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ABSTRACT

A study was designed to provide an initial context for framing the most pressing questions in the teaching of literature. To do this, the teaching of English in the high school classrooms of teachers whose departments were considered excellent by other professionals in education was examined. The issues that emerged in the programs with reputations for excellence should help to define how well current theory and practice in the teaching of literature work, as well as areas that may need further development. The study involved 17 schools in diverse communities throughout the United States. In addition to monitoring classes at each school, the observers interviewed teachers, librarians, and department heads, and collected completed questionnaires from each of these groups. Results suggest that the emphasis on literature instruction has remained relatively constant since the middle 1960s in programs with reputations for excellence in English. Fifty-two percent of the class time observed was devoted to literature. The emphasis on writing instruction has increased, with instruction now focused on literature 75% of the time. The data gathered serve to highlight a series of important issues that arise in schools where the teachers and the department as a whole have given careful thought and attention to what and how they teach. Four issues which emerged represent the growing edges of current theory and practice; they concern the need to: (1) provide institutional support for literature programs; (2) revitalize literature instruction for nonacademic students; (3) reconcile approaches to literature with approaches to writing; and (4) develop a theory of learning/teaching literature that will guide the rethinking of high school instruction. (Twenty-two tables of data are included.) (MG)

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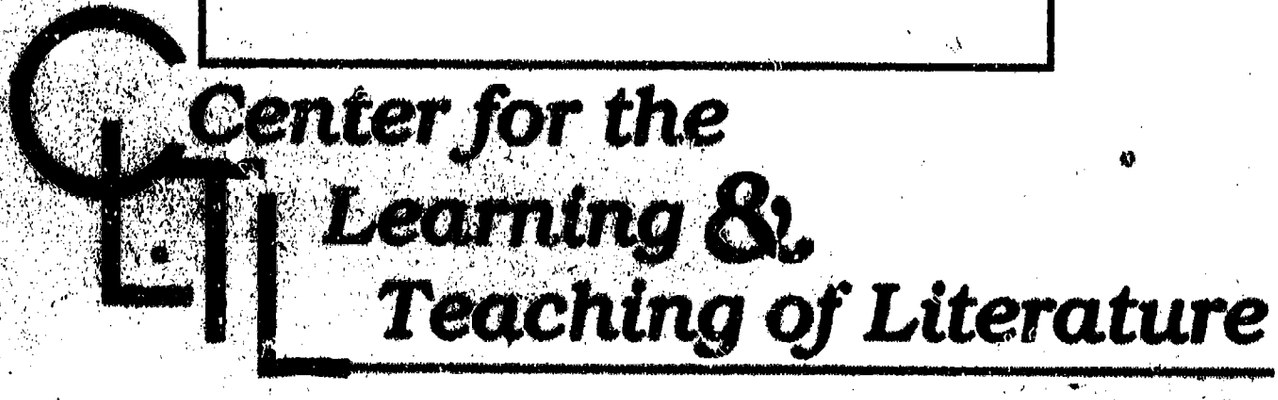

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature is a research and development center located at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The Center was established in 1987 with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Center's mission is to improve the teaching of content knowledge and critical-thinking strategies that contribute to literary understanding, particularly at the middle and high school levels.

Center-sponsored research falls into three broad areas: 1) surveys of current practice in the teaching of literature, including studies of both what is taught and how it is taught; 2) studies of alternative approaches to instruction and their effects on students' knowledge of literature and critical-thinking abilities; and 3) studies of alternative approaches to the assessment of literature achievement, including both classroom-based and larger-scale approaches to testing.

The Center also promotes good practice in the teaching of literature through conferences and seminars, through the development of computerized bibliographies on research and practice in the teaching of literature, and through publications that present the Center's own research and provide other resources for research and practice. To receive a list of current publications, please write to CLTL, School of Education, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222.

The Teaching of Literature in Programs with Reputations for Excellence in English

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Introduction

It has been 25 years since James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee (1968) undertook their systematic study of outstanding high school English programs. That study, which gathered its data during the period 1963-65, provided the profession with a detailed mirror of itself, a look at both the successes and failures of the English curriculum during a period of widespread curriculum reform and program development.

Much has happened in the teaching of English since the middle 1960s, however. We have had, among other enthusiasms, calls for basic skills instruction, minimum competency testing. process-oriented writing instruction, the students' right to their own language, adolescent literature, cultural literacy, and excellence. Yet, though these and other calls have swept through our conferences and the pages of our professional journals, we lack systematic evidence about their effects on the teaching of English in general and literature in particular. What is being taught now? To whom? With what success? What issues need to be addressed by teachers, departments, and the profession as a whole if we are to encourage continued improvement in the teaching of literature?

The present study is one part of a comprehensive analysis of the teaching of literature in American high schools being carried out by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature over a period of three years. This analysis will provide the necessary background for understanding what works best in the teaching literature, and for suggesting areas where improvement is needed.

The present study is designed to provide an initial context for framing the most pressing questions in the teaching of literature. To do this, we examined the teaching of English in the classrooms of teachers whose departments have local reputations for excellence as perceived by other teachers, by university professors concerned with education, and by other education professionals. Such departments have usually built their reputations over many years and are likely to reflect the best of conventional theory and practice, though they are not necessarily centers of experiment and change. The issues that emerge in such programs should help to define how well current theory and practice in the teaching of literature work, as well as areas that may need further development.

Awareness of a number of recent movements in the teaching of English framed our approach to these schools. One issue that has loomed large over the past several decades concerns the nature of the titles that are included in the literature curriculum. Partly as a result of the civil rights and women's movements, schools have been asked to teach a broader array of titles; in particular, they have been asked to include more selections written by women and by members of minority groups. These arguments have in turn prompted a somewhat bitter reaction from other teachers and scholars who have argued the importance of maintaining the

traditional canon in order to insure that all students have access to "the best that has been thought and written" (cf. Hirsch, 1987). In light of these arguments, we were concerned with the breadth of the curriculum in the schools we studied, as reflected both in the core of materials chosen for classroom study and in the materials and resources available to supplement that core.

A second issue that has framed our observations concerned the kinds of approaches to literary study that were being promoted by these programs. Historically, classroom approaches in the high school have been tied at least loosely to developments in scholarship at the university level. Thus during the past century, classroom orientations have moved through literary history, philology, semantics, social criticism, New Criticism, and myth criticism as the emphasis in the academic study of literature has shifted (cf. Applebee, 1974). The past two decades have been a time of great debate among competing schools of literary theory, however, with none yet coming to dominate: reader response criticism, Freudianism, structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, Marxist criticism, and feminist criticism, for example, have all had vocal and effective proponents. If there is any theme that has emerged with more consistency than others, it is the importance of the reader as well as the text in the process of literary understanding--a central tenet of reader response criticism but also important in many of the competing orientations. Though instruction in past decades has echoed developments in literary theory, none of the currently popular alternatives offer much guidance on classroom approaches, even at the university level. We were concerned, therefore, to discover where teachers are turning for guidance as they plan their approaches to the texts they introduce. Are they still relying on the New Critical approaches that dominated literary scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s, and if so, have they found ways to keep such approaches vital and attractive to students? Or have they begun to build alternatives grounded in reader response criticism or some of the other approaches to literary theory?

The third issue that concerned us had to do with the impact of recent developments in writing instruction. During the past two decades, most of the energy in discussions of the teaching of high school English has focused on writing rather than on literature. This has usually taken the form of suggestions for process-oriented approaches to instruction; these approaches emphasize the skills and knowledge that a writer brings to bear over the course of constructing a text, rather than emphasizing the form of the final written product. To be fully implemented, process oriented instruction requires major changes in classroom approaches, in particular requiring a shift toward student-centered rather than teacher-centered instruction, a change in evaluation techniques (to allow the writing process to unfold), and the use of alternative instructional techniques such as small group work or workshop approaches. We were concerned, therefore, to explore the extent to which these approaches to the teaching of writing had also begun to affect the teaching of literature. Had writing instruction begun to displace literature from its historically central role in the English classroom? Had approaches to writing about literature changed? Or had there been any shift toward more student-centered approaches to literature instruction itself? Such changes have been long advocated (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1938) but have never been well articulated or fully implemented in many classrooms.

In addition to these major issues, we were concerned with the general characteristics of the teachers and of the context within which they worked: What is the background and preparation of the teachers in these successful programs? Do they display a high degree of professionalism as reflected in training, experience, and professional activities? Are they

supported in their professionalism by their department and school administration? To what extent do these successful programs have an institutional context that fosters instruction, providing reasonable teaching conditions, adequate instructional materials, and abundant library resources? Do these conditions vary in substantial ways between good schools in different types of communities?

The Study

Overview

The study involved visits to 17 schools in diverse communities throughout the United States; the schools were selected on the basis of local reputations for excellence in the teaching of English. School contacts and visits were coordinated by a university faculty member in English or Education, drawn from a neighboring university. The visits were conducted by the faculty member and an experienced teacher, chosen to provide a practitioner's view on the issues that emerged. The visits lasted approximately two days and included classroom observations, interviews with teachers and department heads, and a variety of questionnaires and checklists completed by librarians, teaching staff, and selected students. In planning the study, we relied heavily on the procedures and instrumentation developed by Squire and Applebee (1968) for a starting point, although no exact replication of that study was sought and all instruments were modified to focus directly on currently important issues. Where our questions parallel those from the earlier study, the comparable data will be noted in reporting the results.

Observers

The data gathering was conducted in ten communities across the country, selected to be diverse in geographic location, size, and racial and ethnic background. In each community, we asked a faculty member at a local university to coordinate school contacts and data collection. These faculty members all had particular interests in the teaching of high school English. They were responsible for coordinating the school contacts, visiting the schools, and preparing the data for analysis at the Literature Center.

The second observer at each school was an outstanding teacher from a school not part of the study's sample. This teacher was selected by the faculty member concerned on the basis of experience, knowledge of the teaching of English, and professional involvement, in order to provide a teacher's view throughout the observations and write up of results.

The use of such a diverse and talented group of observers posed its own problem: how to obtain consistent data across diverse settings. The approach that we took was twofold: 1) the basic data gathering procedures were laid out in detail in advance (see Instrumentation, below), so that comparable information would be gathered from comparable members of the school community during each visit; and 2) the observers' own summary comments were drawn on extensively in preparing this report, to provide a sense not only of the schools but also of the orientation of those who were observing them.

The observers are listed in appendix 1; their collective expertise and wisdom made this study possible.

Schools

After discussion with local educators, 20 schools were selected on the basis of their reputations for overall excellence in their program in English. Although the selections were made with the knowledge that our study would be focusing on the teaching of literature, the assessment of reputation was based on all aspects of the English program, not just on excellence in the teaching of literature. Whenever possible, two schools serving different populations (e.g., urban/suburban) were selected in the geographic area surrounding each of the selected communities. In three communities, a suitable second school was not found or access could not be arranged in time for participation in the study. This left a final sample of 17 schools.

The 17 schools included: 2 from California, 1 from Hawaii, 2 from Kentucky, 2 from Illinois, 2 from Iowa, 3 from New York, 2 from Ohio, 1 from Pennsylvania, and 2 from Virginia. Six of these schools served inner-city students; 7 were suburban; 4 were small town or rural. They ranged in size from 400 to 4500, and had English departments that ranged from 3 to 29 teachers. Because the numbers are small, no attempt is made here to contrast conditions in different settings; we will do this with more representative samples in a follow up study that will be conducted by the Literature Center. The schools are listed in appendix 2.

Instrumentation

A variety of instruments were developed to provide different perspectives on the English program. These included:

Department head interview: This open-ended interview schedule contained questions designed to provide an overall view of the English department, curriculum structure and sequence, resources available, departmental examinations, special strengths, and areas in need of improvement from the department chair's point of view. The interview was administered jointly by the two visitors.

Department head questionnaire: This structured questionnaire gathered background information about the department and program to supplement the more open-ended information gathered during the department head interview. It was completed by the department head and returned to the observers.

Teacher questionnaire: This questionnaire was left with all English teachers at the beginning of the two-day visit and collected at the end. It contained a variety of structured as well as open-ended questions about educational background, preparation for teaching literature, teaching practices, and goals for instruction.

Teacher interview: This open-ended interview schedule was administered to 8 English teachers in each school, chosen in conjunction with the department chair. The teachers were chosen for their strengths, and to represent the diversity of interests and approaches within the department. Each visitor administered four of the interviews. Questions focused on goals of a specific literature course, formal and informal assessment procedures, materials used, teaching techniques, writing about literature, perceived strengths of the program, and areas in need of improvement from the teachers' points of view.

Log of class activities and summary of classroom observation: This set of instruments contained an open-ended log for recording the nature and duration of activities during classroom observations, and a summary page for recording emphases on the different components of English instruction, types of literature observed, and approaches to instruction. Eight classes were observed in each school, selected in conjunction with the department chair to reflect the strengths and diversity of approaches within the department. In order to establish consistency between the observers, one class was observed by both visitors.

Librarian's questionnaire: This questionnaire was left with the librarian at the beginning of the school visit and collected at the end. It contained a variety of structured and open-ended questions about library size, usage, funding, and coordination with the English department.

Checklist of library titles: This checklist contained the titles of 48 books, some of which had been surveyed previously and some of which represented contemporary or possibly controversial titles. One observer checked the availability of each title against the library card catalog listings.

Student reading questionnaire: This questionnaire was administered by school staff to one class of non-college-bound and one class of college-bound twelfth graders. The structured and open-ended questions asked about independent and assigned reading, reading preferences, and library usage.

Procedures

Initial school contacts were made by each team of observers. Usually, this involved explaining the study and obtaining permission from the superintendent, the principal, and the department chair. These contacts stressed that the study was concerned with describing the current state of literature instruction in a small sample of schools with local reputations for outstanding programs in English. During the school visits, letters were distributed to participating faculty and students, again describing the general goals of the study and emphasizing that participation in all parts of the study was voluntary.

Each team of observers received a packet that contained a complete set of materials for each school visit. These materials included general information about the study as well as copies of the instruments and instructions for their use. A generic schedule for a two-day visit was provided, and is reproduced in Table 1. This was adapted at each site to fit the particular organizational structure of each school.

Completed questionnaires were returned to the university faculty member coordinating each visit, who in turn returned the materials to the Literature Center for data entry and analysis.

Each observer also completed an overall summary of impressions of each school. These summaries provided invaluable insight into the high points and low points of each visit.

Table 1
Sample Schedule

FIRST DAY

Period	Visitor #1	Visitor #2
Home room	Check in with department head; leave teacher questionnaire in mail boxes	Check in with department head; arrange for student reading questionnaire to be distributed to one class of advanced 12th graders and one class of non-college bound students
1	Department Head Interview	Department Head Interview
	Ask that department head questionnaire and survey of book length literary works be completed later.	
2	Observe 1 class	Interview 1 teacher
3	Observe 1 class	Observe 1 class
4	Interview one teacher	Visit library; leave librarian questionnaire; complete book checklist
	LUNCH	LUNCH
5	Interview 1 teacher	Interview 1 teacher
6	Observe 1 class	Observe 1 class
After School	Meet with English department if they wish, to answer questions about the study; encourage completion of questionnaires and copying samples of student writing about literature. Pick up student questionnaires.	

SECOND DAY

1	Observe 1 class	Interview teacher
2	Interview teacher	Observe 1 class
3	Observe 1 class	Observe same class
4	Interview teacher	Interview teacher
Lunch	Pick up teacher questionnaires	Pick up librarian and department head questionnaires, survey of book-length works
Afternoon	Courtesy visit to department head Complete summary of visit to school	

Treatment of Data

In addition to the interviews and questionnaire responses from the 17 department heads and librarians, the data available for analysis included: 143 classroom observations, 200 teacher questionnaires, 120 teacher interviews, 597 student reading questionnaires, and 33 observer summaries of reactions to the schools. The data sources were designed to provide complementary views of the emphases and organization of each program. About half of the data were collected in structured formats that allowed direct tabulation of responses; the remainder allowed open-ended responses that were analyzed to capture patterns of response across respondents. The observer reports were similarly analyzed for patterns across schools, but they are also quoted directly to reflect the tenor of the observations and the issues and special strengths that emerged during the observations.

A subset of the questions, particularly those dealing with the characteristics and background of the teachers and the overall emphases on various components of English, directly paralleled questions used in the earlier Squire and Applebee (1968) survey of a similar sample of outstanding English programs. Where parallels exist, responses in the two surveys were compared for trends over time.

Results

The Teachers

Table 2 summarizes teachers' reports about a variety of aspects of their background and experience. Their responses are summarized according to the grade level they primarily taught, as well as for the group as a whole.

In general, the teachers in these schools were highly experienced, averaging 15 years of teaching experience (compared with a national average of 14 years; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1988). Some 69 percent had at least a masters degree, noticeably higher than the average of 53 percent for secondary schools nationally (NCES, 1988). At the undergraduate level, 88 percent had majored in English.

In general, these teachers were better prepared than those surveyed by Squire and Applebee (1968). In their schools, only 51 percent had at least a masters degree, and 72 percent had majored in English. This may reflect a continuing strengthening and professionalization of the teaching force during the past two decades.

The teachers were also asked about their preparation in literature, writing, and language--both as an academic study and in terms of methods of teaching. Their responses, summarized in Table 3, indicate that the vast majority of the teachers in these successful programs considered themselves to be well prepared in each of the major components of English instruction. Overall, they considered themselves somewhat better prepared in the teaching of literature than they did in the teaching of writing or language.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Teacher

	Grade:	9 (n=37)	10 (n=56)	11 (n=66)	12 (n=33)	All (n=192)
Years of teaching English	M	12.3	16.2	14.7	18.4	15.3
	(SD)	(7.6)	(7.2)	(8.2)	(7.5)	(7.9)
Number of classes per day	M	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9
	(SD)	(.7)	(.7)	(.5)	(.8)	(.6)
Number of preparations	M	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.7	2.7
	(SD)	(.7)	(.9)	(1.0)	(.9)	(.9)
% Having Masters or better		59.5	73.7	69.7	70.6	69.1
% Majoring in English		91.9	80.7	89.6	90.9	87.6

Table 3

Percent of Teachers Rating Themselves "Well-Prepared" in Various Components of English Teaching

	Academic Study	Methods of Teaching
Literature	91.7	87.1
Writing	77.9	77.4
Language	76.1	70.0

(n=204 teachers)

In general, the preparation and experience of the teachers reflect the criteria for selection of schools to visit: They are committed and well-prepared professionals with the background and experience to develop effective programs in English. As one observer summarized:

> The major strength of the English program is the staff. We observed teachers who loved teaching and who were proud to be teaching at _____. The teachers were energetic. They all appeared to have a genuine love for literature. Indeed, several teachers commented in their interviews that this was a department of readers. Our observations revealed two clear indices of the investment of the teachers in their teaching. In every class we observed, the assignments and relevant notes were written on the board before the class began. Further, in our ten observations we counted only 14 minutes of non-instructional time. The teachers were obviously eager to get down to the business of teaching. Both the interviews and the classes demonstrated that the teachers have a thorough grounding in literature, if not in theory. The teachers also respect their colleagues and enjoy working with them. Several teachers commented that there was an open atmosphere that encouraged sharing ideas and materials.

Such dedication extended even to participation in our study, as was noted by an observer at another school:

> Overall the teachers and chair were extremely helpful and eager to participate in the study. Teachers who were not observed or interviewed complained and wanted to know from me why they were not chosen! They saw the study as an opportunity and a privilege. They want me to return to study them some more. It was a personal and professional privilege for me to be there.

The Department

If the teachers were enthusiastic and well prepared, they worked for the most part within departments that also functioned well. An observer enumerated the factors that contributed to the strengths in one school:

> --lots of material and human support: plenty of books, computer and writing labs and teacher-aides who are also enthusiastic and professional
>
> --a department head with a strong sense of her role as instructional leader
>
> --an educated, concerned, competitive open-minded local population
>
> --continual on-going program review.

Or as an observer described another school:

> The English program has consistency and continuity across grade levels, and English teachers have worked together for many years. I think these add up to similar approaches and materials; teachers know what to do, and students know what to expect.

If some departments emphasized consensus and consistency, others functioned equally well by providing scope for teachers to develop their own best approaches:

> ...the teachers seem quite free to choose their own materials and to design curricula that work from their individual strengths. The administration is generally non-obtrusive and supportive: the teachers feel in control of things, and that makes for a sense of ownership for what happens in English classes.

Within these departments, course loads were typical of high school programs, with a mode of 5 classes per day, representing 2 to 3 preparations. Class sizes averaged 25 (sd = 5). Although there were exceptions, in general the teaching conditions in these schools were at least reasonable, and sometimes they were very good.

Emphasis on the Major Components of English

Literature has traditionally been at the heart of the English curriculum, and it holds that place in the 17 schools in the present study. Teachers, observers, and department heads were all asked to comment on the relative emphasis placed on literature, writing, language, and other components of English.

Table 4 summarizes teachers' questionnaire responses when asked to estimate the percent of time devoted to literature, writing, language, speech, and other activities in a representative class. Overall, they reported devoting approximately 50 percent of class time to literature instruction, followed by writing (at 28 percent), language study (10 percent), speech (9 percent), and other activities (4 percent). These emphases were relatively consistent across grades 9 to 12, with perhaps slightly more emphasis on literature in the two upper grades, and slightly less emphasis on language.

Department heads were also asked to estimate the percent of time devoted to these components of English. Their estimates, summarized in Table 5, parallel those of the teachers.

These results suggest that the emphasis on literature instruction has remained relatively constant since the middle 1960s in programs with reputations for excellence in English. Squire and Applebee (1968) reported some 52 percent of the class time they observed was devoted to literature (compared with approximately 50 percent in teachers' and chairs' reports in the present study). The emphasis on writing instruction, however, was higher in the present sample (28 percent compared with only 16 percent in the earlier study). The increase in writing came at the expense of language study, speech, and other activities (e.g., media, reading instruction), all of which may receive somewhat less attention in these programs than they did in those studied in the 1960s.

Table 4

Teachers' Estimates of the Percent of Class Time Devoted to Major Components of English in a Representative Class

	Grade:	9 (n=37)	10 (n=56)	11 (n=67)	12 (n=34)	All (n=194)
Literature	M	44.9	45.1	56.5	50.4	49.9
	(SD)	(14.8)	(17.1)	(16.2)	(13.6)	(16.5)
Writing	M	25.9	31.5	24.3	31.2	27.9
	(SD)	(9.0)	(16.3)	(10.2)	(11.1)	(12.6)
Language	M	15.2	13.0	8.0	8.0	10.1
	(SD)	(11.4)	(14.7)	(8.3)	(8.3)	(11.4)
Speech	M	10.6	8.1	8.3	7.7	8.6
	(SD)	(8.4)	(10.6)	(8.6)	(8.6)	(9.1)
Other	M	3.5	3.6	4.8	2.2	3.8
	(SD)	(7.1)	(13.6)	(13.3)	(5.1)	(11.3)

Note. Percents do not total exactly 100 because of rounding.

Table 5

Department Heads' Estimates of the Percent of Time Devoted to Major Components of English

		Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	All
Literature	M	46	47	52	48
	(SD)	(11)	(12)	(14)	(10)
Composition	M	28	29	24	27
	(SD)	(8)	(10)	(6)	(7)
Speech	M	9	11	10	10
	(SD)	(4)	(9)	(7)	(5)
Language	M	12	9	10	10
	(SD)	(4)	(4)	(6)	(3)
Other	M	5	4	5	4
	(SD)	(7)	(7)	(7)	(10)

(n=9 department heads)

Note. Percents do not total exactly 100 because of rounding.

For the present study, when there was a choice, observers were more likely to select classes engaged in literature instruction than they were to choose classes engaged in other aspects of English teaching. Thus the content emphases in these classes are unlikely to be representative of the program as a whole. In any event, in 83 percent of the classes observed, literature received primary emphasis during the lesson. In another 7 percent of the lessons, although literature was not the major focus, it received at least a secondary emphasis.

The observers' reports are particularly interesting for what they reveal about differential emphases for students in different tracks (Table 6). For these analyses, the observed classes are divided into those for nonacademic track students, those for college-preparatory students (including honors and AP classes), and those organized heterogeneously. In general, the classes for the college-preparatory tracks placed more emphasis on literature, with 86 percent of the observed lessons focusing primarily on literature, compared with 68 percent of the observed lessons for nonacademic students. The lessons for the college-preparatory students placed correspondingly less emphasis on composition, language, and other activities (primarily film). This general pattern of less emphasis on literature for students in nonacademic classes parallels the emphases reported by Squire and Applebee (1968) two decades ago.

The estimates of the amount of time spent on literature are complicated by the fact that even when instruction focused on writing, it was likely to be writing about literature. Overall, for example, teachers estimated that 75 percent of the writing that their students did for English was writing about literature. (We will return to the relationships between writing and literature below.)

Approaches to Literature

We noted earlier that literary theory has blossomed during the past few decades, with a variety of different approaches claiming right of succession to the domination of the New Critics. In spite of the vigor of the theoretical debates, however, these competing schools of thought have paid only passing attention to the instructional implications of the new theories. (For exceptions, see, for example, Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986; Chew, DeFabio, & Hansbury, 1986.) In turn, high school teachers have found little of direct use in current literary scholarship.

Teachers were asked directly about their familiarity with recent developments in literary theory. Their responses, summarized in Table 7, show that just over 70 percent of these experienced and successful teachers reported "little" or "no" familiarity with contemporary literary theory. As one teacher put it in responding to this question, "These are far removed from those of us who work the front lines!"

The teachers were also asked to select one class "representative of your teaching of literature," as a baseline in discussing a variety of aspects of their instruction. One open-ended question asked them about their primary goals in teaching literature with this class. Their responses are summarized in Table 8.

Table 6

Observers' Reports of Content Emphasized in Classes Observed

	Percent of Classes			
	Nonacademic (n=38)	Mixed (n=18)	College Preparatory (n=36)	All (n=92)
Primary Emphasis				
Literature	68.4	94.4	86.1	80.4
Composition	15.8	5.6	11.1	12.0
Language	7.9	0.0	0.0	3.3
Other	7.9	0.0	2.8	4.3
Secondary Emphasis *				
Literature	15.8	0.0	11.1	10.9
Composition	23.7	33.3	13.9	21.7
Language	10.5	11.1	8.3	9.8
Other	5.3	0.0	2.8	3.3

*Percents do not total 100 because not all classes had a secondary emphasis

Table 7

Percent of Teachers Indicating Little or No Familiarity with Critical Theory

	Percent of Teachers				
Grade:	9 (n=31)	10 (n=52)	11 (n=62)	12 (n=31)	All (n=176)
	83.9	71.1	74.2	58.1	72.2

Table 8

Teachers' Reports of the Most Important Goals of Literature Instruction for a Representative Class

	Percent of Teachers Mentioning					
Grade:	9 (n=33)	10 (n=54)	11 (n=66)	12 (n=33)	All (n=186)	Chi-square (3 df)
Literary analysis	66.7	61.1	62.1	81.8	66.1	4.71
Appreciate literature	54.5	53.7	62.1	54.5	57.0	1.11
Understand theme	54.5	46.3	45.5	51.5	48.9	1.30
Understanding world	33.3	37.0	43.9	30.3	37.6	2.14
Literary heritage	6.1	20.4	54.5	33.3	32.3	28.38***
Other goals	39.4	27.8	34.8	24.2	31.7	2.43
Understanding self	36.4	31.5	30.3	27.3	31.2	0.67
Reading skills	36.4	33.3	26.2	30.3	30.8	1.30
Writing skills	12.1	25.9	28.8	42.4	27.4	7.74
Exam preparation	9.1	1.9	6.1	9.1	5.9	2.80
Ethnic/gender awareness	0.0	3.7	4.5	0.0	2.7	2.91

***p <.001

Note. Percents total more than 100 because most teachers indicated more than one goal.

The most frequent goal cited by the teachers was to teach their students the techniques of "literary analysis" (66 percent overall). Appreciation of literature came second (57 percent), and understanding of theme third (49 percent). The only significant fluctuation in goals with grade level concerned literary heritage, which became much more important in the 11th and 12th grade classes.

Observers' reports of the emphases in literature classes suggest that classroom implementation of these goals relies on the techniques of close textual analysis developed by the New Critics (Table 9). Overall, the majority of the classes that were observed emphasized close textual analysis, often within literature units that were organized around broad themes or historical development. Approaches varied somewhat with classes in different streams: heterogeneously grouped classes were somewhat more likely to emphasize student response, and high ability classes were more likely to emphasize close textual analysis.

An observer described text-centered teaching in a school where it worked well:

> The Advanced Placement program is the department's pride and joy, boasting several regional and national awards for its successful preparation of students. In general, the teachers have high regard for the academic side of their work. They view the reading and study of literature as a complex and extraordinary experience that requires analytic skills and special knowledge. Virtually all of the teachers talked about the importance of analytical skills and the role of reading and writing in developing rational, mature students....Literary analysis was the primary focus in literature courses: close, objective, and text-centered.

An observer at another school noted a similar emphasis:

> While there are no strict departmental guidelines, most teachers use anthologies sparingly, teach different works even when teaching the same course (e.g., American literature), use discussion-journals-tests-papers for evaluation, have a strong concern for literary concepts and less for reader response. They enjoy high level thinking papers, such as compare and contrast two characters or two novels. All make use of the library themselves and encourage their students. They are very serious about literature and believe that a successful student should be one who has the skill to understand it and relate it to himself/herself.

At their best, such approaches can lead students into engagement with the ideas and issues underlying the works they read; such was certainly the hope of the original proponents of New Critical techniques. The emphasis on the text and content, however, sometimes turns into an end in itself. Teachers and observers worried about this problem in many of the schools. Again, an observer summarized at the end of a visit to a school that prided itself on fostering close, analytic readings of text:

> Instruction was primarily teacher-centered. Even though we saw discussions, we did not see many free exchanges of students' responses. We did not see much emphasis on strategies that could be applied to new reading situations or other techniques that could make students independent of their teachers' questions. However, several teachers apparently recognize this problem and indicated that they are becoming more student-centered.

Table 9

Observers' Reports of Primary Emphases during Classroom Observation of Literature Instruction

Class Level:	Percent of Reports			
	Nonacademic (n=30)	Mixed (n=15)	College Preparatory (n=31)	All (n=76)
Close textual analysis	52	50	59	54
Student response	33	53	42	41
Thematic	27	33	36	32
Social history	11	7	20	14
Moral values	13	6	7	9
Literary history	4	0	11	6
Intellectual history	0	6	7	4

Note. Percents total more than 100 because some classes had more than one primary emphasis.

The observers' summary comments suggested that when teachers focused on student response, this often represented a concern with motivation. In these classrooms, response was treated as a way to get students engaged in a text before moving on to analysis. As one observer put it:

> Most teachers in this school seemed to understand intuitively the importance of encouraging student response to literature, though such encouragement was more of a means to help the students' interpretive skills than to promote responding as a valued act in and of itself, perhaps reflecting their reluctance to grade individual response....The prevailing approach I saw was a lecture/recitation process in which the teachers, rarely sharing control, would intersperse explanations of the text with questions about what happened and why. Character motivation, themes, and the author's use of symbols were stressed.

When Squire and Applebee (1968) studied outstanding programs in English in the middle 1960s, they did so in the midst of enthusiasms for New Criticism and close textual analysis. They reported "exciting examples of analysis and discussion," but even more "widespread confusion about the nature of close reading and about how to translate into classroom practice knowledge of the critical reading of literature acquired in college courses" (p. 120). More than two decades later in the schools in the present study, the close textual analysis that Squire and Applebee sought has become the conventional wisdom. While such approaches were sometimes very successful, particularly with honors or advanced placement classes, the observers and the teachers in the present study worried that the emphasis on text could lead to a neglect of the reader. As one result, the classes and programs that generated the greatest enthusiasm were those that sought to redress that balance, stressing student response and involvement as much as or more than the text to be analyzed. Such enthusiasm is reflected in an observer's comment on an ESL program:

> Collaboration among the students in the class was the norm. Students were responsible for accomplishing activities, with assistance from the teacher and from their peers who sat around the table with them. The students encouraged each other to participate in the discussion--knowing they would not be ostracized for their answers--and knowing that they needed all of the different perspectives available in the group. Students felt responsible for accomplishing the tasks the teachers assigned for them. The students took all of this as normal; however, my experience in similar classes suggests that this expectation is not typical. I think part of the success of this program is the fact that students have specific responsibilities, which increase as they accomplish more. Inherent in such an approach is a respect for the abilities of the participants.

Similar enthusiasm is evident in the description of a class in another school:

> [The teacher] places a high value on helping her students connect personally to texts before she moves to critical issues. Much of the discussion is thematic (and lively). Furthermore, she pushes kids to read more than they think they can. They read a lot (and so does she). In their conversations they connect the text under discussion with other things they have read, movies, personal experience. The discussion is free-flowing but focused. Students have a sense of the relationships which obtain

between an artistic creation and real world experience. They clearly enjoy what they are reading. Before discussion students freewrite about selected topics, and get into groups to share their writing. Then they come together for discussion as a class. The feeling in the class is not phony or stilted; this is a collaborative group which is serious about and interested in literary inquiry.

Activities in the Teaching of Literature

Teachers' goals for literature instruction are realized through the activities they choose to implement. To understand their emphases, interviewers asked teachers to estimate the percent of class time they spent on a variety of different kinds of activities. Results are summarized in Table 10.

The results in Table 10 suggest that teachers are using a wide variety of specific techniques, some emphasizing particular literary content and others emphasizing student contributions. Overall, 28 percent reflect teacher control of the content that will be presented (teacher presentation of new material, teacher-led discussion of content). Another 9 percent represent contexts in which students' responses will be guided by teachers' materials (guided individual reading, seatwork). Some 31 percent of the time reflects the activities that are most likely to emphasize student interpretations of what they read: small group discussion, 8 percent; teacher-led discussion of student responses, 17 percent; and creative writing, 6 percent.

In another approach to the same set of issues, teachers were asked to indicate which of a variety of common approaches and activities they used "regularly." Their responses are summarized in Table 11. As in their responses to earlier questions, the majority of teachers noted regularly engaging their students in close study of a single work (80 percent) or of a single author (51 percent); both of these approaches were reported somewhat more frequently for upper than for lower grade levels.

Approaches that are often more student-centered were apparent in a substantial minority of the classes; these approaches included creative dramatics (18 percent), creative writing (36 percent), and oral interpretation (35 percent). Adolescent literature was relatively popular in grade 9 (reported by 38 percent of the teachers), but nearly disappeared by grade 12 (3 percent). In contrast, the use of selections of literary criticism was low in grade 9 (8 percent), but rose to 39 percent by grade 12. Memorization, once a popular approach in the teaching of literature, was regularly required by only 7 percent of the teachers.

Table 10

Teachers' Reports of Percent of Time During Literature Instruction Spent on Selected Types of Activities in a Specified Class

	Mean Percent of Time						
Grade:	9 (n=35)	10 (n=54)	11 (n=64)	12 (n=32)	All (n=185)	(Within-cell SD)	F-linear (df=1;180)
Teacher presentation of new material	12.9	10.5	13.2	13.9	12.5	(9.6)	0.89
Teacher-led discussion of content	14.3	15.0	17.7	12.3	15.3	(9.7)	0.01
Teacher-led discussion of student responses	14.7	18.5	19.3	14.7	17.4	(11.5)	0.07
Student presentation	7.8	7.0	7.9	11.4	8.2	(8.9)	2.62
Silent reading of common selections	6.5	5.4	6.4	4.6	5.8	(7.6)	0.36
Guided individual reading	4.5	3.7	2.5	2.3	3.7	(4.7)	5.10*
Seatwork completing study materials	6.0	5.1	4.3	3.8	4.8	(5.9)	2.95*
Reading aloud from works being studied	11.3	10.9	6.6	13.5	9.9	(10.6)	0.05
Small group discussion	8.4	8.6	7.5	9.9	8.4	(9.7)	0.08
Watching film or videotape	4.5	5.1	5.3	3.4	4.6	(6.5)	0.24
Creative writing	6.8	5.9	5.5	4.3	5.6	(5.6)	3.31
Writing about literature	12.5	15.3	15.5	15.8	14.9	(12.5)	1.15

*p <.05

Note. Percents do not total 100 because of rounding.

Table 11

Approaches and Materials Used "Regularly" in a Representative Class

	Percent of Teachers					
Grade:	9 (n=37)	10 (n=56)	11 (n=67)	12 (n=33)	All (n=193)	Chi-square (6 df)
Writing about literature	70.3	86.0	86.2	94.1	84.5	11.05
Close study of single work	67.6	78.9	84.8	88.2	80.4	6.88
Close study of single author	27.8	40.7	61.5	71.9	50.8	30.85***
Creative writing	43.2	44.6	28.8	26.5	35.8	9.60
Oral interpretation	40.5	22.2	33.3	51.5	34.7	12.25
Creative dramatics	24.3	16.7	15.9	18.8	18.3	4.05
Literature for adolescents	37.8	21.4	9.5	3.1	17.6	45.57***
Selections of literary criticism	8.1	10.7	14.9	39.4	16.6	27.73***
Memorization of specific texts	10.8	7.0	4.5	8.8	7.2	5.19

*** $p < .001$

Note. Teachers rated all items on a 3 point scale: never, sometimes, regularly.

Types of Literature Studied

Teachers were asked to estimate the percent of instruction in literature devoted to different genres. Their responses are summarized in Table 12.

Teachers reported a relatively balanced spread of attention to poetry (19 percent), short stories (26 percent), novels (29 percent), and plays (19 percent). But in spite of these reports, the instructional time observed was usually dominated by plays and novels. Of the classes visited by observers, for example, 38 percent included some study of a novel, and another 27 percent included some study of a play (Table 13). Only 19 percent included poetry; another 13 percent included short stories. There were, however, some variations with grade level. In general, the upper grades were more likely to focus on novels, while the lower grades were more likely to emphasize plays. Emphasis on short stories and on poetry showed little systematic variation with grade level.

Some of the programs made extensive use of individual texts, as one of our observers commented:

> In literature the program is rich and varied, relying mainly on paperback single texts rather than anthologies. The huge bookroom is as big as some college bookstores. The list of approved texts is lengthy and expandable by individual teacher requests. They seem to stress modern and contemporary works much more than most schools do.

Such diversity was often tied to elective programs, which had remained intact in many of these schools in spite of a reduction in electives nationally:

> The program is strongly literature based. Novels, in particular, form the cores of the many diverse electives. Students can choose themes, authors, time periods or even teachers that interest them. Because of the very generous budget and because students purchase the major paperbacks used in the courses, very recent works are available. Books that "failed" are immediately disposed of.

Most of the programs studied make relatively extensive use of literature anthologies, either as primary or supplementary materials. (At the same time, the observers seemed most likely to comment enthusiastically on those programs which had moved away from the anthologies.) Although anthology series are revised regularly, the new editions are not always available; they cost too much and the older texts represent a considerable investment that administrators are not eager to abandon. Thus it was not unusual to hear complaints such as the following:

> The most evident complaint about the literature program is one common to the whole district--outdated material in assigned anthologies. This includes poetry, essays, short stories, and drama selections. The novels assigned to various classes draw the loudest complaints. There is little inclusion of materials written by ethnic or gender minorities.

Table 12

Teachers' Reports of the Percent of Literature Instruction Allocated to Particular Types of Literature

	Mean Percent of Time						
Grade:	9 (n=37)	10 (n=57)	11 (n=67)	12 (n=34)	All (n=195)	(Within-group SD)	F-linear (df=1;191)
Novels	24.9	27.2	33.2	27.9	28.9	(20.8)	1.60
Short stories	30.0	28.0	26.0	16.3	25.7	(18.1)	9.49**
Plays	19.6	22.9	15.4	19.4	19.1	(14.5)	1.48
Poetry	14.5	16.7	18.1	28.2	18.8	(14.1)	15.18***
Film	6.9	4.4	4.7	2.9	4.7	(5.7)	6.88**
Other	5.3	2.2	2.8	4.4	3.4	(7.6)	0.13

**p <.01
***p <.001

Table 13

Observers' Reports of Types of Literature Studied

Percent of Classes

Grade:	9 (n=21)	10 (n=20)	11 (n=48)	12 (n=23)	All (n=112)	Chi-square (3 df)
Novels	23.8	25.0	50.0	39.1	38.4	6.14
Plays	52.4	30.0	18.8	17.4	26.8	9.74*
Other	14.3	15.0	27.1	17.4	20.5	2.28
Poetry	14.3	20.0	10.4	39.1	18.8	8.75*
Short stories	9.5	20.0	10.4	17.4	13.4	1.71
Film	19.0	5.0	6.3	0.0	7.1	6.45

* p <.05

Note. Some classes studied more than one type of literature during the observed lesson. Therefore percents total more than 100.

A limited range of selections was evident in other schools, however, including those where resources were abundant. As one observer put it after describing a program in which teachers seemed "quite free to choose their own materials and to design curricula that work from their individual strengths": "We have little or no attention paid to world literature or minority literature, for example, and the Contemporary Literature course includes the rather less than contemporary Grapes of Wrath and Animal Farm."

There are other problems, such as censorship, that limit how effectively the schools can reach out toward a broader range of selections. Community reaction to possibly controversial books remains a real concern: 1 of the 17 schools we visited, for example, had recently had trouble because of teaching a now-standard text, Catcher in the Rye.

Assessing Achievement in Literature

Teachers were asked a series of questions about their use of a variety of common techniques to assess student achievement in literature. The results are summarized in Table 14.

The results suggest that teachers use a variety of quite different sources of information in assessing student progress. The two most frequent approaches--mentioned by nearly all of the teachers--were class discussion (98 percent) and formal writing assignments (98 percent). The vast majority of teachers also made use of teacher-constructed exams (93 percent), short-answer quizzes (89 percent), and study guides or worksheets (76 percent). Much less frequent were dramatization (47 percent), reading logs (35 percent), commercially-prepared tests (27 percent), and district or departmental exams (20 percent).

The different approaches to assessment reflect not just different methodologies, but also differing kinds of learning that are being evaluated. Short-answer quizzes, for example, are likely to focus on relatively surface level comprehension; formal writing assignments, on the other hand, are more likely to require students to reflect upon and interpret the works they have read. The diversity in methods of assessment suggests a similar diversity in goals for literature learning.

Students' Reports on Their Reading

Some 597 twelfth grade students (337 from college-bound tracks, 260 from nonacademic tracks) completed questionnaires about their reading. These questionnaires asked about the amount of reading they ordinarily do, the books, magazines, and newspapers they preferred, the influences on their book selection, and their usage of school and public libraries.

Table 15 presents results for the amount of reading the students reported doing. The college-bound students reported significantly more hours of reading each week than did their peers in nonacademic programs, but the difference was concentrated in reading for homework (6 hours versus 4 hours); the reported amounts of reading of their own choice were identical for the two groups (about 3 and a half hours per week).

Table 14

Techniques Used to Monitor Student Success in Literature Class

Percent of Teachers

Grade:	9 (n=37)	10 (n=56)	11 (n=67)	12 (n=34)	All (n=194)	Chi-square (3 df)
Class discussion	100.0	98.2	97.0	97.1	97.9	1.21
Formal writing assignment	94.6	96.4	100.0	100.0	97.9	4.81
Exams teacher constructs	94.6	94.6	91.0	94.1	93.3	0.84
Short-answer quiz	89.2	87.5	89.6	88.2	88.7	0.14
Study guides or worksheets	73.0	82.1	76.1	70.6	76.3	1.90
Dramatization	59.5	51.8	37.3	44.1	46.9	5.46
Reading logs	35.1	35.7	31.3	38.2	34.5	0.55
Commercially-prepared tests	29.7	32.1	19.4	29.4	26.8	2.96
Other	18.9	17.9	26.9	29.4	23.2	2.52
District or department examination	16.2	21.4	17.9	26.5	20.1	1.47

Table 15

Hours of Reading Each Week Reported by Students

		College-Prep (n=322)	Nonacademic (n=249)	F-linear (df=1;568)
Reading for homework	Mean	6.5	4.1	
	(SD)	(5.0)	(3.9)	36.91***
Reading of own choice	Mean	3.7	3.4	
	(SD)	(4.6)	(5.8)	0.59

*** p <.001

The two groups differed considerably in the books, magazines, and newspapers that they preferred to read, however. For favorite magazines, the top two for the college bound students were Time (30 percent) and Vogue (1. percent); for the nonacademic track students, they were Sports Illustrated (19 percent) and Seventeen (16 percent) (Table 16).

Table 17 summarizes the favorite magazines under a variety of broad categories. In addition to clear differences in the number of magazines the students in the two groups reported enjoying, there were differences in the most-preferred types. Magazines that emphasize news or a combination of news and culture (e.g., Time, New Yorker, Esquire) dominated the lists for the college-preparatory students (83 percent of whom cited at least one magazine in this category); sports magazines dominated the list for the nonacademic track (33 percent). (The specific titles cited most frequently suggest that there are strong gender and ethnic biases in the composition of the two groups.) When asked about newspaper reading, 56 percent of the college-preparatory students and 64 percent of the nonacademic students regularly read the local newspaper; conversely, 52 percent of the college-preparatory students regularly read a national newspaper (e.g., New York Times, U.S.A. Today, Washington Post), compared with only 23 percent of their nonacademic track peers.

Similar differences in taste were apparent when students were asked to list books and authors they found "personally significant." Ninety-one percent of the college-preparatory students had at least one personally significant book or author, and their responses echoed the curriculum structured by their teachers: Shakespeare and Hemingway led the list, and all of the authors mentioned by 5 percent or more of the students came from the high school canon. Only 72 percent of the students in the nonacademic stream, on the other hand, had a significant book or author to cite, and the two that were listed by 5 percent or more of the students were Judy Blume and Stephen King (Table 18)--neither of whom has become a significant part of the school curriculum.

Students were also asked about the sources of help they used in finding books to read for pleasure. Their responses, summarized in Table 19, indicate that overall, students are most likely to rely on browsing or on other students for suggestions, followed by suggestions from their teachers, booklists, the school librarian, or the public librarian. Differences between the two groups of students continue to be evident, however, with the college-preparatory students seeking suggestions from a wider range of sources--in particular, they make more use of other students, their teachers, and lists of suggested readings.

The college-bound students in the present study correspond to the advanced 12th grade students surveyed by Squire and Applebee (1968). The responses of the present group of students suggest some shifts in the rank-ordering of influences on book selection, with teachers and booklists (ranked first and third, respectively, in the earlier survey) falling off somewhat in influence, and school librarians improving their position somewhat relative to public librarians (ranked 7th and 6th, respectively, in the earlier survey). These changes may be related to gradual improvements in school library services, and a decline in attention to guided individual reading programs as part of English instruction.

Table 16

Magazines Reported as Favorites by
5 Percent or More of the Students

College Preparatory (n=337)		Nonacademic (n=260)	
Magazine	Percent	Magazine	Percent
Time	30	Sports Illustrated	19
Vogue	15	Seventeen	16
Seventeen	13	Time	11
Sports Illustrated	12	Ebony	9
Newsweek	11	Cosmopolitan	8
People	11	Hot Rod	8
Rolling Stone	11	Vogue	7
Elle	8		
National Geographic	8		
Cosmopolitan	6		
Glamour	6		

Table 17

Types of Magazines Reported as Favorites
by 5 Percent or More of the Students

College Preparatory (n=337)		Nonacademic (n=260)	
Type of Magazine	Percent	Type of Magazine	Percent
News and culture	83	Sports	33
Fashion	48	Fashion	29
Sports	23	News and culture	28
Teen	16	Black Culture	26
Music and popular culture	16	Teen	23
Science	10	Auto	22
Black Culture	9	Sex	7

Table 18

Personally Significant Authors Mentioned by 5 Percent or More of 12th Grade Students

College Preparatory (n=337)		Nonacademic (n=260)	
Author	Percent	Author	Percent
Shakespeare	10	King	12
Hemingway	9	Blume	5
Faulkner	8		
Salinger	8		
Steinbeck	8		
Doestoevsky	6		
Fitzgerald	5		

Table 19

Sources of Help in Choosing Books to Read

	Percent of Students Indicating			
	College-Prep (n=336)	Nonacademic (n=253)	All (=589)	Chi-square (1 df)
Browsing	69	66	67	0.29
Other students	74	55	66	23.52***
Teacher	67	50	60	17.58***
Booklists	41	22	33	22.58***
Parents	30	23	27	2.93
School librarian	16	24	20	4.99*
Other	19	17	18	0.39
Public librarian	14	17	15	0.79

* p <.05
*** p <.001

The School Library

One of the major resources available to a literature program is the school library. Because of this, we asked for comments about the school library from a number of sources, including librarians, teachers, and students. Table 20 summarizes some of the general characteristics of the libraries in these schools. Overall there is considerable diversity, both in the number of books in the school collection (from 1,862 to 51,500) and in the annual allocation for books (from $6,600 to $28,500). (Both of these figures, of course, are closely related to overall school size, but variations in per pupil figures were also large.)

Many of the libraries are making special efforts to be accessible to students. As a group, they averaged half an hour of time open before school and 45 minutes after school; 21 percent were open to the public as well as to students. They also reported that an average of 95 percent of their books were available on open shelves, though the range here was large (from 80 to 100 percent). Some 29 percent also reported that there were restrictions (other than monetary) on the books they could purchase, mostly designed to avoid the inclusion of controversial titles in the school collection.

Project observers were also asked to complete a checklist indicating the availability of specific titles. These were drawn from a similar checklist of books examined in Squire and Applebee's (1968) study of outstanding high school English programs, supplemented with additional titles likely to generate controversy or reflecting attempts to broaden the collection to include more women and minority authors. Table 21 summarizes the results.

Overall, the collections look more inclusive than they were when Squire and Applebee collected their data; several titles which were not widely available in the early 1960s were widely available in the schools in the present study (The Stranger, The Fountainhead, Catcher in the Rye) At the same time, some contemporary titles that are likely to appeal more directly to students were unavailable (e.g., Blume's Forever), as were some difficult or controversial classic texts (e.g., Joyce's Ulysses) and some new texts reflecting a more diverse canon (Allende, The House of Spirits; Garcia-Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude).

Students' reports of their library usage reflect some differences between the college-preparatory students and those in nonacademic tracks (Table 22). Both groups reported using the school library an average of 3 times during the past month, and about 45 percent of both groups reported borrowing books from the school library during the same time period. The nonacademic students were more likely to feel that the school library usually had all the books that they needed (56 percent compared to 37 percent for the college-preparatory students), however. Concomitantly, the college-preparatory students were more likely to also use the public library (an average of 3 times in the past month, compared with 2 for the nonacademic students), and to borrow books from it (57 percent in the past month, compared to 30 percent for the nonacademic track).

In general, the libraries in the 17 schools were among the special strengths noted by the observers. Their comments were often enthusiastic, noting both the resources available and the cooperation that took place between the teachers and librarians.

Table 20

Characteristics of School Libraries

	Mean	(SD)	Range
Volumes	19,481	(10,838)	1,862-51,500
Volumes per pupil	11	(3)	6-17
Weekly circulation	266	(136)	50-525
Annual allocation for books	$13,838	(5,321)	$6,600-$28,500
Allocation per pupil	$8	(3)	$1-$12
Allocation for other resources	$5,056	(5,251)	$0-$20,000
Minutes open before school	29	(16)	0-50
Minutes open after school	45	(39)	0-110
Percent of books on open shelves	96	(6)	80-100
Percent of seats regularly used	52	(27)	22-100

(n=15 libraries)

Table 21

Titles Available in School Libraries

Author	Title	Percent of Libraries 1988	1963-65
Dickens	A Tale of Two Cities	100	100
Hawthorne	The Scarlet Letter	100	100
Bronte	Jane Eyre	100	98
Thackerey	Vanity Fair	100	96
Austen	Pride and Prejudice	100	93
Steinbeck	Grapes of Wrath	100	75
Huxley	Brave New World	100	69
Conrad	The Heart of Darkness	100	68
Golding	Lord of the Flies	100	54
Rand	The Fountainhead	100	23
Wright	Black Boy	100	
Ellison	The Invisible Man	100	
Hemingway	For Whom the Bell Tolls	100	
McCullers	Member of the Wedding	100	
Stowe	Uncle Tom's Cabin	100	
Twain	Huckleberry Finn	100	
Hardy	Return of the Native	94	99
Hemingway	The Old Man and the Sea	94	98
Maugham	Of Human Bondage	94	98
Mitchell	Gone with the Wind	94	98
Tolstoi	War and Peace	94	98
Melville	Moby Dick	94	96
Lee	To Kill a Mockingbird	94	92
Butler	The Way of All Flesh	94	88
Orwell	1984	94	85
Wolfe	Look Homeward, Angel	94	80
Salinger	Catcher in the Rye	94	50
Joyce	Portrait of the Artist	94	46
Camus	The Stranger	94	26
Zindel	The Pigman	94	
Cormier	The Chocolate War	94	
Williams	A Streetcar Named Desire	94	
Galsworthy	The Forsythe Saga	88	96
Hugo	Les Miserables	88	96
White	The Once and Future King	88	65
Faulkner	The Sound and the Fury	88	51
Bunyan	Pilgrim's Progress	81	96
Morrison	Song of Solomon	81	
Walker	The Color Purple	81	
Cleaver	Soul on Ice	75	
Lawrence	Sons and Lovers	63	
Garcia-Manquez	One Hundred Years of Solitude	56	
Lewis	The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe	50	
Joyce	Ulysses	38	
Blume	Forever	19	
Pym	Excellent Women	19	
Allende	The House of Spirits	13	
Piri	Down These Mean Streets	13	

Table 22

Students' Use of School Library

	College Preparatory (n=334)		Nonacademic (n=259)		All (n=593)		Chi-square (df=1)
	Percent of Students						
Borrowed books in last month							
From school library	46		42		45		0.78
From public library	57		30		45		40.82***
Does the school library usually have all the books you							
need?	37		56		45		19.36***
would like to read for pleasure?	43		54		48		6.74**
Books used at school and public library are about the same?	53		71		61		19.23***
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	F(1;592)
Number of times in last month							
Used school library	3.1	(5.3)	3.4	(5.6)	3.2	(5.4)	0.27
Used public library	3.4	(6.0)	1.7	(3.4)	2.6	(5.1)	16.27***

** p <.01
*** p <.001

When library resources were limited, however, the effects on the literature program were also noticeable:

> [The] teachers all complained bitterly about the school library. They indicated it is completely inadequate, both in terms of title holdings and physical space. There is no certificated librarian, only library clerks, and the district does not appear to have plans to hire one. One English teacher summed it up quite prosaically: "The library sucks."

Writing Instruction

Although the present study focused on approaches to the teaching of literature, the teachers reported that 75 percent of the writing that their students did was writing about literature. Thus a comprehensive examination of literature instruction needs to consider literature in the context of movements affecting the teaching of writing as well. The past two decades have witnessed a shift in attention in the professional literature about writing instruction toward "process-oriented" approaches that stress the skills and strategies needed to produce a piece of writing. These approaches are usually somewhat open-ended, providing room for tentative early drafts, peer response to work in progress, and student- rather than teacher-oriented emphases in the classroom as a whole.

The renewed interest in writing instruction has already been evident in reports of the amount of emphasis given to various components of the English curriculum: The schools in the present study seem to give somewhat more attention to writing instruction than was the case in the schools in the Squire and Applebee (1968) study. Department chairs were also asked directly about the extent to which new movements in the teaching of writing had affected their programs. All of them indicated that their departments were familiar with the issues raised by process-oriented approaches to writing, though only half felt that the department had actually changed their approaches to writing instruction as a result. Most saw the approaches as generating a needed attention to writing skills, whatever approaches were in fact utilized in insuring that attention.

The observers' reports on the influence of recent movements in writing instruction were also somewhat ambivalent. In 16 of the 17 schools, they noted an awareness of the issues raised by process-oriented approaches, and in 11 of the schools they saw such approaches implemented effectively in at least some teachers' classrooms. Rarely, however, did they find wholesale adoption of these approaches. The following comments are typical:

> The department's official statements emphasize the value of the writing process as a vehicle for thinking and learning. In-house faculty workshops had been devoted to responding to student writing and other composition concerns. The number of teachers who had gone through extensive Writing Project training was impressive. However, ...some faculty seemed to have gotten mixed or faulty messages from their Writing Project training--one teacher commented that the Project taught her to "lower her expectations of students." Much of the writing that we witnessed or that teachers talked about was of the five paragraph theme variety, rather formulaic. Writing is still used largely for assessment purposes, rather than as a way to get students thinking and learning. ...We encountered worksheets; objective, short-

answer type tests; very structured, thesis/support essay assignments; and more in-class writing assignments than we expected given people's comments. Thus, from our limited observation, we suspect that the writing process approach has not been as fully integrated into the curriculum as people seem to think.

Other departments had not really attempted to integrate these approaches into their programs:

> When we inquired about recent development in writing, the teachers were aware of changes because they read more about writing in English Journal or elsewhere, and they reported that more materials were available now. Yet, I often heard that writing process is "old wine in new bottles" or that "I tried those techniques and the writing does not get any better."

In schools where process-oriented approaches to writing instruction had had some influence, department chairs also noticed some carryover to literature. In 4 of the 17 departments, they felt that changes in writing instruction had led to more attention to writing about literature. In 5 departments, the chairs also reported changes in the ways literature was taught. The observers also commented on teachers whose approach to writing had carried over to literature instruction:

> The links between composition and literature are strong at _____. In fact, at times, the focus on composition almost seems to dominate the literature curriculum. Many of the English teachers we talked to have done considerable amounts of inservice training and coursework on the teaching of writing. These teachers have placed writing at the center of the English department's mission. This emphasis on teaching writing throughout the English curriculum has resulted in an array of interesting assignments and approaches. ...English courses put less emphasis on lecture, memorization, grammar instruction, objective and short-answer tests, and more emphasis on short, informal writing, imaginative assignments, logs, prewriting, and revising. And while innovations in the teaching of literature, such as the California Literature Project, have not yet had a major impact on this part of the country, the emphasis on writing has resulted in changes in the teaching of literature, with more personal response encouraged.

Urban Schools

Because we studied a relatively small number of schools, our discussions have focused on patterns that hold across most of them. One contrast, however, was acute, and needs to be highlighted here: that was the difference between the working conditions and environment in the urban compared with the suburban schools. The suburban schools sometimes had almost an embarrassment of riches, as the observers' comments noted:

> Also contributing to this high morale are the department's ample resources. Books and films are in extremely good supply. The facility itself is massive, with, for example, a theater wing which houses four different theaters of varying sizes and shapes. The district is very wealthy, due not so much to the wealth of the residents, but to the presence of some large, tax-paying factories within its boundaries. The largess extends to the library as well. Actually, I should say "libraries." There are

three: one for literature, one for "careers," and one for fine arts. All three are impressive.

Programs in such communities, as one of our observers pointed out, may be successful no matter what they do:

> In talking with the teachers, I got a real feeling of complacency--a sense that few changes would be forthcoming because few challenges would encourage such change. The teachers do many things well, but in watching the students I got the feeling that the teachers could do just about anything and the kids would respond well. I observed classes which were dominated by teacherly explication of texts and I interviewed teachers who took students' initial responses to texts very seriously. Whatever the approach, the students simply adjusted. I don't want to be hypercritical here--to suggest that there is something wrong with the success that these teachers are experiencing. But this community is so supportive of the schools, is itself so well-educated and relatively stable, that some of the success these teachers achieve has to be attributed, not to the teaching I saw, but to the students who show up at the school every day.

In contrast, the good programs in urban schools wrenched their achievements out of much less supportive environments. In one school, our observers commented:

> The major problem with the program is inadequate resources. The teachers are tied to anthologies because they have few class sets of individual titles. Teachers' options are further limited because the department does not have access to a copying machine. The budget is so limited that the department raises its own money by selling vocabulary books.

Or again, in another urban school:

> The major strengths of the English program at _____ arise almost entirely from the strengths of its teachers and principal. This urban school manifests all the problems ordinarily found in city schools: lack of money, time and equipment. The faculty, however, appear determined to do their utmost to counteract these difficulties. Many teachers commented on the professionalism of their colleagues and on the friendly manner in which they offer each other support. ...Time and again teachers said that the "improvement they would like to see" in their literature program was money. The funds to purchase books and audiovisual aids, to lower the class load of individual teachers, to invite outside speakers to classes, to provide more time for planning as a department, to restore the class period from its present 45 minutes to the 55 minutes previously allotted: this is the single greatest "improvement" teachers call for.

Yet in spite of these conditions, the program in this school was unusually successful in reaching its students:

> In the face of inadequate supplies, large numbers of students assigned to each teacher, relatively high absenteeism, low student motivation and a very limited amount of planning time, they work diligently to bring literature to their

students. ...One teacher commented that her department's strength in teaching literature lies in its concerted effort to teach literature successfully to comprehensive (lower level) students. Indeed, I did not observe any class, no matter how blase, unmotivated, or just plain tired the students w e, in which the teacher did not work at teaching to these young people. The members of this faculty seem to have concluded that a great part of their teaching of literature is simply arousing interest and inspiring curiosity: teaching literature as it touches the lives of their students.

Programs for Nonacademic Students

Our discussions so far have noted a number of differences between the programs for nonacademic students and those for the college bound. These differences came together in the observers' perceptions to highlight one of the areas of the curriculum most in need of improvement. As one of the observers summarized the problem that appeared in a number of schools:

> Literature seems to be the province of the academically successful. Lower phase students either studied the mechanics of language or, in one case, took "individualized reading." This reading course consisted of reading silently, filling out a worksheet on the book, and turning in the worksheet for grading. While the works studied were adolescent novels (The Pigman, The Outsiders), few if any discussions were held. Nor was there any extended writing about the books. I had the impression that the teachers of such courses are more concerned with keeping the kids busy than dealing with their responses to the books.

One of the observers in another school noted a similar problem:

> Even more important a problem is the relative lack of attention given to less academically oriented students. We observed a "whatever works" approach to dealing with the non-college-bound, largely minority English classes, which is surprising in a department with such an emphasis on developing coherent curriculum. Certain individual teachers were doing interesting things in their classes, but as a whole the department has not devised a way of working with this student population. Some teachers simply do a watered-down version of what they do in college-prep classes, others avoid using extended writing activities, but there is a genuine sense of confusion about how to meet the needs of this group of students. One gets the sense that such students, who make up perhaps a third of the student body, are not the main focus of the faculty and administration, which for obvious reasons would rather highlight the achievements of its top students.

Aware of the possibility of such problems, a few of the schools in this sample relied on heterogeneous grouping specifically as a way of benefiting nonacademic students.

Conclusion: Issues in the Teaching of Literature

The various data gathered on these 17 schools suggest that they in fact were the kinds of schools we had sought: They were schools typified by highly professional, well-trained, and experienced staff, with the resources and support necessary to implement an effective English program. While the data gathered in these schools do not provide a representative portrait of the teaching of literature in American schools, they do serve to highlight a series of important issues that arise in schools that represent "good practice," where the teachers individually as well as the department as a whole have given careful thought and attention to what and how they teach.

The issues that emerge represent the growing edges of current theory and practice--the places where teachers and observers were uneasy about current approaches, even in schools where the English program as a whole works well. Some of these issues were readily apparent to everyone; others emerged out of the stepping back from the press of the immediate that a study like this invites for participants and observers alike. As some of the teachers pointed out during our visits, the process of describing their current practice to knowledgeable outsiders heightened their awareness both of the strengths of what they were doing and of the areas that needed reconsideration.

Issue 1. We need to provide supportive institutional contexts for our programs in literature.

The teachers in these successful English programs did not work alone. The best programs were characterized by strong departmental leadership (whether that leadership encouraged a departmental consensus about goals and approaches or provided the support for teachers to develop their own personal approaches). They also were characterized by an awareness of and trust in the professionalism of the teaching staff: The department chairs cited with pride the degrees and accomplishments of their teachers, and provided them with the flexibility and resources to exercise their professional judgment. Most of the schools could also boast of abundant resources, both within the department and within the school as a whole. When resources were clearly lacking, as they were in some of the inner-city schools, the problem of how to obtain them came almost to dominate all discussions.

Issue 2. We need to revitalize literature instruction for nonacademic students.

The classes that impressed both the teachers and the observers most were those targeted at the college-bound. In these classes, close textual analysis coupled with an emphasis on literary history and major themes often worked very well, leading to intelligent, analytic discussions of texts and responses. These were the programs cited with most pride by teachers and department chairs; these were the classes that produced the award-winning students (and high SAT scores) that earned newspaper reports and favorable publicity for the school and the department. Programs for the nonacademic tracks, on the other hand, received less praise and less attention. Some of the schools had well-earned reputations for success in teaching these students, but it was a success almost always attributed by the department, the teachers, and the project observers to individual, devoted teachers; it was rarely a success attributed to careful planning of curriculum and approaches. Paradoxically, it was the very students in most need of help who got the least attention in curriculum planning and curriculum revision. To avoid

such problems, some of the schools in the present sample relied on heterogeneous grouping, which by eliminating tracking tries to insure that no group of students is neglected in curriculum planning.

Issue 3. We need to reconcile approaches to literature with approaches to writing.

The teachers in these schools showed widespread awareness of recent movements toward process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing. In some cases they had embraced these approaches wholeheartedly; in others the new movements had simply reopened the debate about the most effective approaches. In either case, however, composition had been vitalized with increased emphasis and a sharper sense of energy and purpose. With a few exceptions, however, these same teachers reflected widespread adherence to traditional approaches to literature. The most widely used classroom approach involved a New Critical close reading of texts, and class discussion usually took the form of a dialogue leading students toward an accepted, teacher-sponsored interpretation. Reader response theory, to the extent that it was acknowledged, was likely to be used as a motivating device on the way to close analysis of text, not as a legitimate approach in its own right.

This traditional approach to literature seemed overly text-centered to many teachers and observers, but the profession has offered few clearly worked out alternatives to consider. There are few models to sharpen the debate about literature instruction in the way that process-oriented approaches have sharpened the debate about writing instruction, and none of the available models is widely known. The teachers in these schools lacked a vocabulary to talk about the process of literary understanding, or about the instructional techniques that might support such a process. In this, they mirror the state of the profession at large.

Issue 4. We need to develop a theory of the teaching and learning of literature to guide the rethinking of high school instruction.

Recent developments in critical theory have for the most part ignored pedagogical issues, and teachers in these schools have found little in current theory to revitalize their instructional approaches. Most remain largely unaware of movements such as structuralism, deconstruction, or recent developments in reader response theory. Instead, they rely in their curriculum planning and day-to-day instruction on traditional organizational devices such as genre, chronology, and theme, and on New Critical approaches to individual texts.

The teachers in this sample seem unaware of the recent ferment in critical theory at the university level; however, most of the major work in critical theory has been equally unconcerned with unraveling the pedagogical implications of the new approaches. (Many of the recent advances in critical theory do, of course, have pedagogical implications, but only a few scholars (e.g., Bartholmae & Petrosky, 1986; Scholes, 1985) have seriously begun to explore what these implications would look like in classroom practice). Even at the university level there is little evidence of major changes in the nature of instruction in literature. At the same time, this is an unusual state of affairs: Historically, approaches in the schools have adjusted themselves to changing critical fashion, whether the current fashion has been philology, ethical values, semantic analysis, or New Critical textual analysis (cf. Applebee, 1974).

The current disjunction between developments in literary theory and developments in pedagogy may be appropriate, but to the extent that it is, we need an alternative, well-articulated theory of literature learning and instruction to guide our approaches to curriculum development and instructional reform.

The issues being raised here define a large and important agenda for the profession. When we can offer programs which more effectively engage our nonacademic students, which reconcile currently conflicting approaches to literature and composition, which are based on a richer theory of the teaching and learning of literature, and which exist within a supportive professional environment, we will have come a long ways toward improving the teaching of English for all of our students.

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Appendix 1

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