

LITERARY UNDERSTANDING AND LITERATURE INSTRUCTION

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The study reported here involved a school and university collaboration. It sought to understand the types of principles underlying effective literature instruction that emphasizes the development of students' reasoning abilities in the context of their understanding of literature. I begin with a review of the theories of instruction and of literary understanding that underlie the research, and move from there to a consideration of the work itself.

Teaching the Process of Literary Understanding

This entire project is based upon a sociocognitive view of learning (Langer, 1985, 1986, 1987b, 1989, in press a). Such a view is heavily influenced by Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and the neo-Vygotskians (e.g., Rogoff, 1990; Scribner & Cole, 1980; Wertsch, 1985) who carry on after him, on Bruner and his students' (Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1956; Bruner, 1986) work on concept development, on work in language acquisition (e.g., Brown, 1973; Weir, 1962), and on work studying issues of language and culture (e.g., Labov, 1972; Gumperz, 1982). It sees learning as being socially based, and cognition (in particular, ways of thinking) as growing out of those socially-based experiences. Within social settings, children learn how different forms of knowledge are used and communicated – what counts as knowing and what that knowledge “looks like.” As children learn to manipulate the tools of language to serve the functions and reach the ends they see modeled around them, their ability to think and reason develops in a culturally appropriate way; they use certain cognitive strategies to structure their thoughts, and not others. Ways of thinking appropriate to a particular culture are learned, while others (those that are unproductive for successful knowing and communicating in that culture) are not practiced and learned. Learners' cognitive uses are selective, based upon the uses to which literacy is put within a community, and the learners' beliefs about “what counts” within that community. Thus, as children learn to interpret and use the linguistic signs and symbols of the

culture, they become part of the community (see Langer, 1987b; in press a).

This view leads to a substantive change in the ways in which literacy learning and issues of schooling are addressed. It forces us to look at ways in which literacy is used, what is valued as knowing, how it is demonstrated and communicated, and the kinds of thinking as well as of content knowledge that result. Because schooling is an important context in which “academically sanctioned” literate thought and literary discourse take place, we need to understand the sociocognitive context of that schooling – the ways of thinking encouraged in literature classrooms and the goals and values of the classroom discourse community.

The Current Context for Literature Instruction

While the English language arts have witnessed extensive reform during the past 20 years, this reform has focused primarily on writing instruction. And despite the fact that nearly 75% of the writing that goes on in English classes is writing about literature, the teaching and learning of literature has been largely ignored. Thus, the conventional wisdom about effective approaches to teaching the English language arts is schizophrenic – discussions about writing instruction emphasize process-oriented approaches that focus on students’ thinking, while the teaching of literature remains dominated by text-based approaches that focus on “right” answers and predetermined interpretations (Applebee, 1989; in press). Until recently, there have been few attempts to reconceptualize literature instruction in light of relevant research on the processes of making meaning in reading and writing, or in light of major movements within literary theory itself.

Process conceptualizations of reading and writing (Spiro, Bruce, & Brewer, 1980; Gregg & Steinberg, 1980) see text understanding and production as constructive processes that develop over time. Such views move the goal of instruction from ensuring that students interpret texts in a single “correct” manner toward helping them learn to explore their growing understandings of the pieces they read and study and write.

The work of a number of scholars from a variety of fields and theoretical frameworks has begun to converge on these issues. Duckworth (1987), from a neo-Piagetian framework, argues that all learning is constructivist. It is the individual’s own inquiry that is at the root of learning, the source of understanding, and the development of the mind. We need, she says, to stimulate

learners toward genuine inquiry, and can teach them best when we learn ways to support their own ideas and directions. Rogoff (1990), from a neo-Vygotskian perspective, posits that cognitive development is an apprenticeship. It occurs through guided participation in social activity, with participants who support and stretch learners' understandings. Willinsky (1990), from the perspective of school literacy programs, argues for a "new literacy" consisting of programs that actively engage students in reading and writing – programs that "produce hours of focused discussions, reams of notes and drafts, scores of performances and publications" (pp. 7-8). He calls for instructional programs that foster a new level of literate engagement, with less intellectual authority in the environment and greater voice to the students' developing thoughts.

These views are consonant with those of John Dewey (1915) and the student-centered educational theorists of the early 20th century who called for experience-based curricula and students' active engagement in learning. However, almost a century of interdisciplinary research into the processes of language and learning (see Langer & Allington, in press, for a discussion of this issue) provides the basis for a reconceptualization of instructional theories in a way that moves well beyond that early work. Several movements in language education (including literature-based reading instruction, whole language approaches, and the integrated language arts) are examples of active attempts to put these notions into practice, and their growing popularity is due in large part to an emphasis on students' central role in the construction of meaning.

Most instruction, however, has a different emphasis. Applebee (1984) found that students are often asked simply to display their knowledge rather than to explain, defend, or elaborate on what they are learning. Langer and Applebee (1987) and Langer (in press b) report that teachers tend to focus on particular content to be learned to the neglect of ways in which their students think about that content. Rather than developing a rich web of meaning in which new knowledge becomes part of an available background for interpretation of new experiences, students are taught content in isolation from processes of comprehension and interpretation. And Marshall (1989; Marshall, Klages, & Fehlman, 1990) found that despite teachers' intentions to use discussion for students' self-discovery and deeper analysis of the texts being read, in practice teachers maintain control of the topics discussed, the points focused on, and the pace as well as organization of the class meetings. Related results are evident in the last two national assessments that focused specifically on literature. In the 1980 assessment (National Assessment

of Educational Progress, 1981), students demonstrated little ability to formulate extended and well-defended interpretations of literature. In the 1986 assessment (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1987) they demonstrated a limited degree of recognition of major themes, characters, authors, and works from the Western literary tradition. It seems, in other words, that current approaches may be leading to the development neither of sufficient background information nor of adequate skills of interpretation and analysis. What students seem to have developed instead is a set of superficial reading skills that allows them to answer multiple choice comprehension questions about the selections they encounter, together with a vocabulary of technical terms (character, theme, setting) that they can use in limited contexts, but cannot use effectively in developing their own interpretations. In many ways this behavior is a sensible reaction to instructional demands; students have developed a “response to literature scaffold – an ordered ‘ladder’ on which to hang the ‘key school words’ which are appropriate in responding to a predictable ‘school-type’ question” (Langer, 1982).

Yet, if skills of interpretation and critical analysis are to be taught more effectively, recent research indicates that the study of literature can be a particularly productive way to do so. Literature is an inviting medium, both in content and structure, in which all students can productively develop, analyze, and defend interpretations. However, to do so, notions of “what counts” as knowing will need to change.

The teaching of literature became formalized as a mandated part of the English curriculum in American schools in the late 1800s (see Applebee & Purves, in press, for a review). Since that time, the major debates that have focused on the teaching of literature have centered on the relative contribution of the text and the reader’s own understanding to “good” reading. For example, one set of text-centered approaches, New Critical approaches, involve close and careful textual analyses of different sorts. They focus on the text as the source of knowledge, and are an example of one set of movements within literary criticism, themselves unconcerned with issues of instruction, that have been used to formulate educational goals and approaches to teaching. By and large, such text-focused approaches emerge from the view that there is a “message” in the text that needs to be extracted by the reader who must learn to follow certain procedures to arrive at meaning. In this case, the analytic procedure becomes the focus of instruction. Another text-centered school approach to literature relies upon already agreed upon interpretations of works, and urges teachers to rely upon those interpretations as the focus of instruction, so that students

will learn to read in ways that invoke those interpretations. Instruction focuses on content – on the received interpretation itself.

In contrast, approaches that focus on the reader (e.g., reader response theory) consider meaning to reside in the reader (e.g., Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1971) or in the transaction between reader and text (e.g., Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938/1978), with the readers' interpretations as evidence of good reading. In the first case, any well-argued interpretation would be as good as any other; in the second, accountability to the text does not determine one correct interpretation, but does set limits. Transactive approaches have received extensive emphasis in the recent pedagogical literature (Britton, 1970; Diaz & Hayhoe, 1988; Hynds, 1989, 1990; Muldoon, 1990; Probst, 1988), and represent the critical view most consonant with current research on reading comprehension as an interactive and constructive process. It is also the literary approach that has contributed most significantly to my work on the learning and teaching of literature.

Understanding Literature

If literature instruction has been limited in its goals and approaches, this has been in good part a reflection of a dearth of research into the nature of literary understanding and its contribution to the developing intellect. Too often, literature instruction has been considered only as a way to indoctrinate students into the cultural knowledge, good taste, and elitist traditions of our society (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Ravitch & Finn, 1987), neglecting the role of literature instruction in the development of the sharp and critical mind. Thus the potentially significant contribution of the teaching of literature to current educational reform has been marginalized.

However, there is evidence from a number of sources that the processes involved in understanding literature are a natural and necessary part of the well-developed intellect. The philosopher Suzanne Langer (1967) describes human feelings and understandings as emanating both from outside the individual and from within. She refers to these as objective and subjective experience, explaining that together they create a unity of meaning. However, the different starting points (the objective outer world and the subjective inner world) lead to related but somewhat different approaches to making meaning.

Several scholars who have examined language and meaning have distinguished between these two universes of discourse. For example, Suzanne Langer (1942), in her work on the process of

symbolization, distinguishes between presentational and discursive techniques; Rosenblatt (1978), focusing on the reader's role, distinguishes between aesthetic and efferent reading; and Britton (1970), in his work on the development of language abilities, distinguishes between spectator and participant roles. Although developed for different purposes, each set of distinctions focuses on qualitative differences between experiences that have literary or informative purposes. Each describes on the one hand a situation where the language-user engages in a lived-through experience of literature, and on the other hand holds meaning apart, in quest of a more rational or logical understanding.

Bruner (1986) argues that these contexts, involving what he calls narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought, provide distinctively different and complementary ways of viewing reality. Full understanding, he suggests, is better achieved by using both the ordered thought of the scientist and the humanely inquisitive thought of the storyteller. The paradigmatic mode offers facts, objectivity, logical proofs, and reasoned hypotheses, while from the study of literature comes understanding of the "vicissitudes of human intention" (p. 17). Britton (1983) similarly contrasts the linear, rule-governed thought of the scientist with the many-sidedness of literary thought, suggesting the complexity of the latter is necessary for understanding the human experience. It is the focus on the human situation described by each of these scholars that suggests the particular power of literature to draw the individual into the experience, reaffirming the status of literature as one of the most natural and productive ways in which we make sense of and share our understandings of the world.

A few studies have also provided evidence that the processes involved in the understanding of literature are productive in dealing with the problems of everyday life. Elstein, Shulman, and Sprafka (1978), for example, have shown that physicians who usually take a "logical" approach to diagnosis turn to "storytelling" to help understand complex problems; the thinking processes involved in such storytelling are a productive alternative to their usual approaches to problem solving. Orr (1987a, b) studied the ways in which technicians who repair highly complex machines go about building their understanding of the problem. He similarly suggests that stories are remembered and told during the diagnosis of the problem, and that individual expertise involves the ability to abstract important clues from the context of the stories.

Putnam (1978), studying practical reasoning, argues that literary understanding, with its attention to knowledge about how people live, is a critical component of scientific thought, and

that imagination and sensibility are essential instruments of practical reasoning. Dworkin (1983), in related work, argues that the understanding of law can be enhanced by “literary” readings, and calls for lawyers to read legal documents through literary-interpretive as well as logical-analytic means.

Although these concerns about the nature of literary understanding and its contribution to thinking and problem solving in general are provocative, they have not been sufficiently well-developed to drive new conceptualizations of the role of literature in the curriculum, nor of how to teach it. While each of the works cited above refers to literary understanding and describes it in a general sense, none explains the reasoning strategies involved in literary understanding in a way that can inform educational change. To provide such explanations, I have undertaken a series of studies (Langer, 1989, 1990, in press b), which will be reviewed below. The studies explored the processes involved in coming to understand literature (the works generally taught in literature classes) and compared them with the process of coming to understand in other coursework, especially science and social studies. Rather than examining the expressed content of students’ understandings, the focus was on the approaches they use to develop that understanding during the reading of works for either literary or informational purposes.

Reading as Envisionment-Building

To study the process of literary understanding, it was necessary to first specify a theoretical orientation to the process of understanding. The orientation I have taken (see Langer, 1989) grows from a constructivist view; it sees reading as an experience of envisionment building, of growing understandings that change over time. Envisionment building is an act of becoming – where questions, insights, and understandings develop as the reading progresses, while understandings that were once held are subject to modification, reinterpretation, and even dismissal (Fillmore, 1981; Iser, 1978; Langer, 1985, 1987a, 1989; Langer, Bartolome, Vasquez, & Lucas, 1990; Suleiman, 1980). Envisionment refers to the understanding a reader has about a text at a particular point in time: what the reader understands, the questions that develop, and the hunches that arise about how the piece might unfold. The envisionments change as the reading progresses because as reading continues some information is no longer important, some is added, and some is reinterpreted. What readers come away with at the end of a reading includes what

they understand, what they don't, and the questions and hunches they still have. Therefore, the "end-of-reading" envisionment is also subject to change. Thus, if one wishes to understand this act of interpretation, it is necessary to examine reading experiences across time, as the reader traverses the course of meaning-making.

Stances in the Process of Interpretation

From this orientation, I studied the ways in which envisionments develop – how meanings grow from the reader's vantage point. Middle and high school students from inner city as well as suburban schools engaged in interviews and think-alouds focusing on their experiences during their reading of short stories, poems, social studies texts, and science texts. Findings indicated that during reading, there were a series of relationships readers took toward the text, each adding a somewhat different dimension to the reader's growing understanding of the piece. These stances were recursive rather than linear (they had the potential to recur at any point in the reading), and together provided different kinds of knowledge – enriching the reader's developing envisionments. The four major stances in the process of understanding are described below. (Examples are taken from an 11th-grade student's reading of "I See You Never," by Ray Bradbury).

Being Out and Stepping Into an Envisionment

In this stance, readers attempt to make contacts with the world of the text by using prior knowledge, experiences, and surface features of the text to identify essential elements (e.g., genre, content, structure, language) in order to begin to construct an envisionment.

"The soft knock – which means maybe he's not a mean person, a soft person."

"Obviously there's something going on, because maybe Mr. Ramirez got arrested."

Being In and Moving Through an Envisionment

In this stance, readers are immersed in their own understandings, using their previously constructed envisionment, prior knowledge, and the text itself to further their creation of

meaning. As they read, meaning-making moves along with the text; readers are caught up in the narrative of a story or are carried along by the argument of an informative text.

“No, he wouldn’t be staying at Mrs. O’Brian’s house if he were a drug smuggler because she doesn’t like dirty things in the house. . . . He’s obviously an illegal alien.”

“The only time he shows affection is when he says thank you.”

Stepping Back and Rethinking What One Knows

In this stance, readers use their envisionments to reflect on their own previous knowledge or understandings. Rather than background knowledge informing their envisionments as in the other stances, in this case readers use their envisionments to rethink their prior knowledge.

“I hate policemen. . . . Not that I’ve dealt with them many times in my life, but what they’re doing to Mr. Ramirez makes me not trust them. . . .”

“Last week in Washington I didn’t want to come back. Now I know why.”

Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience

In this stance, readers distance themselves from their envisionments, reflecting on and reacting to the content, to the text, or to the reading experience itself.

“The whole story is very sad.”

“I still don’t know what relationship they have.”

Over time, across the reading of an entire piece, readers weave a growing web of understandings. (See Table 1 for an overview of stances.) It is woven through the variety of recursive stances a reader takes along the way. It is through these shifting relationships between self and text that readers structure their own understandings, gain different kinds of knowledge, and enrich their growing responses.

| Table 1 Stances in the Process of Understanding | |
|--|---|
| <u>Stance</u> | <u>Strategies</u> |
| Being Out and Stepping into an Envisionment | forms tentative questions and associations in attempt to build text world |
| Being In and Moving Through an Envisionment | uses local envisionments and personal knowledge to build and elaborate understandings |
| Stepping Back and Rethinking What One Knows | uses growing understandings to rethink previously held ideas, beliefs, or feelings |
| Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience | distances self from text to examine, evaluate, or analyze the reading experience or aspects of the text |

The stances can be used to describe less as well as more proficient readers (Langer, in press c; Purcell-Gates, 1990). However, less proficient readers may be easily “dislodged” from their envisionments by unexpected information, difficult words, unfamiliar concepts, or complex organizational structures. They are thus more likely to resort to the first stance or not to move beyond it at all, trying to gain enough background information to return to an envisionment. Because these stances represent the strategies all readers engage in as they make sense, they have the potential to help us understand where to provide instructional support in response to students’ sense-making.

Literary and Informational Orientations

While the stances describe the relationships between readers and texts for all types of reading, readers’ particular concerns, and thus their orientations toward meaning, differ substantially when they are reading for literary as opposed to other purposes. In any reading, the reader is not only guided by the local envisionment as it exists at that point in time, but also by the reader’s sense of the whole. And the role of that overall sense is quite different in the two contexts.

Exploring a horizon of possibilities

When reading primarily to engage in the literary experience, the sense of the whole changes and develops as the envisionment unfolds – it exists as a constantly moving horizon of possibilities. (See Iser, 1978; Langer, 1990 for discussions of horizon.) These possibilities change over time, emerging out of the developing envisionment of the human situation as reflected in the characters, events, and relationships portrayed in the text. In literary readings, readers clarify their ideas as they read and relate them to the growing and changing horizon – the horizon modifies the parts and the parts modify the horizon. In doing this, readers continually explore possibilities, see many sides, and go beyond their envisionments; they focus on the human situation and the complex meanings embedded in it.

Maintaining a point of reference

When reading primarily to gain information, on the other hand, the sense of the whole is used to provide a steady reference point. As the envisionment unfolds, readers use this sense as a focal point around which to organize their growing understandings. New information might clarify the sense of the whole, but rarely changes it. From early on, readers establish their sense of the topic or the slant the author is taking and use this judgment to monitor their growing envisionments. Once established, it takes a good deal of countervailing evidence before readers revise their sense of the whole.

Although both purposes (to engage in the literary experience and to gain information) can interplay during any one experience, each situation seems to have a primary purpose, with other goals being secondary. For example, when reading a personal account for history class in order to gain facts about polar exploration, students may sometimes get so caught up in the day-to-day travails being described that they “live through” the experience along with the author. However, because their primary purpose is to gain particular information, their primary orientation toward meaning is point of reference. It is perfectly possible that at other times, for example when reading the same account in their literature class – this time to understand the joys, anxieties, and fears the explorer experienced – their primary orientation would likely involve the exploration of possibilities, although at times they might also do some point of reference reading for particular

information. (See Table 2 for an overview of orientations toward meaning.) It is the primary purpose, however, that shapes the reader’s overall orientation toward (and expectation about) meaning.

| Table 2 Orientations Toward Meaning | |
|--|--|
| <p>Literary: Reaching Toward a Horizon of Possibilities</p> | <p>Readers explore both their local envisionments and their overall sense of the whole as they enter into and reflect upon their text worlds.</p> |
| <p>Informative: Maintaining a Point of Reference</p> | <p>Readers clarify their ideas and construct their text worlds by relating what they read to their relatively stable sense of the topic or point of the piece.</p> |

The findings on stances in the process of interpretation and on distinctions between readers’ differing orientations toward meaning offered promising directions from which to build a theory of literature instruction that seeks to support students’ intellectual growth. Such instruction could focus on students’ abilities to engage in the sorts of reasoning and problem solving that are an intrinsic part of the literary experience.

The Study

The study reported here represents the first step in developing such a theory of instruction which began with a set of goals for instruction based on the work summarized above: we wanted students to engage in the active exploration of possibilities in their reading and discussion of literature, to become critical readers who would be confident in developing and supporting their own interpretations of the selections they read; and to learn how to use the comments and reactions of other readers to enrich and elaborate upon their own point of view. We also began with a belief, based on the sociocognitive view of learning outline above, that teaching students to read, think, and discuss in these ways would require a restructuring of the pattern of uses of

language and of social interactions characterizing classroom contexts. Previous work and theory, however, provided little detailed guidance on the ways that teachers might structure such instruction, or on the strategies that would be effective in reshaping the underlying goals and expectations in discussions of literary texts.

To discover the most effective ways to achieve these ends, the study involved a two-year intensive collaboration between classroom teachers and university-based researchers. The collaboration focused around one major question: How can we best shape instruction in order to attain these goals for student performance? In turn, the present report will describe the commonalities that seemed to be most essential across those classroom episodes where students did seem to be engaged in the thoughtful exploration of possibilities that we were seeking.

Thus the study describes the characteristics of classrooms (beliefs about knowing, uses of language, and social interactions) where students are encouraged to enter the world of literature as they explore possibilities and move beyond their initial understandings. Using the notions of stances and orientations as ways to begin to conceive of the processes of literary understanding, the study describes what students' thinking looks like in the context of daily classroom activities, as well as the principles of pedagogy that supported such thinking. Because we sought to describe pedagogical commonalities across situations in which such thinking occurred, the research focus was limited to only those instructional situations in which students were engaged in the exploration of possibilities. Thus, *that* we observed instances of literary instruction that supported student understanding was no surprise; our purpose was to describe the nature of the instructional interactions and intentions that *permitted* such instances to occur.

Participants

Across two years, 14 teachers, seven research assistants and I worked collaboratively to find ways in which students could be helped to engage in critical thinking about literature. The teachers had volunteered to participate in the project because they were interested in rethinking their approaches to literature instruction and wanted to become involved in the development of activities that supported active response and reasoning. During the first year eight teachers participated. Four were middle school and four were high school teachers, half working in a city and half in a suburban school district. During the second year, four of these teachers continued to

work on the project (2 middle and 2 high school), and another 6 joined the project (2 middle, 2 high school, 1 reading specialist, and 1 college level educational opportunity/ basic skills teacher). An equal balance of middle and high school and city and suburban localities was maintained across both years. The two other classes were added because these teachers expressed an interest in joining the project, providing us with additional opportunity to examine the teaching of literature to “traditionally underachieving” students. When the teachers joined the project they had from 5 to 25 years of teaching experience, with a mean of 16.5 years. The research assistants all had teaching experience in English language arts, and were doctoral students in the Language in Education, Reading, and English programs at SUNY Albany. Each teacher selected one class, typical of those he or she generally taught, as the focus of the study. In all, over 250 students participated.

Two students from each class, deemed “average” for that class by their teacher, participated as case study students; the teachers’ ratings were corroborated by test scores and cumulative records. To enlist these students, the teachers and research assistants explained the two levels of participation we invited: 1) class study participant in which we observed the students engaging in their ongoing coursework, took fieldnotes of class activities and discussions, and occasionally tape-recorded or videotaped lessons and collected student work; and 2) case study participant which also included weekly tape recorded meetings to discuss the student’s classwork and perceptions of activities. All work done by case study students was collected and duplicated. Letters to the parents also explained both types of participation. Thus, both parents and students could decline participation, or agree to either level of participation. The 28 case study students were selected from a pool five times that size.

Setting

Half of the schools were in inner city and the other half in suburban areas. The urban student populations were heterogeneous, with 35 percent or more of the students representing various minority groups. (Most of the minority students were Black, but Hispanic, Indian, Afghani, Pakistani, and other students also attended these schools.) The city schools were within sight of office buildings and heavily trafficked roads, and many students lived close enough to walk to school. Less than one-third of the high school graduates went on to four year college. Teaching

practices and materials tended to be traditional, although there had been some recent steps toward curriculum reform. In contrast, the suburban schools tended to be homogeneous, with minority students representing less than 5 percent of the student enrollment. The schools were surrounded by greenery, and most of the students had to be bussed to school. More than half of the high school graduates went on to four year colleges. The districts continually kept apprised of new research and theory, and sponsored workshops throughout the year to serve as impetuses for a continual process of curriculum revision and reform. Despite the differences, when this study took place, all of the participating districts were open to change, and each of the participating teachers was eager to explore new approaches in their classrooms.

Instruments and Materials

Since this was a naturalistic case study, the materials were those ordinarily used in each class. The usual curriculum was followed, and the only changes grew from the teachers' efforts to help the students explore possibilities and develop interpretations. Case study methodology was used, where each class was a case unto itself, and two case study students from each class were treated as particular cases within a case. In this way, we were able to trace, across one entire school year, the interactions among the participants (teachers and students), the instructional context (the expectations, activities, artifacts, and attitudes), and the ways in which the students reacted to and interpreted classroom activities. The teachers selected the readings as usual, but the lessons and assignments were shaped by their ongoing attempts to create thought-provoking experiences for their students.

A questionnaire was developed for the teachers to complete at the beginning of the project, to gain information about their teaching experience, coursework, and instructional concerns.

Procedures

Two types of collaboration occurred throughout the year. First, each research assistant worked collaboratively with two project teachers, jointly planning new lessons and reflecting on past ones. To this collaboration, each brought a special expertise. The teacher brought a keen understanding of the students and the curriculum, and the research assistants a more ready-to-

hand knowledge of recent theory and research on literary understanding and a “second pair of eyes” to observe students’ reactions to classroom activities. Across the year, the teachers and research assistants planned approximately five instructional episodes – each episode consisting of the lessons surrounding a particular literary work. (These episodes ranged from one week to one month, depending on the work.) During these episodes, the RAs served as nonparticipant observers, taking field notes, interviewing case study students, and collecting artifacts. Tape recordings were made whenever possible. Frequent meetings were held with the teachers to share reflections on the lessons and to revise plans for future ones. Full-project team meetings (the teachers, RAs, and I) met on a weekly basis for the first semester and once a month during the second semester. During these meetings the groups discussed the findings of previous studies and related them to our own work – guiding students beyond what they already do to more critically reasoned ways of understanding literature. We also engaged in literature reading and discussion sessions of our own. These involved self-reflection on our own reading strategies, and were designed to increase our sensitivity to students’ approaches to making sense of literary texts. Finally, success and concerns from the ongoing study were shared and discussed.

Data from these collaborations consisted of baseline observations and reports of lessons before the study began, tape recordings and field notes of planning and follow-up meetings with teachers, tape-recorded discussions with case study students, field notes of class lessons and meetings, artifacts (assignments, worksheets, and student work), in-process journals written by the teachers, and end-of-year reflective reports written by the teachers.

In addition, the RAs and I met on a weekly basis for ongoing case study presentations and analyses. During these sessions, each RA was expected to present an in-progress case report about patterns of instruction and learning within classes. These were discussed by the group, in search of patterns both within and across cases. All pertinent material gathered up to that time was used as data for these in-process presentations. Minutes and artifacts of these meetings then became an additional source of data.

Design

Thus, the study involved a nested design where the class served as a case, with two student cases embedded within each case. This permitted the lessons to be analyzed from three

perspectives: the teachers', the students', and the observers'.

Analyses

One level of data analysis was ongoing, in search of possible patterns of interaction, content, and thought; this was accompanied by continual testing, revising and refinement of the patterns, by returning to the data for confirming and disconfirming examples. (Disconfirmation led to reconceptualizing the patterns.) These analyses informed, but did not limit or replace, intensive analyses of the total data set.

Because in previous studies (Langer, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1987), I have identified factors that inhibit students from thinking critically about what they are learning, this study focused on those lessons where things “went right” – in order to identify factors underlying thought-provoking experiences in the classrooms. Thus, after all the data had been collected, each lesson was screened for evidence that the students were engaged in experiences where they were developing their own understandings and interpretations (in contrast to lessons where they groped to find the answers they thought their teachers wanted). This determination was made on the basis of the students' own language during class, their comments during case study interviews, and the work they had done. The 62 resulting whole lessons (each approximately 40 minutes each) and 56 parts of lessons were then available for intensive analysis. We examined the contexts in which these lessons occurred, seeking to understand the conditions that facilitated such thinking in the following ways:

1. Analysis of the classes in action – macroanalyses and resulting descriptions of the instructional events, and the roles and interactions of the participants in those events. Here we focused on the nature of the instructional activities, how they occurred, on what they focused, what motivated them, and to what they led. (See Appendix 1 for a synopsis of one lesson.)
2. Analysis of literary stances and orientations to meaning – examination of the kinds of thinking the students were engaged in during the help sequences. Each transcript was examined for the recurring stances and orientations toward meaning in which the students engaged, and these were then related to the “signals” they provided to the teacher. (See Appendix 2 for examples.)
3. Analyses of conversational turns – segmentation of each lesson within topic, searching for “helpful” interactions and the ways in which they occurred. (See Appendix 3 for examples of topics and analyses of turns within topics.) As part of this analysis we also used approaches from previous studies to examine the particular kinds of help given. (See

Appendix 4 for instructional scaffolding categories and one sample analysis.)

4. Analysis of the field notes, interviews, and artifacts around the particular instructional lessons – these were related to the transcripts of the classroom lessons themselves, permitting a more complete understanding of the events, interactions, and activities that surrounded instruction from the teachers', students', and observers' perspectives.

The various sets of data were organized around the individual classroom lesson, providing multiple views of each particular instructional event and allowing description of instruction and thought (as well as tasks) from multiple perspectives (the teacher's, students' and observer's) over time.

Findings

Although all the schools, classrooms, teachers, and students were different, and the activities we observed were also different, there were a number of common characteristics underlying the instances where students engaged in the process of literary understanding. In such instances, the classrooms became cultural contexts that both called for and expected the active thought and participation of each student. These characteristics of effective instruction will be discussed in turn: envisionment-building was supported through discussing and writing about literature, the primary instructional focus was on the exploration of possibilities rather than maintaining a point of reference, the social contexts taught students ways to discuss and ways to think about literature, and they provided small group activities in which students could use their new knowledge and strategies on their own.

Supporting Envisionment-Building Through Discussion

Analyses indicate that when the lessons “worked” the teachers focused on the envisionments the students were building. Instruction was driven by the underlying belief that readers’ understandings change and grow with time, even after the reading has ended, and that students need to learn to become aware of their own envisionments. Because the teachers were guided by the assumption that all students are in the process of making sense of what they read and that they need to learn to reflect on and reconsider these meanings, the students were treated as thinkers, as if they could and would have interesting and cogent thoughts about the pieces they read, and

would also have questions they would like to discuss. In supporting the process of envisionment-building, the teachers provided the students with ownership for the topics of discussion, making the students' understandings the central focus of each class meeting. The ways in which they did this involved how they asked students to share initial impressions, helped them develop their own interpretations, treated the discussion of specific content, encouraged the entering of stances, and used small groups to explore ideas on their own. These will be discussed below.

Sharing Initial Impressions

In the lessons that worked, a focus on student understandings was continually the teachers' primary concern, right from the opening of the class discussion, when the students' initial impressions were sought.

The following are examples of the kinds of questions that tapped students' environments as a way to begin a lesson:

- T: What did you think about when you finished reading the story?
T: What does it mean to you?
T: What do you make of it?
T Do you have something you want to talk about today?
T So?

The thread that runs through all of these questions is the assumption that it is the students' understandings that will form the basis of discussion. In the following excerpt from an 8th-grade urban class discussion of *The White Mountains*, we can see how the teacher makes it clear from the initial questions that it is the students' understandings she is after:

- T: Who has something to share?
Chet: Will has feelings for Eloise.
Tish: He's confused.
T: Why?
Tish: Because Eloise is capped.
T: Why?
Sido: Eloise belongs to the Tripods.
Lenny: Body and soul belongs to The Enemy.

T: Before he wanted to take her with him.

Lenny &

Sido: To the White Mountains.

T: What is the significance? Why is this important to Will?

In this case and others like it, such questions prompted class discussions that began with the students' envisionments, permitting them to voice their initial responses, to hear those of others, and to extend and develop their overall understanding. For example, the teacher asking, "Why is this important to Will?" could be interpreted as either a call for recitation or a prompt for students' own thoughtful responses – depending on whether the teacher wants and accepts the students' own developing interpretations or a predetermined "right" answer. In this case, the teacher extends the dialogue to prompt the students to think further. This is conveyed over time, by her continued provocation of students' ideas (e.g., Who has something to share? Why?) and her lack of telling.

Developing Interpretations

Unlike traditional discussions that focus on "correct" interpretations and tap students' envisionments merely for diagnostic purposes, to be corrected if they differ from those of the teacher or the book, in these cases the students' initial responses were used as the basis for continuing discussion. Throughout the discussions, there were continual invitations for the students to explore and explain their ideas. The following questions are typical of those that invited students to share and build envisionments as the discussions progressed:

T: Does anyone want to respond to that particular comment?

T: Kitty, do you want to consider that?

T: Does anyone have any other thoughts about that?

The following excerpt from an 11th-grade suburban class is an example of the ways in which such questions help the students explore ideas throughout a class discussion. In this case the students are reading *The Great Gatsby*, and the teacher has asked them for comments or questions they would like to discuss. Several discussions of the book have preceded this one.

T: Okay, what are you making of the book so far?
Harry: That it's confusing.
T: You have to speak up a bit so I can hear you.
Harry: What's so great about Gatsby? That's all I want to know.
T: Do you have any guesses about what's so great about Gatsby?
Harry: Not yet.
T: Why is that?
Harry: 'Cause they haven't really given enough background on it to be able to figure it out yet.

The teacher then uses Harry's question to encourage others to respond, encouraging them to elaborate on their interpretations.

T.: Look at what is so great about Gatsby. Tell me what you think about it. That's a question I have. Rhonda? That's a question. I know Harry isn't the only one that has that question, that lots of you have.
Rhonda: I really don't know, it doesn't go into great detail. Gatsby is still a mystery. We don't know anything about it. He tries to make himself out to be this great person himself. And it's like because he's throwing all these parties and he's making himself so popular. And its more or less so far, it's like he's the one who's making himself pretty, nobody has really, you know, said, "Oh, he's great." Because you, it's just more or less him throwing these great parties and doing all different kinds of things.
T: Go ahead.
Rhonda: All his money, nothing to write about (unintelligible). I'm sure people admire that.
T: Are you saying that that's what may be great about him?
Rhonda: Part of it. . . .

Throughout this discussion of the selection, the teacher's questions further inquire into the students' concerns, helping them elaborate and explain their envisionments of the story. This openness helps them move from an initial feeling that "it's confusing" to a variety of clearly articulated comments about Gatsby's character as it emerges so far in the book.

Discussing Content

In lessons that supported the exploration of possibilities, the teachers' questions about

content build upon the content concerns the students had already raised. When they introduced new content, they did so to help the students move their own thinking along. The questions they asked tapped the content within students' envisionments rather than seeking an external "right" answer. The kinds of questions we came to call "student knowledge taps" were questions, either building upon the students' concerns or teacher-introduced content, that were designed to tap what the students understood and to prompt them to consider their understandings more fully. Such questions had no single right answers and they also prompted extended language and thought about the issues under consideration. However, this does not mean that there was no "check" on the student understandings, nor that "anything goes." Instead, the teachers elicited the students' envisionments, and then guided them to question and clarify their ideas. Such an approach is very different from telling. The following example from an 11th-grade city class discussion of *When the Legends Die* illustrates the kinds of questions the teachers asked to help the students rethink their ideas, maintaining students' envisionment-building as the focus of the lesson:

- T: Take a look at some of these things. All right. Miss Jones (Movelia), would you read, well take a look. Which one do you want to deal with first?
- Movelia: What have the Indians lost?
- T: All right, well, what have they lost? Open it up. What were they like, Orlando?
- Fern: Their freedom?
- T: What was that?
- Fern: They were made to live on reservations instead of living on the land where they wanted to live. They were told where they had to live.
- T: Could you describe it for us? What does it mean to live on the land as opposed to living on a reservation?
- Fern: Well, like how they were living in a lodge, how the boy was living in the lodge, and they made him go to a new school. They took him from where he was living and he was happy to somewhere he wasn't.
- T: Anybody else want to add to that? Does anybody have anything they want to add to it? . . .
- Tony: They lost their privacy too.

Entering Stances

Because students' envisionment-building rather than eliciting the teacher's expected responses was the goal of instruction, when the students engaged in class discussions, the

relationships they took toward the texts they were discussing recapitulated the stances and orientations that characterize the process of literary understanding during reading. Thus, the students' recursive movements through the stances and their exploration of possibilities led them to an envisionment at the end of the reading that then became the starting place for collectively exploring further understandings during the class discussion. The following segment of the beginning of a class discussion in a 7th-grade suburban school illustrates the ways in which stances and orientations characterize the students' processes in understanding:

- T: Okay, do we have something that we want to talk about today? All right, Marissa.
- S1: I didn't like the reading. I thought it was like too perfect. Like, she gets the city back and everything's just peachy-dandy. I thought something else would happen. It just didn't feel right.
- T: Charlene?
- S2: When you said peachy-dandy, it's not peachy-dandy. There are tons of problems she has to face. I mean, she's got the problem, what if the gang comes back?
- S1: Well, Tom Logan's a wimp.
- S2: Well, you've got to think about it because when they were going around doing all this other stuff, they heard mention of this other gang called the Chicago gang I think it was . . . and what if that gang comes? I mean, they're not perfect. Nothing is perfect by any means.

In this instance, a 7th-grade suburban class was discussing their reading of *Girl Who Owned a City* by O. T. Nelson. Student 1 begins with a stance 4 statement (stepping out and objectifying the experience), judging the piece and explaining why. Student 2 begins with a 4th-stance response, and then shifts to the 2nd stance (being in and moving through an envisionment), as she points out and begins to rethink a portion of the text. The third student, assuming the 2nd stance, reworks her understanding as she explains it to Student 1. In addition, each of the students adopts a literary orientation as he/she reaches toward a horizon of possibilities. The first student does this with the implicit question "What else could/should have happened?" The other two students are explicit as they raise the problem of what might have happened if the gang actually had shown up in the story. In this way, class discussion served as a time when students individually and collectively participated in reworking their interpretations, raising questions, exploring possibilities, and getting deeper into the piece by taking a variety of stances toward it.

Using Small Groups

Group discussions where students had opportunities to discuss their questions and predictions also served to support envisionment building. Sometimes these discussions focused on a topic the teacher had set, but most often they were used as opportunities for the students to discuss the predictions they had written in their journals, the questions they had that they felt they needed to discuss, or an issue related to their reading they thought would be interesting for the small group to consider. It was these small groups that often decided what topics or concerns should then be brought to the whole class for discussion. One student in one 11th-grade suburban class said:

When we have our discussions we learn a lot from each other. We can really give each other ideas. It's not just one person's ideas, it's all of them put together.

Another student said:

The first time we read it we didn't understand it very thoroughly, and then Charles Hendrix in our class kind of gave us what he thought about it, and everyone kind of said, 'Oh yeah, that's what it means.' Then we could think about it.

Supporting Envisionment-Building Through Writing

Besides discussion, a variety of writing activities, taking such diverse forms as logs, briefwrites, informal letters, reviews, written conversations, essays, and analytic papers, supported students' envisionment-building. Such experiences encouraged them to reflect on, state, defend, and rethink their envisionments, and to form their own interpretations. For example, almost all the students kept literature journals regularly. In them they wrote their questions and responses to what they were reading, using their comments as the basis for later class discussions and writing. In one 7th-grade urban class, the students were encouraged to write thought-provoking questions that would be interesting to discuss in class (Teacher: "Write thoughtful questions, not things we could just look up." And also, "Make a prediction in your journal when you put the book down. Check it later to see if that happened.")

An 11th-grade suburban class also used their literature journals regularly. During the reading

of each piece of literature, for homework, students were asked to write thoughts or questions they had. For example, when reading *The Scarlet Letter*, one student made these journal entries:

I want to know more about the man dressed like an Indian. I think he's going to try to find out who had the affair with Hester Prynne. I already know. This book is starting to get interesting.

Another student in the same class wrote:

I don't understand why Hester wants to help Dimmsdale so badly when he is responsible for her becoming an outcast in the first place.

This teacher frequently reminded her students to refer to their journals to refresh their memories and prepare for other activities. For example, in *The Scarlet Letter* episode (11th-grade suburban), journal entries were used as preparation for groupwork. (Teacher: "You've got five minds [in your group] – you've got your notebooks. Check your books first and then discuss what's on your mind." Also, "Put an asterisk by the part you want to bring out in the group.") Journals were also used in preparation for whole class discussion. (Teacher, 7th-grade urban: "I'm going to give you five minutes. Look through your journal. Use it as a jumping off place to get an overview of your ideas. Jot down a question you want to ask.") They were also used to help students share and reflect upon their interpretations. (Teacher, 11th-grade suburban: "Let's take two or three minutes to read over your reaction to chapter 15 and your reaction to it. Then share your reaction with another person and discuss your thoughts.")

Written conversations, in which students write back and forth to one another, were also useful in helping students develop their in-process envisionments. The following portion of one suburban 7th-grade written conversation is an example:

Betsy: I'm sort of behind in *Girl Who Owned a City*, so don't ruin anything for me. Okay? Well, anyway, I like the book so far. I think Lisa is a pretty good leader and has good ideas, but I'm not so sure I really like her. What do you think?

Sheila: I like the book but I don't like Lisa because she is very bossy and sort of yells at the kids when she talks.

Betsy: Sheila, I like the book but I don't like Lisa because she is very bossy and she sort of yells at the kids when she talks. What page are you on so I know. I'm on 128.

Sheila: I'm only on page 103. I guess I agree with you that Lisa is bossy but it seems as though everyone is letting her be bossy which I don't like because even in a horrible situation like that I don't see how every one can just do whatever Lisa says.

An 11th-grade city teacher asked his students to write what the play *Marty* had meant to them. Selected papers (anonymous) were read to the class for discussion. While in other kinds of writing students tended to work through their envisionments in the first and second stances (stepping in and moving through), in this type of writing, they often entered the third stance, using their envisionments to reflect on their own lives and experiences. For example, one student wrote:

In this play, I feel that some of the content has opened my eyes and heart. During parts of the play I began to think of times in my own life when I judged someone by the way they looked. It's not something done on purpose, its just ignorance. I think that Marty was a brave man, because of his ability to stand up to the people in his life and defend the woman he cares for. If more men were like Marty there would be (a lot less) fewer women w/ broken hearts. One of the Biggest changes in the play was in the short time Marty spend w/ the girl they both matured a great deal and both desided to make a big change in there life, (where Marty desides to but the shop & the girl desides to move)

Thus, in a variety of contexts, developing envisionments, exploring them, talking about them, and refining understandings underlay the very fabric of the social interactions that defined being a class member. Although other people's interpretations were discussed and considered, they were introduced and analyzed only after the students had had an opportunity to explore their own interpretations. Thus, they were able to react to these ideas through the lens of their own considered interpretations – which continued to by treated conditionally, always subject to further development.

Supporting the Exploration of Possibilities

Because the theoretical framework underlying the successful lessons viewed envisionment-building in literary contexts as involving the explorations of a horizon of possibilities, instruction focused on helping students become inquisitive and discern possibilities from their own envisionments as well as from their knowledge of the human situation. In such instances, the teachers assumed that after completing a piece, students come away with questions as well as understandings, and that responding to literature *involves* the raising of questions. Instruction, therefore, helped students not only to resolve their own uncertainties, but to go beyond their momentary envisionments and explore possibilities. Thus, class meetings were times when students were expected to take a literary orientation to meaning-making. The teachers invited

students' questions, and they did so in many contexts, throughout each reading. For example, they invited students to explore possibilities by asking them to raise questions as they were beginning a new work.

T: Look over the cover of this novel and read the one-page introduction. What questions do you have?

They also used homework as an opportunity for students to ponder possibilities and become aware of their questions. For example:

T: Read the next chapter. Come in with a question for us to discuss.

They also invited exploration of possibilities during class discussion. For example:

T: Is there anything you'd like to know more about?

T: Does anything bother you?

T: Any questions?

While in more traditional lessons students' question-asking tends to be treated negatively – signifying that a student doesn't know (the “right” answer), and therefore asking questions is often avoided by students – in these successful lessons, asking questions was considered a positive behavior, indicating that the students were recognizing uncertainties and ambiguities, and were exploring possibilities, just as *good* readers of literature do when they assume literary orientations in the process of constructing meaning.

One 7th-grade teacher in an urban school spent an entire session helping her students become aware of their uncertainties in response to their reading of *The Rocking Donkey* by Joan Aiken. She began by asking them to focus on possible explanations for the fantasy aspects of the ending, “Remember, they're just possibilities we can think about.”

T: (recalling what other students had already said) She could have snuck out of the house. She could have ridden the donkey. Now, what about this riding the donkey and never being seen again?

Sido: Well, she could have never been seen again.

T: She could have never been seen again.

Tish: She could have run away.

- T: All right.
- Sido: Well, both of them, she could have took the horse, I mean the donkey.
- T: O.K. Now, what do you think really happened? When it says “Never was seen again. . . .”
- Lenny: She left. She ran away.
- T: She left. She ran away with the donkey. Ran away. All right.
- Several: (A number of students are mumbling things and there is a pause of about 15 seconds.)
- T: (Writing) Ran away. Are there any clues earlier in the story that point to the fact that she might run away?
- Sido: Yes. The way her stepmother was treating her. She didn’t have no clothes, she had no friends . . .

The discussion continues at length in this fashion first exploring alternative possibilities and then looking for evidence for them. The teacher recorded the students’ suggestions on the board, revisiting them later in the discussion:

- T: Oh. Anybody else? All right, let’s look at these. We’ve got, these are all the possibilities of where she went. (Reading the board) she ran away, maybe because the clue might be because the stepmom’s treatment was so bad so she went to find friends. Or somebody said she could have committed suicide, but when I asked for clues from the story, nobody could come up with any, so I don’t know about that one.
- Henri: Too much pressure . . .

There was frequent reinforcement that the reading of literature involves the generation of questions, and students were encouraged to come to class prepared to ask their questions. An 11th-grade urban teacher explained this directly to the class:

When you read literature there are many unanswered questions. In time, and sometimes through talking, some of these become clearer. But there are always questions. It’s part of the way your mind works when you read literature. It’s part of what makes it interesting – even exciting.

The Role of the Teacher in Instructional Dialogue

Earlier, I discussed ways in which the students’ envisionment-building processes were supported through discussion. We can understand more clearly how the verbal interactions

operated by looking more closely at the teachers' role as facilitator of that discussion. In this study, the episodes that successfully engaged students in developing their own interpretations focused on and were shaped by the students' concerns. The role of the students was to question, explore, and rethink their initial interpretations, and the role of the teacher was to guide the students in ways to think. The relationship between the teachers and the students was one of collaborative interaction (see Langer and Applebee, 1986) where the teachers encouraged the students to work through their understandings on their own, but also helped them in appropriate ways when this was necessary, and accelerated or reduced the complexity of the task in response to what the students needed to learn. The teachers did not serve as the sole holders of knowledge, and provided almost no evaluating or correcting during the discussions. Instead, they provided scaffolding for the students, helping them do what they could not yet do alone. This scaffolding fell into two distinct types and helped the students in different ways: "ways to discuss" and "ways to think."

The "ways to discuss" scaffolds focused on social behavior, helping the students learn how to participate in a literature discussion, while the "ways to think" scaffolds provided opportunities for the students to think about the content in new and different ways, to expand their repertoire of ways to think about and explore their concerns. There is an inevitable complexity inherent in the social situations that surround classroom discussion, and multiple purposes underlie the questions teachers ask. This suggests that ways of thinking and ways of speaking are necessarily connected, but it is useful to separate out some of these related purposes in order to illuminate our understanding of the instructional nature of the situations in which they occur. Close examination reveals that there is a subtle yet real difference in primary intent behind different kinds of scaffolds. "Ways to discuss" scaffolds are essentially pragmatic; they help students learn the social rules of discussion – such as what is permissible to talk about, how to check that you are being understood, and how to take turns. In contrast, "ways to think" scaffolds provide help in cognitive procedures – in ways the students can structure or restructure their ideas. Even though these ideas may be voiced during class discussion (or written), it is how to think about them that is the focus of this kind of help – not what is appropriate to talk about or how to get it "on the floor."

Scaffolding Ways to Discuss

The teachers helped the students learn how to engage in literary discussion in their classrooms by showing them what was appropriate to talk about within the context of a thoughtful literature discussion as well as by familiarizing them with the pragmatic routines of such discussions. It was this type of scaffold that let the students know that in these classes they were expected to talk about their responses to the piece – to discuss their own ideas, and not to try to guess at “right” answers. This type of scaffolding was accomplished by tapping the students’ understanding, seeking clarification, inviting participation, and orchestrating the discussion. Each of these will be discussed below:

a. Tapping the students’ understandings – The teachers asked questions that invited the students to express their ideas, thus indicating to the students that their understandings were the important topics of concern. The following are examples of ways the teachers’ questions provided indication that discussion was to focus on student understandings:

How did it make you feel?

What ideas do you have?

Does it remind you of anything you’ve experienced or read?

The students’ understandings are the central concern of each of these questions.

b. Seeking clarification – The teachers also demonstrated that clarity of presentation counts. By asking for clarification through use of questions or restatements, the teachers helped the students learn to check to see if their stated concerns were being understood. The teachers also modeled possible ways to express the same ideas more clearly, as in the following examples:

So, you’re unhappy with the idea that there’s just one person who seems to be able to pick up the leadership, and that’s not [to use that word] realistic?

Are you saying, I’m trying to go back to where you were just a little before – Are you saying, depending on how the reader wanted to interpret the ending it was either okay and everything was fine, or, there was still many things that needed to be worked out?

c. Inviting participation – The teachers introduced the students to the pragmatics of turn taking in a literary discussion. They showed the students how to “enter” a literature discussion by signaling when and what to say, as in the following examples:

Does anyone want to respond to that particular comment?

Kitty, do you want to consider that?

d. Orchestrating the discussion – The teachers also showed the students how to sustain a literary discussion, moving beyond their initial comments and concerns. They did this by calling on students and showing them how to converse, how to connect ideas, how to agree, disagree, and extend the ideas being discussed, and how to signal this in conversation.

Darren – you wanted to say something on that topic?

One at a time.

Is that connected to what Betsy said?

In the following examples, we can see how one suburban 11th-grade teacher helped her students by explicitly commenting on the purpose of the discussion and what to talk about.

Orchestrating discussion: We're talking to each other. You're not talking to me, so let's be sure that you can be heard and that you're clear.

Tapping student understandings: First look in your journals and find one question or response that you would like to bring up for discussion.

The following excerpts similarly reflect a teacher's attempts to scaffold ways to discuss, in this case in a 7th-grade suburban classroom. The teacher began by inviting participation and then asking for clarification:

T: What do you think, Chuck?

Chuck: Well, if he got as much money as he wanted, he could just go and buy a shirt.

He also sought clarification:

T: Do you mean you saw a connection with the king? I didn't follow you.

Chuck: Well, they do have them.

Crystal: Yes, there are kings and happiness in both stories.

In each case, the teacher's comments not only provided guidance for the students at that moment, but served as general models for ways in which discussions in those particular classrooms were meant to proceed. In essence, then, the teacher was helping the students learn

the conventions of a particular kind of academic discourse.

Scaffolding Ways to Think

In lessons supporting the exploration of possibilities, the teachers also provided systematic help in ways to think about the content. They did this by providing the students with more sophisticated ways to think about and refine the ideas with which they (the students) were concerned. Although some attention to students' thinking inevitably occurred concurrently with "ways to discuss" scaffolding (students were not expected to discuss nothing), the focus on ideas was not the central point. In contrast, when the teachers' main focus was on "ways to think," their concerns about their students' pragmatic discussion strategies were less the issue. Rather, the emphasis was on helping students rethink their ideas, providing them with suggested routines for doing so. The strategies the teachers used to scaffold "ways to think" included focusing, shaping, linking, and upping the ante. Each of these will be discussed below:

a. Focusing – Sometimes the students had a particular idea they wanted to discuss, but presented it within a very general or rambling commentary. This often occurred when a student initiated an idea, but did not know how to flag it as the critical concern, and thus the meaning was unclear. The teachers provided scaffolding by helping the students focus – to narrow in on the particular concern they wanted to discuss. We can see how Jimmy's teacher (7th-grade suburban) helps him focus in his discussion of *The Girl Who Owned a City*. Although Jimmy wanted to indicate that Tom Logan made his decision all by himself, without the influence of the other children, he got caught up in telling the details of that part of the story instead of focusing on his interpretation. His teacher helped.

Jimmy: It wasn't really warring it, with Tom Logan and all. Tom Logan was standing there with a gun, and he could have blew Lisa's head off right there. But he, but because of what Lisa was saying, he'd realized what he was doing, and he put the gun down and left.

T: So it wasn't . . .

Jimmy: It wasn't because of war, it wasn't like guns and everything.

T: You're saying it wasn't what the children did then?

Jimmy: Yeah, it was, she just came in and talked to him and he actually dug into himself and found out it was true what she was saying.

Betsy's teacher helped her focus on what she meant by unreal.

Betsy: I sort of agree with Sheila, because the end is like, unreal, okay? Unreal. I'm not gonna say anything.

T: Why? What bothered you about whether it was realistic or not?

In both cases, the teacher's questions served to help the students move beyond their initial comments in a way that would make their ideas clearer to themselves and better understood by others.

b. Shaping – Even when students were able to focus on a clear concern, sometimes they had difficulty presenting it in a way that made their point. Thus, the teachers also helped the students take the ideas they were focusing on and shape them into a tighter argument or presentation.

In the following example, Neisha, an 11th-grade suburban student, is trying to work through Hester Prynne's predicament in *The Scarlet Letter*. Her teacher pushes her to be more explicit and then offers her two alternative ways to think about her argument.

Neisha: They're being tormented, they don't know who the other is. And you know, she does. I think she's better off. I think she think she ought to find herself a new man.

T: What, Neisha?

Neisha: I think she ought to find herself a new man.

T: Neisha, you spoke earlier about the names. But I don't, (I) wonder whether you're talking about the names had to do with just what is Hester's real name, or what is Chillingworth's real (name).

Neisha: Or whether the people in the town really know who he is, and why they suspect, well now I know. Because they all think he's dead, or they think he's lost at sea, and I didn't understand that before.

c. Linking – Students often had points they were making, but did not use all the information available to them from other portions of the text, from the discussion, from other classwork, or from other readings, in order to elaborate on their ideas or gain new insights. In this type of scaffolding, the teachers helped the students learn how to take ideas they as well as others had stated (and other experiences and knowledge they had available) and consider them for use in their own developing interpretations.

In the following example, Henri's teacher (7th-grade urban school) intercedes to help him pay attention to the information other students are offering as he clarifies his own response to *The*

Duel by Emily Dickinson.

- Henri: (Reads) “. . . but myself was all the one that fell. Was it Goliath was too large, or only I too small?” The speaker is trying to be like David.
- Lenny: It says: “myself fell.” But Goliath didn’t throw the pebble.
- Tish: David did.
- Henri: But it’s not David that fell.
- T: Listen to what Henri is saying. There are two things in the poem. See if you can agree.
- Henri: Oh. . . it’s not David that fell, it’s the speaker.

d. Upping the ante – At times the students reworked the same ideas in the same ways, not knowing how to carry them further. In such cases, the teacher helped the students by providing them with new and often less obvious ways to think about their ideas and concerns. For example, after one class had been discussing their frustration with the end of the play *Marty* for some time, and were repeating old ideas in old ways, the teacher (Grade 11, urban) interceded, providing a new vantage point from which to consider the ending.

- Tony: . . . sitting around talking about women like they don’t even exist . . .
- T: What is the world view of women in this play?
- Movelia: You know what about this play. You know how like guys, you know, they’ll be talking about girls like that. Whatever, even if he loved her he was talking about her, you know, calling them tomatoes and calling the girl ugly and this and that. I mean, that’s her son and she’s not supposed to – ooh, she’s ugly. If he liked the girl, she’s supposed to be happy.
- Tony: And, yeah, supporting him.

In another attempt of upping the ante, Gep and Kent (Grade 7, suburban) were reiterating their “happy ending” interpretation of *The Girl Who Owned a City*, and their teacher challenged them with another way to consider things.

- Gep: Well, I think the reason they didn’t shoot Lisa is because they had to have a handy, little happy, tidy ending to the story.
- Kent: Like those nursery rhymes.
- Gep: Yeah.
- T: Let me ask you if it really is a happy ending. Because, at the end of the story Lisa is asking a lot of questions, like “Why do they need me?” The children are out in the hall and they’re calling for Lisa and Lisa is saying “Why don’t they understand, why are they calling on me?”

Gep: Because they all respect her, and think she knows everything.

Kent: She started it when she, She started it when she started helping them. She should have, with her actions, she should have followed with the responsibility, and she knew in the beginning when she would give them popcorn and soda that it was gonna eventually lead up to this, because she was giving them all the popcorn and telling them to do all this stuff and everything. I mean, she's responsible for her actions.

The various kinds of scaffolding described above were used by the teachers to provide their students with new ways to talk about and to think about the content of the literature they had read. Both types of scaffolding are summarized in Table 3.

| Table 3 The Teacher's Role in Instructional Dialogue | |
|---|---|
| Scaffolding Ways to Discuss: | |
| Tapping students' understanding | the teacher's questions indicate that students must discuss <i>their</i> responses |
| Seeking clarification | the teacher helps students check that their comments are understood |
| Inviting participation | the teacher demonstrates ways in which students can enter the discussion |
| Orchestrating discussion | the teacher helps students sustain the discussion |
| Scaffolding Ways to Think: | |
| Focusing | the teacher helps students narrow in on their concerns |
| Shaping | the teacher helps students construct their argument or point |
| Linking | the teacher helps students use the present discussion as well as previous ideas and experiences to enrich their understanding |
| Upping the ante | the teacher helps students reframe their concerns, providing a new vantage point for thinking about the issues at hand |

In the following excerpt an 8th-grade urban class that had spent several months learning to arrive at their own responses instead of providing "right" answers read the poem *The Duel* and

discussed it. The excerpt provides a fuller illustration of how the scaffolding a teacher provides fits into and supports the students processes of developing an understanding of a text.

- T: (Invite) What do you think? What is the speaker telling us?
Tish: What the people think like.
T: (Invite) Anybody else?
T: (Focus) What purpose did he have?
Robin: Every day's a new day. Yesterday should be forgotten.
Lenny: He wants to spread peace around the world.
T: (Focus) Can you give the line?
Lenny: Not just a line (Reads the third stanza)
Today, every moment shall bring
feelings of well being and cheer.
And the reason for my existence,
my most urgent resolve,
Will be to spread happiness all
over the world,
To pour the wine of goodness into
the eager mouths around me . . .
Tish: It's not true. You might be prejudiced.
T: (Orchestrate) Lenny, do you want to answer her?
Lenny: They could be friends and happiness means peace.
Tish: (confusing)
T: (Invite) Can anyone help them out?
Chet: I don't understand.
T: (Focus) Who?
Chet: Tish.
Tish: You could be prejudiced and still be happy. That don't mean
peace.
T: (Clarification) Can you say it another way?

Tish and Lenny go on to clarify their points, then the teacher recaps what has been said so far.

- T: (Invite) So far, Iris says to live for today. Lenny says spread peace, but now
he says happiness. What else?
Bob: (Reading) "My only peace will be the dreams of others;
their dreams, my dreams;"

T: (Invite) How did he get happiness?

Tish: By giving happiness to others, so he then is happy.

T: (Focus) Ever been in a bad mood and been around a happy person and it changed your mood?

Student: And the opposite, too, like at a funeral.

T: (Focus) Look at stanzas 1 and 2. Is he for only forgetting the bad, or the good too?

Tish: Both.

T: (Upping the ante) Who thinks it's a good idea to forget and just start over?

Carol: But if it's really bad, it's really hard to do.

Tish: Yes. But it depends on how bad it is.

T: (Upping the ante) Is there a time when it's good to remember the past? Is there ever a time when you learn from the past?

Tish: You learn from a mistake and remember not to do it again.

While this teacher was providing a good deal of instructional scaffolding, the students were also active participants – building envisionments and exploring ideas in ways that are decidedly thoughtful. The social structure of the interactions supported envisionment building and the exploration of possibilities, and the students were learning to become participants in this context.

In instructional environments of this sort the students were given room to work through their ideas in a variety of ways: in whole class discussion, alone, and in groups – in reading, writing, and speaking. While they worked, in each of these contexts, they were given opportunities to interact collaboratively, with each other. In this way, they were able to try out, come to understand and eventually internalize the ways of talking and thinking about literature that their teacher had modeled for them.

The teachers' use of the two types of scaffolding was also evident in their planning of and reflection on daily lessons. For example, when considering using a particular short story to which she had recently been introduced, Barbara, the teacher of a 7th-grade suburban class, commented that she would likely use that piece with her class later in the year. She went on to explain that she preferred to select interesting but less conceptually complex pieces at that point in time – until her students could more easily engage in the response-oriented discussions she was encouraging.

Similarly Richard, a teacher in a suburban middle school, commented after a lesson that when he found his students perseverating on negative characteristics of the rag picker in Tennessee William's *The Beaded Bag*, he tried to provide them with a way to extend their understandings by asking them to focus on the lady of the house, and later to focus on the maid.

Barbara's concern for her students' need to learn the variety of "ways to discuss" that were central to the thought-provoking discussions she wished to continue throughout the year, and Richard's response to his students' need for alternative "ways to think" (in this case by upping the ante) exemplify the many times when the teachers relied upon the two types of scaffolding to respond effectively to their students' needs.

On their own: Small group discussions

Small group discussions were one particularly fruitful context for fostering students' understandings of literature. They provided a place where students could try out strategies they had seen modeled in the classroom. One remedial 7th-grade student commented on this process directly. After he had provided a particularly thoughtful analysis of a piece he had read to a few of his classmates during a small group discussion, his teacher asked him how he knew what the important issues to think about and discuss were. The reply: "I knew what you would ask me [even though you weren't there]." Thus, in a Vygotskian sense, learning how to think and reason about literature moved from the interpsychological plane (the socially based interactions where ways to think about literature were modeled by the teacher) to the intrapsychological plane (where the individuals internalized the underlying rules their teachers had modeled). From a sociocognitive perspective, the small group discussions served as an important interim learning environment where the students had two types of opportunities to practice "ways to discuss" and "ways to think": by assuming the teacher's role as they interacted with and helped each other, and by thinking and doing on their own. In these contexts, the students treated each other as thinkers, following the patterns of thought and interaction their teacher had modeled.

The teachers helped the students by visiting each group, taking the role of participant observer – asking pertinent questions and providing models of how to structure thought in ways that the students were not yet doing. Early in the year, one teacher (8th-grade urban) found that at first, many of the students waited for her to come around to their groups to give them assistance,

to help them get started. She reminded them to “tell how you felt at the end.” However, she saw her role as supporting *their* discussion, and therefore avoided becoming involved in the discussion herself. She reminded them of “ways to discuss”:

You just said something and he said something else. Now listen to what they’re saying. What’s your idea? Discuss ideas with each other just like we do with everyone [in whole class discussions].

Thus, in response to the modeling the teacher had provided in the whole class sessions and the support provided when they were trying to take on these behaviors on their own, the students came to engage in authentic discussions about literature, where they agreed and disagreed with each other, challenged each other, and defended their views. Analysis of their discussions indicated that they invited, focused, shaped, linked, and upped the ante in response to what the others had said, and challenged each other to rethink their understandings. The following student-to-student comments serve as example. In the excerpt, the students use many of the conversational conventions their teacher had previously supported:

- S: I want to ask the others if they thought Lisa was city-bound. (focus)
S: What about the rest of you? Would you do as she did? (invite)
S: I’m agreeing with those kids (link), but when things were going well . . . (shape)
S: Show me why you think so. Where did you get it from? (shape)
S: I disagree with her and her and her and him, but I agree with Tom because . . . (link)
S: What about all the other gangs, and the food? (up the ante)
S: I felt that in the third part it was a little different . . . (shape)

Thus, across time, the characteristics of the instructional interaction served to create an environment where students not only were encouraged to think and to communicate their ideas to others, but were taught how to do so.

Discussion

In general, then, while the classes in this study “looked” and “felt” different from one another, the principles of thinking and learning (of what counts as knowing) in the episodes in which students became actively involved in developing their own interpretations were similar.

The underlying ethos of instruction supported the students as they became socialized into ways of thinking about literature, and as they engaged in the process of exploring their understandings. The social structure of the classrooms called for (and expected) the thoughtful and active participation of the students, and provided them with the environment in which they could learn and practice these expected behaviors as a matter of course.

Thus, in situations where students were engaged as literary thinkers, good reading was not considered to lie in the students' ability to analyze the text for an underlying meaning or to arrive at an already agreed upon interpretation, but rather in the students' engagement in the process of arriving at their own understandings – involving use of the text, their prior knowledge and experiences, and discussion with others as ways to extend their understanding and interpretation of the text. We can summarize the characteristics of such episodes in terms of six principles of instruction that seem to underlie the interactions that supported envisionment-building and the exploration of possibilities.

A. Student as Active Makers of Meaning – Students were treated as thinkers – as if they could and would have interesting and cogent thoughts about the piece and have questions they would like to discuss.

B. Literature Reading as Question-Generating – It was assumed that after reading a piece, students would come away with initial responses, but that questions are also part of their envisionments – that the understanding of literature *involves* the raising of questions.

C. Student Knowledge Taps – When teachers asked questions about content, they either prompted further thinking about the content the students had already brought up as topics for discussion or they introduced new content that was related to the discussion at hand. In each case, the questions were student knowledge taps that focused on what the students understood about that content. Such taps had no predetermined right answer, and were meant to prompt extended language and thought.

D. Class Meetings as Time to Develop Understandings – Effective class discussions supported the process of coming to understand. Teachers helped students to develop envisionments by assuming different stances toward the text. Thus, the cognitive behaviors students engaged in when making sense during reading also supported envisionment-building during discussion.

E. Instruction as Scaffolding the Process of Understanding – All questions and assignments were in response to the students’ own ideas and concerns – and scaffolded *their* process of understanding.

F. Transfer of Control from Teacher to Student – Students were given room to work through their ideas in whole class discussion, alone and in groups. While they worked, they were encouraged to interact collaboratively – to respond to and communicate with each other.

While the findings discussed in this report were derived solely from analyses of the lessons that supported students’ critical thinking in response to literature, the more general analyses of the range of lessons suggest that there are certain conditions in the instructional environment that mitigate against students’ opportunity to develop their own understandings and interpretations, even when their teachers want very much to encourage it. These suggest that: 1) Materials count. Some texts are simple and straightforward, so much so that they do not invite cogitation. Thus, evaluation of reading matter is particularly important in the selection of “discussable” or “teachable” works in contrast to those that students should enjoy without follow-up. 2) Thoughtful responses cannot always be offered verbally, either in writing or speech. Therefore, we need to provide opportunity for alternative response options (e.g., drawing, dance, music, and other art forms), and sometimes accept the reality that lack of response does not necessarily indicate lack of understanding. 3) Even when teachers invite their students to come forth with their initial responses, they may use this initial response as an end in itself, failing to help their students find ways to rethink their responses and go beyond. In such instances, scaffolding is never offered, and potentially “teachable” moments are lost. 4) Well-meaning teachers can become too “invisible,” failing to provide guidance when needed. Although teachers mean to encourage student thinking, sometimes support and control are confused. Thus in an attempt to be noncontrolling, opportunities for guidance are lost. 5) Teacher-sanctioned responses are sometimes kept as a hidden goal. Thus, although the teachers’ language appears to request students’ initial responses and developing interpretations, “right” answers receive far greater rewards. 6) Student knowledge is often undervalued and “upping the ante” occurs infrequently. Thus, discussions focus on the development of understandings *to a point*, but new and more sophisticated ways of addressing the same problem or new and more sophisticated problems that could be addressed are not raised. 7) Sometimes, when the teacher’s concern turns to student understandings, focus on the text, on literary elements, and on received interpretations

ceases completely. Thus students learn to become sophisticated in their thinking about literature without the cultural knowledge to enter into the larger high-literate community.

In each of these cases, students' exploration of possibilities is inhibited by the materials, interactions, or both. Thus in the next stage of work on reconceptualizing literature instruction, it will be necessary to trace ways in which the principles of instruction described in this report can be used to facilitate more far reaching change in our own project classes as well as in classrooms that are not involved in the intensive project work we experienced.

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Appendix 1: Excerpts of a Macroanalysis of One Lesson (edited and abridged)

Prepared by Doralyn Roberts

Goal of Lesson

To nurture growth in the process of literary thinking.

Overall Class Environment

This class is characterized by a spirit of mutual trust and collaboration as the students and teacher work through understandings and interpretations of the piece. The students seem to enjoy the process and become involved spontaneously and energetically in the discussion without prodding from the teacher, who continually seeks their participation and seems genuinely interested in their ideas. Overall, the teacher is strategically involved in the ways delineated under “teacher’s role,” but does not dominate. In fact, she is absent from whole pages of the transcript as the students talk to each other.

Teacher’s Role

1. The teacher is always the teacher.
2. The teacher has an agenda. When the students address the items on her agenda or items which they need to address to further their understanding of the piece, she encourages their exploration to continue. If the items on her agenda do not get addressed, she introduces them, but does not let them compete with or dominate the students’ agendas.
3. The teacher supports the students’ getting into the piece by asking “open” questions. She invites the participation of specific people by eliciting their questions, feelings, or points of view.
4. The teacher encourages free-flowing exploration, incorporates student contributions, and supports student-to-student interaction.
5. The teacher asks for clarification and elaboration of students’ ideas.
6. The teacher does not possess all the knowledge. She is open to and invites alternative interpretations. Her interventions are always to further thinking, to elicit ideas, but never to tell or provide the right answers, but helps the students think things through. She restrains her own contributions.
7. The teacher provides input to change directions. She does this by introducing alternative possibilities, offering information (here it was biographical), and modeling (here role playing, taking another point of view).

Students’ Role

1. The students assume an active role in their own learning by exploring and sharing ideas and interpretations; defending their own interpretations; and questioning and answering each other.
2. The students do not look to the teacher for answers. They respond to the teacher’s questions and suggestions, but do so in pursuit of their own understandings.
3. Some students serve as knowledge providers by sharing knowledge of other pieces written by this author and sharing knowledge of the author’s life.

What Was Taught

1. Alternative interpretations are acceptable, helpful, and expected.
2. Insights and understandings can be furthered by deliberately stepping aside, detaching oneself, and intellectually entertaining another's idea – another perspective.
3. Arguing and defending requires the use of the text (came about by need).

What Was Learned

1. 1-3 of What Was Taught
2. While the teacher may be quiet or appear to be just letting the discussion go, she had an agenda which guided and shaped her questions, comments, and interventions. These were picked up by the students in subtle ways. For instance, ??? ways to consider and analyze alternative interpretations; and ways to enrich understanding by using the input of others.

Appendix 2: Excerpt from a Coded Transcript of Literature Discussion

7th-Grade Class (3 pages of 19)

Prepared by Eija Rougle

Stances and orientations are marked as follows:

| | | Stance | Orientation |
|-----------|---|--------|-------------|
| T: | Okay, do we have something that we want to talk about today? All right, Marissa. | | |
| Marissa: | I didn't like the ending. I thought it was like too perfect. Like she gets the city back and everything's just peachy-dandy. I thought something else would happen. It just didn't feel right. | 4 | H |
| T: | Charlene? | | |
| Charlene: | When you said peach-dandy, it's not peachy-dandy, there are <u>tons</u> of problems that she's got to face. I mean, she's got, the problem, what if the gang comes back? | 2 | H |
| Marissa: | Well, Tom Logan's a wimp! | 2 | P |
| Charlene: | Well, you've got to think about it, because when they were going around doing all this other stuff, they heard mention of this other gang called the Chicago Gang I think it was, and what if that gang comes? I mean, they're very, they've got a lot of problems. It's not perfect, nothing is perfect by all means. | 2 | H |
| T: | Conrad? | | |
| Conrad: | I agree with Charlene, that it's not really perfect, it is kind of a happy ending, because everyone is all fine. But they are, there's other problems and all the gangs and stuff, they're kind of used to it, but it's still, it's still a big problem, and it's gonna take a long time to get over that problem. | 4 | H |
| T: | Gep? | | |
| Gep: | It is too happy, perfect, it's like they have problems, but they don't have that many problems, like the Chicago Gang doesn't really have that high of a chance of coming. | 4 | H |
| T: | You don't believe that's gonna happen? | | |
| Gep: | No. Because, even if they do, they have a lot of defense. And I think it wouldn't be like that, the Chicago Gang would just take them over. They'd still have a defense and stuff. And the food problem, they'd probably overcome after a little while, because they'd get more people thinking than just like Lisa and that group. | 2 | H |

| | | Stance | Orientation |
|-----------|--|---------------|--------------------|
| T: | I'm gonna use the word vulnerable. You don't think they're vulnerable to the Chicago Gang. You think they'll have enough to overcome that. | | |
| T: | Sheila. | | |
| Sheila: | I didn't like the ending either. Because it just seemed like towards the ending, I mean at the beginning of the book, Lisa wasn't the only person who, with ideas. But towards the ending, the kids seemed to be, like, really dumb. And they were just, 'We need Lisa, we can't survive without her.' And I just, this is like another topic, sort of, but it goes into this, it seems like that isn't very realistic at all. I mean, I don't see how one person can be smart and have all these ideas, and the rest of them be like frogs. | 4 | H |
| T: | So you're very unhappy with the idea that there's just one person who seems to be able to pick up this leadership and go, and that's not, to use that word, realistic. Which is another word we've been wanting to talk about. Kent? | | |
| Kent: | I disagree with her, her, her, and her. (Pointing over and over at one person, Charlene.) | 4 | P |
| T: | Let's hear what. | | |
| Kent: | Because she says everything wasn't so peachy dandy. And I think everything was peachy-dandy. | 4 | P |
| T: | Why? | | |
| Kent: | Because like (in a feminine voice like Lisa) "Oh, we get the city back, and Tom Logan leaves us alone." | 4 | P |
| Charlene: | What about all the other gangs, and the food? (Others are also objecting.) | 2 | H |
| Kent: | The Chicago Gang, who cares about them! | 2 | H |
| Charlene: | what about all the other gangs in the city where they used to live? I mean, Tom Logan wasn't the only gang (Many students are talking at once.) | 2 | H |
| T: | One at a time | | |
| Gep: | After they demolished Tom Logan's gang, a lot of other gangs did not want to mess with them. | 2 | H |
| Charlene: | But what happens if the other gangs join up? You know that is possible. | 2 | H |

| | | Stance | Orientation |
|----------|---|---------------|--------------------|
| T: | O.K., let's go here with Betsy. Betsy? | | |
| Betsy: | I sort of agree with Sheila, because the end is like, <u>unreal</u> , okay? Unreal. I'm not going to say anything. | 4 | H |
| T: | Why? What bothered you about whether it was realistic or not? | | |
| Betsy: | I really don't know. But it's like, oh wow, what are you supposed to do now. Oh we're happy, it's like . . . | 2 | H |
| T: | Is that, do you agree? Does anybody have a <u>different</u> feeling about the ending? Gerrick? | | |
| Gerrick: | I think the ending was sort of like, the author tried to keep you hanging on so much that, like in other stories, especially like with "Charles" where they cut you off, but he kind of left us hanging just a little bit, so you <u>could</u> let your mind wander, but if you weren't that person, you just trapped the story there, okay, we got the students back fine, but you could let your mind wander, like this is when the food supply runs out, I mean, what are you going to do? Go across the Atlantic Ocean go over to Saudi Arabia and stuff like that, and start pumping up oil? (The concern here is the gasoline.) | 4 | H |
| T: | Are you saying, I'm trying to go back to where you were just a little bit before. Are you saying, depending on how the reader wanted to take the ending, it was either okay and everything was fine, <u>or</u> , there was still so many things you could think about? | | |

Appendix 3: Analyses of Interactions

Interaction analyses which led to the across-data pattern searches from which the findings presented in this paper were derived from an iterative process of searching for patterns, returning to the data, and refining the levels of analysis and categories that were derived. These, in turn, became the bases for the broader categories discussed in this paper.

1. Levels of analysis: overall instructional episode; individual lessons within episode, topics within lesson, conversational turns within and across topics
2. Analytic concerns

Each of the following was analyzed at the levels cited above:

- a. Task and topic initiation
 - Learner-initiated
 - Teacher-initiated
- b. Functions of turn:
 - Agree
 - Challenge
 - Check
 - Clarify
 - Confirm
 - Disagree
 - Expand
 - Help
 - Invite
 - Orchestrate
 - Present
 - Recycle
 - Restate
 - Up the ante
- c. Nature of help:
 - Focus
 - Hint
 - Modify/shape
 - Suggest
 - Summarize
 - Tell
- d. Task and topic closure
 - Learner-ended
 - Teacher-ended
- e. Primary regulation
 - Self-regulation
 - Other-regulation
 - Shared-regulation
 - Nonshared concept of task or topic

3. Evidence of Instructional Scaffolding
 (see Appendix 4 for definitions and example)
- a. Ownership
 - b. Appropriateness
 - c. Structure
 - d. Collaboration
 - e. Internalization

Functions of Turns: Definitions

Prepared by Doralyn Roberts

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Agree: | Affirming another's comment or idea |
| Challenge: | Positing an alternative view |
| Check: | Requesting clarification to check one's own understanding |
| Clarify: | Restating an idea in an effort to be better understood |
| Confirm: | Accepting someone else's restatement of one's own idea |
| Disagree: | Disagreeing with another's idea or position |
| Expand: | Elaborating upon ideas, either one's own or another's |
| Help: | Offering assistance to move thinking along |
| Invite: | Providing overt opening to participate |
| Orchestrate: | Logistical intervention to facilitate turn-taking and discussion participation |
| Present: | Introducing an idea or comment |
| Recycle: | Returning to previously discussed topics |
| Restate: | Paraphrasing the ideas of another to voice understanding |
| Up the ante: | Addressing a more difficult concept, or the same idea in a more complex way |

Kinds of Help

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Focus: | Helping narrow the topic of consideration |
| Hint: | Providing partial information or ways to think about the idea |
| Modify/shape: | Helping tighten the argument or point being made |
| Suggest: | Positing an alternative way to view an issue |
| Summarize: | Restating ideas to help students take stock |
| Tell: | Providing information |

Sample Discussion Segmented by Topics

Prepared by Doralyn Roberts

| Segment | Page | Topic | Initiator |
|----------------|-------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | 1-2 | Perfect ending vs. Problems | Marissa |
| 2 | 2-3 | Ending is not realistic | Sheila |
| 3 | 3-4 | (Recycle) Perfect vs. Problem ending | Gerrick |
| 4 | 4 | Power in gang's reputation | Darren |
| 5 | 4-5 | Guns vs. Verbal confrontation | Jimmy |
| 6 | 5-6 | Lisa's accomplishment coupled with dragging on of story | Don |
| 7 | 6-7 | Author rushed the ending | Kent |
| 8 | 7 | (Recycle) Power in reputation | Samantha |
| 9 | 7 | (Recycle) Verbal confrontation | Charlene |
| 10 | 7-8 | Boring ending | Sheila |
| 11 | 8-9 | Unexpected ending | Betsy |
| 12 | 9 | Tom Logan's mistakes | Gerrick |
| 13 | 9-10 | Is last part needed? | Conrad |
| 14 | 11 | (Recycle) Verbal defeat or Welcome alternative | Ann |
| 15 | 11 | (Recycle) Rushed ending | Darren |
| 16 | 11-12 | Lisa should have died | Sheila |
| 17 | 12 | (Recycle) Happy ending or not | Gep |
| 18 | 12-13 | Responsibility | Kent |
| 19 | 13 | (Recycle) Lisa should die or not in relation to purpose and meaning | Conrad |
| 20 | 13-18 | Has Lisa changed? (Recycle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19) | Gerrick |
| 21 | 18 | (Recycle) Not realistic | Kent |
| 22 | 19 | Summary | Teacher |

Sample Transcript with Functions of Turns Noted

Prepared by Doralyn Roberts

Note: Students numbered in order of appearance of turn in the conversation for that particular person. Thus we could identify who initiated and closed the lesson and each topic within the lesson, who said what to whom, and the function of those comments.

Segment 1: Perfect ending vs. Problem

| <u>Turn</u> | <u>Function</u> | <u>Speaker</u> | |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| T-1 | Invite/Orchestrate | Teacher | Okay, do we have something that we want to talk about today? All right, Marissa. |
| S1-1 | Present/Expand | Marissa | I didn't like the ending. I thought it was, like, too perfect. Like she gets the city back and everything's just peachy-dandy. I thought something else would happen. It just didn't feel right. |
| T-2 | Orchestrate | Teacher | Charlene? |
| S2-1 | Expand/Challenge | Charlene | Well, you've got to think about it, because when they were going around doing all this other stuff, they heard mention of this other gang called the Chicago Gang I think it was, and what if that gang comes? I mean, they're very, they've got a lot of problems. It's not perfect, nothing is perfect by all means. |
| T-3 | Orchestrate | Teacher | Conrad? |
| S3-1 | Agree/Expand | Conrad | I agree with Charlene that it is kind of a happy ending because everyone is all fine. But they are, there's other problems. Like, they still have the food problem, and all the gangs and stuff. They're kind of used to it, but it's still a big problem and it's gonna take a long time to get over this – to get over that problem. |
| T-4 | Orchestrate | Teacher | Gep? |
| S4-1 | Expand | Gep | It is a too happy, perfect. It's like they have problems, like the Chicago Gang doesn't really have that high of a chance of coming. |
| T-5 | Restate | Teacher | You don't believe that's gonna happen? |
| S4-2 | Confirm Expand | Gep | No. Because even if they do, they have a lot of defense. And I think it wouldn't be like that the Chicago Gang would just take them over. They'd still have a defense and stuff. And the food problem, they'd probably overcome after a little while, because they'd get more people thinking than just like Lisa and that group. |
| T-6 | Restate | Teacher | I'm gonna use the word vulnerable. You don't think they're vulnerable to the Chicago Gang. You think they'll have enough to overcome that. |
| S4-3 | Confirm | Gep | Yeah. |
| T-7 | Orchestrate | Teacher | Sheila? |

Segment 2: Ending is not realistic

| | | | |
|------|----------------|--------|--|
| S5-1 | Present/Expand | Sheila | I didn't like the ending either. Because it just seemed like towards the ending, I mean at the beginning of the book. Lisa wasn't the only person who, with ideas. But toward the ending, the kids seemed to be really dumb. And they were just, "We need Lisa. . . ." |
|------|----------------|--------|--|

Appendix 4: Components of Instructional Scaffolding

Review fieldnotes, videotapes, audiotapes, and transcripts carefully for evidence of components of instructional scaffolding. Describe which components operate and how. Provide examples of students' language and classwork.

Components of Instructional Scaffolding

(From Applebee & Langer, 1983; Langer, 1984; Langer & Applebee, 1986, who describe five characteristics of instructional interaction that were critical to the success of activities in the classrooms they studied, but that were often lacking in the activities carried out.)

1. **Student Ownership of the Learning Event** – The instructional task must permit students to make their own contribution to the activity as it evolves, thus allowing them to have a sense of ownership for their work. They must develop their own reasons for participating in the activity rather than simply completing the task because it has been assigned by the teacher.

The notion of ownership does not preclude the teacher's introducing an activity. The activities introduced, however, must leave the student room to make a contribution beyond simply repetition of information or ideas drawn from the teacher. For example, the assignment can provide room for the student's value judgments or for reorganization of the content being studied: "Write a newspaper article giving critical information that you feel will be helpful for people who are deciding for whom to vote." This contrasts with an assignment that restricts the student to information previously presented by the teacher or textbook, e.g., "Write an election article telling who the candidates are, the parties they represent, and their major platforms."

2. **Appropriateness of the Instructional Task** – The instructional task must grow out of knowledge and skills the students already have, but must pose problems that cannot be solved without further help. The task, then, needs to be sufficiently difficult to permit new learnings to occur, but not so difficult as to preclude new learnings.
3. **Supportive Instruction** – Once the student and teacher understand that help is necessary, direct instruction in the form of questioning, modeling, or constructive dialogue, is offered to help the student develop a successful approach to the task. The student learns new skills in the process of doing the task in a context where instruction provides the scaffolding or support necessary to make the task possible.
4. **Shared Responsibility** – The teacher's role in the instructional event needs to be more collaborative than evaluative. It is one of helping students toward new learning, rather than of testing the adequacy of previous learning. The teacher's responses to student work help the students rethink efforts and rework ideas as they move toward more effective solutions to the problem-at-hand.
5. **Internalization** – Over time, instruction should change, in response to the students' internalization of the patterns and approaches practiced with the teacher's assistance. (Too often, "effective" lesson patterns become an unchanging part of the instructional routine, for sequences of textbook lessons as well as for individual teachers. In these cases, students are "helped" to do things they can already do on their own. Instruction must be sensitive to the fact that as students gain new knowledge and skills, the instructional interaction should change as well. The students' contribution to similar tasks will increase while the teacher's concerns will shift toward more sophisticated issues or approaches. The amount of dialogue may actually increase as the student becomes more competent, with the interaction shifting from simple questions or directives toward a more expert exploration of options and alternatives.

Evidence of Instructional Scaffolding (Analysis of One Class Meeting)

Prepared by Doralyn Roberts

This analysis is based upon the model of instructional scaffolding presented in Applebee and Langer (1983), Langer (1984), and Langer and Applebee (1986), which defines five components of effective instructional scaffolding. The five criteria are ownership, appropriateness, structure, collaboration, and internalization.

1. Ownership. The students are given ownership of this discussion from the very beginning of the class when the teacher opened by asking if there were things “we want to talk about today?” All of the topics of discussion from this beginning were determined by the students. Recycling of topics occurred as the students answered and questioned each other. No one is simply repeating what the teacher has said nor is anyone trying to discover the teacher’s interpretation. The teacher does not share her interpretation with the students. The students’ sense of purpose appears to be to share and defend their points of view and to voice their changing ideas when they have them. They are talking to each other and not to the teacher.
2. Appropriateness of the instructional task. The task for this class is to talk about concerns students have about the book they have been reading so that they may each have a greater understanding of the piece they have read and be able to share those ideas with each other. They bring a level of skill in group discussion which enables them to participate in an open way which allows for different points of view to be expressed and challenged. They also come to this discussion having had a number of other discussions on this book as the book was being read. In these respects, the task is within their ability.

For the task to be appropriate, there must also be room in the task for learning, i.e., the task is of sufficient difficulty that the students can develop new knowledge and skills through the help given by the teacher or the structure of the activity which enables them to use abilities that are in the process of maturing but need help.

The task for this class is appropriate in several ways. While they seem quite tolerant of a variety of viewpoints, they are not yet mature enough to just have such a discussion without the teacher’s constant intervention to manage turn-taking. Even with her, many sometimes all talk at once. Listening to others as a part of sharing and working through ideas is being learned.

Most of the students have room to learn to ask themselves the “why?” and “what?” questions in exploration of the reasons behind the feelings and opinions they express. These questions and the, “Do you really think?” questions are asked by both the teacher and students and help students to think through their ideas. Hearing other points of view is also helpful to some in challenging their own ideas.

Many students have room for learning how to express themselves orally in a succinct manner which allows for their ideas to be understood by others. The students are assisted here by the teacher’s continual clarification of what the students intend to say. The teacher usually restates in one sentence what may have taken the student several sentences or more to develop, sometimes with much repetition. This modeling provides the student with an example to follow and sometimes shows students where their original statements were inadequate or misunderstood.

3. Structure. Structure here refers to the supportive instruction which makes the structure of the activity clear and provides new procedures and routines that are embedded in the context they serve.

The teacher's numerous interactions involving attempts to clarify students' ideas is a major aspect of the structure she provides the students. The need to be clear in what one is saying and in how one says it is embedded in the context of the total purpose of the discussion, i.e., to share and clarify one's own understandings and concerns about the book. The teacher's efforts blend with the natural sequence of thought and language which emerges from the students rather than to impose the teacher's agenda upon the students' efforts.

All of the teacher's logistical interventions to regulate the discussion serve naturally to structure the flow of participation which supports the open sharing of ideas and the listening component of the activity which the students sometimes need assistance doing.

The teacher also provides some structure in the questioning which she does to focus discussion and elicit more specific responses to "why?" and "what?" questions.

4. Collaboration. This component of effective instructional scaffolding involves a shared responsibility between the teacher and the students for the tasks being undertaken. The teacher's role is to participate in interactions in a manner which builds upon and recasts the students' own efforts to solve problems or complete tasks without evaluative responses or a testing of previous learning.

In this lesson, the teacher maintains a collaborative stance throughout. Her numerous clarifications of students' ideas never contain an evaluation of the students' ideas, but rather a recasting of ideas understood by both the teacher and the students to be the students', and further, with the mutual expectation that the student will confirm or correct the teacher's understanding in line with the students' intention and meaning and never the teacher's. This clarification process, as has been shown, has the effect of often prompting the students to elaborate or expand upon ideas and sometimes to elicit other students' responses by directly asking them questions as they continue to work upon the issues being explored.

The teacher also asks questions of a "what?" or "why?" nature which point the students to further elaboration of ideas which they have already brought up themselves but which need development. By this, she helps them to take a next step in the path they are on or to turn onto another path if they choose, but one does not dictate the choice. In like manner, she asked one that they look at Lisa at the end, but she did not force them to take up Lisa as a focus of discussion. This had the effect of pointing out another focus for thought and eventually produced productive work later in the discussion when the students were ready and took up the topic of whether Lisa had changed. Notably, the students evolved this focus on change, not the teacher, although she collaborated in getting them to look more closely at Lisa.

One of the teacher's two rare instances of telling occurred in the context of collaboration. When the students were speculating that the author of the book wrote the ending as he did to set himself up for a sequel undertaken noted that in the biographical sketch of the author that it said he would write one, but she also told them to just discuss the book and forget the possibility of a sequel. This helps them to complete their task of discussing their response to the book.

5. Internalization. This final component of effective instructional scaffolding involves the students' internalization of the patterns and approaches which have been practiced with the teacher's assistance and external scaffolding. As the students take over more and more of the elements provided by the teacher, the scaffolding is gradually withdrawn until it is no longer needed because the learner is using the new knowledge of skills on his own.

Specific skills which can be learned in a short time are not being taught in this class, but there is copious evidence of students' internalization of patterns and approaches to discussion learned over

time which the students use and which are mutually understood by the teacher and students to be in operation even though they are never verbalized or overtly recognized. For instance, from the very beginning, students know that they must voice their concerns and ideas and not wait for the teacher to introduce topics for them to discuss. They also automatically further their positions by supplying reasons and expansions for their ideas and answering questions they anticipate will be asked. Other approaches which the students use which are not prompted in the class by the teacher include comparison to another text, attention to how the piece was written, looking at all the possibilities without closing off avenues of the mind, addressing what the purpose and meaning of the story might be, and sharing the way their ideas are changing as the discussion proceeds without fear of rejection or judgment.

Further evidence of internalization is seen in the way they listen to each other, pick up on each other's ideas, and direct questions to each other. It is understood that they are talking to each other, not just to the teacher. It is also understood that the teacher will not supply topics or her ideas. No one looks to the teacher to discover what she thinks or to seek her approval. The whole class functions smoothly through an internalization of a routine they learned long before this class and the teacher only intervenes on several occasions to point them to deeper questions or more solid responses to each other's ideas. In a very large measure, this group of students could and does function without the teacher's help. She has for the most part reduced herself to "traffic controller" and allowed the students to take over the bulk of the task which they themselves set for the day.