the possibility for increased confidence and empowerment is extended. Boni Gravelle describes how research has informed practice through her experiences as a teacher-researcher curious about experiences with student writing.

I am researching for myself out of curiosity to try to make sense of what students are doing and to be more aware of what is happening in my classroom. I use the information to reflect on what has happened, to evaluate and assess my progress, to create new avenues that will enable each child to feel successful as a writer, and to invent record-keeping methods that meet my needs (In Newkirk 1992, 54).

Reflection Through Linguistic Discourse

Committing thoughts to writing, the teacher-researcher makes explicit much of the tacit knowledge and experience of the classroom. Risk-taking, tentative expression made evident on the page, self-discovery, and self-evaluation, are embedded in the writing process. Initially, there may be several possible avenues for the study; the selection of the question often evolves from the study itself.

While personal commitment and self-direction are essential elements of the study, many opportunities for dialogue with others often provide valuable situations with anticipation of new learning. Through interactions with others, the teacher-researcher engages in spoken and written discourse, reviewing strategies as well as content. Informal conversations with colleagues provide feedback, questions for clarification or extension, new meanings for situations, and valuable on-going support. As teachers
undergo immediate and personal change, support groups are a valuable source of renewal and encouragement for ongoing work (Watson and Stevenson in Pinnell and Matlin, 1989, 181).

Experiences and knowledge of writers expressed through the professional literature, which may have been only mildly interesting prior to the study, seem to soar in relevance during action research. Comparisons and contrasts, areas of agreement and disagreement, and a range of perspectives help to broaden and deepen the experience of the teacher-researcher. These texts inevitably become embedded in the text of the current study. Such interactive linguistic discourse is followed by inner dialogue, which is then reexternalized through presentation for others (Wells 1995).

Teachers move beyond empathy to identifying with their students as they are immersed in learning. Through active listening and careful observations, teachers discover learning from their students' perspectives. Becoming learners in their own classrooms, teachers rediscover the discomfort and tentativeness of unfamiliar learning.

The world learners live in is an ambiguous one in which there are few right or wrong answers. They must, therefore, become risk takers who are willing to live with ambiguity and consequences. Ambiguity produces a tension that keeps learners growing (Short and Burke 1989).

In active research, teachers not only learn about their students; they learn with them (Wells 1994; Booth 1994, 344; Kutz 1992, 195). The classroom becomes a community of learners, with a multitude of opportunities to challenge each other, outgrowing current understandings, resulting in the development of new knowledge.
Donald Schöns Contribution of Reflection-in-Action and Reflection-on-Action

Action research takes place during the course of events in a naturalistic setting for learning. Much of the practitioner's knowledge is gained from engagement in the interwoven fabric of meanings, tasks, relationships, and priorities in the immediate situation. Munby and Russell have studied the work of Donald Schöns and related it to education. They write, "For Schøn, knowing-in-action refers to our unstatable, tacit knowledge that drives our actions. Reflection-in-action refers to what happens when we are presented with novel puzzles" (1989, 72). In action research, an immediate connectedness exists between reflection-in-action and, later, reflection-on-action.

When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision which he must later convert to action (Schøn 1983, 68).

Reflection-in-action often promotes subsequent reflection-on-action. In the midst of the buzz of classroom activities, teachers become sensitive to points of surprise during the transactions that are taking place and reach for a pencil to quickly record thoughts during the immediacy of the situation. Angela Jaggar describes it this way, "...I reflected on how I learn as a teacher. Each time I had an 'ah ha!' experience, I would ask myself: 'What did I learn? What did I do? Where did it happen? Who was involved? What happened next?" (Jaggar in Pinnell and Matlin 1989, 68). In this manner, she was reflecting-in-action and shortly afterwards recording her thoughts within the context of the event.
From Research to Action: Examples in the Field

In their enthusiasm to push forward in teaching and research, teachers sometimes face unexpected reluctance from the students. Karen Evans describes teacher reflection "as a cure for tunnel vision" (1995, 266-271). She writes:

Engaging in such reflection allowed me to rediscover how important it is to let students and their individual needs and interests into my instructional decision making. After all, teaching and learning is a two-way process between ourselves and our students. Not only do we teach them, but they also teach us, if we are willing to listen to them (271).

Donald Cordell’s thesis, “Teacher Reflection on Personal Knowledge in Action: Teacher thinking and spontaneous drama” is a valuable contribution toward the goal of the researcher as participant observer in authentic classroom contexts. Clearly, new levels of understanding were developed through the process of teacher as researcher and researcher as teacher. Cordell’s relationship with the four teachers in the study is described as “equal partners in this investigation” (1989, 8). Through reflection-on-action which related to reflection-in-action, all of the participants developed insights from experiences with spontaneous drama in the classroom. Communication remained open between the participants, and trust and collaboration flourished. Connections were made to other areas of the curriculum in which the teachers were attempting to create classroom contexts for student-centred learning. According to Westberg, Clyde, and Condon, “When collaboration is undertaken in a systematic fashion, the only prediction that can be made is that all participants will change” (1996, 8).

In reflecting about her research project with a high school English class, Lucinda Ray outlines the reasons that she has developed for studying writing in the classroom. She found that her own study was more valuable than any professional course she
has taken; her students benefited more directly from the research; she learned unexpected directions from first-hand experience; and she is confident in believing that the process in carrying out the study has resulted in improvement in her teaching (In Goswami and Stillman 1987, 242).

For Cynthia Biery, a valuable result of examining her own practice was to discover "what had been missing from my afternoon fourth-grade writing sections was the groundwork of a one-on-one, teacher-student relationship" (1993). Teachers who examine the complexity of their own work, including the positive and negative aspects of the situation, generate possibilities for creating change from within.

Patterson, Stansell and Lee accent the importance of the process in action research. They suggest that a significant value of teacher research is finding those questions and methods which will lead to "new insights and deeper understanding" (1990, 8). They challenge teachers to work with questions that defy easy explanation, examining and re-examining their findings closely.

Developing Images and Metaphors for Action Research
Recently, some writers have given attention to the use of images and metaphors in descriptions of teaching. Connelly and Clandinin suggest that through their stories about teaching, educators are living their images and metaphors (In Jackson 1992, 369). Developed from within classroom practice, images manifest not only the logical, cognitive components of teaching but also the imaginative, affective side of the story (Clandinin 1985, 363). From my own thinking about teaching, learning, and research, I offer two images, one related to the teacher-researcher and the other related to action research.
The teacher-researcher acts as composer, instrumentalist, and listener. The research begins as a constructive meaning-making process in which, among a multitude of possible beginnings, false starts, and explorations, a problem evolves. As composer, the teacher-researcher experiments with the data, creating an organizational framework, establishing and revising thematic and harmonic ideas. As instrumentalist, the teacher-researcher prepares for the presentation of the work, interpreting the phrases, refining ideas, making connections between previously known literature in the field and personal experiences. As listener, the teacher-researcher reflects or reviews during every phase of the process. If the presentation has been audiotaped or videotaped, the teacher-researcher has repeated opportunities to listen to the presentation, reflecting on the action. Throughout the study, the artist changes perspectives, using knowledge-in-action to create the work in progress. Similarly, a teacher-researcher shifts perspectives from that of teacher to learner, from reader to writer, from passive consumer of research to active creator of research, and, therefore, from reflection to action.

An Afro-American storyteller, children's author, and artist, Faith Ringgold, is perhaps best known for developing a genre which unifies story and art: the story quilt. She has created quilts which are works of art that have also developed from stories. (Using an alternative genre, Ringgold has depicted quilt patterns in the illustrations for some of her children's stories.) These stories range from autobiographical narratives to the stories communicated through oral tradition representative of Afro-American culture. The narrators of Ringgold's stories are women, the stories are often about women, and Ringgold has selected a visual genre that is associated with women as makers of quilts. The quilt subsumes all of the narratives from which it is created -- the overall, unified narrative; the narrative about the artist; the cultural background of the work; and the set of interconnected narratives within the large image. Those who come to
appreciate the story quilt, listening to the narratives and seeing the art, marvel at the uniqueness and beauty of the experience, wonder at the perception and skill of the artist, and see their own lives reflected in the narratives of others.

Through the image of the story-quilt, it is clear that action research relates to the stories of the individual participants in the study, to the social context in which they are collaborators in the co-construction of meaning, and to the cultural context of the study with all of its complexity and diversity. The visual images of the quilt and the narrative of the story transact and transform to create meanings which would never be available if the modes of expression were not experienced in unity. While some may suggest that quilts as an art form are restricted to the home, others will point to various exhibits and displays of quilts as a serious form of art; similarly, critics have questioned the status of action research and its relationship with traditional forms of research. A more positive view toward micro-studies and macro-studies would be to consider the authenticity and valuable exchange of viewpoints that each form of research can provide for the other. Originality and diversity can be encouraged and celebrated.

Other images and metaphors have been used in describing the process of active involvement and standing back for a reflective stance. In a section entitled "Winks Upon Winks Upon Winks of Ethnography", Cathy Fleisher writes, "Traditionally, then, ethnographic research becomes a constant ping-pong game of getting close and stepping back, getting close and stepping back, as one carefully tries to maintain that balance" (1995, 20).

Action research, I have argued, leads to educators being more reflective. Ownership of the issue under investigation, the design and methodology, and the data collection, analysis and interpretation fosters a degree of commitment and responsibility on the
part of teacher-researchers that would otherwise be impossible. Co-construction of meaning for the study develops in dialogue with students and colleagues. Dialogue with others in the field occurs through immersing oneself in reading professional literature, making discoveries and connections between the theories of others and the current investigation. Links can be made between the work of Donald Schon, particularly in the area of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, to micro-projects of research in which teachers are involved as participant observers. Examples of action research offer additional perspectives and authenticity to previously developed, scholarly expertise and theoretical interpretation. Images and metaphors related to action research are manifestations not only of the logical, cognitive components of teaching but also of the imaginative, affective side of the story. In education, which has been traditionally dominated by change through hierarchical structures, action research, which accents the closeness of the researcher and the researched, generates opportunities for change from within.
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Establishing a Focus for Inquiry

As an ESL teacher, I have been particularly interested in the relationship of oral language and literacy learning. Students who have come from differing cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds gradually learn to communicate and develop shared experiences about text. As much as possible, I wanted to study learning as it takes place in one natural context of the classroom. Through layers of conversation, inner dialogue that takes place through professional reading, and reflection about practice, I developed the question: “In what ways do students engage with text through collaboration with others?”.

Key Concepts of the Study

In this study I examine students' learning under four categories:

(a) Concepts related to language and thinking growth:
   - Use of the language functions of persuading, narrating, informing and instructing
   - Use of metaphor and figurative speech
   - Use of intertextuality
   - Use of creative expression

(b) Social and collaborative learning based on the following theoretical concepts:
   - Negotiation of meaning, in which the learner interacts with others to clarify, extend, and develop understandings
   - Social context, in which the meaning and the use of the text is related to the given situation (e.g. a newspaper in a classroom in contrast to a newspaper on the front steps of a house)
   - Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1962), in which an individual learns from the language and demonstrations (Smith 1983) of a more experienced language user
   - Fictional context, in which the students explore a fictional text in classroom drama
(c) Engagement with text and commitment to learning:

- Identification with a character in the text
- Reflection of past personal experiences that relate to the text
- Reflection of past experiences in literacy that relate to the text
- Expression of self-determination toward future learning
- Metacognition

(d) Connections to other areas of the school curriculum

- Math, Science, and Technology
- The Arts
- Self and Society

Rationale for the Use of Drama and Literature Circles as Teaching Strategies

Throughout our lives we are actively involved in making sense of the world around us. We use language to engage in this process: relating to others, pursuing unanswered questions and inquiries, giving order and direction to daily circumstances, remembering the past, valuing the present moment, and creating dreams and hopes for the future.

Much has been written about providing classroom contexts for learning through collaboration with others. As an ESL teacher, I recognize the significance of creating opportunities for dialogue related to meaningful classroom activity as students learn language, learn through language, and learn about language. In a holistic language program, in which reading, writing, listening, speaking, and representing are integrated, the components relate interactively to build upon successive language and literacy events. The learner's past experience, including both world experience and
prior experiences in literacy, will have a bearing on interpretation of text.

Literature circles serve as a framework to engage students in talking about text. A group of students come together to share the selections that they have read. The connections that are made during discussion stimulate further reading and talking in a supportive, challenging social context. Students express and explore their understanding of the selection(s), extending one another's thinking. Opportunities are provided to question the meaning of the text, to make predictions for further reading, and to negotiate group responses to the selection(s).

Reading for meaning is accented when students are aware that they will talk with their peers about the selections that they have read. The internal dialogue, in which students participate as they prepare for literature circles, is, potentially, a form of metacognition. Such mental activity results in engagement with the text, silent rehearsal of ideas that will later be shared in a group, and self-monitoring. Students come together knowing that they will share perspectives from reading and will be influenced by insights expressed by others. A spirit of anticipation is in the air as students link understandings and form questions through the process of discovering connections related to reading.

Intertextuality, or making connections between texts, deepens comprehension and produces opportunities for personal interpretations of text. Linking one text with another is vital as readers use their present knowledge to acquire new knowledge. Concepts are developed as students express their ideas verbally, as they listen to others, as they respond through writing, and as they continue reading. In some instances, the verbalization of ideas in literature circles becomes a rehearsal for writing. The re-creational and epistemic modes of engagement with text are
highlighted in literature circles.

Classroom drama provides another curricular component to engage with text, extending situations in a fictional context, developing characters, and probing issues. I have approached drama from a perspective of language in the curriculum. Drama has been for me a means of bringing into the classroom a range of contexts for language use which would otherwise never be explored. In drama the energy level rises, students become involved in exploring issues and solving problems, and students are motivated to talk because of commitment to the experience within a fictional setting. Communication through music, art, and writing becomes a natural part of holistic learning through drama.

In classroom drama, as in reading, students often identify with a character in a fictional context. Nuances of meaning, description, humour, analogy, and paradox may be conveyed in a particular style in drama. Felt knowledge, in which the message carries emotional response, is an integral part of story drama; feelings are communicated with the message. Text as potential is accented in drama, which is open-ended for exploration, interpretation, and creative response. The re-creational mode of engagement with text is highlighted in story drama.

While changes in the classroom program were necessary to incorporate the use of literature circles and classroom drama, I believed that the benefits for the students and the teacher were well worth the effort to make these changes possible.
Relationship of the Teacher-Researcher to the Classroom Context

Qualitative Research: "From the Inside Out"

As the ESL teacher, whose class was "two doors down the hall", I had frequently worked informally with this Grade 4 class during the fall term. Together, the classroom teacher and I had planned some language lessons based on their student anthology, Cross the Golden River. Later, a unit from the anthology about humour became the topic for text sets for literature circles. The students, classroom teacher (Judy), and I all developed experience in the use of literature circles in the classroom. During occasional times for classroom drama, we introduced the students to another strategy for exploring story.

Although I had previously introduced literature circles and classroom drama to teachers and students, when acting in a consulting relationship, this was the first time that I had the opportunity to observe, informally and intermittently, class involvement over the course of a year. The research project took place in earnest from late November to June.

Not every classroom teacher would be as open to sharing classroom experiences with a colleague doing research. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Judy, who shared her class, her own insights and reflections, and who worked with me in tandem during the research. Because of her willingness to try unfamiliar approaches in teaching, I was able to gain a better understanding of the realities of lessons related to literature circles and drama in the classroom.

From an ESL perspective, I was particularly interested in exploring teaching strategies which embraced the wealth of experience and knowledge of all classroom participants, and which built on social and cultural diversity. Rather than replacing one
culture with another, I hoped that students could participate in both cultures -- the one into which they had been born and the Canadian culture in which they now lived. Literacy learning, therefore, was a means of self-expression as well as a collection of culturally transmitted stories and experiences. Furthermore, I wanted students to make connections between their own lives and the literature in the classroom. The emphasis was on the generative nature of text and the interpretations which were possible by each member of the classroom community.

The Teacher-Researcher as Participant Observer in the Classroom

Intentions, Actions, and Records of Classroom Experiences

Throughout the period of data collection, I was involved as a participant observer in the classroom. Judy and I talked about initiating literature circles, which easily flowed from the more familiar study with student anthologies. As we began to compile books for text sets, we explored our own personal collections of books as well as the classroom and school library. Text sets are selections for reading that are related by genre, author, or topic; or, a text set can be several copies of the same selection. Sometimes we linked the topics of text sets to other parts of the curriculum, such as science or social studies. During whole class discussion as well as small group discussion, Judy and I demonstrated that we valued risk-taking, considering alternative interpretations of a text, and having students ask questions about a text.

The students were introduced to the strategy "Say Something", described by Harste and Short (1984) in which, during their reading of a passage, they shared their questions and tentative understandings with a partner. In a sense, this was practice for the kind of talk that occurs in literature circles, in which students share their questions, interpretations, and insights with others. This reading strategy also helps students to make connections between previous texts and the current text, to wonder
aloud, to clarify, and to extend meanings in conversation with a partner.

Rather than adhering to a single practical enactment of literature circles, we decided to experiment with possible options. We were asking that students look at text tentatively and explore possibilities about text; we, too, were thinking tentatively about literature circles, exploring adaptations, extensions, and purposes. As we were encouraging the students to consider other viewpoints related to their reading, we also tried to be open-minded toward different perspectives of literature circles in the professional literature. Our conversations from reading about literature circles interacted with the literacy events of our classroom practice. One of the benefits of the role of the teacher-researcher as participant observer is the immediacy and reciprocal relationship of research with practice; each influences and is influenced by the other (Cordell 1989).

A significant factor linking my role as participant observer with records of the experience was the use of videotapes as a means for collecting data. Because of the immediate nature of teaching, it is difficult to gain sufficient distance to understand the experience from a research perspective. However, through the use of videotapes of classroom experiences, I was able to maintain my role as a teacher-researcher in the classroom context while also preserving evidence for later replay and layers upon layers of meaning.

**Collaborative Teaching and Reflection-on-Action**

**Social interaction as an element of the teaching and research experience**

Although there was a structure and timeline for the design of the research, there was also a sense of open-endedness. Plans were not made months ahead regarding the topics for the literature circles or drama. Judy and I took our cues from the interests of the students, from related areas in the language arts program, such as the student
anthologies which were part of the established program, as well as from other areas of the curriculum. Because of the tight demands placed on teachers' time, as well as our own teaching styles, we often worked interactively during the situation rather than strictly from a preplanned set of tasks. We believe in responsive teaching, taking our cues from the students within the learning situation.

At times, I helped to collect books for the text sets and record lists of the books comprising each text set. We used books from the classroom, the school library, the public library, and my own personal collection of children's literature. I always enjoy enriching opportunities for reading by adding resources from the public library. Judy made charts or lists for students to sign up for literature groups. Together we spoke with the whole class to introduce the text sets, which were then displayed in various parts of the class. Time was given for the students to browse and look over the selections in each set. Students were encouraged to consider more than one topic, in case they didn't get their first choice.

Judy and I talked considerably about the formation of groups for the literature circles. We wanted students to feel comfortable with the people in the group in order that they could share their ideas more easily. At the same time, we wanted them to be challenged to work with those whose ideas and experiences did not match their own. Each group, we believed, should have both girls and boys. We wanted to build on the strengths of social relationships to facilitate the exploration of text.

Sometimes during lunch hour Judy and I would get together to make future plans and to reflect about what had worked well and what had not worked as well as we had hoped. She described some of the student responses that occurred at times when I was not present. Frequently, we were surprised by connections that students had
made and their metacognitive awareness in talking about their learning.

Each of us was also involved in professional development outside of the classroom. In November, Judy attended a conference with Lucy Calkins, which led to additional reading of books written by Calkins, conversations with other staff members about student writing, and new perspectives toward student writing. Throughout the year, Judy attended eight math inservices given by the board for junior level teachers. She was actively involved in the music program of the school, taught French to her own classroom, as well as other subjects including art, math, science, and environmental studies. Therefore, this research project was necessarily balanced with all of the other areas of the curriculum; as an elementary classroom teacher, Judy viewed learning as an interactive and holistic process. Later in the year, she noted the influences of engagement with text expressed through connections that students had made in areas across the curriculum.

My professional development that year stemmed from my work at OISE, a course in the arts and education in the fall and a reading course based on text interaction in the winter term. The reading, writing, and dialogue from these courses (added to previous OISE courses) influenced my own teaching in general and the research project specifically. I saw myself as part of the larger teaching community, committed to continuous growth and refinement of teaching practices. I especially valued inquiry related to language learning and the arts as a mode of learning across the curriculum. Acquiring Board approval for the research project itself entailed a great deal of social interaction which resulted in professional development and learning from another perspective. It was wonderful to have a colleague like Judy who expressed active interest and encouragement during all the stages of the research project.
Timeline for Data Collection

Part One: (November - December, 1994)
- Personal, audiotaped interviews with each of the student participants
- Audiotaped interview with the classroom teacher

Part Two: (January - June, 1995)
- Classroom observation and data collection in journals kept by classroom teacher and teacher-researcher.
- Videotaping of four literature circles from three different times of the year (a total of twelve groups).

Part Three: (January - April, 1995)
Videotaping of two classroom drama sessions.

Part Four: (May - June, 1995)
- Personal, audiotaped interviews with each of the student participants
- Audiotaped interview with the classroom teacher

Interpretation and Analysis of the Data
The model of teacher as researcher in qualitative research has influenced the interpretation and analysis of the data in this study. Concrete experience and reflection-in-action followed by reflection-on-action formed the foundation of our collaborative teaching relationship. We were cognizant of the outcomes and indicators for literacy learning at the board level, and the key concepts of the study were congruent with the curriculum documents from the Board of Education. However, our practice was more of an exploratory nature in which I, as the primary investigator, was interested in engagement with text through social interaction, in role as well as out
of role. We began with reflective inquiry, gained insights about student learning, and made modifications in our beliefs about practice for the future. Gradual change evolved from our direct practice, in contrast to implementation of a prescribed set of curriculum strategies. Freedom to experiment with curriculum strategies enabled us to make comparisons and contrasts and to develop our own understandings directly from practice. The interpretation and analysis of the data is a form of narrative research, in which episodes from the videotapes were described qualitatively.

The Dialectic Relationship of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge
At the outset of the study, my understanding of text related mainly to surface structure and deep structure (Smith 1973), or to literal and implicit meanings. I recognized that the personal, social, and cultural experiences that each person brings to the text influences the meaning of the text. That is, meaning does not reside in the text itself but in a transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt 1978; Harste, Woodward, and Burke 1984). Although I had only a tacit knowledge of text as object, event, and potential, it was an emphasis on text as event which led me to question how I could more fully develop situations in which students could relate their own understandings of text to the understandings constructed by others. I had believed that, intentionally or unintentionally, teachers tend to stress their own single understanding of text which they in turn hope that students will “catch”. Instead, I wanted to consider a variety of ways in which students can construct meaning collaboratively.

Modes of Response
Responses to literature varied greatly throughout the study. At times, awareness of an author or illustrator would be the impetus for a mode of response. In other instances, the genre of a piece dictated the focus for response. Some responses were personal,
such as responding to literature through writing a poem; some occurred with others in a small group, as in preparing a puppet play; and other occasions related to whole class participation, such as in a class drama.

The classroom teacher was often actively involved in creating an environment for risk-taking, creativity, and support. Through her encouragement, one group experimented with making pictures using plasticine in the style of Barbara Reid (Oppenheim 1986); another group created “postcards” after talking about Postcards from the Planets (Drew 1988). Some children worked together to develop a chant with a poem about dragons. While these forms of response included an element of presentation for others, they evolved immediately from literature circles.

Most of the time, responses to literature occurred informally and naturally, without an audience in mind. During their reading, children sometimes wrote questions or notes using post-it notes. As they prepared for literature circles, some children made lists of words, some wrote several questions, some prepared to read an excerpt for the group, and some made notes about connections that they wanted to make with the others. Literature circles, as a forum for talk about stories, were planned responses to reading.

The themes for classroom drama were often based on literature in the class at that time. While drama was often a response to literature, it also stimulated further reading, re-reading, writing, and informal talking about the story. Often other stories by the same author were highlighted as a result of the drama experienced. Occasionally, drama became the focus for introducing literature -- in which case literature became a response for drama. Drama also encompassed music and storytelling as forms of response to literature.
Responses to literature occurred personally, in a small group, and with the whole class. The concept of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) relates to the range of modes of responses to literature, including music, drama, visual arts, and language. Informally, the purpose of a response could be that of questioning the text, relating the text to prior knowledge and experience with literature, exploring the themes of the text, and developing understandings. More formal responses, intended for a wider audience, focused on a specific area of learning to be shared with others.

**Example of a Classroom Drama Session**

Following is a description of a classroom drama session as it occurred with the Grade 4 class. The overall drama structure is a variation of the convention "A Day in the Life" described by Jonothan Neelands (1990). Through engagement in a meaningful drama experience, learning opportunities were available to deepen the students' understanding of the tensions and conflict that had developed over a social and economic issue. The source from which the drama developed was a front page article that had recently appeared in a major newspaper.

Students were provided with role descriptions of various Canadians whose lives were influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the railway strike that was currently taking place. Some students held roles of great authority, such as the Labour Minister:

*Labour Minister, Liberal Party -- Ottawa, Ontario*

You are trying to get legislation passed in the House of Commons, which then has to be passed in the Senate, in order to put an end to the railway strike.

Unfortunately, the Members of Parliament from the Bloc Québécois are trying to stall (slow down) this process. First of all, they did not want the introduction of this legislation until they had plenty of time to read and digest what it meant. Secondly, they believe in the right to strike, which they say should be respected. Thirdly, they insist that the government will provide for a mediator to settle the dispute, rather than sending the employees back to work without mediation.
Others represented everyday Canadians in various parts of the country, such as an employee at Loblaws in Prince Edward Island. (See Appendix D for a description of each role in the drama.)

**Loblaws Employee -- Prince Edward Island**

So the railway strike has come to this, has it? Now there's a shortage of toothpaste and Kleenex in your Loblaws store. What will be affected next? Is the store going to raise the cost of toothpaste and kleenex? If you don't have toothpaste, what can you use instead? What about a sale on apples? Has your store manager thought of suggesting apples for people to clean their teeth? Maybe you could win a prize for making such a good suggestion!

What do you think about the railway strike? Should the railway employees be legislated back to work?

The introduction of the drama was a storytelling episode in which I provided an historical context for the unfolding of a "slice of life" depicted in one day. The class sat in a large circle around a parachute, which I had borrowed from the physical education teacher. Through storytelling, I acknowledged the contributions of many Canadian immigrants, including Chinese Canadians who helped to build the railway and West Indian Canadians who helped to operate the system. Gradually, a refrain evolved during the story: "You could feel the rhythm of the train, and the people worked together." The students responded nonverbally through the rhythmical movement of the parachute which paralleled the rhythm of the train. As the story was told, the class began to develop their own connections to the story, and a commitment to the anticipated drama was already emerging.

For the drama, the day began at 6:45 a.m. with a parent attempting to persuade a daycare worker to open the daycare centre early that day, in order for the parents to get an early start to work. Since the Go-train was not running, it was imperative for many employees to try to make alternative travel arrangements. One of the students was in role as the daycare worker, and I was the parent trying to negotiate an early
opening for the daycare centre that day.

An hour later a carpool driver and a parking lot attendant were arguing about whether there was one more space available in the parking lot. The driver was visibly frustrated by the inconveniences of the train strike and stated her opinion that the workers should be sent back to work.

I provided a unifying narration as each chronological event followed another. The next event took place in a coffee shop, where people had gathered from several contrasting work experiences. One of the students suggested that we have more people in the scene, and several students volunteered. The issue of the railway strike evolved throughout the conversations, and individuals, including a police officer, a bus driver, and a railway worker expressed their views and how they were personally affected as a result of the strike.

Perhaps more challenging than some of the other episodes of the drama was the radio program. The attempt in this drama strategy was to bring together people from various parts of the country who could talk “on the radio” about how the railway strike was affecting their lives. Instead of face to face interaction, participants sat in a semicircle facing away from each other. Not only was each child in role, but he or she was also representing a geographical region of the country. The guests on the talk show included a Loblaws employee from Prince Edward Island, an exporter from British Columbia, railway employees from Saskatchewan and Ontario, and a farmer from Manitoba. While some of the children in this class had been born in Canada, others were immigrants to the country. The children’s own cultural and social experiences were brought to the fictional situation of the drama, which added to the complexity of the experience. Learning opportunities included an increased awareness of
Canada's geographical regions, a recognition of similarities and differences in the ways people across the country were affected by the strike, and an understanding of the cumulative impact that the strike was having across Canada. At one point, when we had moved from role-playing to talking about the experience, I tried to generate more participation, stressing the importance of expressing personal viewpoints and keeping the conversation going "on the air". As the moderator of the talk show, I certainly did not want to have any gaps of silence on the program.

Later in the drama there was a telephone interview with a travel agent from Nova Scotia. Although business was at a standstill with the trains, business was booming for the airlines and the trucking industry. The travel agent was able to talk about some of the modifications that had been made to travel across Canada.

Working inside the drama, I was able to appreciate the event in which a news reporter spoke with the Labour Minister, a Liberal MP, and a Bloc Québécois MP. To prepare for this part of the drama, the students had read newspaper articles and talked with others about the roles that they were preparing. They needed to become familiar with the perspectives which they would be expected to describe. The reporter had prepared a list of questions which then set the tone and provided a focus for the discussion. At this point in the drama, the participants sat leaning forward, listening intently to each other, and speaking with the authority of their roles. All of this occurred as I observed from the sideline.

The whole class participated in the scene for the five o'clock rush hour at a subway. About half a dozen chairs were arranged for passengers, and one for the driver. Passengers gathered in front of the areas for the doors to the subway. The students were full of excitement and anticipation as they waited for the train to arrive. On a
given signal, everyone crowded into the subway train, scrambling for seats, or trying to stand without being squashed. On another signal, everyone became "frozen" for a few seconds; that is, people stopped talking, and movement stopped.

While most of the other events through the day had involved a few students at a time, the whole class was involved with the subway. Many of the students had ridden on a subway before and could therefore imagine the scene without difficulty. Their own prior personal experiences with public transportation added meaning to the fictional situation with the whole class working together in role. There was a sense of group cohesiveness and heightened awareness within the drama. "A Day in the Lives of Canadians During a Railway Strike" closed with a conversation with a parent who was late getting home from work.

From an outsider's perspective, the drama might have lacked the polish of a final product, and some students seemed to struggle with understanding some of the concepts inherent in the story. From an insider's perspective, on the other hand, I observed children struggling to understand the complexity of issues which were intertwined in a problem facing the whole country. Through drama as a learning medium, students experienced "first-hand" some of the difficulties, uncertainties, and frustrations in an unresolved issue for Canadians across the nation. With newspaper articles as the source for the drama, students developed their own understandings of text within the social context of the drama.
Example of a Literature Circle: A Journal Entry

April 12, 1995

The structure of setting roles for the participants as described in Harvey Daniels’ book Literature Circles influenced the preparation as well as the interaction of the students in the groups today. Veronica set the stage by identifying herself as Discussion Director and stating that the topic for the group was “Talking with Artists”.

The text set was based on the book Talking with Artists compiled by Amy Schwartz. As it happened, I had had a couple of reasons to visit The Children’s Bookstore during March Break -- I had recently received a coupon for a free book by a Canadian author, and I needed to purchase a baby gift. I selected Freedom Child of the Sea by Ricardo Keens-Douglas as the free book, found a copy of Lee’s Alligator Pie, and discovered a tape of dreams, lullabies, and poetry from the same series as Beethoven Lives Upstairs. While I was at the bookstore I decided to use the gift certificate that I’d been saving which my daughter Ingrid had given me for my birthday -- valued at $25.00 from The Children’s Bookstore! As I browsed, I came across a book by Michael Rosen about comments from illustrators about their dogs, and how these dogs appear in their illustrations. Then I found the book Talking with Artists. I couldn’t believe my luck. The format of the book was a short description or story by the artist, followed by questions similar to ones that kids would ask, such as: Where do you get your ideas? What do you do all day? There was also a sample of each artist’s work as a child as well as one that had been published in children’s literature. At the back of the book there was a list of several books which each artist had illustrated. I was hooked immediately. Next time I visit The Children’s Bookstore I’ll receive a free book from the Teachers’ Book Club!

The text set for this literature circle included as many books by the illustrators in Talking with Artists as we could locate from our classroom library and my personal library. Unfortunately, not a single Canadian illustrator was included in the book, so we made up another text set just about Canadian artists.

As the literature circle sat around the table, the “Memoirs” group was reading on the rug. The other groups of children, working with Judy on this day, were considering “Dragons” and “Canadian Artists”.

Veronica invited the others in the group to state what their roles were: Martin/Literary Luminary; Jane/Summarizer; Lee/Vocabulary Enricher; Robert/Connector; Sherlock/Investigator. As Director, Veronica said that she has prepared questions for the books. It seemed that she was going to ask a question of an individual, so I jumped in and said to ask the question and everybody can discuss it.
“When you first saw the book, even before you read it, what kind of a book did you think it would be?” asked Veronica.

There was a long pause. In a very small voice, Martin replied, “Magical.” I asked what he meant by that. Would all of these books have to do with magic? What did the others want to ask Martin about what he meant?

One student asked, “How does it look like?”.

Another wanted to know, “What does it do?”.

I asked, “How did you know that it had to do with magic?”.

Martin, an ESL student, used very few words to explain his opinion. He explained very briefly that the knights in the book are not from our time now. He was not able to express his previous understandings that linked with the concept of magic. I also wasn’t sure whether or not this was the first book that Martin had read in the Jon Scieszka/Lane Smith The Time Warp series. Perhaps he could have linked it with what he had read from another book in the series.

Sherlock mentioned that there were the same kids in every book of the series.

“Do you think Lane Smith, the illustrator, would have to know the story before he did the art work for it?” I asked. The group agreed that he would.

“First you do the story, then you do the pictures,” said Lee.

“So you’d have to make a comparison between the story and the pictures. Do you think that when he did the illustrations he sometimes had to go back and read the story again?” I asked. The group agreed that this would occur.

Veronica picks up the role as director and says, “Tell me anything that caught your attention in the story.”

Robert picked up the book Talking with Artists. He turns to the section about Lane Smith. He compares the photos of Smith as a boy and as a man.

“He’s a boy or a girl?” asks Martin. Sherlock says that he’s a boy.

I underscore the point that Robert has made: “We often have kids who dress up like grownups, don’t we? Do you know of kids who like to wear
high heels? What do you think he’s done here? He dressed up like a kid! Didn’t he? Not only that, he dressed up like himself when he was a kid!” I was quite impressed with this discovery that Robert had pointed out for the group.

Someone else added, “He looked at his small picture and then...."

Did you find anything else in the Lane Smith description [from Talking with Artists] about how he did his pictures? The students noted that the illustrations from The Time Warp were in black and white, and they talked about how circular in shape the faces were.

Lee, an ESL student, mentioned, “He drewed...."

I tried to correct her incidentally, “Yes, he drew...."

Someone handed the book to Martin, who was locating a part in the text about how Lane Smith went about publishing his first book and about whether he drew the pictures first or read the story first. He found the part in the text to confirm his statement, “He drew the pictures first.” Several kids were huddled around the book.

Sherlock began reading aloud and the others chime in, “I did it in a backward kind of way...."

I add that Lane Smith was very fortunate because the first illustrations for his first book were then set to words by the poet Eve Merriam. I said that even though there is nothing about her in this book, we could surely find some information about her.

Martin points out from the covers of the books that both Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith were author/illustrator of The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs and The Time Warp series.

Veronica notes the sharp noses of Lane Smith’s characters. I ask what Lane Smith likes drawing best. “Faces,” says Martin. “And circles,” adds Robert, referring to his art as a child.

“I’m going to be quiet now,” I say. (Slim chance.)

Veronica picks up the cue, “Okay, is everybody done? Do you have anything?”. Veronica addresses Jane. Robert, Lee, Sherlock, and Martin are all standing up.

Someone throws in, “He not only uses paint, but he also uses other materials.”
Another student responds, "Yeah! Newspaper!"

Sherlock adds, "I notice that he uses dark colours."

Veronica says, "Oh, look it! He made the ‘F’ out of things to make the houses! [straw, sticks, bricks]."

When I point to a picture of the sandwich, the group lets out a combined, "Ooooooo!"

"Do you think he wants the readers to go ‘Ooooo!’?” I ask. The group agrees that he does. Jane gets up slightly to look more closely at the picture.

"I think he uses oil...pastels,” said Sherlock.

"Or even oil paint,” I add.

Finally, Veronica can ask her next question! "Tell me the parts you didn’t like,” she says. This prepared question comes from some notes that I dug up from Aidan Chambers’ book, Booktalk. In a sense, the question doesn’t really fit the context of our discussion, but that’s what happens with prepared questions. I sense there are “pro’s and con’s” for this practice. The group doesn’t respond.

Veronica goes on, "Tell me the parts you liked and why.” I mention that this could have to do with the illustrations as well as with the story. Someone pointed out the pigtails with bow ties on the pirate’s beard in The Time Warp Trio.

I ask how many have read parts of Talking with Artists. There were four who raised their hands. I think it was Robert who next brought up something he had noted from Amy Schwartz.

Lee said, “And they dráwed....”

This time I elicit a response from the group, “You just said, ‘And they dráwed....’ Does that make sense to you guys?”

Others call out, “Drew!”

It may have been Robert who noted that for every artist [in Talking with Artists] there is a sample of art when they were "small and big”. I ask, "Do you like looking at the similarities and differences?” They responded that they do.

Sherlock comments, "Christ Van Allsburg didn’t go to art school.”
"You mean when he was growing up?", I ask, since I was fairly certain I had read that he had gone to art school. He expected it to be a lot different from what it was.

"Yeah. His friend had a dog, and he sometimes puts the dog in his pictures," added Sherlock.

Robert wants to make a point. Searching through the books for an example that he wants to show us, he says, "Lane Smith and Amy Schwartz both us...."

Trying to help out, I say, "Paint? Very colourful...? Oil?" He locates two examples of lettering in which the first letter on the page is written as a piece of art work.

Everybody is engrossed in looking at the illustrations. I draw their attention to an illustration that's caught my eye. Looking at the picture of the Grandma Wolf on the wall in The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs, I ask the group where else they remember this sort of thing? Sherlock said, "In Piggybook?"

I ask who wrote Piggybook, and to my complete delight, Robert, after a pause, called out, "Anthony Browne!"

This reminds me of an article I read yesterday about the Vygotskian classroom based on the notion that learning precedes development. Last January when I read Piggybook to the group and called attention to the detailed illustrations throughout the reading, I was rather disheartened that no one realized that Anthony Browne was the author and illustrator of the book. Now, months later, Robert has remembered our discussion about Anthony Browne! According to Vygotsky, we may not be able to see the fruitions of the student's learning as the learning is taking place but only later is it evident. At the beginning of our group, Robert had called himself the "Connector", and here he demonstrates that he can certainly make connections!

Lee mentions that Chris Van Allsburg uses a lot of animals. However, I point out that she's not looking at a Chris Van Allsburg book and ask who it's by. Someone calls out, "Steven Kellogg!" We agreed that Steven Kellogg uses a lot of animals in his illustrations.

I must have indicated that it was about time to wind up. Veronica says, "I have one more question! It's a simple one!"

There was a very brief discussion about Lois Ehlert's art work.
One person noted that some artists put in people who change into animals. I said that we can call that "transformation" and asked who the vocabulary enricher was. Robert found a Chris Van Allsburg story in which the sailors change into monkeys.

At last, Veronica asked, "What were the parts that boreded [sic] you?"

I elaborated, "What parts bored you? What's the most boring part here?"

Martin said, "All about the uncle" [in The Time Warp series].

As the students gather up the books, I ask, "Do you know what you're reading next?". Some of the students call out their choices.
Chapter 4
Presentation of Data

Potent Questions

As we experienced literature circles initially, the activity looked very much like a traditional teacher-led discussion, with the teacher asking most of the questions. It took a while for the students to feel comfortable in speaking directly to each other, without raising their hands for permission. There was also a transition period in which I as a teacher needed time to change from assuming the central role of asking the questions to sharing this responsibility and engaging the students in asking their own questions. For example, in the group that discussed *Princesses Don't Wear Jeans* (Bellingham 1991), I tended to ask the questions and the students provided possible answers to the questions.

E. B. What does she mean by a princess?

...She's treated royally. What does that mean?

...When she grows up, is she going to be a princess?

Some questions elicited more interactive talk than other questions. This was clearly evident in the group that considered stories about relationships. For example, when I asked “Do you know what we call brothers and sisters?”, responses included “family” and “relatives”. I provided the word *siblings*. Later, when we talked about one of the issues in *Little Nino's Pizzeria* (Barbour 1987), I asked, “Do we want to have the fancy
shop with the bigger business or do we want the smaller shop?". This elicited a flurry of interaction, including instances when one child added meaning to what another child had expressed. Eventually, members of the group wanted information from the others.

Alexander: I don't remember it saying "Little Tony's Pizzeria". Can you show me, please?

Referring to the story Left & Right (Oppenheim 1989), Phoebe asked, "Is that their names or is that what they want to work on?"

At the beginning of the discussion, I had asked the question, "In every book that you had, was there a problem?". By the end of our time that we had together, Alexander had made this question his own. I challenged him to consider this as he continued reading.

Alexander: In every book is there a problem?

E.B. That's what you need to be looking for.

Sometimes I recorded on chart paper questions that the group wanted to know as they continued their reading of the novel. We revisited these questions during the next time that the group met. Once the students were given roles for literature circles, the discussion director prepared questions ahead of time. In one situation, the group was considering the work of the illustrators of children's books, but the questions could have been used for a variety of topics.

Veronica: When you first saw the book, even before you read it, what kind of book did you think it would be?

Tell me the part you didn’t like.

What are the parts that bored you?
In contrast, a discussion director from one of the other groups, who tended to be quite shy during our times together, had prepared an opening question which generated a great deal of imaginative and collaborative thinking, and challenged the participants to become immediately involved in the topic of the literature circle.

Robert: If you met a dragon, what would you do?

Similarly, Henry had participated mainly as a listener during the first literature circle, but as discussion director he initiated talking about stories with this question:

Henry: When you read your story, did a picture come in your mind?

For me, as well as for the students, some of the questions that I asked were more probing or thought-provoking than others. I asked questions to help students explain and clarify their understandings from the stories; knowledge which had been tacitly held was made explicit for the group. Hence, in the group whose topic was “memoirs”, I asked, “What is a memoir?” In other instances, questions were intended to draw attention to detail. For example, with a child who had expressed her ideas easily and confidently, I challenged her to look more closely at the text.

E.B. Sometimes -- When you have a style of writing like you have here -- this is called expository text because it’s about real things -- okay. See what they have. This is all on this kind of paper -- white paper, black print. And then they have a continuation here. Same way, right? This is similar. But, look, what’s in between? They have this. And this little insert in between the two pages is just about that [photo of the dinosaurs]. It’s like a little story inside a bigger story.

Phoebe: Yeah.

E.B. And they do that with expository text a whole lot.

Phoebe: And most of the time they draw little pictures, like a map or something. It shows what the people do and how they live and the animals.
E.B.: So would you say that in a book like this which has very factual information, would you say that it helps to have those pictures and maps and photographs?

Phoebe: Yes, it helps to... it does help.

E.B.: Alright, why do you think it helps?

Phoebe: If there were absolutely no pictures in this book, you couldn’t tell what was going on, and if it doesn’t make sense. In a book with pictures, if it doesn’t make any sense at all, you could look at the picture and you might understand what they mean. But if there aren’t any pictures and there’s something that you don’t understand -- like you can’t picture it in your mind -- then, um....

E.B.: You’re stuck. So the pictures and maps can help a lot.

Through questioning, I also drew attention to words, idioms, metaphor, and familiar sayings.

- She’s treated _royally_. What does that mean?
- What does it mean, “pick up roots”?
- How does the saying “Never cry wolf” apply to this story?
- He draws pictures in people’s minds. How does he do that?  
  [Discussion about Dennis Lee]

- That’s a pretty common thing for parents to say... or grandparents.... What are they doing when they are thinking about, “When I was your age...”?  

Sometimes students asked functional questions that helped them to continue with the flow of expressing their understandings collaboratively.

Elizabeth: And Phoebe Gilman? She has her husband’s name in this book as the grandpa [holding up The Balloon Tree].

Scotson: As the king!

Elizabeth: Yeah, the king.
E.B. Where did you find that out?

Elizabeth: In this book (Greenwood 1991)!

Phoebe: In this book.

E.B. Elizabeth, I'm impressed!

Scotson: (Reaching across the table) Show the king in the story.

Phoebe: It says, "Her husband Bryan, the king in The Balloon Tree..." (reading from the CANSAP book). Where does it say....? (Searching for confirmation of this in The Balloon Tree.)

Elizabeth: It's right here. (All of the students in the group are involved in looking at the book; three of them are standing up.)

At the end of a literature circle, I often asked a question intended to help students focus as they continued reading.

- Can you have an ending that feels good, but it's not really happy?

- Do you know what you're going to read next? Are you going to continue reading "Dear Mr. Henshaw" in Thread the Needle (Booth, et al. 1987). Make sure you record it on the list.

- Do you know what you're reading next?

- You are going to love reading about lan Wallace. He's an amazing person. I've heard him speak, and he brought along some of his paintings. Dig into that book! You can take it home. Who is the recorder?

- Why don't you two read Journey (MacLachlan 1991) together?

Personal Identification

Students brought with them their own life experiences as they read, talked about their reading, and made discoveries about the life experiences of authors and illustrators. Several categories emerged from conversations with the students and classroom teacher in literature circles, from their work during drama, and from the personal
interviews about their learning.

- Personal identification with a character or experience
- Family stories, in which parents and grandparents describe personal experiences; books related to such retelling of family stories
- Influence of life experience as expressed by authors and illustrators
- Life experience and drama
- Immediate teaching interests and the relevance of professional reading

**Personal Identification with a Character or Experience from the Study**

During a literature circle, Henry related his own experiences to two of the books in the text set. He said that every time he reads *Paul Hunt's Night Diary* (Hunt 1992) it reminds him of the time when he used to live in a house and he could hear the sounds of animals and sounds from lightning at night. *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea* (Williams and Williams 1988), in which there are samples of writing on postcards, reminds him of the time he went camping and wrote notes home to his mom. Other students related their personal experiences and reading during the time for the interviews. Both Veronica and Rose could identify with the younger brother in *I'll Fix Anthony* (Viorst 1969).

Rose: It was like *I'll Fix Anthony*. I'll fix my sister, too. [Laughter.] She always thinks she's the boss, so I'll fix [name of sister].

Knowing how it once felt when his own friends had a club and at first wouldn't let him join, Sherlock talked about Encyclopedia Brown's experience with a neighbourhood clubhouse. Calling it "my story", Alexander described his own experience that was similar to *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* (Viorst 1972).

Alexander: 'Cause once I was at the mall. Like when I came to the mall, I splashed and my leg pants were dirty, and then when I went in the mall I pushed something down like a cardboard thing? ...And then I was really embarrassed.

E.B. Yes. Alright. You think that's the same thing that happened to
Alexander and his horrible day.

Lois described her experience of taking out a book from the library with instructions for riding a bike and then painfully learning to ride the bike herself. Phoebe had recently read a book in which the students had learned to get along with their teacher, and she related this to another time and another school in which she had known a principal who had not been very friendly to young children. In contrast to some of the less pleasant personal experiences, David could identify with the main character in *The Magic Hockey Skates* (Morgan 1991). A proficient hockey player himself, David could envision playing a game in which his skates were empowered with a special magical of their own.

*Family Stories, In Which Parents and Grandparents Describe Personal Experiences; Books Related to Such Retelling of Family Stories*

During our discussions related to memoirs, I asked the students whether their parents or grandparents had ever told them stories about times when they were younger. Several students indicated that they had definitely heard stories which began, “When I was your age....” Henry added that they were “remembering when they were just like us.” We talked about some of the books in our text set, such as the stories by Stéphane Poulin (1990, 1991), in which there were retellings of family stories. The students easily recalled their own instances of family stories.

*Influence of Life Experience as Expressed by Authors and Illustrators*

During the study, the students developed interest in learning more about the authors and illustrators of the stories that they read. They found out that Chris Van Allsburg used to have a dog, who often appeared in his illustrations. The story of *The Balloon Tree* (Gilman 1984) was associated with the time that Phoebe Gilman’s daughter had had a balloon caught in a tree. In the same story, Gilman named the king after her
husband, Bryan. In the book Talking with Artists (Cummings 1992), some of the
students noted that Lane Smith wore “the same shirt” for his photographs as a child
and as an adult. It was discovered that Dennis Lee had been riding his bicycle, feeling
the rhythm from pushing the pedals, when he composed the first rhythmical lines of

Personal Experience and Drama
A reciprocal relationship exists between personal experience and drama: each
participant brings his or her own personal, social, and cultural experiences to the
drama; the drama that is developed in a community of learners in turn becomes a
significant area of learning and shared experience for the participants. While much of
the knowledge developed through drama is tacit rather than explicit, it is reflected in
the comments by the students as they recalled their experiences in drama from several
months earlier. The classroom teacher highlighted this as a significant area of learning
for the children.

E.B. Have you noticed ways in which the students relate drama to
other modes of learning, such as reading and writing?

J.B. Okay, they were writing in role after the drama, and I think it had a lot --
they were able to think about themselves in role and actually be part of
the story. I think that’s the way in which they related drama. They also in
their choice of books, sometimes, if we had done a drama, they might
have chosen books that would be sort of connected to the topic as well.
Some of them did say, “Well, I liked doing that. Is there anything I could
read about that topic?”

E.B. Okay.

J.B. Especially the dragons! They liked that! The dramas that we did -- a lot
of them were literature-based, and because of that the children
remembered the stories. They remembered the books and the
situations...ones that we had done in October. And I think that’s pretty
significant.
Immediate Teaching Interests and the Relevance of Professional Reading

Professional literature, the classroom teacher and I recognized, becomes a powerful tool for learning within the context of classroom experience. Had we ourselves not been involved in using drama and literature circles in the classroom, the books and articles that we considered would not have been such a high priority for us. Classroom experience, reading, and talking together were all important elements in our learning. Judy noted the significance of professional reading related to experiential learning.

E.B. What suggestions do you have for teachers who are interested in trying to implement literature circles in the classroom?

J.B. I myself hope to try to implement them next year in the classroom, so that all this work is not for naught. And the big thing is, I would find, that talking and working with someone. I find it really hard to try to implement new things by myself. I was doing portfolios by myself this year and found it very difficult to work by myself, so literature circles I find the same thing. Especially if you talk with someone who is more experienced. I’m hoping to keep in contact so that you will help me through it, because I really do feel I still need that expertise. Professional literature is a help, but myself, I don’t find it good enough to just read it and try it. I can learn by doing better. I think if you share an interest with someone about learning about something that it’s a lot easier.

Intertextuality

As the children talked in literature circles about the stories they had read, they often made connections related to books by the same author, stories that they had known previously which connected in some way to the present text, or new discoveries related to stories and/or illustrations which gradually emerged as we talked together. During a whole class discussion we looked at Changes (1990) by Anthony Browne, and after a lengthy discussion, the class recognized that Browne is both the author and the illustrator.

In literature circles, the groups looked at the work of others who are both author and
illustrator: Phoebe Gilman, Steven Kellogg, Chris Van Allsburg, and Lois Ehlert. One child noted the predominence of animals in stories by Steven Kellogg, while another pointed out that stories and illustrations by Lois Ehlert relate to nature. In one group we looked at an illustration by Lane Smith from The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs (Scieszka 1989). On the wall was a picture of the wolf's grandmother. When I asked what other illustrator this reminded them of, Robert recalled Anthony Browne; in Piggybook (1986) Browne, in a similar fashion, has pictures of pigs on the wall.

In the first session in which a group met who were reading the novel Princesses Don't Wear Jeans (Bellingham 1991), I recorded on chart paper questions which emerged from the discussion. As the children continued their reading independently, they could consider these questions which we then revisited during the next session in which the group met. The following dialogue from the second session relates to the question that one of the children had read aloud, “How does the saying ‘Never cry wolf!’ apply to this story?”

Veronica: Yeah, it does.
E.B. How do you know?
Veronica: Because “Never cry wolf” means, “Don’t say things that aren’t true, because when you do say things that are true, no one will believe you.
E.B. (To others in the group) What did she mean? Well, do you understand what she said there?
Henry: Umhmm.
E.B. Can you give me an example?
Henry: Like....
David: If you say something and then you say, “No, I was just joking, and no one believed you before....”
Rose: (Bringing our attention back to the novel) Yeah, because they believed her after she brought wild bears, and when they didn’t believe her she should have said, “I was just joking,” but she never.
Veronica: And it’s from a story. It’s a story called “Never Cry Wolf.”
David: Yeah.
Veronica: It’s when this little boy had a bunch of sheep, and he kept on crying, “Wolf, Wolf!”
E.B. (To others in the group) Do you know that? Do you know the story that she’s talking about?
Veronica: And everybody came from the town to see what was wrong, and then he said, "It was just a joke. Ha, ha, ha!" -- and all this stuff. Right? And then they went back to town and he said it again, and they said it was just a joke. And one time a wolf really did come. And he cried, "Wolf!", but nobody came because they thought he was lying again.

One of the literature circles centred around a study of the stories by author/illustrator Chris Van Allsburg. As often happened, the comment that one child made led to further observations by the whole group, and I recorded these points on chart paper for future reference. For example, the illustration on the cover of the book Just a Dream (Van Allsburg 1990) created interest and speculation in other unusual phenomena depicted in Van Allsburg’s books. Giant-sized ants were talking in Two Bad Ants (1988) and a house was flying in Mysteries of Harris Burdick (1984). The group then considered other objects that were up in the air or flying in Van Allsburg stories: the bed in Just a Dream (1990), the broom in The Widow’s Broom (1992), and the boat in The Wreck of the Zephyr (1983). This led to a further observation that Van Allsburg does not deal with ordinary objects or people in ordinary ways but rather gives them special powers; the children found evidence of this in The Widow’s Broom, The Stranger (1986), Mysteries of Harris Burdick, and The Wreck of the Zephyr.

During the literature group in which the students had read a number of stories about dragons, one student noted a story in which the dragon was not afraid and others were not afraid of the dragon. This became the impetus for talking about other stories in which the dragon was friendly: There’s a Dragon in My Closet (Green in Dragon Tales 1992), Min-Yo and the Moon Dragon (Hillman 1992), and Philippa and the Dragon (King 1995).

When one student mentioned that several of the stories about dragons were from China, we tried to list all of the stories in our text set which were from China: Eyes of
the Dragon (Leaf 1987), Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like (Williams in Dragon Tales 1992), Min-Yo and the Moon Dragon (Hillman 1992), Lucy Meets a Dragon (Reid 1990), and later we added The Dragon’s Pearl (Lawson 1992). Making a visible list for the whole group helped us to link the stories together, to look at the illustrations as well as the text in order to make our decisions, and to summarize our conclusions. Furthermore, it was not a finalized list, and we could make additions when necessary. During the interview in June, the classroom teacher noted that drama became a vehicle for students to make connections between a whole class activity and the stories in the classroom.

**Awareness of Author and Illustrator**

During the interviews in January, only one student spoke convincingly of a favourite author. Lois said that James Howe is her favourite author, and she named three books written by Howe. Several students mentioned Jon Scieszka and Robert Munsch. One said that her favourite author wrote the Babysitters Club series, and another said that his favourite author wrote the Nate the Great series. Several students said that they could not remember or that they did not have a favourite author. When asked in January about a favourite illustrator, few students provided a name. David said that Lane Smith is his favourite illustrator. Two students mentioned Jane Yolen, and one named Dennis Lee, both of whom are writers rather than illustrators.

During the following several months, the students became increasingly aware of both authors and illustrators and by the time of the interviews in June, several of the students were descriptive about their selection of a favourite author or illustrator.

Sherlock: Chris Van Allsburg [favourite illustrator].
E. B.: Tell me about that.
Sherlock: He, when he was small, he used different things...He used to use pencil crayons and other things. And now he uses water colour, Chinese painting, and he uses regular paint.
David also seemed to have Chris Van Allsburg in mind as he described some of the illustrators whom he had learned about.

David: Like authors had the same thing. Like some of the authors used pointilism.
E.B.: Illustrators.
David: Illustrators used...like shaded it....
E.B.: Umhmm.
David: or dark...used dark colours.
E.B.: So we looked at that, didn’t we?
David: Yeah.

By June, David was slightly reluctant to name a favourite author. When asked, he paused for a while first and then said, “There’s a lot of good authors...Jon Scieszka, David Booth, I forget their names.” He went on to mention that he liked the author of the Sherlock Bones series, the author of the Jillian Jiggs books, and the authors of “those big books over there”, pointing to several sets from the Impressions series. He said that his favourite illustrators were Lane Smith, whom he associated with The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs (1989) and The Time Warp Trio series, and Steven Kellogg, whose books included Mike Fink (1992) and Jack and the Beanstalk (1991).

Several of the students during the literature circle sessions noted the work of Phoebe Gilman; in some instances they referred to her stories, while in others they considered her illustrations.

E.B. Well, tell us about the Jillian Jiggs books.
Joy: At the start, she always messes up her room and then her mother comes in and says the same thing that she says in the other one.
Elizabeth: Yeah, “This room looks like it’s been lived in by pigs!”.

In describing Gilman as an illustrator, Jillan noted, “colours that are bright, a lot of detail. Her first book was The Balloon Tree, and it was published in 1984.” Steven quickly located an illustration from The Balloon Tree which demonstrated the detail in
Gilman's work. In another literature circle, we began to look at the simplicity of the illustrations drawn by Tibo, in contrast to the detail of Gilman's work. Steven noted, "Phoebe Gilman got the idea of the balloon tree from a time when her daughter got a balloon caught in a tree." Elizabeth and Phoebe were keenly interested in the possibility that Phoebe Gilman and Barbara Reid may have shared some ideas while they were both at The Ontario College of Art. They had read about these illustrators from a resource from CANSCAIP (Greenwood 1991).

E.B.: ...What do you notice about Barbara Reid? Nobody has said anything about her.
Elizabeth: Plastercine [sic]! She makes pictures out of plastercine!
Phoebe: And at the back -- No, where's that other book? [Elizabeth and Phoebe find the book about Canadian authors and illustrators from CANSCAIP]. It said she graduated from the Ontario College of Art. And in this blue book....
Scotson: Red book!
Phoebe: Red book...
Elizabeth: You know Phoebe Gilman? They went to the same place at the same time.
Phoebe: They went to the Toronto -- Ontario College of Art. And in this blue book about Phoebe Gilman...She [Barbara Reid] graduated in 1980, and Phoebe Gilman was teaching.
Phoebe: Actually, it doesn't really say what time. It says she came to Toronto in 1972. "...for fifteen years before retiring in 1990 to devote her full energies to writing and illustrating children's books." So they might have known each other and got different ideas from each other.

During another literature circle, students indirectly expressed their awareness of the author. When a student as discussion director inquired what they would do if they met a dragon, one child said that she had read a book recommending that "you have to tickle him". Another child responded that, if it were a moon dragon, she would feed him vegetables. This suggestion was derived from the book Min-Yo and the Moon Dragon (1992).
During the interview in June, the classroom teacher noted the development of student awareness related to authors and illustrators.

J.B. They also realize that authors really wrote these stories, so they’ve got the connection between reading them and actually somebody else having written the stories. I think they’ve thought a lot about that. So I think literature circles have influenced them in a major way. And also the awareness of literature. It really excited me to see how aware they became of children’s authors, how aware they became that people do this for a living, that people illustrate books for a living. Whereas, before I think books were just something that they always had.

Another thing that was unexpected was that the children really developed favourite authors and illustrators. And I think they chose -- they began to choose books by author or illustrator, because, “Oh, I read that book. I’d like to read another book by that author.” Whereas, before, I think quite often they wouldn’t really know their preferences for reading.

Collaborative Thinking: Prism or Puzzle Piece?

Interwoven throughout the data of the study is the issue of collaborative thinking -- what it means, how it is expressed, and its value in the classroom. One perspective is that collaborative thinking is like a varied assortment of puzzle pieces which, when arranged according to a pre-planned design, fit together to form a whole picture. According to this view, each participant has an essential, if minor, part to play in creating the whole. Embedded in this view is the assumption that the teacher already knows what the end product will look like and he or she encourages the individuals to find the “proper order” for fitting together the pieces for the picture that the teacher has in mind. During an interview in June, one of the children suggested that participation in literature circles enabled an individual to put the pieces together for writing. Jillian commented, “It gives you certain ideas from other people, and then you add some of your own ideas, and then you connect them all, and see what you can write with them.”
While Jillian expressed her opinion of a separateness in the ideas of others and one's own ideas, she also indicated that there is a sense of discovery through writing, that the end product is not predetermined.

In contrast to a static view of knowledge, collaborative thinking, which takes place between individuals, is fluid, and ever-developing. Participants experience reciprocity as they contribute collaboratively to the development of knowledge and are simultaneously affected by that knowledge. The image of the prism is appropriate for honouring the range of perspectives represented in collaboratively constructed knowledge. As suggested by the prism, a dynamic mutuality exists between holistic learning and the diversity of perspectives by the participants. According to this theoretical framework, individuals develop knowledge primarily through their interaction with others, in contrast to adding together individual pieces of knowledge. For this reason, the videotapes of students' experiences in the classroom are especially significant in examining group interactions which provide the foundation for collaborative thinking. The teacher accents, clarifies and elaborates the contributions of the group members, respecting unexpected discoveries and helping to develop commitment and intensity during the process. The prism serves as a reminder that although knowledge may be separated by analyzing various qualities, it is the interaction and interdependence of these qualities that is essential to the whole.

Several episodes of classroom drama illustrate the dynamic quality of collaboratively constructed knowledge. In one drama, based on Jack Prelutsky's poem, "The Dragons Are Singing Tonight" (1993), the students worked in groups to create representations of dragons from several geographical areas. Each group formed a tableau which depicted the strongest characteristics of the personality of the dragon from their area. One person in the group explained to the class why their particular
dragon should be named “Dragon of the Year”. The effectiveness of each group was expressed nonverbally through the tableau and verbally through a short statement about the tableau. It was the total effect, rather than the sum of the parts, that conveyed (or did not convey) the message about the dragon.

In another drama, we explored the experiences of Canadians in various parts of the country who were affected by the railway strike. Morning began earlier than usual when a parent who had to allow extra time to get to work arrived early with her child at a daycare centre; interruptions to routines occurred throughout the day all across the country; the drama ended with a parent arriving home late due to the extra evening traffic. The power of the drama was not a result of a collection of individual contributions but the collaborative thinking of all of the participants working interactively to create the entire episode. A dynamic reciprocity existed in which each participant, during the development of the drama, helped to construct knowledge collaboratively and in which each participant learned from the interaction with others.

It took time to develop collaborative thinking within literature circles. Initially, I led the discussion, asked the most questions, and made the most comments. Students raised their hands and directed their comments primarily toward me. They were conscious of acting properly rather than actually engaging with the complexities of the text. The experience was more like a traditional teacher-led reading group than an authentic literature circle. Later, I continued to participate actively in the group, but the students also participated actively and confidently, exploring and valuing a range of understandings about text.

At times, I challenged the students about their statements, and, increasingly, they challenged each other. During the second set of literature circles, one of the groups
had as their topic, “Talking About Canadian Artists”. In the following excerpt, the stance taken by Elizabeth is eventually abandoned, and the group replaces her view with one that was developed collaboratively.

Elizabeth: Almost every book I read had nothing in common with other books.
Phoebe: Or maybe they had something in common with real life -- or like that.
E. B.: Did you find any similarities between your books?
Joy: No.
E. B.: Not any?
Joy: Except the Jillian Jiggs books.
E.B.: Okay. Well, tell us about the Jillian Jiggs books.
Joy: At the start, she always messes up her room and then her mother comes in and says the same thing that she says in the other one.
Elizabeth: Yeah, “This room looks like it’s been lived in by pigs!”. E.B.: And that’s the same in the other book.
Elizabeth & Joy: Yeah.
E.B.: So you did find a similarity there.
Phoebe: And somehow they always seem to have something to do with pigs.
Elizabeth & Joy: Yeah.
Elizabeth: Almost every story has something to do with pigs.
E.B.: Well, that’s a pretty major similarity, isn’t it?
Phoebe: And Phoebe Gilman books are always bright and busy.
Elizabeth: And colourful.
Phoebe: And they tell what’s mostly happening in the story.

Later, the members of the group also express, revise, and elaborate their understandings of how Phoebe Gilman names a character in The Balloon Tree (1984) after her husband. In this process, they pull together information they have found from two books about Canadian authors and illustrators as well as locating the point of reference in the children’s story. Additionally, they hypothesize that Phoebe Gilman and Barbara Reid may have known each other during a time that they were both studying or teaching at The Ontario College of Art.
In another literature group, a very shy member of the class had the role of discussion director, while it happened that several of the more loquacious students had other roles. To begin the session, the discussion director had prepared the question, "If you met a dragon, what would you do?". Two of the students immediately drew on their reading experiences to answer the question, replying that they had read that it would be a good idea to tickle the dragon or to give the dragon vegetables. One student used her personal knowledge of meeting a dog and adapted this to the possibility of meeting a dragon. While no one child had a complete answer, together they created a response suggesting a variety of recommendations with logical references from children's literature and through personal knowledge.

In another literature circle, one of the group members had provided the student who had the role of literary luminary with an excerpt to read aloud from Your Mother Was a Neanderthal by Jon Scieszka (1993). The group listened to the excerpt twice, as each of the students had a chance to read it aloud.

E.B.: Is there an illustration for that wooly mammoth? David, read it again. (As David read aloud, everyone else closed their eyes as they imagined what the mammoth looked like.)
Alexander: I saw something!
E.B.: Did you see something?
Jack: The monster was standing beside the tree.
David: When I was reading it, I was imagining what it really looked like.
Alexander: I thought it would have big, huge tusks.
David: (David finds an illustration which he shows us from the book.) It looked sort of like that except it had tusks.
E.B.: It's telling me that David is using the image from the illustrator, okay, and then he's adding something to it in his head from the description by the author -- to imagine the mammoth...So, in a sense, the illustrator balance the author, right?
Alexander: He has a good imagination! (Pointing to David. Alexander and David pick up the book Talking About Artists (Cummings, 1992) and he and David begin to look for the part about Lane Smith.) I never knew that Lane Smith was a boy! I thought he was a girl!
Language Power

Throughout the study, in small group and large group exploration of text, the power of language was evident as students became engaged in talking about stories. Three general areas emerged which highlighted the power of language: genres, functions of language, and discoveries with words. In contrast to direct instruction, it was through informal social interaction between students, as well as with the teacher, that students developed authority, purpose, flexibility, and experience denoting language power.

Genres. Students became immersed in reading from a variety of genres which enriched many conversations about text. These included: picture books, novels, short stories, poetry, postcards, memoirs, biography, nonfiction related to the focused topics as well as books about authors and illustrators.

During one of the literature circles, students had prepared to talk about the illustrators of the stories that they had read. One book in the text set was The Story of Canada, written by Janet Lunn and illustrated by Christopher Moore (1992). As we talked about expository text, students noted the illustrations, photographs, maps, and graphs that were presented in The Story of Canada in contrast to the illustrations created for stories of fiction. They clearly recognized that the genre of a text influenced the illustrations for the text.

In another literature circle, students read and talked about “Stories from Many Cultures”, which were generally presented in the genre of picture books. Some of the stories were variations of traditional tales, such as Red Riding Hood or Cinderella. Some represented a range of cultural traditions from many countries. Others, such as stories by Bourgeois, Lottridge, Keens-Douglas and Mollel, exemplified the rich diversity of cultural stories written by authors living in Canada. The following books
were available to the students who were engaged in reading stories from many cultures. For a list of books available to other literature circles, see Appendix C.

An Angel for Solomon Singer (Rylant 1992)
Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad to the Sky (Ringgold 1992)
The Black Snowman (Mendez 1989)
Eyes of the Dragon (Leaf 1987)
Felisa and the Magic Tikling Bird (Belknap 1973)
Flossie and the Fox (McKissack 1986)
Follow the Drinking Gourd (Winter 1988)
Grandma's Secret (Bourgeois 1989)
The Josefina Story Quilt (Coerr 1986)
Lon Po Po (Young 1989)
Mrs. Katz and Tush (Polacco 1992)
The Name of the Tree (Lottridge 1989)
The Nutmeg Princess (Keens-Douglas 1992)
Oom Razoom (Wolkstein 1991)
Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper (Mollel 1991)
The Rough Face Girl (Martin 1992)
Sami and the Time of the Troubles (Heide and Gilliland 1992)
The Selkie Girl (Cooper 1991)
Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt (Hopkinson 1993)
Tales of the Caribbean: Anansi Stories (Jones 1989)
The Talking Eggs (San Souci 1989)
Tar Beach (Ringgold 1991)

Genre also influenced the kinds of activities for classroom drama. Two of the lessons were based on picture books by Chris Van Allsburg, The Stranger (1986) and Anthony Browne, Gorilla (1983). Narration, storytelling, dialogue in role, and tableaux in the drama were related to the genre of story from the picture books. One drama, called "A Day in the Life of Canadians During a Railway Strike", was based on a current newspaper article. Narration, radio interviews, dialogue in role, interviews with a newspaper reporter, and tableaux within the drama also corresponded to the genre of the text. The final classroom drama was related to the poem and picture book The Dragons Are Singing Tonight by Jack Prelutsky (1993). It could be argued that the format for group presentations within the drama corresponded to stanzas of a poem, confirming another instance in which the genre of a text influenced the unfolding of the
drama.

Functions of Language
As students interact socially in talking about books, they use language -- oral and written -- for many purposes. They learn to explain and describe their current understandings, making judgments, persuading others, questioning intentions of the author, and reporting their own experiences. They locate and re-read excerpts from a text to explain or justify their viewpoints. They listen to others to confirm or disconfirm their understandings about text. They begin to recognize and appreciate the voice of an author. And, in time, the students generate questions and comments which result in student-led discussions in contrast to teacher-led discussions. Although the teacher may be a member of the group, a student as “Discussion Director” has the authority to guide the conversations about text.

In classroom drama, social interaction and the use of language for various purposes are highlighted. Drama has been for me a means of bringing into the classroom a range of contexts for personal and social expression which would otherwise never be explored. Jonothan Neelands writes:

There is growing evidence which testifies to this power of drama in offering young learners a unique relationship with literature and talk. Using drama, a child is able to enter into the world of a book or story and behave as one of its characters, free to ask other characters (taken on by the teacher and others in the group) the questions that they want to ask and free to attempt to negotiate alternative choices to those given in the original. The difference in comprehension is similar to the difference between hearing about an event and actually being there at the time. Drama therefore complements and enhances other creative forms such as reading and writing, and by including drama with other creative forms a teacher is able to offer all young people a tool for expression. This enhancement means that a broader range of ability has access to an expressive form (1992, 8).

The point that Neelands makes about comprehension relates to Schön’s concept of
reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. By “actually being there” in a dramatic context the participant has the opportunity for reflection-in-action, while talking about the event can result only in reflection-about-action. Frequently, the issues explored within a drama prompt continued oral or written discourse afterwards; reflection-in-action prompts reflection-on-action. From the drama, the participant gains authentic experience, cognitively and affectively, resulting in comprehension that is constructed personally and socially.

Following the drama about the railway strike, students were invited to write about the experience. They were given a range of functions for writing and were asked to select one as a focus for their thoughts. I have made editorial changes only with spelling and punctuation. Functions of language such as explaining or recalling, persuading, questioning, and reporting are expressed in the following pieces of student writing. The instructions for the assignment, from which the students could select for their responses, appear in italics.

You are a Grade 4 student outside of the drama. Tell what happened in class that day.

Jane: We were sitting in a circle and we talked about the strike. It’s so hard staying on strike. People who go to work they have to wake up in the morning and leave their kids to the daycare and everything. I have problems buying toothpaste and Kleenex. If we don’t have toothpaste what can we brush our teeth with? What can we do about the strike? People are disappointed and worried about the strike.

You are a storyteller. Tell the story of the drama.

Scotson: A long time ago [the] railway was built and today the railway is on strike. Lots of people have to walk to work and the bus drivers have hardly any break time because there’s so many people waiting for him to drive them to work. People are arguing about not getting their deliveries from other places and the bus drivers are mad because they have to work all day. People have to leave their kids at the daycare early so they could get to work on time.
You are inside the drama in role as _____________. What problems have you had as a result of the railway strike? Has work been more difficult or easier as a result of the strike?

**Alexander:** I have had twice as much people in my bus. My work has been difficult. I am annoyed with those people in Parliament. I am working my butt off for all those Go-train workers. I am ticked off when I was on my coffee break and they couldn't give good coffee. I've had a rough day. I hope the Labour Minister gets to an agreement. I hope the people know what us bus drivers [are] going through.

You are a newspaper reporter. Describe experiences that people in several areas of Canada had during the railway strike.

**Sherlock:** "Today on CBC News Update"

Yesterday a coal miner tried to ship his coal across Canada but there were no trains to ship it there. So now because of the strike people are arguing about their coal. In fact, I was there interviewing some of them like the coal miner, the storyteller, the babysitter, and other people. And the babysitter was mad because people keep coming so early, people even come before he opens.

**Rose:** Good morning. We have a problem with the railway strike. People are having a hard time going to work. There are streets full with cars and buses. There is no place for you to park your car, so try to have a car pool just until the strike ends. We have a hard time getting food for our country. The stores cannot get what they want. We hope we can get the trains back to work soon. The managers are complaining about them having to work because of the sort money they have to buy for the workers. The Government of Canada are doing their best to help the trains get back. Some of the stores are closed. People are having a hard time with their cars.

**Phoebe:** This railway strike is a disaster! The roads and subways are full. How can we get to work? "We are losing all our sales to other countries on toothpaste and toilet paper," says Loblaws employee (P.E.I.). "It's not fair to other people that our country is falling apart just because the railway is on strike," argues Labour Minister. I think people are feeling both sad and angry at this time. "We are doing everything we can but the Bloc Quebecois members are trying to slow down this process," says Labour Minister. Are we getting the truth? Can't they force them back to work? These questions are being asked all around Canada. The truck drivers work harder but get more money, everyone else is really mad. Everyone wants the government to force them back to work, but they
don't want to work. Nobody is going to be happy until they go back to work. Everyone is hoping they'll go back to work.

**Discoveries With Words**

In the newspaper article about the railway strike, it was noted that a “ripple effect” was being felt across Canada. Through storytelling during the drama, I briefly described the history of building the railway system and the conflict which led to the current railway strike. As I spoke, the class sat around a large parachute, moving it in various ways coinciding with the ebb and flow of the story. In this drama, the concept of a “ripple effect” was experienced visually and kinesthetically, as well as through language. Here, the wonder of words is enhanced by movement and social interaction, or, to put it another way, language and movement within the fictional context of drama transact to create meaning.

In the final activity of the drama based on Prelutzky's poem, “The Dragons are Singing Tonight” (1993), the students contributed ideas describing characteristics of dragons in the future. Within this context I used the word “millennium”. While none of the students knew the word immediately, I gave them hints for understanding and challenged them to search for the meaning of the word.

In the literature circle about “Memoirs”, the subject itself became a topic for discussion in which we expressed, clarified, and extended our understandings. At the beginning of the following discussion, we were considering the lead sentences in two of the books from the text set.

**E.B.** Both begin with the same meaning, “When I was little” or “When I was young.” Yesterday I read a story to the Grade 1’s called *Wheniwasalittlegirl* (Gilmore 1989). Have your parents ever said to you, “When I was your age....”?  

**Group:** Yeah.  

**E.B.** That’s a pretty common thing for parents to say...or grandparents.... What are they doing when they are thinking about, “When I was your age....”?
Henry: They are remembering when they were just like us.
E.B. Okay, they are remembering, and that's what we're talking about when we're thinking about memoirs, isn't it?
Rose: Yes.
Henry: And "memoirs" is a French word....Every time I read this book (Paul Hunt's Night Diary 1992), I remember like when I used to live in a house....

The students whose role was "vocabulary enricher" often brought interesting words to the attention of the literature circles. On one occasion a student had recorded "introspection", but was unable to pronounce the word. We took time in the group to search for the word in the dictionary and then to relate it to our topic of discussion, memoirs. In another group, Veronica, who was also the vocabulary enricher, had recorded "temperamental" for the group to consider, and, on request, she was immediately able to locate and read the context in which the word had appeared, in Sheree Fitch's Sleeping Dragons All Around (1991). Conversely, there were situations in which significant words, such as "transformation" and "portfolio", were generated as we talked about books, and these words were offered to the vocabulary enrichers to be added to their lists.

Other times students incorporated in conversation words that had appeared in their reading. In describing some of the main events from Margaret Leaf's Eyes of the Dragon (1987), Phoebe used the word "magistrate", expressing in context her understanding of the word. As David talked about Jon Scieszka's Your Mother Was a Neanderthal (1993), he could explain his understanding of Neanderthal.

There were also occasions when I provided new vocabulary or extended the meaning of words that the students had come across. One of the students for whom English was a Second Language had come across the word "bliss" as she read a quote to the group. I added, "It's like saying, 'This was heaven.'” In another discussion, the same student pronounced the letter “k” in the word knight. This led to the group making a list
of words with "silent k", including knight, knife, knew, and know.

As we talked about Anthony Browne’s stories, in which objects sometimes change shape and become animals, I explained that this is known as "transformation". In our discussion about Janet Lunn’s The Story of Canada (1992), Phoebe called attention to pictures that had been "drawn", while Scotson gently corrected her, saying that they were "photographed". I explained that this kind of writing is known as expository text.

In this section, I have referred to language power in terms of genres, functions of language, and discoveries with words. To a great extent, the social support from drama and literature circles provided a base for exploration of ideas, inquiry, making previously implicit knowledge explicit for others, and collaborative thinking, which resulted in experiences highlighting language power.

**Quality of Engagement with Text**

From the data of the study, several elements emerged which are descriptive of quality of engagement with text: intensity, frequency, focus, and extensions and connections. While it was true that the social context of the small group work in literature circles and community experience in drama usually supported the quality of engagement, there were also instances which depicted lack of intensity or lack of focus.

**Intensity**

During literature circles, students had the opportunity to express the connections that they had made between stories, authors, and illustrators. A high point was reached when students were often interacting in rapid succession, sometimes completing each other’s phrases, often referring to specific sections in a text to confirm their understandings. This occurred, for example, when one group had discovered that
Phoebe Gilman and Barbara Reid may have crossed paths and perhaps affected each other's learning while at The Ontario College of Art. In another situation, the students listened intently to a part of the text read aloud as they created their own mental images of a wooly mammoth. In two of the groups, the students became so involved in their deliberations that most of the children were standing rather than sitting around the table. Once, the group continued talking even after the bell had rung for lunch, and I had to finally cut off the discussion.

As I talked with Judy in June, I asked her to describe the ways that she had noticed that literature circles had influenced students' engagement with reading and writing. The work with the group gave students a meaningful purpose for reading. Children assumed responsibility for the roles that they had (discussion director, vocabulary enricher, literary luminary, etc.). They anticipated participating in the literature circle and therefore prepared for the experience. Judy described their work as follows:

I think in both areas. When they're reading the books, they're intense. They're intense about reading them, and they are very intent on their jobs about writing and asking themselves questions and reflecting upon what they're reading, and they did it in an exciting way and in a very serious way, which is not characteristic of a lot of children in this class. They took these jobs seriously, and they didn't even notice that time was passing. It was really neat to see them, because they weren't sort of saying, 'Well, it's time for recess. We have to go now.' They would keep right on with reading and writing...

Another thing was that when they were offered to read from a different set of books that wasn't for their literature circles, they just were so excited about devouring these other books and what could possibly be in these books. It was really wonderful.
Frequency

Another element to describe quality of engagement with text is frequency. In this study, frequency refers to student participation within a literature circle and to the occurrence of students rereading a part of a text to express or emphasize their viewpoint during the group discussion. Occasionally, a student came to the literature circle prepared to read a section aloud, and once a group prepared a choral reading. Most often, however, a student would simply pick up one of the books on the table from the text set and find a part of the text that he or she wanted to share with the others.

In the first set of literature circles, Henry participated mainly as a listener rather than contributing his own understandings as students talked about their reading. A child who benefitted from extra support with reading and writing, Henry also received assistance from the Special Education Resource Teacher at the school. During the third time that he participated in a literature circle, Henry not only had much to offer but also expressed his thoughts confidently. In response to a comment by another child, he asked, “When you read your story, did a picture come in your head?” As well as being responsive during the conversation, he drew on personal experience and made his own connections to the stories he had read.

E.B.: ...Have your parents ever said to you, 'When I was your age...'?  
Group: Yeah.  
E.B.: That's a pretty common thing for parents to say...or grandparents...What are they doing when they are thinking about, 'When I was your age'?  
Henry: They are remembering when they were just like us.  
E.B.: Okay, they are remembering, and that's what we're talking about when we're thinking about memoirs, isn't it?  
Rose: Yes.  
Henry: And "memoirs" is a French word.... Every time I read this book (Hunt 1992), I remember like when I used to live in a house. 'Cause at night I hear strange noises, and a picture comes in my head and I remember 'cause I used to go outside at night and I remember the animals and lightning sometimes at night striking the trees.
Henry also related his own experiences from camping to the story Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea (1988). The children then questioned him vigorously about his camping trip. He discovered that as he made his own contributions to the group, the other participants listened with interest and asked him to extend his meaning. The setting of a literature circle provided authentic purposes for students to find relevant areas of the text to support their understandings and beliefs and then to read these aloud for the group.

In the group that considered the topic "Relationships", Alexander located a part of the text in Mr. Nick's Knitting (Wild 1988) to prove his point. As the students contrasted the positive and negative aspects of having a big or a small restaurant, Alexander stated, "I don't remember it saying 'Little Tony's Pizzeria'. Can you show me, please?" He wanted verification from the story which related to the comments of his peers. In the group "Talking With Artists", Alexander read aloud from the book The Talking Eggs (San Souci 1989). He said, "I like this part because it's surprising. All the gold eggs, they never wanted to be taken. But the white eggs all wanted to be taken." Later, in the same discussion, in his role as literary luminary, he read aloud a part of Your Mother Was a Neanderthal (Scieszka 1993) as requested by another participant.

A student who had recently immigrated to Canada from Southeast Asia, Karl was learning English. Before coming to the literature circle, he had read and reread the story "The Dragon Who Had the Measles" (Krueger 1990). In my journal for that day I recorded the following:

The most compelling development in this group today was with Karl. Previously, he had participated mainly as a listener in the literature circle. I knew that he had spent a fair bit of time reading and rereading "The Dragon Who Had the Measles" in class, in ESL, at home...and yesterday he had retold the story to Martin. So, right off the top, I invited Karl to retell the story at the beginning of the literature circle. As he told us the story, he flipped the pages, recounting the essence of each part of the story. To be sure, he spoke quietly and it was somewhat difficult to
understand his English, but I repeated or elaborated some of the points for the others to hear. As I viewed the video, I was quite impressed with how respectful Henry was as he listened to Karl. Although this is not a part of the video, I believe that the whole group listened respectfully to Karl.

Rose was one of the participants in the group with Karl. Toward the end of the literature circle, she shared with the group an excerpt which she especially liked from The Dragon’s Pearl (Lawson 1992). This group had also prepared a choral reading of the poem “I Have a Secret Dragon” by Jack Prelutzy (1993) and were eager to read it aloud. Later in the term another group also selected the topic “Dragons”. When the discussion director asked, “If the dragon had the measles and you got them, what would you do?”, Elizabeth immediately referred to a specific part of “The Dragon Who Had the Measles” (Krueger 1990) to support her response.

During the thick of activity in which the students were making connections between texts, Phoebe referred to descriptions about artists and illustrators, read aloud excerpts for the group, and related these to the stories that the group was reading. She also read aloud from the description on the back cover of one of the stories to relate pertinent information about an author/illustrator. Her comments reflected a concern for accuracy and detail in developing a knowledge about the authors and illustrators.

During a conversation about Jon Scieszka’s books, David had selected an excerpt for the literary luminary to read to the group. At my request, he then read it aloud again, and, from the description, the participants tried to imagine and visualize a wooly mammoth. The activity of the students closing their eyes and creating an image as David read the excerpt aloud sparked lively responses from several of the children.
Focus

Sometimes the children came to the literature circle eager to share their discoveries and findings. Rose noted that in several of the books about memoirs there was an adult sharing memories with a younger child. The discussion directors had prepared questions to ask the group, and this often created an immediate focus for the conversation. Other times, students asked questions that arose from new knowledge or insights that they had gained from others in the group. For example, Phoebe listened to a peer talk about the book *Left and Right* (Oppenheim 1989) and asked whether the title referred to the names of the characters or to what they did. There was a definite focus in the group as students sought and shared connections between stories or discoveries about authors and illustrators. When a student noticed a reprint of an illustration from *Home Place* (Dragonwagon 1990) in a book about authors and illustrators, he immediately searched to find the same illustration in the book *Home Place*, which was also on the table at the time as a selection in the text set. The students also took delight in noting that Lane Smith was wearing "the same shirt" when he was a child and when he was an adult. Another student pointed out that Stéphane Poulain used very similar first paragraphs in two of his stories, and exactly the same illustration to begin each of the stories (1990, 1991).

As the vocabulary enricher in one group, Sherlock intended to share all of the words that he had written on his list. I expanded from the word "architect" to describe to the children the new shoe museum that was soon to open in the city. In spite of this rather lengthy interjection, Sherlock continued to focus the group on his complete list of words. He was also able to describe the context of the writing from which he had selected the words. When asked where he had found the word traitor, Sherlock referred to the girl's uncle in *The Balloon Tree* (Gilman 1984). Another student immediately supported his statement and located the part of the text.
There was also an instance when a group was not focussed. In this situation, the group activity was not meeting the needs of one student, who did not have a leadership role at the time. Comments that she made to one or two children tended to distract the group from working together. She argued that someone else had been given credit for a contribution that she had made, she told a group member to stop talking and listen to what she had to say, she tried to grab books away from other students, and she called attention to the videotaping that was taking place. Although the others tried to stand their ground and even laughed when she grabbed books, the challenges from the social interaction interfered with the topic of the literature circle. Instead of exploring an issue collaboratively, the students casually looked through the books, relying more on the teacher to carry the conversation. The potentiality for the group to develop new and deeper meanings had been thwarted.

By contrast, it usually happened that at the end of the group conversation, I challenged the students to keep up the momentum from the literature circle. Realizing that students need encouragement to continue reading and writing on their own, my comments often reflected an intention to preserve the focus that had been developed collaboratively. I made the following comments at the close of several of the sessions.

"Think about what has happened to the person at the beginning of the book and see whether there is a change in the person by the end." (Challenge)

"Look at a piece of your own writing. See if you have a problem or comparison." (Challenge)

"Do you know what you're reading next?" (Question asked following two of the group discussions.

"You are going to love reading about Ian Wallace. He's an amazing person. I've heard him speak, and he brought along some of his paintings. Dig into that book! You can take it home. Who is the recorder?" (Challenge)

"Why don't you two read that book together?" (Suggestion)
Extensions and Connections

The focus from the topic of a literature circle was often extended multimodally through related areas of communication. Creating a puppet play, students retold a story that they had read. They worked together to practice choral reading, made their own postcards, created plasticine pictures in the style of illustrator Barbara Reid, as in the story written by Joanne Oppenheim, Have You Seen Birds? (1986). Finally, they participated in a drama about dragons.

The work of Barbara Reid and David Booth was placed in a new context when the students viewed the photo on the cover of a magazine from George Brown College (1993). The students talked about the author Crescent Dragonwagon, suggesting that the two words sounded more like a phrase than someone's name. They learned that her mother was Charlotte Zolotow, another author of children's books. One child drew our attention to an illustration by Jerry Pinkney that was reprinted from another text.

At one point, a child who was the vocabulary enricher hesitantly called the group's attention to a word that he could hardly pronounce: "introspection". This opportunity was seized to look up the word in the dictionary and then to link its meaning to the discussion topic, "Memoirs". "Introspection" was then included in a new print context, a list of words which I wrote on chart paper to describe memoirs.

In my journal for that day I recorded the episode as follows:

Steven mentioned that he was the vocabulary enricher. From his literature log he read a short word list (that he had collected from his reading): "sincerely", "constellations", and...what was that other word? Looking at his work from a distance, I asked whether it was "interpretation", but he didn't think that was it. I asked to see it more closely and found that he had written "introspection" -- quite an impressive word which could certainly relate to our work on memoirs!
Chapter 5
Interpretation of the Data

Student Interviews Contrasted with Collaborative Learning

As I review the data of the study, it becomes clear that students could express their current understandings specifically, elaborately, and effectively within the immediate social contexts of talking about text. In contrast, the personal student interviews, both before and following the experiential aspects of the study, often resulted in polite but terse, generic responses. The work of several social constructivist theorists sheds light on possible reasons for this difference.

Dewey described learning as it takes place through meaningful experiences (1938). According to Vygotzky's concept of the zone of proximal development, opportunities for individuals to work with more experienced others can result in learning that takes place in the upper limits of students' developmental understanding (1962). Wells and Chang-Wells emphasize the significance of collaborative thinking, in which learning takes place between individuals rather than within individuals (1992).

In the study, literature circles and classroom drama are examples of social contexts through which students develop and refine their own semantic contexts related to literature. While the students had opportunities for asking their own questions about text in these experiential episodes, as the teacher-researcher, I had complete control
of the questions that were asked in the student interviews. As students interacted socially during literature circles, conversations about text were directly related to the semantic contexts of their stories. On the other hand, in the student interviews, students were required to generate their own responses without the support of their peers and without specific semantic contexts.

Students who are actively engaged in talking about text are also involved in constructing knowledge together, creating a web of learning through the interpretation of different viewpoints. In contrast, situations such as the student interviews require that individuals report and interpret their past learning, generalizing from a myriad of experiences. The social context of talking about text provides a forum for students to make tacit knowledge explicit -- to convey their understandings to others -- whereas the opportunity for students to clarify and elaborate their meanings was less likely to occur during the student interviews. Instead of thinking about questions which were of personal importance to them, the students answered my questions, perhaps trying to provide responses which they thought I wanted to hear. There were no books on the table, as there had been in literature circles, which might have served to jog their memory about previous learning experiences.

For me, one of the surprises of the study was that the student interviews exemplified learning experiences which were characteristic of learning in isolation rather than collaborative learning. Perhaps more experienced learners in later grades are likely to express their reflections more easily during interviews than the children in the Grade 4 class in which I was working. The challenge of urging students to reflect independently on their past learning should perhaps be left for older students, while increased value can be placed on the learning that takes place as younger students are engaged in the midst of an activity. Donald Schón distinguishes reflection-in-
action, which takes place during the activity, from reflection-on-action, which occurs later. As children are engaged in talking about text, social interaction supports their inquiry related to constructing ever-developing knowledge.

This is particularly evident in our work in classroom drama. When students are actively involved in developing a story -- talking in role, imagining possibilities, exploring ideas in small groups -- they are reflecting within the activity of the drama. There is a buzz of activity and lively points of view are shared in which students challenge each other, take positions of authority, persuade others, and inform the larger group. As students participate deeply in the unfolding story, time passes quickly, and inevitably the bell has rung before the conclusion of the drama. Days or months later, during personal interviews or in writing about their experience in drama, the students express continued interest in learning through drama. While drama provides a social context for learning which is remembered long afterward, nothing can compare to the learning which takes place during the “here and now”.

The classroom teacher with whom I worked offered a unique perspective in which she related experiences from the study to the curriculum as a whole. I certainly valued Judy’s reflections and insights during the interviews both prior to and following the data collection. She described the everyday circumstances of children who were reading and preparing for literature circles, marvelled at the impact of learning through drama, made connections to other areas of the curriculum, and related the experiences from her own class to other junior level classes within the board. Recognizing similarities between her own learning and that of her students, Judy linked professional reading and our conversations about teaching to the reading of her students and their conversations about text. Judy and I had come to experience for ourselves what we had discovered with the students. As Judith Newman writes,
I now recognize that collaboration is at the heart of learning. Learning is social. People don’t learn in isolation; we learn as members of learning communities. While we each construct an individual interpretation of a particular event or situation, our understanding is shaped by contact with other people’s perceptions of what is taking, or has taken, place. Our particular interpretations stand until a discrepancy of some sort catches our attention and causes us to re-examine and to reinterpret the situation (1991, 14-15).

Developing Student Empowerment in Talking About Text

Within a student-centred curriculum, teachers are eager to provide opportunities for students to develop and pose their own questions, to discuss their explorations with others, and to continue the process of inquiry in other social and semantic contexts. For both students and teachers, one of the challenges experienced in literature circles is that of inviting students to take initiative in posing questions and in directing the points to be considered. In traditional reading groups, teachers have had the role of leading the discussion and asking the questions.

At the beginning, it took time to develop a transition from the students depending on me to lead the discussion to the students preparing and leading the literature circles themselves. There were points of awkwardness in which both the students and I were hesitant to talk. On the surface, we had to eliminate the practice of students raising their hands to be recognized by the teacher. There were, however, more important ways in which we all gradually became more accustomed to enabling student ownership of the conversations about text. During independent reading, students wrote questions or points for discussion on post-it notes which could later be used during group discussion. I acted as scribe, recording on chart paper and thereby highlighting points from the discussion. Rather than imposing my own viewpoint from
the outset, I asked the students what was important for the group to talk about. As the conversation developed, I asked questions for further clarification and explanation, nudged students to make connections between texts, and encouraged them to continue their personal reading and exploration.

Increasingly, the students began to plan to share in the group the discoveries that they had made or the questions which had evolved. Sometimes I was surprised by the directness with which even shy students would ask questions which they had prepared for the group. To an extent, this was a result of the use of roles as designed for literature circles by Harvey Daniels (1994, 70-104). With the inclusion of roles, such as “discussion director”, “literary luminary”, and “vocabulary enricher”, the students realized the contributions that each group member could make as we talked about stories. Generally, this led to greater commitment to prepare for the literature circles and a shared respect for all participants.

There was, however, an instance in which a participant who was accustomed to taking leadership had difficulty in adjusting to accepting another role for the discussion. As students became more experienced in talking about stories, the necessity for roles was reduced. In contrast to the tunnel vision that might develop from too much focus on specific roles, students learned to listen to others, to share their own discoveries about text, and to ask questions naturally within the group setting.

Opportunities for Sharing Recent Discoveries About Text

During literature circles, students recognize the value of their own experiences -- personal as well as previous experiences with literature -- which they bring to reading and talking about text. They note that authors and illustrators at times draw on personal experiences as they create stories and illustrations for others. Having
opportunities to read several selections by a single author, students become aware of the voice and style of writing developed by an author. In drama, students bring their own personal, social, and cultural experiences to the activity; the direction of the drama itself is influenced by the interests and personal experiences that the students offer. They begin to identify with the roles that they assume.

Gradually, students revised their expectation that the questions to be discussed had been predetermined by the teacher. They spent time developing questions which they anticipated discussing with the literature circle. Through exploration and negotiation of meaning, students began to value a diversity of viewpoints and meanings which deepened their own comprehension. They experienced for themselves the dynamic nature of knowledge constructed collaboratively.

Intertextuality, in which the reader relates features of one text to another, became more accessible to each student as he or she noted similarities and differences between the selections of the text set provided for each literature circle. Considerations were given to a specific topic as it was addressed through various genres; discoveries were formed by comparing several picture books created by the same author/illustrator; and contrasting interpretations were developed as stories representative of Canadian culture were placed alongside stories from other cultures.

As students talked about their reading, they shared recent discoveries about language and text: they related their own situations to those of characters in stories; asking questions of personal significance, they developed ownership of learning in a social setting; and they had opportunities to make connections between texts.
Learning Together

The image of a prism is useful in considering the process of engaging with text through social interaction. Differing perspectives are honoured as students question their assumptions about stories, interpret their understandings for others, and construct new meanings through interactive discourse. As the teacher-researcher in the classroom, it is imperative that I convey that the knowledge about text does not reside in me but rather has to be created within the group.

We, as teachers, draw on our understandings of reading process, of literature, of learning, and of our particular students in order to create the opportunities for the students to encounter worthwhile texts, to make the texts their own, and to respond to them (MacKenzie 1992, 15).

Through the process of sharing tentative understandings about text, the participants develop knowledge that is relevant to their own needs. By revisiting a text again and again, they recognize that knowledge is not acquired through memorizing facts but through mutual dialogue. Through inner dialogue, students begin to "question the author" about the text. Through social dialogue, they have opportunities to make explicit for others understandings which had previously been tacitly held knowledge. They discover the dynamic quality of knowledge as it is questioned, confirmed or disconfirmed, expressed from various viewpoints, and reinterpreted in different social and semantic contexts. Students come to expect that comprehension of text is not a finite quantity but is subject to change with their own experience.

Expressions of Language Power

When children participate in drama, they are in charge of building the dramatic experience through their actions and words. They become the drama, discovering ideas and directions that will surprise and change them. Because meanings are being made and not given, the children will find responses and language powers that are unexpected, engendered by the collective drive for group meaning (Booth 1987, 11).
For students who are deeply engaged in constructing meaning, in solving 
incongruities, in listening to the viewpoints of others, and in expressing their thoughts 
in a group, the focus of discourse is clear, and time seems to fly by. Students interact 
with a sense of authority and purpose; questioning, clarifying, interpreting, and 
extending their understandings; and fitting their words to the social and semantic -- 
and, in drama, fictional -- context of the situation. Conversations are layered and 
interwoven; meanings become intertextual and extend across time. Learners are 
empowered to change the viewpoints of others and in the process change themselves 
(Booth 1987).

In this study, I have considered language power through the analysis of data in three 
areas: genres, functions of language, and discoveries with words. While teachers may 
initially structure the text sets for literature circles, students make the meanings their 
own as they read, respond, and re-read parts of the text. Exploring a range of genres, 
they broaden and deepen their experiences with text. In authentic learning contexts, 
in which students create and develop meaning together, they use language for many 
purposes, both orally and in writing. Opportunities abound for discovering words, 
playing with word patterns, and for making connections to relevant syntactic and 
semantic contexts.

Findings from Quality of Engagement with Text

Going beyond the text requires that the teacher's techniques 
somehow relate the concepts in the text to the child's 
experiences. In this way, fundamental memories brought 
forth by the intensity of the reading or drama experience 
are tapped so that the resultant response is both personal 
and universal, and can be shared in the context of the 
literacy situation and the dramatic experience. Then the 
literary code will be broken and the context made 
significant to the "theory of the world" that each individual 
is in the process of creating as he or she is educated --
in the widest sense of the word (Booth 1994, 119).

Through literature circles and drama, students who have varied cultural, linguistic, and educational experiences work together, nurturing each others' differing viewpoints, to construct meaning both personally and collectively. Through the continual process of forming one's own ideas about text, sharing tentative thoughts, listening to others, reviewing and revising, and interpreting for others one's current perspective, the potential exists for students to create understandings which hold personal and social significance. Such social contexts are both flexible and inclusive, enabling the participants to take risks experientially and cognitively.

As the teacher-researcher in the study, I realized that my role was not to try to help each child arrive at the same conclusions about text but rather to create numerous entry points in which students could talk about stories. As we reflected together about our work, Judy, the classroom teacher, stressed that the children exhibited intensity as they were involved in reading as well as while they prepared to talk about their reading with the group; this became a crucial element describing the quality of engagement with text.

Literature circles enabled students to talk about text at different stages: before, during, or after reading. Sometimes we came together to plan what we were going to read, who would have which role in the group, and when we would get together next. Other times a group talked about what they were currently involved in reading, the questions that they had so far, predictions of what they anticipated would happen in the story, and what they intended to read next. In some instances, the situation was rather a summary of the reading, an interchange of viewpoints, a discovery of similarities and contrasts between texts, and the expression of a development of ideas which were
constructed together. During the literacy events for talking about text, the selections that the children were reading were within reach at the table, and quality of engagement with text included the frequency in which students re-read a part of the text to illustrate or reinforce a point for the group.

Perhaps the most pivotal element, which inevitably affects each of the other aspects of quality of engagement, is the focus of the participants. As the students determine a focus for their work, the elements of intensity, frequency, and extensions and connections seem to evolve naturally. Conversely, without evidence of personal and group focus in talking about text, there is risk of achieving low quality of engagement.

Although there was one particular instance within the study in which an individual created enough distraction to dissipate any focus that might have developed, there were numerous instances in which participants working collaboratively determined a focus for the literature circle or drama.

The very nature of classroom drama, in which the text is a starting point for students to explore creatively, lends itself to imagining analogous problems, themes, and issues. Students can step into the story themselves, confidently using language for purposes supported and sustained in the fictional context.

By participating in classroom drama and literature circles, students have opportunities to experience both the maintenance and generative functions of language (Harste, Burke, and Woodward 1983, 122). As students carry on conversations to understand a text from the viewpoint of the author, they also interpret the text from their own social, cultural, and personal perspectives. In the classroom, interpretation is constantly under construction -- conversations about text lead to new texts and new interpretations. Communication takes place multimodally, including expression
through art, music, movement, and choral reading.

The ramifications of extensions and connections are beyond the scope of this study. I could never have predicted that two years later one of the girls (who had also been receiving support in ESL) would be the leader of a literature group, persuasively convincing all of the other participants -- who happened to be boys -- to read and talk about *The Baby-Sitters Club* series. I have also been surprised to discover that two years later David, who was keenly interested in books by Jon Scieszka at the time of the study, would continue to ask for Scieszka's newest publications, and has been the first student to sign the new books out from the school library.

**Relating the Data from the Study to Modes of Engagement with Text**

Although the performative mode is often in use concurrently with other modes of engagement, this was not a mode that was highly recognizable from the data of the study. Perhaps the most prominent example of the performative mode was from a literature circle about memoirs. Steven, who was the vocabulary enricher, had brought a list of words which he wanted to share with the group. One of the words, however, he could not pronounce, and he did not know the meaning of the word. When I took a closer look at the list, I said that the word was *introspection*. Steven and David tried to locate the word in a dictionary. We talked about how to use the guide words at the top of the page of the dictionary to locate the word meaning: "An examination of one's own thoughts and feelings". Clearly, this was a valuable word for Steven to have shared in our discussion about memoirs. As we talked and recorded on chart paper a list of points to describe memoirs, we moved into the functional and informational modes of engagement:

**Memoirs**
- record of facts
- report of a person's own experience
- autobiography
- something that people remember from their life
- memories
- introspection

In a literature circle about dragons, Rose referred to the knight in Tomie de Paola's book, The Knight and the Dragon (1991). She had pronounced the initial consonant of the word, "k-night". I responded, “You’ve brought up a really good point about words, too. So often it’s hard to know whether you say the beginning letter or not.”

As a group, we thought of words with the same initial consonants: knight, knife, knew, and know, and I recorded the list on chart paper. In this instance, Rose’s miscue highlighted the performative mode and we focused our attention on a word pattern.

An example of the functional mode of engagement occurred when students used information from The CANSACP Companion (Greenwood 1991) interactively with The Balloon Tree (Gilman 1984). Together, they located an excerpt from the CANSACP reference and the part of the story of The Balloon Tree demonstrating that Phoebe Gilman had named the king after her husband Bryan. Emphasizing their finding, Scotson reached across the table to the book and called out, “Show the king!” The illustration, therefore, added legitimacy to the printed text.

Similarly, the students in another group used their findings from Talking with Artists (Cummings 1992) to explore stories illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, Lane Smith, and Chris Van Allsburg. In this episode, there seems to be a blending of the functional and informational modes of engagement, in that the former leads immediately to the latter. It is also possible that the information which the students learned about authors and illustrators influenced the enjoyment gained from subsequent encounters with the stories. Such subsequent encounters might involve the re-creational mode of engagement. This however would be a by-product of the literature circle, in which one
literacy event leads to another, and is indirectly related to the data presented.

In a literature circle about Canadian artists, Sherlock, as the vocabulary enricher, shared his findings from a word list that he had compiled. He also informed us of the sources from which he had selected the words. *Tundra* was mentioned in *Very Last First Time* (Andrews 1985); *architect* was selected from *Architect of the Moon* (Wynne-Jones 1988); and *traitor* was chosen from *The Balloon Tree* (Gilman 1984).

Sherlock: (describing *architect*) - They make things.
E.B.: Is he the one who goes out and digs?
Martin: He drew the building and some of the people have to do the work.

In this brief interaction Sherlock introduces the word and gives a very general description, I challenge his statement, and Martin clarifies and extends the meaning. Here, in a nutshell, is an instance of collaborative thinking in the informational mode.

In the drama about dragons, the group of students from the central region pronounced that their dragon was the strongest. As could be seen from their tableau, the dragon had three heads. Its colour was flourescent green, red, blue, and white. The narrator for the group informed us that this dragon "saves its own kind and glows in the night". It weighs between 168 to 195 tons.

The informational mode was also evident during the drama about the railway strike. The actual text for the drama was a newspaper article. Initially, as the students read the article, it is probable that they would have been engaged in the informational mode, as the article was an account of the highlights of the strike. For most of the students, it would have been unclear how the facts provided in the article related to their own lives.
At the beginning of the drama, through storytelling, I tried to set the historical context for the current situation. I had also referred to Paul Yee’s *Tales from Gold Mountain* (1989) to relate the experiences of Chinese-Canadians who built the railway in western Canada. In his book *Stories to Read Aloud*, David Booth notes that Paul Yee presents historical information within a folktale narrative.

Paul Yee, a noted historian and children’s author, has based the stories in his collection *Tales from Gold Mountain* on the experiences of Chinese immigrants who came to Canada to work on the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He has woven into this history the rich folktale traditions brought from China to create powerful stories that work on many different levels (Booth 1992).

In light of Booth’s comment, the data from the study stimulate questions for further consideration. If powerful stories work on many different levels, then is more than one mode of engagement also at work, or is one mode always predominating over another? In the storytelling at the beginning of the drama, might some students be engaged in the informational mode and other students in the re-creational mode?

As the storytelling progressed and the drama began to unfold, there was a transition from the informational to the re-creational mode. At various times during the storytelling, the whole group picked up the parachute which lay on the floor in the middle of our circle and began to move it together. As I spoke the words, “You could feel the rhythm of the train, and the people worked together,” the class moved the parachute rhythmically, as if the train were chugging along. Our own narrative was emerging. “What we have today,” I said, “is a snapshot of a day in the life of Canadians during a railway strike.” There was a sense of anticipation as the parachute was put away and the student in role as a daycare worker stood up. No longer was the information from the newspaper article an account of events that other people experienced. From their commitment to the drama, the students experienced the tensions and conflict caused by the strike. Engaged in the
re-creational mode, they created their own narrative text within the drama, extending from the original newspaper article.

Evidence of students engaged in the re-creational mode while reading was not as obvious or frequent as I had anticipated. The reason for this is partly because data from the study did not include the literacy encounters prior to the literature circles. Class time was provided for students to read independently or with a partner. Students were also encouraged to sign out books to read at home. The data for the study is from the conversations that took place during the literature circles. It may well be that students were involved in the re-creational mode of engagement prior to literature circles during opportunities for sustained reading. A question for further exploration is: When students are aware that they will be talking about text in a literature circle, are they more or less likely to become engaged in the re-creational mode?

In the literature circle about Canadian artists, the following conversation took place. It suggests that the students had been engaged in the re-creational mode while reading stories by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Michael Martchenko:

E.B.: So what do you notice about Michael Martchenko’s work?
Elizabeth: Funny? Funny?
Phoebe: ...He also wanted to bring his sister to school but he couldn't fit....
Elizabeth: Fit her in his backpack, because she was 17!
Phoebe: 17 years old! ...And if you like stories that make you laugh, you can take most of these books out.

In another group, Rose commented on why a student may have chosen to read Eyes of the Dragon (Leaf 1987), “Maybe you thought it would be amazing to have an adventure like that.” Later, she chose to read aloud to the group the ending of the story The Dragon’s Pearl. While she may have been engaged in the re-creational mode in reading the text independently, she now shares her delight in the words of the
story with others, engaging again in the re-creational mode:

Today in China, the River Min still flows through the province of Szechuan. If you stop by that river to watch sunlight dance upon the water, you will see the banks carved by the dragon's tail.

And if you listen very carefully to the rippling of the water, you may even hear the dragon singing (Lawson 1992).

At the end of the conversation, the group eagerly shared for my benefit a choral reading of a poem from Jack Prelutsky's book, *The Dragons Are Singing Tonight* (1993). In this case, the whole group was engaged in the re-creational mode.

The highest level of engagement, the epistemic mode, is exemplified by data from several literature groups and both class dramas. The following example comes from the literature circle about Canadian authors and illustrators. The stories that the children read by author/illustrators Barbara Reid and Phoebe Gilman have been complemented by information about the author/illustrators. The children have then posed their own question about the text. They discovered that Reid and Gilman were probably at George Brown College at the same time. Is it possible, Elizabeth and Phoebe postulated, that Barbara Reid and Phoebe Gilman may have shared ideas for their work? This tentative, yet reasonable, response to reading indicates an example of the epistemic mode of engagement.

In another literature circle about Canadian authors and illustrators, we had been using the terms "illustrators" and "artists" synonymously. When one of the children said that Dennis Lee is an artist, therefore, I challenged the students to pursue the idea.

E.B.: You could argue that Dennis Lee is an artist.
How can you be an artist if you don't draw the pictures?

Anthony: You can imagine them.

E.B.: He draws pictures in people's minds. How does he do that?

Steven: In the poem?

E.B.: That's right. So you can be an artist and still be a poet!
In this conversation, the students extended their current understanding of the word *artist* beyond that of one who “draws pictures”; they also extended their understanding of *poet* beyond that of one who writes poetry. This new understanding may be used in later literacy encounters in which they continue to develop a broader understanding of the word *artist*. I would suggest that the epistemic mode of engagement in this particular situation was possible through the collaborative construction of meaning that occurred during the literature circle.

At the end of the drama based on Jack Prelutsky’s poem “The Dragons Are Singing Tonight” (1993), the class sat in a circle and students had an opportunity to share their opinions regarding “What will dragons of the future look like?”. While one response may be contradictory to another, each student was permitted his or her own viewpoint. Some of the responses complement the text of the poem; others are in contrast to the poem or may relate to previous texts about dragons or more directly to the drama. The following qualities were attributed to dragons of the future: friendly to all kinds of people, magical, vicious, helpful, colourful, friendly and kind, will respect people. It was also suggested that “Dragons will become true”, “People will keep little dragons as pets”, and “Everybody will live happily ever after”. While there was no attempt to have students agree, disagree, or challenge the statements, the opportunity was available for students to revise their personal opinions in light of the expressions of others. Those who became involved in such continued interpretation were engaged in the epistemic mode.

In contrast to the picture books or poetry from which other class dramas developed, we used a current article from the newspaper to develop the drama about the railway strike that was currently occurring (March, 1995). As it happened, one morning, after reading the paper, I became involved in reading David Booth’s book, *Story Drama*. 
Gradually, I began to consider the possibility of developing a drama around this issue that was creating much interest and concern across Canada. Jonothan Neelands' book, *Drama Structures*, was helpful in considering and developing small group and whole class experiences related to the topic. Although I was not aware of this until later, intertextuality was a natural and necessary element in planning the drama. As time progressed, some students brought other related articles to share with the class. The printed text of the newspaper articles, as well as the role description that each student was given, influenced the spoken text of the drama. Yet another layer of meaning was expressed intertextually as students responded to the drama through writing.

Following are two examples of dialogue from the drama which indicate that the students are engaged in the epistemic mode. In the first situation, the time is mid-morning and the place is a coffee shop. Students are in role as a reporter, a railway manager, a truck driver, and employee at a car shop, and a bus driver. I am in role as an employee behind the counter at the coffee shop.

Bus driver: I've been working since 2:00 this morning, and I just got my break. Can you make my coffee a little hotter please?

Coffee shop employee: No problem! Coffee coming up!

Railway manager: Well, we couldn't call the workers to come to work, because we didn't have enough money to get the railway back, so the managers have to get down there and work. And I'm so tired. And this coffee tastes terrible. Could you put some more sugar, please?

Coffee shop employee: Sugar coming up!

Bus driver: Where do you live? How long does it take you to get to work with the trains....

Car shop employee: It takes me an hour to get to work. I'm tired of walking. I went to work at 5:00 in the morning today, and I'm so tired.

Railway manager: Can't you get a car?

Bus driver: Maybe he hasn't got that much money, and the Ford business is going down....

Truck driver: I'm getting lots of money, 'cause I'm carrying people all over the place.
Railway manager: Well, we’re not so happy as you are. We’re not getting that much money.
Truck driver: Do you know when the trains will be going again?
Railway manager: Well, we’re working on it. So we probably think it’s going to go back next week.

In the next situation, a news reporter is holding an interview with the Labour Minister, a Member of Parliament from the Liberal Party, and a Member of Parliament from the Bloc Québécois. Engaging in the epistemic mode, these Grade 4 students are thinking critically about what would happen if they were personally in a role of political responsibility.

Reporter: So what have you been doing since the Go Train went on strike?
Labour Minister: We’ve been trying to get them back to work, but the union doesn’t want to do it so quickly, and the Bloc Québécois members are slowing down our operation.
Bloc Québécois M.P.: Well, my party thinks that the railway strikers should go...the railway strikers should go on strike, because they have the right to strike, because they have to work and everything all day and they hardly get any breaks, right?
Labour Minister: But, but this strike affects everybody in Canada, and I don’t think they have the right to turn this country around just so they need a vacation. If they need a vacation, they can take a vacation, but I don’t think they have the right to strike when all...when everything is like this.
Chapter 6
Implications and Conclusion

From the Student’s Perspective
The implications of the study encompass engagement with text through social interaction before, during, and following literacy events. Alternative modes of communication, such as classroom drama, provide experiences to deepen understanding -- developing analogies to the story, extending the theme, or making predictions within a fictional context. This can add vitality, commitment, and engagement before, during, or after reading.

Before reading, time is necessary for browsing and previewing materials which will become potential texts for reading and discussing. While the teacher may be responsible for selecting materials within the text sets, students will have some degree of choice as to which literature circle they would participate in, how they will prepare for the discussion, and what reading/writing connections they will create in response to their reading.

As students experience reading intensively, they learn to carry on a dialogue with the author, often making connections to prior personal experience as well as prior literacy experiences. At times, they may find themselves identifying with someone in the story. Parts of the text which seem to be confusing, contradictory, or surprising can be
transformed into opportunities for exploration, negotiation, and deeper understanding.

Students who expect to talk about their learning with others will form questions of their own and will anticipate the questions that others will ask. They accept *personal* responsibility for reading and responding as well as *social* responsibility for making worthwhile contributions to the group. Through experiential learning situations students use language and develop knowledge collaboratively. As students listen to the viewpoints of others, they gain respect for the diversity of opinions within the classroom community.

**From the Parent's Perspective**

The study also has implications for extending literacy events at home. During school meetings in which parents and teachers discuss learning at school and at home, it is essential to communicate that learning occurs during interactions with others. Parents can create opportunities for siblings to read together and talk about their reading, or for children to read with parents and grandparents. Parents can also be made aware of functions of language which occur more naturally at home than at school, and therefore they can recognize the significance of such events for literacy learning. For example, children who attend arts or fitness programs at a community centre can communicate to others, including parents, about the activities in which they are involved; extensions can be made to relate topics of high interest to children’s reading and writing.

When parents themselves become involved in reading and writing, sharing their experiences in natural situations, they provide powerful demonstrations to their children that literacy is a significant part of their lives. Learning and reflecting take place in the midst of our busy lives; even then, parents and children discover a myriad
of ways to share their literacy experiences, often making connections to their own personal, social, and cultural lives.

From the School's Perspective

Just as students benefit from learning collaboratively, implications from this study confirm that teachers, too, benefit from opportunities to learn together. By planning lessons, collecting materials, working together, and reflecting about our experiences, Judy and I shared our frustrations, tentative ideas, concerns, as well as moments of elation of teaching in an immediate classroom context. Often we shared surprising situations in which students demonstrated evidence of challenging each other, of expressing confidence and authority, or of listening and supporting each other. Although we were both experienced teachers, the implementation of literature circles and classroom drama challenged us to grow professionally just as the children were growing in literacy learning. At times, we, too, may have been working within our zones of proximal development! As one month followed another, we found ourselves immersed in experiences for reflection-in-action. More often than not, this tended to take priority over reflection-about-action.

A few practical implications emerged from the study. Teachers and students need accessibility to excellent children's literature which encompass a variety of genres. We had the benefit of using student anthologies, personal collections of children's literature, the school library, and the public library. Following the study, as a teacher-librarian, I have sometimes consciously purchased multiple copies of a title, in the event that this could facilitate the selection of materials for literature circles. In the library, the picture books, or "E" category, and the novels in the fiction category have been organized by author. Teachers who wish to organize text sets for an author study can readily see which books are available in the school library; students can
also see at a glance the books in our collection by the same author. During library classes, I highlight for students some of the recent books on the market about the lives of authors and illustrators. I also actively search for materials from publishers which are centred around a theme or which augment themes that correspond to curriculum based studies.

For implementing story drama in the classroom, it is usually helpful to have a flexible timetable with large chunks of time which can be adjusted when necessary. Because of the unpredictable nature of each unique drama session, it is most desirable that the principal encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and integrated learning. When there is clearly a valuing of the arts on the part of the administration at the local level, it is much easier for a teacher to experiment with responses to reading through story drama. Ideally, there is a colleague on staff with whom a teacher can share experiences in implementing drama in the classroom.

From the Board’s Perspective
In our board, as in many jurisdictions throughout Canada, teachers and administrators are adapting strategies for working with heterogeneous groups of children of varying social and cultural backgrounds, having a wealth of educational and linguistic differences. Educators, sensitive to the positive influence these factors can have for everyone in the class, endeavour to create environments which will authentically validate the experiences of all class members. Teachers are interested in helping students to read intensively as well as extensively, to make connections from text to their own lives, and to explore different viewpoints about text. Integral to the philosophy in many elementary classrooms is the concept of collaborative learning and integrated studies. Empowering students to take ownership for their learning is evident in theory and practice. The timetable reflects opportunities for learning in
larger blocks of time, in contrast to fragmented parts. Implications of this study underscore the significance of these qualities in creating classrooms for inquiring learners.

With regard specifically to classroom drama as a mode for engagement with text, many avenues can be taken to open opportunities for both students and teachers. In an integrated curriculum, language and the arts are mutually supportive. Far from resisting initiatives for story drama, for example, teachers, principals, and others need to feel empowered to employ role-playing as a means of exploring issues and events from children’s literature. Initiatives to promote and support the continuation of such occurrences can be made at the board level as well as within a single school, in a single classroom.

Relevant to the philosophy of this study are curriculum documents and professional literature related to integrated studies and the holistic curriculum, language learning and the arts, creating classrooms for literacy learning, collaborative learning, and the influence of social constructivism in the curriculum.
Conclusion
When I began teaching a quarter of a century ago, the teaching of reading and writing was a great mystery to me. I can still recall my days of practice teaching when the emphasis seemed to be on the legibility of handwriting on the blackboard, or, more accurately in my case, the problematic conditions of an idiosyncratic style of left-handed writing on the blackboard. Because the students were often expected to "copy from the blackboard", it was imperative that the teacher produce an acceptable standard of handwriting. In those days, the content of the message was secondary to the surface structure, or the chalk marks on the board. Relatively little time was provided for the composing process by students; much more attention was given to features that are now considered part of the editing process.

In reading, attention was given to decoding words, to discussing word meanings, and to locating literal meanings of the text which were expected to be the same for everyone. Assessment was based on accurate pronunciation of words, fluency, and the ability to answer prescribed questions about the text. Frequently, choices were provided following the question, and the student merely had to circle the correct answer. This was labelled reading comprehension.

One day after school our teacher-librarian had arranged an inservice for our staff with educator and storyteller Bob Barton. Without warning, we were all involved in thinking about and responding to short excerpts of children's literature in quite an unusual and creative manner. We experienced choral reading with vast contrasts in volume, tempo, and mood. Most surprisingly, we were introduced to role-playing without a script! There was a direct link from the inservice to our classrooms through a new language arts program, Colours (Booth, Barton, and Buckles 1975). It was the philosophy of this program which I found to be grounded in the essence of personal
and social meaning-making and the generative aspects of text. Years later, I analyzed, the inservice with Bob Barton had highlighted language power and engagement with text through social interaction and served as a memorable example of potentials for language and literacy learning in the classroom. Our imaginations were sparked and a new vision gradually emerged on the horizon.

The thesis journey for me has been a long and winding one. My interest in how students learn to read and read to learn dates back more than twenty years. Early in my career, when I was a student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the 1970’s, I had the opportunity of taking courses from such people as John McInnes and Peter Board. I found that my learning at OISE required a leap into new territory for implementation in the classroom.

In contrast to the instructional practice I observed in schools, at OISE I was introduced to the work of Kenneth Goodman (1975), Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke (1972), and Frank Smith (1971). Through an evaluation tool known as miscue analysis, I learned to observe the meaning that individual readers brought to text and took from it and discovered that miscues, not necessarily negative, often reflect the child’s search for meaning. I explored the concept of reading as a psycholinguistic process and gained a respect for children before their school years, as they used language to understand the world around them. Reading was placed in the larger spectrum with writing, listening, and speaking. I was challenged to develop curriculum in my classroom which was consistent with my emerging beliefs about the reading process.

In the summer of 1983 I had the privilege of taking a seminar from Jerome Harste at Indiana University. It was then I learned that reading is a sociopsycholinguistic process in which the reader brings meaning to print and takes meaning from it and that
the social context has a bearing on the text. For example, an account that a student writes of a class trip for the school newsletter may include different information and reflect a different tone from the account of the trip that the student wrote in his or her journal in the classroom. I also learned from Jerome Harste that we communicate *multimodally* -- including through music and drama. I was challenged to rethink curriculum based on my current knowledge and observations of children engaged in literacy learning. At the end of the seminar we were invited to communicate our thoughts through art; the art form that I chose was poetry:

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Continually
Orchestrate:
Multimodally,
Meaningfully,
Uniquely;
Now
In transaction --
Clarifying process,
Authoring
Together,
Ever-changing cognitive and affective structures.
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A few years later, I enrolled in drama "additional qualifications courses" through the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto. The "specialist course" in drama, led by Larry Swartz, Jonothan Neelands, Warrick Dobson, and Tony Goode, was a unique and memorable opportunity that took place in London, England. As a whole group and in smaller groups we frequently explored the art form of drama by experientially working with tension which mounted into conflict that required a commitment of action on the part of all the group members. That summer in London we explored issues significant to the participants through various drama structures.

As we discussed implications for curriculum implementation, I began wondering why drama did not have greater prominence in many elementary language arts programs.
A couple of years later I had the privilege of teaching Drama, Part 2 at the Faculty of Education, U. of T. By then I had recognized the value of teacher reflection following a drama, but I was still unaware of the quality of reflection that often takes place within the fictional context.

In the 1990's I have returned to study at OISE/UT, taking courses from such people as David Booth, Gordon Wells, Joyce Wilkinson, and Richard Courtney. I have gained a deeper understanding of concepts such as: one's view of knowledge, literacy, the arts, engagement, and text. The learner as inquirer includes for me both the teacher and the students in the classroom. I have developed an appreciation for teachers as researchers in their own unique classroom contexts.

With the current scene in education, the pressures for examining student progress in literacy learning are as rigorous as ever. Much of the work from theorists including K. Goodman, Y. Goodman, C. Burke, and F. Smith in the 1970's is now embedded in the outcomes and indicators produced by our Board of Education for reading and writing in the 1990's. Several respected educators across North America (Harste and Short, 1984; Peterson and Eeds, 1990; Short and Pierce, 1990; Daniels, 1994; and Booth, ed., 1996) have described literature circles as a teaching strategy for engaging students in talking about text. The strategy of role-playing as a means for exploring text personally and socially has yet to receive the attention and respect it richly deserves. Educators in England including Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, and Jonothan Neelands as well as Canadians -- David Booth, Charles Lundy, Richard Courtney, Bob Barton, Larry Swartz, and others -- have all made significant contributions in this area. In his book Drama Words, Booth links the relationship of drama to reading:
The relationship between the two learning areas of drama and reading lies in the world of meaning. It is the idea of symbolization and its role in the discovery and communication of meaning that connects drama and reading. Both areas are concerned with interaction. In drama, the students enter into a dialogue, modifying and exploring the symbols used by changing and challenging each other's contributions. When reading, the student enters at first into a dialogue with the author, then with other students and finally with himself or herself. Through discussion and analysis, he or she modifies and develops his or her understanding of the author's meaning, as well as absorbing the diversity of meanings his or her classmates have taken from the text. In both cases, the student is negotiating at the symbolic level (1987, 46-47).

Working with a class in drama has its own intrinsic rewards. When the class is involved in group role-playing, the intensity of the story is evident in the responses of the students. While the teacher, working within the art form, employs a variety of drama structures for inviting student participation, the students create their own unique responses and determine the direction that the drama will take. Such an open-ended experience is challenging for both the teacher and the students.

One of the thorniest problems in implementing classroom drama in the elementary grades is simply allotting time for it in the curriculum. On any given school day, teachers at the junior level have the satisfaction of knowing that the vast majority of other teachers in the board are also spending time teaching literature. Teachers who begin to use drama in the classroom may wonder how legitimate this activity really is, and, therefore, whether it warrants the time that may be necessary. Interpretation of data from this study indicates that drama as a learning medium (Wagner 1989) in the elementary grades needs to be clearly expressed in curriculum implementation at the school level and solidly confirmed in policy at the board and provincial levels.

Posing the question for the thesis was the result of a fair bit of wandering and
wondering. Just as we need to give students time to become immersed in an area of interest, it took me several months of observation and puzzlement. I wondered:

Why are some children actively involved in thinking about text and others remain on the fringe?

What is it about classroom drama that is so absorbing, and how does this relate to engagement with text?

In what ways do students engage with text, both in role and out of role?

Finally, I arrived at the central question for the thesis: *How does collaborative thinking facilitate engagement with text?*

My intentions had included the classroom teacher as an equal partner in the research study. Just as we encourage students to work collaboratively, I had hoped that the study would be an instance of collaborative teaching and research. Donald Cordell had recognized the fluidity of teacher-as-researcher and researcher-as-teacher that had developed with the participants in his study (1989), and I had hoped to develop a similar relationship.

Looking at the study from a board-wide perspective, the committee granting permission for me to do the research had reservations about the design of the project. The study was to be completed for my degree, which was not a result that would be shared with others. I should accept complete responsibility for the work, which included maintaining the anonymity of all of the participants. Although it was accepted that my own journal would be of value, the committee questioned whether it was necessary for the classroom teacher to be keeping a journal for the study. Modifications were made which clarified the learning outcomes and procedure for data collection. I submitted a timeline for the three sets of literature circles and the two classroom dramas for the study. All of the children in the class were given parental
permission to participate in the research.

Earlier in the year the class had participated in dramas related to stories by Robert Kraus, Chris Van Allsburg, and Anthony Browne. While the students gained experience in drama as an art form, these drama sessions were not specifically a part of the study. The data collection for the study was initiated once I had been given permission for doing the research, which was in late November, and continued until the end of May, 1995.

It was during this time that Judy and I worked closely together. Arrangements were made to schedule the videotaping of each session. Although Judy was not teaching during these particular episodes, she was very active in the planning and implementation of the class program and in the evaluation of student progress. Sometimes the group had met on one or more occasions previous to the videotaping. Working with the class on a daily basis, Judy was directly involved with the literature circles on occasions which were not videotaped. One of the advantages in working together was to have someone else to consult regarding adjustments that we considered making as the result of our observations in classroom practice. We had the opportunity of sharing with each other the surprises which prompted reflection within the immediacy of the situation.

This reflection-in-action, I'm learning, involves not only noticing critical moments when they occur, but thinking about them subsequently in ways which permit me to adjust the on-going learning situation. This reflection-in-action serves an important function: it forces me to examine my assumptions, my intentions, and my instructional invitations critically. I have to think about where we are at the moment, what problems have arisen or what unexpected opportunities have just presented themselves. I may, as I reflect, restructure my strategies for action, or my understanding of what's going on, or I may reframe the situation (Newman 1991, 54).
At times, students were more capable of accepting responsibility for their learning than I had predicted they would be. In contrast, I had also expected more personal, in-depth responses during the student interviews at the beginning and end of the study; instead, I found that the students were far more expressive during the literature circles and drama sessions when their reflection took place in conversation with others.

Admittedly, I had reservations about implementing the use of roles for literature circles (Daniels 1994). My reluctance stemmed from a concern that the students would rely too heavily on their particular roles and would not listen and interact easily with others during the literature circle. Years ago, in traditional reading groups, a child could count ahead to predict what part he or she would be asked to read orally; there was no great need to attend to the text until it was his or her “turn to read”. This could have been an instance of disengagement with text. My concern with the literature circles was that a child might similarly isolate himself or herself with a role and not attend to the group as a whole. In practice, quite the opposite occurred. Students came to the groups prepared with ideas to talk about, confident and eager to share their questions or findings, and more willing to respond to the contributions of others. There was a sense of personal and group responsibility which resulted in group cohesiveness as issues about text were explored.

For the first set of literature circles, the students were not given roles. Those who usually tended to be leaders in class, or who tended not to, maintained such characteristics in the literature circle. For the next two sets of literature circles, on the other hand, even shy students had the opportunity to have the role of “discussion leader”. I was surprised at how the students, in accepting their roles, rose to the occasion by preparing points for the group to talk about or by sharing their own
findings. In the study, I was a participant in each of the literature circles. With older students who had more experience with literature circles, I would expect that, in time, the teacher would visit the groups only occasionally.

Roles are especially useful as students and teachers are implementing literature circles in the early stages. Organizationally, the teacher can work with the whole class to introduce the roles; with each group to determine that every member understands his or her responsibility; or with students having the same role from different groups, sharing ideas and experiences to enrich the viewpoints related to a particular role. This jigsaw effect can deepen commitment and provide additional opportunities for engagement with text through social interaction. With a keen sense of anticipation as the students gather for the group, participants are clearly focussed as the dialogue unfolds. As students and teachers become familiar with routines and responsibilities related to literature circles, roles become less necessary and can eventually be abandoned.

As I reflect about my work from the past few years, I realize that at the outset I had expected my study to be an example of action research. I considered myself to be a teacher embarking on research within a classroom context. I have used the principles of action research to develop the study, but the methodology has been altered to meet the needs of the situation. As the ESL teacher at the school, some of the children in this class were children with whom I worked on a regular basis. However, in order to consider the strategies of literature circles and classroom drama for engagement with text, I needed to work with all of the children in a class. In this variation of action research, therefore, the classroom teacher and I worked in a complementary situation.

Two years have passed since the completion of the data collection. The following year
my teaching position was that of librarian at the school. This past year I have been half-time librarian and half-time ESL teacher. Next year I will be at another school teaching the English component in a French Immersion Grade 5/6 class for part of the day and ESL for the remaining part of the day. As one of the two classroom teachers for the Grade 5/6 class, I am eager to express my personal theory, which is continuously evolving, in action. I will then have a chance as a classroom teacher to create curricular invitations for literature circles as well as classroom drama. The assumptions listed at the beginning of the study have been confirmed and refined through further knowledge and experience. The themes that emerged from the data of the study have helped to demystify the issue of engagement.

I look forward to conversations with other teachers as questions for further inquiry develop. For example, does intertextuality occur independently from or concurrently with the re-creational and epistemic modes of engagement? In the future, I will be interested in observing the frequency and circumstances with which students engage in the re-creational and epistemic modes in the classroom. I will be looking for evidence of the re-creational mode as students read in preparation for literature circles. What instances will I find in which a student may be engaged in the informational mode and another student reading the same text may be engaged in the re-creational mode?

The investigation of the issue of engagement with text through social interaction has led me to listen intently to the students. It was often the unexpected response that created an opportunity for reflection-in-action. During this reflection-in-action I recognized that in challenging the students, I also challenged my own views and assumptions.

Surprise leads to reflection within an action-present. Reflection is at least in some measure conscious although it need not occur in the medium of words. We consider both the unexpected
event and the knowing-in-action that led up to it, asking ourselves, as it were, “What is this?” and, at the same time, “How have I been thinking about it?” Our thought turns back on the surprising phenomenon and, at the same time, back on itself (Schön 1987, 28; in Newman 1991, 70).

As I reflect about my own involvement in learning throughout the time of this study, I am struck by the image of “interwoven conversations” (Newman 1991) and how this resonates within my teaching experience. This research project is by its very nature experiential and reflective; I have learned from conversations with students, colleagues, professors, and authors. Internal dialogue has become a part of me like an extra, albeit necessary, appendage, as I endlessly make connections from one conversation or text to another. Interwoven conversations account for learning that takes place both in role and out of role, conversations surrounding my most immediate professional interests, and across time and space to the early years of my career; interwoven conversations highlight the significance of learning in a social context.

Another image which holds personal significance for me is that of a story quilt. Faith Ringgold, a storyteller and quilt-maker, uses the images from the quilts that she makes to tell her stories. The narratives are rooted in the historical, cultural and social context of Afro-American experience. As the author and illustrator of such children’s stories as *Tar Beach* (1991) and *Aunt Harriet’s Railroad in the Sky* (1992), Ringgold also pursues other genres which relate to story quilts. As a metaphor, the story quilt reflects for me the tension between part and whole, process and product, being and becoming, familiarity and surprise. It reminds me that our personal and professional narratives are grounded in social and cultural context. The story quilt as metaphor is a poignant expression of narrative in unity with the arts.
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Appendix A

Transcript of Interviews with the Classroom Teacher (J. Blume) and Teacher-Researcher (E. Bandermann)

January and June, 1995
E.B. - Teacher-Researcher, Elaine Bandermann  
J. B. - Classroom Teacher, Judy Blume

January, 1995

E. B. What I'd like to know is how long have you been teaching?

J. B. Okay, I've been teaching for 14 and a bit years.

E.B. Umhmm. Okay.

In what ways do you continuously develop professional knowledge and expertise?

J.B. Well, since I've had a break in my teaching career, I've taken courses and I've done professional reading, which was often supplied to me by you. (Laughter.) And I go to conferences. I went to the Reading Conference last year, and I went to the Lucy Calkins conference this year. It was mainly about the book that she wrote...

E.B. Living Between the Lines?

J.B. Living Between the Lines, and Lessons from a Child, and there's another one that she wrote about -- that she first wrote about writing in the classroom. It's the only other big one she wrote.

E.B. Was it, okay, something about writing in the classroom. Is it black? [We were trying to recall the title The Art of Teaching Writing.]

J.B. And I've been reading, since we've been working on literature circles, I've been reading Grand Conversations -- from Scholastic -- and...

E.B. Some articles?

J.B. Some articles, oh yeah! From reading magazines. And I've been talking a lot.

E.B. So, we've been meeting, too.

J.B. It helps to figure out where we're going and what we're doing. And also your having a student!

E.B. A student teacher.

J.B. Yeah! Supplying her with a lot of reading material, and reading that, and going over it with her is really helpful, too.

E.B. So how many students are in the class right now?
J.B. There are 22 right now. Pretty soon I'm losing one, at the end of January, I think.

E.B. Okay.

J.B. Of whom English is a Second Language or Dialect for 8 children....so that's being out of 21, a large number, most of them Tamil.

E.B. Right.

J.B. I think one is Chinese.

E.B. So most of them are speaking Tamil and one is speaking Chinese. Now you had a child who spoke Greek, but that was last year, right?

J.B. Umhmm.

E.B. Right. How many of the children are receiving support from the school's Special Education Resource Teacher?

J.B. There are five at the moment who are receiving support, and one kind of on an "alert".

E.B. Umhmm. So that would be five plus the one?

J.B. The one is receiving extra support from a parent, we're keeping an eye on him, and also the Area Support Teacher is seeing him as well.

E.B. Now what factors outside of the classroom may have a negative influence on students' learning at school?

J.B. In this community particularly, the living conditions -- a lot are overcrowded living conditions-- they don't have enough space at home. They don't have quiet, any quiet space or time to read and do work. Families are often from not really functional families -- a lot of single parents. A lot of the parents of the kids in my class don't work. It doesn't always have a detrimental influence, but sometimes it does. The parents often can't help their children with school work. They lack the knowledge of how to, and it's very hard to send work home, because it's... They lack the knowledge and they lack the experience of how to sit down with their children and do something together. Also...I think nutrition plays a big part, too. I think a lot of these kids, we'd be surprised, to see that they don't have, what I would consider, proper diet. I think that we have to really be careful that the parents are watching out for things like eyesight and whether the children are hearing properly, because it's often left up to the school. We find out maybe that after while the kids haven't had their eyes tested and so on. So, I think all of those factors combine to make a negative influence
on children's lives.

**E.B.** In what ways do students work together in the language program?

**J.B.** Well, the obvious one is the students talk a lot together about things, especially in literature circles. They're engaged in speaking, and arguing even, and putting forth their own points of view, and giving points from the story.

We're involved in peer conferencing to some extent, not a great deal at this age level. I find they can't really do too much, but some of them can.

**E.B.** Uhmhm.

**J.B.** And some of them work together on stories as well.

**E.B.** Well, what about whole class...like at the beginning of your lesson?

**J.B.** Oh, yeah....(Pause) Well, the children do a lot of partner reading, and they do the strategy "Say Something" -- that's working together. And, also, if they see modelling from the teacher with charts, and modelling talking with a group, then they can talk with one another as they see has been done with them.

**E.B.** In what ways do students respond to stories and other selections that they read?

**J.B.** Well, the students respond orally -- by talking with each other and with the teacher about the story. They respond in writing, they respond artistically, sometimes through drawing and through role-playing in drama. They really enjoy that.

**E.B.** How do the students make connections between reading and writing?

**J.B.** I'm not sure I know how students make connections between reading and writing. I think that we presuppose that they do, but I don't think all students do. There are some students in my class that really have, because it's all there! But I'm hoping that with this study that we can find out how students make connections, because when we're doing literature circles and extending that experience with writing we're hoping that that will carry over into the students' writing, and examine those students who are making the connections, and maybe talk with them and find out why. But I think I don't really know how they do it.

**E.B.** Alright. What materials are especially important in your language program?

**J.B.** Well, I think having a lot of varied materials is really important. Class sets of novels, sets of anthologies....
E.B. When you say class sets of novels, do you mean enough novels for the whole class?

J.B. Oh, no, not necessarily. A text set would be enough for a literature circle. I think a class set of an anthology like *Cross the Golden River* would be good -- a whole class set of that. Sets of books written by a particular author, sets of books on topics written by different authors, picture books, stories, tapes -- there are tapes to go along with some of these stories, too -- really important. I think a good variety and a lot of materials.

E.B. Okay! How do you relate drama to language learning?

J.B. Well, when you say drama, I assume you mean drama that isn't involved in text. So, for example, reading a story and using that story to produce the drama. And that's how I see it with role-playing, and extending the story and creating from there. I think it has a big impact on language learning, because the children can really be involved with the story.

E.B. In your opinion, how is your class similar to other Grade 4 classes in the Board?

J.B. Well, I think there are many developmental stages in my class shown by the students, as in every class. I think there are a lot of Grade 4 classes with a heavy multicultural component, as in my class. I think that there's sort of a boy/girl ratio -- maybe we have more boys, but that can be similar to many other classes in Grade 4.

E.B. And how is it different from other classes in the board?

J.B. Well, I really think it has a high concentration of English Second Language students and students who receive help from the Special Education Resource Teacher. I think when you add them together, it makes a pretty high number. It's also different in that there's a small pupil/teacher ratio, and... those are the main differences that I think I would see.

E.B. And how do you assess student progress in language learning?

J.B. Well, I listen to the children a lot in everyday conversation. I listen to their ideas in their literature circles and often, after such a time when we're having a literature circle discussion, I will make anecdotal notes. And when I'm reading -- not always, but -- when I'm reading with a child certainly individually I will make notes and see how they're doing. I assess the students' learning logs and their reading logs and see the progress over time -- especially something like a learning log that we started in October and see how they're engaging with the story, and how their writing is an extension of their reading. Maybe figure out from that how they're making the connections. I like to talk with other professionals about the children, too, that helps me assess the children, too. Especially the Special Ed. Resource Teacher about those
children, and the ESL teacher about those children and how they are progressing. Also, when we’re doing social studies research, I assess language by seeing how well they do in that, too. That’s everywhere -- pretty well, almost everything they do.

June, 1995

E.B. Judy, what are the features of literature circles that you have found especially valuable in your classroom during the last several months?

J.B. Well, I found the discussion aspect very valuable. The children learned to interact with one another and discuss books and make connections between books they’ve read and make connections with other children. I also liked the fact that when they worked for their literature circles they had a focus, because they had jobs to do, and they looked at that as something really important. And they looked at their literature circles as a really major part of their learning.

E.B. What concerns do you have about using literature circles in the classroom?

J.B. I guess that I have only one main concern and that is if a teacher were to use them as their only kind of language program with no support from other areas. For example, some of the children, I did notice, if I couldn’t get around to them too frequently to the literature circles, I didn’t know whether they were really reading the books or looking at the pictures, especially the ESL children. I think it can’t be the only basis for language, but certainly I find it’s helpful as a major part.

E.B. What were some of the unexpected results or surprises that occurred with the class as a result of literature circles?

J.B. Well, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a class before that was so intense about learning. This class, in particular, is a big challenge, and they were really excited every time we had new books for them. They were excited about going to their literature circles. They wanted to be ready. That was totally unexpected to me.

And also the awareness of literature. It really excited me to see how aware they became of children’s authors, how aware they became that people do this for a living, that people illustrate books for a living. Whereas, before I think books were just something that they always had.

Another thing that was unexpected was that the children really developed favourite authors and illustrators. And I think they chose -- they began to choose books by author or by illustrator, because, “Oh, I read that book. I’d like
to read another book by that author.” Whereas, before, I think quite often they wouldn’t really know their preferences for reading.

E.B. In what ways have literature circles related to collaborative learning with pairs, in small groups, and with the whole class as a community of learners?

J.B. I think when we changed our ideas of literature circles and got the children to focus on jobs before they came to the circle, I think they realized that when they came to the circle everybody had done a job and everything fits in, and everybody has their little niche, and to make it all work, everybody had to do their part. And everything became dependent on everybody else’s work.

And they also, as a community of learners, they, I hope, learned to respect one another’s opinions as they were discussing, as they were discussing authors, and as they were coming to the circle with what prior knowledge they each had. I think sometimes they, with the whole class, with the groups, some people would have a job that the same person had in another group, and they could contact one another and say, “Well, how are you approaching this job?” They did that, and I think they really worked together better.

E.B. How have literature circles influenced the ways that students respond to stories and other selections that they read?

J.B. I think that it helped them make connections between stories and other selections that we’ve read. I’ve found that the children responded verbally, because even when it wasn’t literature circle time, they would get a book off the shelf and... One little boy, who really was not a wonderful reader and student would say, “But look at this! This book is by so-and-so. I didn’t know that he wrote this book! I really like his illustrations.” And I would hear them talking like this when they wouldn’t know I was listening. And I think that they have influenced the way that they are responding to stories.

E.B. In what ways do you think that literature circles have influenced the ways that students make connections between reading and writing?

J.B. Well, I think the children realize that they could write for a purpose. When they’d be preparing for the literature circles, sometimes they would be doing post-it notes, so they could write questions to themselves about what they’re reading right away. There’s a connection between reading and writing.

When they would be doing their jobs and focussing, although sometimes they got a little way-layed with their jobs, they still would write, and they knew that they were writing for a purpose, because they had read first.

They also realize that authors really wrote these stories, so they’ve got the connection between reading them and actually somebody else having written the stories. I think they’ve thought a lot about that. So I think
literature circles have influenced them in a major way.

E.B. In what ways have you noticed that literature circles have influenced students' engagement with reading and writing?

J.B. I think in both areas. When they're reading the books, they're intense. They're intense about reading them, and they are very intent on their jobs about writing and asking themselves questions and reflecting upon what they're reading, and they really did it in an exciting way and in a very serious way, which is not characteristic of a lot of children in this class. They took these jobs seriously, and they didn't even notice that time was passing. It was really neat to see them, because they weren't sort of saying, "Well, it's time for recess. We have to go now." They would keep right on with reading and writing and they...

Another thing was that when they were offered to read from a different set of books that wasn't for their literature circles, they just were so excited about devouring these other books and what could possibly be in these books. It was really wonderful.

E.B. Great! Have you noticed ways in which the students relate drama to other modes of learning, such as reading and writing?

J.B. They were writing in role after the drama, and I think it had a lot -- they were able to think about themselves in role and actually be part of the story. I think that's the way in which they related drama. They also in their choice of books, sometimes, if we had done a drama, they might have chosen books that would be sort of connected to the topic as well. Some of them did say, "Well, I liked doing that. Is there anything I could read about that topic?"

E.B. Okay.

J.B. Especially the dragons! They liked that! The dramas that we did -- a lot of them were literature-based, and because of that the children remembered the stories. They remembered the books and the situations...ones that we had done in October. And I think that's pretty significant.

E.B. What aspects of learning through classroom drama do you find particularly important?

J.B. I find that the listening is important, because, as a teacher, I find that lacking in some of my students, and they learned that they had to listen when they were in role, and they had to cooperate with one another, and those two social skills I found are particularly important for me as a classroom teacher.

E.B. What connections have you noticed between learning in role and collaborative learning?
J.B. I felt that since the children were learning in role and working in role, they found that they couldn't do it in a vacuum. They had to work with one another. And in collaborative learning, the children have to work, realize that everybody is different but we all make up a team, and we have different ideas, and we respect one another.

So, I can see that they go hand in hand -- learning in role -- absolutely, because you can't do things by yourselves. They can't do things by themselves.

E.B. Right. When they're in role. Yeah.

J.B. Uhmhm.

E.B. What suggestions do you have for teachers who are interested in trying to implement literature circles in the classroom?

J.B. I myself hope to try to implement them next year in the classroom, so that all this work is not for naught. And the big thing is, I would find, that talking and working with someone. I find it really hard to try to implement new things by myself. I was doing portfolios by myself this year and found it very difficult to work by myself, so literature circles I find the same thing. Especially if you talk with someone who is more experienced. I'm hoping to keep in contact so that you will help me through it, because I really do feel I still need that expertise. Professional literature is a help, but myself, I don't find it good enough to just read it and try it. I can learn by doing better. I think if you share an interest with someone about learning about something that it's a lot easier.

Another thing is, I would suggest also that teachers should give themselves plenty of time. It doesn't happen overnight, and the children don't respond overnight, I think we found.

And also, to play around with the groups. We found some groups worked together better than others. I think every new idea takes some experimentation, time, and effort. But really to absolutely try it! Don't back away.

E.B. What suggestions do you have for teachers who are trying to implement drama in the classroom?

J.B. I would suggest using a literature base, as we did for most of our dramas, because it's a good starting point. The children can relate to the stories. Also, I find that that takes a lot of time in the day -- the drama. So, plug it in when you can. And not to get frustrated as well, because if the children aren't used to doing a lot of drama, they tend to be a little silly at first. And they're also -- some of them are very shy. So, a challenge is to get all of the children involved, and I think we managed pretty well to do that by the end. The children were all involved, some of them to a greater degree than others.
I would also suggest trying it in connection with, if it's not a literature base, then in connection with another aspect of the curriculum, because teachers have so many things put upon their plates right now. They might say, "Well, why drama? I don't have time for it." But if you can relate it to something else in the curriculum, of course you have time for it.

For example, the social studies program, although it's focused on certain topics, everyday current events is important in our world. And when we used the railway strike as a drama, the children were right away aware of the newspaper. They were bringing in clippings of the newspaper, and reading some of the newspaper. So there you've got your reading, you've got your social studies with your current events, and your drama, and all the social interaction that goes with it. So, it certainly was a wonderful experience and worth the effort that we did have to put into it when we had to do it more than once.

I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on these literature circles and the drama that we've been doing. When I ask children to reflect upon their work, I find that they generally start to look at themselves, and they work more seriously, and I think all teachers should have the opportunity to do that. I don't think I realized until I really thought about these questions all the benefits that literature circles have -- especially -- not only the obvious, that they were getting children excited about reading and then the corollary to that, writing, but also the social aspect. It really has had such a big influence on my class.
Appendix B

Transcript of a Literature Circle

April 12, 1995
Scotson: Have you read a book similar to the book that you're reading now?

Phoebe: Well, not as much, but usually the books that are similar to each other are by the same author or illustrator.

Elizabeth: Almost every book I read had nothing in common with the other books.

Phoebe: Or maybe they had something in common with real life -- or like that.

E.B.: Did you find any similarities between your books?

Joy: No.

E.B.: Not any?

Joy: Except the Jillian Jiggs books.

E.B.: Okay. Well, tell us about the Jillian Jiggs books.

Joy: At the start, she always messes up her room and then her mother comes in and says the same thing that she says in the other one.

Elizabeth: Yeah, "This room looks like it's been lived in by pigs!"

E.B.: And that's the same as in the other book.

Eliz. & Joy: Yeah.

E.B.: So you did find a similarity there.

Phoebe: And somehow they always seem to have something to do with pigs.

Eliz. & Joy: Yeah!

Elizabeth: Almost every story has something to do with pigs.

E.B.: Well, that's a pretty major similarity, isn't it?

Phoebe: And Phoebe Gilman books are always bright and busy.
Elizabeth: And colourful.

Phoebe: And they tell what's mostly happening in the story.

E.B. Now what about the Michael Marchenko books? Did you see any similarities? [Others have left the room to get their M. Martchenko books from their desks.]

E.B. What did you investigate here from this book here, *The Story of Canada*?

Phoebe: This is about ice and mountains.

E.B. Did you read it?

Phoebe: Yeah. And they drew a little picture.

Scotson: Photograph.

E.B. Are you saying they didn't draw it?

Phoebe: They photographed. And they also photographed here. This one's about hunting dinosaurs. And I think this one is in a museum or something.

E.B. Sometimes -- When you have a style of writing like you have here -- this is called expository text because it's about real things -- okay -- See what they have. This is all on this kind of paper -- white paper, black print. And then they have a continuation here. Same way, right? This is similar. But, look, what's in between? They have this. And this little insert in between the two pages is just about that [photo of the dinosaurs]. It's like a little story inside a bigger story.

Phoebe: Yeah.

E.B. And they do that with expository text a whole lot.

Phoebe: And most of the time they draw little pictures, like a map or something. It shows what the people do and how they live and the animals...

E.B. So, would you say that in a book like this which has very factual information, would you say that it helps to have those pictures and maps and photographs?

Phoebe: Yes, it helps to...it does help.

E.B. Alright, why do you think it helps?
Phoebe: If there were absolutely no pictures in this book, you couldn't tell what was going on, and if it doesn't make sense... In a book with pictures, if it doesn't make any sense at all, you could look at the picture and you might understand what they mean. But if there aren't any pictures and there's something that you don't understand -- like you can't picture it in your mind -- then, um....

E.B. You're stuck. So the pictures and maps can help a lot.

E.B. So, would you say that these people [from Michael Martchenko's illustrations] could also be found in this book here [The Story of Canada]. Do you think characters like this might be found in a book like that?

Joy, Eliz., Phoebe: No!

E.B. Why?

Phoebe: Because The Story of Canada is nonfiction, and these stories are fiction.

Elizabeth: Are fiction!

E.B. So, what do you notice about Michael Martchenko's work? Not only is it fiction, but what? Would you say it's serious stuff or what?

Elizabeth: Funny? Funny?

E.B. Funny! It is funny, is it not? [Students talk at the same time.]

Phoebe: Yeah, he wanted to take his little sister -- [Reading from the blurb on the back of the book] At the back it says something about Michael Martchenko, and it says, "He also wanted to bring his sister to school, but he couldn't fit..."

Elizabeth: Fit her in his backpack, because she was 17!

Phoebe: 17 years old!

[Laughter.]

E.B. So would you say that he has a sense of humour?

Phoebe: Yes!
Elizabeth: No!

Phoebe: Yeah, he does have a sense of humour.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

E.B. Do you think he might have a character in that one (Zoomerang-a-Boomerang) that you might find in those (Jonathan Cleaned Up, Show and Tell, Paper Bag Princess).

Phoebe: Maybe. Let's see.

E.B. Let's see.

Joy: He also works with Robert Munsch. [Looking at their photos on the back of the books.]

E.B. So, they're quite a pair, aren't they? One writes the funny stories; the other draws the funny pictures.

Scotson: Do you recommend it? [Recommend the book to others to read]

Phoebe: These books by these illustrators -- they usually have something similar in each book. And if you like stories that make you laugh, you can take most of these books out, and if you want light coloured books or different coloured books on different papers.....

E.B. There's a variety that you can choose from, right? What do you notice about Barbara Reid? Nobody has said anything about her.

Elizabeth: Plastercine (sic)! She makes pictures out of plastercine!

Phoebe: And at the back -- No, where's that other book? [Elizabeth and Phoebe find the book about Canadian authors and illustrators from CANSCAIP.] It said she graduated from the Ontario College of Art. And in this blue book....

Scotson: Red book!

Phoebe: Red book...

Elizabeth: You know Phoebe Gilman? They went to the same place at the same time.

Phoebe: They went to the Toronto -- Ontario College of Art. And in this blue book about Phoebe Gilman...She [Barbara Reid] graduated in 1980, and Phoebe Gilman was teaching.

Phoebe: Actually, it doesn't really say what time. It says she came to Toronto in 1972. [Reads aloud] "For fifteen years before retiring in 1990 to devote her full energies to writing and illustrating children's books." So they might have known each other and got different ideas from each other.

E.B. That's really brilliant, isn't it?

Scotson: Uh huh!

E.B. Do you think I knew that, Scotson?

Scotson: No.

E.B. You're right! I did not know that. That is fascinating. I can tell you one thing. If you're interested in Barbara Reid, you should talk to some of the teachers at [name of school] because next Thurs. they are going to hear her speak. And you know what else? I've got a picture of her. I've been saving it all this time specially to show you, and it's somewhere on my desk. And, lo and behold, I can even find it! This is a picture of Barbara Reid, and she works, I think, through George Brown College, because -- and there's plasticine right there!

Phoebe: George Brown College! My dad goes to George Brown College!

Elizabeth: And it says plasticine right in the corner, too.

E.B. And you know who else is on that cover with her?

Students: No.

E.B. Does it say who else it is? It doesn't say! You're right! Well, that's David Booth! That's David Booth with Barbara Reid, and he's written a lot of the stories that we've read and some of the poems that we've read. So there you go! We've got two people right there! And that looks like a real live person, doesn't it, when you see it on the front cover of a magazine, right? Sometimes when you see their work from a book, you wonder, well, are they real live people, or not? But now, you think -- Ah! -- They've got to be real live people.

Elizabeth: And Phoebe Gilman? She has her husband's name in this as the grandpa [holding The Balloon Tree].

Scotson: As the king!
Phoebe: And where's that other book?

Elizabeth: Yeah, the king.

E.B. Where did you find that out?

Elizabeth: In this book [from CANSCAIP]!

Phoebe: In this book.

E.B. Elizabeth, I'm impressed.

Scotson: [Reaching across] Show the king in the story.

Phoebe: [From the CANSCAIP book] It says, "...her husband Bryan, the king in The BalloonTree. Where does it say -- [searching for affirmation from The Balloon Tree]."

Elizabeth: It's right here. [All of the students in the group are involved in looking at the book; three of them are standing up.]

E.B. Wow! That's great! Guys, you're just so smart!
Text Sets for Literature Circles

**Theme:** Fantasy

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<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Until Morning Sun</td>
<td>Anthology, MeadowBook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack’s Fantastic Voyage</td>
<td>M. Foreman</td>
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<td>Flaymboyan</td>
<td>A. Adoff</td>
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<td>Jolly Mon</td>
<td>J. Buffett and S. J. Buffett</td>
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<td>Min-Yo and the Moon Dragon</td>
<td>E. Hillman</td>
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<td>The Moon Flute</td>
<td>A. Wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandma and the Pirates</td>
<td>P. Gilman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regards to the Man in the Moon</td>
<td>E. J. Keats</td>
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<td>Postcards From the Planets</td>
<td>D. Drew</td>
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<td>Travels for Two: Stories &amp; Lies from My Childhood</td>
<td>S. Poulin</td>
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<td>Stringbean’s Trip to the Shining Sea</td>
<td>J. Elliott</td>
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<td>Morgan the Magnificent</td>
<td>I. Wallace</td>
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</table>
Text Sets for Literature Circles

Theme: Stories From Many Cultures

Title:

An Angel for Solomon Singer
Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky
The Black Snowman
Eyes of the Dragon
Felisa & the Magic Tikling Bird
Flossie and the Fox
Follow the Drinking Gourd
Grandma's Secret
The Josefina Story Quilt
Lon Po Po
Mrs. Katz and Tush
The Name of the Tree
The Nutmeg Princess
Oom Razoom
Rhinos for Lunch and Elephants for Supper
The Rough Face Girl
Sami and the Time of the Troubles
The Selkie Girl
Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt
Tales of the Caribbean: Anansi Stories
The Talking Eggs

Author:

C. Rylant
F. Ringgold
P. Mendez
M. Leaf
J. Belknap
P. McKissack
J. Winter
P. Bourgeois
E. Coerr
E. Young
P. Polacco
Retold by C. B. Lottridge
R. Keens-Douglas
D. Wolkstein
T. Mollle
R. Martin
F. P. Heide & J. Heide Gilliland
Retold by S. Cooper
D. Hopkinson
Ginn Traditional Tales from Around the World
R. D. San Souci
Text Sets for Literature Circles

**Theme:** Cold-Blooded Animals

**Title:**
- Animal Acrobats
- Animal Clues
- The Beekeeper
- The Book of Animal Records
- Caterpillar Diary
- Diary of a Honeybee
- Dinosaurs
- Going to Be... A Butterfly
- I Can Jump
- I Love Spiders
- The Life of a Butterfly
- Mystery Monsters
- Tadpole Diary

"Thunder the Dinosaur" Series:
- The Egg
- Thunder Comes to the Rescue
- Thunder and the Dinosaur Puppet
- Thunder Eats a Haystack
- Thunder Gets a House
- Thunder Goes for a Walk
- Thunder Makes a Sand Castle

**Author:**
- D. Drew
- J. Maguiness
- D. Drew
- B. Keir
- B. J. Cutting
- C. Walker
- J. Cowley
- J. Parker
- D. Drew
- D. Drew
- D. Drew
- D. Drew

**Let's Discover...**
- The Prehistoric World Vol. 2
- Cold-Blooded Animals Vol. 4
- About Animals -- Childcraft Vol. 5

- Raintree Publishers
- Raintree Publishers
- World Book

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Text Sets for Literature Circles

**Theme: Dragons**

**Title:**
- Dragon
- Dragon Tales
  - Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like
  - There's a Dragon in My Closet
  - Eyes of the Dragon
  - Puff the Magic Dragon
  - A Dragon for Breakfast

**Author:**
- W. Anderson
- J. Williams
- J. Green
- M. Leaf
- Traditional
- E. and N. McMullen
- C. Krueger
- J. Prelutsky
- J. Lawson
- J. Elliott
- T. dePaola
- S. Reid
- S. King
Text Sets for Literature Circles

Theme: Memoirs

Title:

Dear Mr. Henshaw
Dearest Grandmama
Grandma's Memories
Journey
Just Like Grandpa
Learning to Swim in Swaziland
Me and Alves: A Japanese Journey
My Mother's Loves: Stories and Lies from My Childhood
Paul Hunt's Night Diary
Postcards from the Planets
Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea
The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
Travels for Two: Stories and Lies from My Childhood
What's Under My Bed?

Author:

B. Cleary
C. Brighton
V. King
P. MacLachlan
C. Semple and J. Tuer
N. K. Leigh
T. Akio
S. Poulin
P. Hunt
D. Drew
V. Williams
J. Viorst
S. Poulin
J. Stevenson
### Text Sets for Literature Circles

**Theme:** Talking with Artists

#### Author/Illustrator:
- Kellogg, S.
- Van Allsburg, C.
- Scieszka, J.

#### Title:
- Eating the Alphabet
- Growing Vegetable Soup
- Nuts to You
- Planting a Rainbow
- Jack and the Beanstalk
- Mike Fink
- The Mystery Beast of Ostergeest
- Won't Somebody Play With Me?
- Garden of Abdul Gasazi
- Jumanji
- The Stranger
- The Wreck of the Zephyr
- The Wretched Stone

#### Author:
- Dragonwagon, C.
- Feelings, M.
- Marzollo, J.
- San Souci, R. D.
- Scieszka, J.
- Scieszka, J.
- Scieszka, J.

#### Illustrator:
- Pinkney, J.
- Feelings, T.
- Kellogg, S.
- Pinkney, J.
- Smith, L.
- Smith, L.
- Smith, L.

#### Title:
- Home Place
- Moja Means One: A Swahili Counting Book
- Uproar on Hollercat Hill
- The Talking Eggs
- The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
- Knights of the Kitchen Table
- The Not-So-Jolly Roger
- The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs
### Text Sets for Literature Circles

**Theme:** Talking With Canadian Artists

**Talking with Artists** -- Pat Cummings

**Author/Illustrator:** Gilman, Phoebe

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<th>Illustrator</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Clark, B.</td>
<td>The Balloon Tree</td>
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<td>Morgan, A.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
<td>Jillian Jiggs</td>
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<td>Munsch, R.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
<td>Jillian Jiggs to the Rescue</td>
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<td>Munsch, R.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
<td>The Wonderful World of Jillian Jiggs</td>
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<td>Munsch, R.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
<td>Something from Nothing</td>
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<td>Parry, C.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
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<td>Oppenhein, J.</td>
<td>Reid, B.</td>
<td>Franklin in the Dark</td>
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<td>Chase, E. N.</td>
<td>Reid, B.</td>
<td>Matthew and the Midnight Turkeys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tibo, G.</td>
<td>Tibo, G.</td>
<td>Jonathan Cleaned Up Then He Heard a Sound</td>
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<td>Tibo, G.</td>
<td>Tibo, G.</td>
<td>The Paper Bag Princess</td>
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<td>Munsch, R.</td>
<td>Martchenko, M.</td>
<td>Show and Tell</td>
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<td>Wynne-Jones, T.</td>
<td>Wallace, I.</td>
<td>Zoomerang-a-Boomerang</td>
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<td>Wallace, I.</td>
<td>Wallace, I.</td>
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<td>Andrews, J.</td>
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Appendix D

Role Descriptions for the Drama:
“A Day in the Life of Canadians During the Railway Strike”
Role Descriptions for the Drama:
"A Day in the Life of Canadians During the Railway Strike"

1. Railway Employee -- Saskatchewan
   It's an uncomfortable feeling when you don't know what tomorrow will bring. For the last few days you and many other railway employees have been on strike. Others may have predicted a strike, but you expected both sides to settle without actually having to be off work.

   You have your daily routine of going to work and coming home. Now, without work, that's all changed. One of your biggest worries is: How long will the strike go on?

   What do you think about the railway strike? Do you think that the employees like yourself should be legislated back to work?

2. Railway Employee (Worker)
   You have worked only one year for the railway. One of the biggest reasons that you joined the railway was that it had very good benefits, like job security. Before you worked with the railway you had been out of work for eight months. Job security is very important to you.

3. Railway Manager -- Winnipeg, Manitoba
   You are familiar with the economic problems, that is, the problems related to the amount of money that the railway has for spending right now. In order to compete with the railway system in the United States, you believe that the Canadian railway system has to cut back on expenses (money for costs like paychecks and job security). While you do not ask for cutbacks in salaries (paychecks), you are asking for cutbacks for job security.

4. Police Officer -- Toronto, Ontario
   Ever since the beginning of the railway strike life at work has been hectic. Today you have been busy conducting traffic, writing parking tickets for illegally parked cars, and talking to angry and impatient drivers. You've been asked to work overtime, even thought the family wanted you home on time just this once. That will have to wait. The coffee shop where you go for your break was really hopping. You met another police officer there and found out that that person's experience was similar to yours.

   What do you think about the railway strike? Do you think that the employees should be legislated back to work?

5. Farmer -- Manitoba
   It's not easy being a farmer these days. You have to trust that the weather will be kind to the crops. Sometimes there is too much rain; other times there is not
enough rain. You need to have money for the latest farm equipment. You have to be careful of safety at all times -- farming is a dangerous job! You have to be sure that what you are farming will be sold somewhere in Canada or to people in another country.

As if there weren’t enough problems, now you worry about the wheat that can’t be shipped by rail. Add that to the weather, the equipment, the safety problems, and selling the product. Talk about stress!

What do you think about the railway strike? Do you think that the employees should be legislated back to work?

6. Doctor (Stress Specialist) -- Newfoundland
It’s not only the money that will be lost as a result of the railway strike.

Such increased stress creates health problems for people all over the country.
• Uncertainty and worry, for most of us, is a big cause of stress.
• People in some jobs don’t know whether they will have a job tomorrow.
• People in some businesses don’t know whether they can keep the promises they have made to deliver products.
• People have to change their routines to make other travel arrangements.
• People have to get up earlier and come home later because of their substitute travel arrangements. Some people have to live away from home for several days.

7. Travel Agent -- Nova Scotia
Who would have guessed how the railway strike could affect the travel agency in Nova Scotia? You’re in the middle of a big advertising campaign to get tourists to visit your beautiful province this summer. Meanwhile, nobody is making reservations, although the summer is a long way off. Some customers have made reservations to travel as far west as British Columbia, but now their plans have to be changed. You have a partnership with a travel agency in Germany, because there have been quite a few visitors from Germany who stop first in Nova Scotia and then begin a train trip across Canada. Nobody is booking any trips. Since the beginning of the railway strike, business for the travel agency has not been good.

8. Ford Company Employee -- Oakville, Ontario
You support the employees at the railway, workers like yourself, who are on strike. They belong to a union which, after many months of negotiations back and forth with the management, decided that a strike was necessary. Even though it means that you have less work yourself this week, at least your company is still giving you a paycheck. You hope that the workers at the railway get the job security they want, just like you hope to keep the job security that you have.

9. Coal Miner -- Alberta
You are familiar with a daily routine of time for work and time for home. Will the coal mine close down because the coal can’t be delivered from the mine to the port? Will you still get a paycheck? What will you do while you’re waiting to go back to work, if the mine shuts down for a few days? What do you think should be done about the railway strike?

10. Liberal Member of Parliament -- New Brunswick
You are trying to get legislation passed in the House of Commons, which then has to be passed in the Senate, in order to put an end to the railway strike.

Unfortunately, the Members of Parliament from the Bloc Quebeceois are trying to stall (slow down) this process. First of all, they did not want the introduction of this legislation until they had plenty of time to read and digest what it meant. Secondly, they believe in the right to strike, which they say should be respected. Thirdly, they insist that the government will provide for a mediator to settle the dispute, rather than sending the employees back to work without mediation.

11. Bloc Quebeceois Member of Parliament -- Quebec
You are a Member of Parliament from the Official Opposition, the Bloc Quebeceois. The Labour Minister, from the Liberal Party, is trying to get legislation passed which would order the railway employees back to work and put an end to the strike.

You are trying to stall (slow down) this process. First of all, your party did not want the introduction of this legislation until they had plenty of time to read and digest what it meant. Secondly, you believe in the right to strike, which must be respected. Thirdly, you insist that the government will provide for a mediator to settle the dispute, rather than sending the employees back to work without mediation. (A mediator listens to both sides and then tries to come up with a compromise.)

12. Labour Minister, Liberal Party -- Ottawa, Ontario
You are trying to get legislation passed in the House of Commons, which then has to be passed in the Senate, in order to put an end to the railway strike.

Unfortunately, the Members of Parliament from the Bloc Quebeceois are trying to stall (slow down) this process. First of all, they did not want the introduction of this legislation until they had plenty of time to read and digest what it meant. Secondly, they believe in the right to strike, which they say should be respected. Thirdly, they insist that the government will provide for a mediator to settle the dispute, rather than sending the employees back to work without mediation.

13. Television Reporter -- Ottawa
You are trying to keep up with the happenings in Parliament. The Minister of Labour (in the Liberal Party) wants legislation to be passed by the House of Commons to send the railway employees back to work. The Bloc Quebeceois opposes the legislation unless a change can be made to have a mediator work
with both sides on the railway dispute (controversy). Even when the legislation is passed in the House of Commons, a bill still has to be passed in the Senate before the legislation back to work takes effect. How many days will all of this take? How many companies are closing down because they can’t get their goods delivered on time? How many workers are out of work across the country? How does this affect the families from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast -- in every Canadian province? People all across Canada have been talking to TV reporters like you about what they think about the railway strike.

14. Loblaws Employee -- Prince Edward Island
So the railway strike has come to this, has it? Now there’s a shortage of toothpaste and kleenex in your Loblaws store. What will be affected next? Is the store going to raise the cost of toothpaste and kleenex? If you don’t have toothpaste, what can you use instead? What about a sale on apples? Has your store manager thought of suggesting apples for people to clean their teeth? Maybe you could win a prize for making such a good suggestion!

What do you think about the railway strike? Should the railway employees be legislated back to work?

15. Banker
You are worried about how much money the railway strike is costing people all over the country. This isn’t just thousands or millions of dollars. If the shutdown of many companies continues, the country could be robbed of between 3 and 5 billion dollars! About 30% or one-third of the goods produced in Canada are shipped by rail. Our country has enough money problems already! This is just going to make life more difficult.

What do you think about the railway strike? Should the railway employees be legislated back to work?

16. Exporter -- Vancouver, British Columbia
You are worried about the rippling effect of the railway strike. The rippling effect occurs because one problem leads to another and then another on down the line. For example, when the railroad does not deliver the wheat to the port, then the ships cannot carry the wheat to other countries in the world. When Canada cannot keep its promises for exporting goods to other countries, then other countries lose their respect for us. It takes a long time to build up respect, but it can all go down the drain in a hurry. Companies within Canada also need wheat. Just think of all the food companies that need wheat for flour! And then imagine the families that need that flour for baking birthday cakes! Every family is affected by this railway strike. In no time there could be a shortage of toothpaste in some stores, because deliveries could not be made.

Right now you are busy on the phone and at the computer, trying to make plans for companies to receive the goods that you had expected would have arrived yesterday.
What do you think about the railway strike? Should the railway employees be legislated back to work?

17. Daycare Employee -- Whitby, Ontario
When you arrived at work this morning fifteen minutes before the daycare was scheduled to open, you noticed a line of cars parked on the street. Parents with their kids had arrived early because the parents had to make other arrangements to get to work. They couldn’t take the Go Train to downtown Toronto, because the railway was shut down.

Some of the kids were still asleep. You worry about the extra stress that the railway is placing on families like these. It was dark when the kids arrived at the Daycare, and it will be getting dark by the time some of the kids get picked up. How long will they get to see their parents before it’s bedtime?

We’re talking about ordinary Canadians being affected by the railway strike. What do you think about the railway strike? Should the railway employees be legislated back to work?

18. Parking Lot Attendant -- Toronto, Ontario
Because of the railway strike, many people who have been taking the Go Train into downtown Toronto have had to try to make other travel arrangements. There has been much more traffic than usual, including carpools of people coming from Hamilton and Burlington (west of Toronto) and Oshawa and Pickering (east of Toronto). This is your problem: once they get downtown, they need a place to park. Some of your regular customers can’t find parking because of all the extra people who want to use your parking lot.

How do you feel about the railway strike?

Since the railway strike started, you have seen much more traffic than usual on your regular route. It takes several light changes to make a left turn. Even with the extra buses that have been put on the busy routes, passengers wait in long line-ups to get onto a bus. Most people seem to understand that you can only drive as fast as the traffic, but some people complain because they are late, because they have waited so long, and because they are just plain tired.

20. Truck Driver -- Montreal, Quebec
Because of the railway strike, this is the second day this week that you couldn’t go to work. So you won’t be paid for today. Usually, you pick up goods at the railway station and deliver them on a regular route around Quebec. Since the trains aren’t running, you have no goods to pick up. The companies that you deliver to are getting rather panicky, because they need those goods. They keep calling your company to find out when they can expect the goods to be received.
Carpool Driver -- Oshawa, Ontario
It seems as if you have been stuck in traffic all day. It's your turn to drive your neighbours to work in downtown Toronto. Unfortunately, you hate driving, especially in city traffic. That's why you always take the Go Train. (Usually, you get a chance to listen to your Walkman, read the newspaper, and gradually make the change between home and work.) Then there's the people in the back seat. They have the nerve to complain about your driving! Just wait until it's their turn!

How do you feel about the railway strike? Do you think that the employees be legislated back to work?

Parent -- Hamilton, Ontario
Even though you left work early, you just picked up your son from the daycare centre -- almost an hour later than usual. Because the traffic downtown and on the Q.E.W. was so slow, you were just lucky that you arrived at the daycare when you did. You noticed that even though the daycare is supposed to be closed by then, there were still other kids there, waiting to be picked up. It's getting dark.

Today is your son's birthday. His friends will be arriving in just a little while for the birthday party. Your wife was looking after the birthday cake -- or were you? She said something about being out of flour to bake the cake. Maybe you should stop at Loblaws on the way home to pick up a cake. When you phoned from the daycare centre, your wife still wasn't home. She's probably stuck in traffic, too!