DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 168 SP 035 601

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TITLE Public Knowing and Private Understanding: Two Views of Reading and Teaching Literature.
INSTITUTION National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO NCRTL-RR-94-2
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS English Curriculum; English Instruction; *English Literature; *English Teacher Education; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Prior Learning; Secondary Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Education Curriculum; Teaching Methods; Textbook Selection
IDENTIFIERS Preservice Teachers; Teacher Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This paper describes two prospective English teachers' beliefs and understandings regarding literature and the teaching of literature. Through extensive interviews that included context-specific tasks, the study explored the subjects' prior experiences with literature, their conceptions regarding the nature of literature, and their perceptions of effective literature instruction. Products of the same English and teacher education departments, they offer contrasting views both of why students should read literature and of how teachers should approach literature. The subjects' views of literature influenced their teaching decisions; however, both had experienced limited opportunities to articulate and debate these views in their English and teacher education courses. A question for teacher educators is how to elicit these views and make them the focus of instruction, exploration, and debate, so as to develop more effective teachers. The two prospective teachers were entering teaching without a view of reading literature, and the reasons for so doing, that had been refined and sharpened, questioned and challenged. Such a view is seen as animating the holder's appreciation for other views and providing confidence and clarity of purpose for teaching. Appendixes provide task-related materials. (Contains 26 references.) (Author/JDD)

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NCRTL

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning

Sponsored by the United States Department of Education
Office of Education Research and Improvement

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PUBLIC KNOWING AND PRIVATE UNDERSTANDING: TWO VIEWS OF READING AND TEACHING LITERATURE

Margaret M. Malenka and Stephen P. Smith

Published by

National Center for Research on Teacher Learning
116 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

October 1994

This work is sponsored in part by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, College of Education, Michigan State University. The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or the Department.

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Abstract

This paper describes two prospective English teachers' beliefs and understandings regarding literature and the teaching of literature. Through extensive interviews that included context-specific tasks, the authors explored the subjects' prior experiences with literature, their conceptions regarding the nature of literature, and their perceptions of effective literature instruction. While their views contrasted on several points, similarities also appeared. The subjects' views of literature influenced their teaching decisions; however, both had experienced limited opportunities to articulate and debate these views in their English and teacher education courses. A question for teacher educators is how to elicit these views and make them the focus of instruction, exploration and debate, so as to develop more effective teachers.

PUBLIC KNOWING AND PRIVATE UNDERSTANDING: TWO VIEWS OF READING AND TEACHING LITERATURE[1]

Margaret M. Malenka and Stephen P. Smith

Recently, following largely in the footsteps of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989, 1991), a number of subject matter associations have published curriculum recommendations. At roughly the same time the NCTM published its *Standards*, the English Coalition Conference (Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, 1989) produced goals for all students that include developing intellectual flexibility, critical judgment, and the capacity to work collaboratively. These calls for reform raise questions about teachers' knowledge. For instance, what do teachers need to know and be able to do to teach to the reform recommendations? This, in turn, raises a question about teacher preparation: Are teacher education programs creating the opportunities prospective teachers need to develop the understandings of literature, as well as of teaching and learning literature, that will enable them to achieve such goals?

The teacher education community is ill-prepared to answer such a question. We know relatively little about the development of teachers' understandings of literature or the role that various experiences—within their families, with friends, in school, in college—play in their development and thinking. We also know little about the relationship between their thinking about literature and studying literature and their thinking about students who are socially, racially, or culturally different from themselves. A common assumption is that learning more about literature—the plots and characters in canonical works, critical theories, devices and conventions—is the best preparation for teaching literature. A competing assumption is that becoming more conscious of reading as an interaction between the reader—who brings particular prior experience and knowledge to the act of reading—and the text best prepares teachers for teaching literature.

In an effort to explore these relationships and these assumptions, researchers at the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (NCRTL) are addressing several questions: What kinds of understanding of literature and the teaching and learning of literature do prospective teachers develop while they are taking their subject matter courses? What do they believe is literature? What do they believe it means to know literature? How do they think literature is taught and learned? How do they reason about the central tasks teachers do—designing and orchestrating instruction for and assessing the learning of diverse students? What do they think students should learn? How do they think students learn this? What role do they believe students' background should play in what and how to teach?

Addressing these questions is one of the central goals of the Understanding Literature for Teaching study of the NCRTL. In this paper, we examine the beliefs and understandings of two prospective English teachers. Products of the same English and Teacher Education departments, they offer contrasting views both of why students should read literature and of how teachers should approach literature. At the same time, they share a particular perspective on reading literature—one that, curiously, seems to receive little attention in either their English or teacher education courses.

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METHODS

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how prospective teachers think about literature and teaching literature, and how their thinking changes while taking English courses. Several features characterize the design of this study (for a more complete description, see McDiarmid, 1993). First, the design is longitudinal so that we can follow the development of prospective teachers' ideas over time. Second, the design focuses on the processes of prospective teachers' thinking rather than on a more static sense of knowledge—such as their ability to recall particular information. Third, the interview tasks are designed to provide specific contexts for the prospective teachers' responses. The latter feature is intended to help the researchers understand and interpret the prospective teachers' responses.

Sample

We conducted interviews with 30 juniors and seniors in teacher education programs at a large midwestern university as part of a pilot study for the Understanding Literature for Teaching project. Although the sample is one of convenience, the sample students are representative of the majority of secondary English teacher-candidates entering the profession. They are predominantly white, middle-class females from rural areas, small towns, and suburbs. The sample also included seven males and two African-American females. Julie and Mona—the subjects of the profiles below—are both white and were part of this pilot sample. We chose to write about these two prospective English teachers because they hold well articulated personal theories of literature and these theories are, on several points, representative of contrasting beliefs.

Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument was the Understanding Literature for Teaching interview, developed for this project and designed to be conducted in three different sessions of two hours each (for more details, see McDiarmid, 1993). Part One explored the prospective teachers' prior experiences with literature—in their families, communities, elementary and high schools, and college. Part Two focused on the prospective teachers' conceptions of literature, using questions and tasks such as classifying a diverse collection of texts as "literature" or "not literature" and discussing four contrasting theories of literature. Part Three addressed the prospective teachers' ideas of teaching literature, including tasks such as selecting texts for an 11th grade English class and choosing items for a hypothetical test on *Romeo and Juliet*.

Analysis

Our analysis of individual responses and the development of case studies illustrate how two prospective English teachers, Julie and Mona, conceptualized literature and the teaching of literature. To analyze the interview data, we identified responses in the manuscript where the prospective teachers discussed their views of which texts were and were not literature, what they thought it meant to know literature, who among their acquaintances they believed knew literature and why, which texts they would teach in an 11th grade English course, reactions to literary criticisms, personal views of "The Raven" by Poe, and teaching "The Raven." We entered these into a free-form database, organized by these various categories. We then wrote summaries of the responses. We gave the original responses and summaries to other members of the research team who checked our summaries against the original responses. Although we attempted to write case studies from these summaries, we found that we returned repeatedly to the original transcripts.

CAUGHT IN THE CULTURE WARS: THE CASE OF JULIE

> I think that a lot of canon things can't be thrown by the wayside just because they're canon things. And contemporary things just thrown in because they're a new look. I think that there really is a lot of value in learning things just for being a functional member of society.

> The reader's role is to discover the meaning of the texts. . . . And who is to say what the meaning of the work is? It depends. It differs from reader to reader. And in that process you learn about yourself, and I think that's what the whole point is.

Both of these quotes belong to Julie, an undergraduate English major planning to teach high school literature. Her ideas reflect the conflicts present in the opportunities she has encountered to learn about literature: the timeless, universal values thought to be expressed in the canon versus the individuality and diversity

which permeate our society. This case study profiles her conceptualizations of these issues and her attempts to combine elements from each perspective. It allows us to see how her ideas fit into the larger picture of nationally debated issues.

We first met Julie the summer before her final year as a teacher education student. The following fall she would be a fifth year senior; like many other of the English majors in her program, Julie had taken an extra year to complete coursework. She was looking forward to her last few courses and planned to student teach in the spring.

Julie was serious and thoughtful during our interviews. At times her responses to our questions were decisive and clear-cut, seeming to reflect ideas and opinions she had consciously formed over the years. At other times she puzzled over the issues we raised, interested in thinking and talking about aspects of literature she had not previously considered. Always, Julie's personal love of reading and literature were evident in her comments. It was easy for us to imagine her as she described herself—the young child reading under the covers by flashlight, not wanting to put down her book at bedtime.

Julie's continuing interest in reading and literature prompted her to become an English major her freshman year in college. That was in 1988, the same year Stanford University had become the focal point for the controversy surrounding issues of the canon, cultural literacy, and a core curriculum. While the movement to reform Stanford's classic humanities curriculum eventually passed in the spring of that year, the conflicting arguments brought to a head by the reform continue to be heard.

As an undergraduate English major, Julie was not a participant in this debate; she was probably not even aware of its existence. As Graff (1992) points out, however, the conflict over canons and ideologies is implicit in the separate fields of study offered by universities: for example, students may study Shakespeare in one course, African-American literature in another, and women authors in a third. During our interviews, Julie's self-conscious defense of the canon and her simultaneous emphasis on personal interpretation suggests that she had experienced this debate at some level. The canon, cultural literacy, and personal meaningfulness were all crucial elements in her perception of the teaching and learning of literature.

In order to explore how Julie conceptualized and attempted to connect ideas from several perspectives of teaching and learning literature, this case study examines, first, her conception of the nature of literature; second, her text selection for a high school curriculum; third, her proposed method of instruction; and fourth, her understanding of a particular text, including instructional considerations. Julie's ideas regarding the teaching and learning of literature raise questions for teacher education programs and their preparation of secondary English teachers. We discuss these questions in the final section.

Julie's Conceptions of the Nature of Literature

An elitist perspective. At one level, Julie broadly defined literature as "anything written." She saw literature in mostly utilitarian terms, e.g., for learning about the past, informing readers about world events, persuading consumers to buy certain products, entertaining, and communicating messages. After some consideration, Julie decided to call these forms of societal literature "written material," reserving the word "literature" for the types of texts which she might read as an English major. She stated that these texts were "literature for literature's sake," to be read for enjoyment instead of for practical reasons. Julie perceived texts such as Shakespeare and poetry as being much more important to her than they were to society in general:

> English majors might be a minority of society. They like literature, they like reading, so they're going to view the whole reading thing differently than an auto mechanic.... I think poetry is in the minority in society's [perception of literature], yet it's a large part [for me] because it's something I enjoy.

Julie was careful to specify that she did not "downgrade auto mechanics" while also stating that "there really is a lot of value in learning things just for being a functional member of society." Her somewhat elitist perspective of literature is reminiscent of canon proponents such as Bloom, Bennett, and Bellow. Statements such as "there is no better place to look for guidance than the great books and deeds of the Western tradition"

(Bennett, 1989, p. 4) are thought by some to communicate a selective, aristocratic conception of literature. Pratt (1992), for example, has accused the canon supporters of wanting to "create a narrowly specific cultural capital that will be the normative referent for everyone, but will remain the property of a small and powerful caste that is linguistically and ethnically unified" (p. 15).

A personal perspective. Julie, however, viewed literature not only as something to be enjoyed by a few and referenced by everyone else. She also viewed literature as the means for self reflection, a perspective she seemed to share with Mona (see below). Julie stated that this personal aspect of literature was at least as important as the literary aspect:

> I think that literature is meant in many ways to look back at yourself, not just to look at the literature. It's kind of a vehicle in a way. Although it's very important for itself, that can't be the only reason.

This perspective is in contrast with earlier statements in which Julie implied that literature held a single meaning shared by society. Her idea of readers learning about themselves through literature and her belief that the meaning of a text "differs from reader to reader" suggests a very different conception of the nature of literature: instead of one truth, a text may lend itself to multiple interpretations. Julie indicated this in noting the influence of readers' personal backgrounds and experiences on the meanings they construct from texts.

Connecting competing perspectives. Julie concurrently agreed that "a work of literature is a self-contained world" in which the reader's role is to "discover the meaning of the text," and that "the reader largely determines the meaning of the work of literature." She discussed the importance of critically analyzing text and of understanding the author's motivations and choices while at the same time stressing the significance of readers' personal understandings:

> It's a personal reflection yet it's also author's craft and in looking at how the author looked at it and looking at how the other people look at the author, and you know it's more of an interplay rather than solely personal. Although it's both. . . . And like from then on, maybe getting into more technical, analytical things but I guess I would just have to say getting into the literature. Not keeping a distance from it like a lot of people do.

How did Julie hold and connect these different ideas of literature? She had made the decision to take on what she judged to be the best elements of various theories and to eliminate those aspects with which she disagreed. Julie wanted to reflect the best of everything:

> One example I can think of is like the wholistic language theory. I believe in a lot of its components. but yet at the same time I don't think anything is without its weak points also. So maybe one of my aims is to be like a compilation of different theories and not just a proponent of one.

Selecting Texts for a High School Curriculum

Canon arguments. Julie's pro-canon stance was particularly apparent when we asked her if there were texts which she believed all high school students should read. She again echoed Hirsch's (1987) cultural literacy argument, stating that students needed to read works from the canon in order to understand many societal references. Julie used *1984* as an example, although in general she believed it was more important for students to read certain authors rather than particular texts:

> As far as specific things, maybe not so much specific things, but specific authors. . . . I think that *1984* really needs to be something that's read. I don't know, eleventh or twelfth grade, before going to college because so many things are based off that. Just for the fact of the literature because it's a fantastic piece of work, but still, just so the students will be a functioning member of society and will understand the references made to that. I mean, even in commercials, and all the time, you know, things are being referenced and I think that I would include a lot of canon things in my curriculum even if I had the freedom not to.

Julie felt a responsibility to teach the canon because of the many references made to it, stating that "it would be doing the students a disservice to not teach it to them." Later, after she had selected the specific canon texts she would teach, Julie also discussed the content of the texts as conveying important ideas and values. We had described

three distinct school populations which included minority students and students who would not go on to college. Julie believed they should all read the same texts:

> I don't really think that my list would change very much. . . . I think that these books and the values and the ideas talked about in these books that I picked need to be learned by every student.

We will describe a contrasting perspective of the canon in the profile of Mona, who was critical of its narrow representation of the human experience.

Selecting canonical texts. The six texts which Julie selected for an eleventh grade curriculum came from a list of thirty-five texts (see Appendix A) commonly taught in high school (Applebee, 1990). Although the prospective English teachers did not see the list of titles organized into categories, we constructed the list to represent the traditional canon, the youth canon, and the "alternative" canon consisting of works by African-American and other authors of color. Julie's choices included *The Red Badge of Courage, The Great Gatsby, The Lord of the Flies, The Scarlet Letter, The Chosen*, and *Hamlet*. She later substituted *1984*, which was not on the list, for *The Chosen*.

Julie selected five traditional canon texts and one text from the youth canon (*The Lord of the Flies*). She believed strongly in the value of the canon for everyone—to become familiar with common references and to learn the values and ideas in these texts. She looked for texts by authors with whom she felt students should be familiar and that contained information students should know in order to be culturally literate:

> I would want to include *The Red Badge of Courage*, pretty much for a historical perspective on the war and looking at it in a different light. . . . I would feel it my responsibility to make them aware of Steven Crane in that book.

> *The Scarlet Letter*, so they can get a little Hawthorne.

> Definitely Potok, and definitely Shakespeare. *Hamlet* would be good for them to do in the fact that it's an easy story line. Shakespeare's not that hard to understand for me, but for them it may be.

Within the canon texts, Julie appeared to have a second criterion which related to her conception of literature as being a means for self-reflection. In these texts, Julie looked for elements to which the students could relate both personally and in a larger societal sense:

> *The Great Gatsby*, I don't think there's any problem in students liking this book. It's an interesting look at the jazz age, and power, corruption, a lot of pertinent issues in *The Great Gatsby* that could be looked at in today's society. It would be a really good way of looking at both, I think.

> *The Lord of the Flies* . . . maybe starting the book out with a pre-write saying, imagine that you and six friends were the only people left on the face of the earth. You know, maybe having them actually apply this to their own lives.

Julie's Proposed Method of Instruction

Dual goals. Julie's ideas of literature instruction included the dual goals of exposing students to culturally relevant material and of engaging students in self-reflection. Julie viewed reading and discussing the texts as the primary means of achieving these goals. She also mentioned, however, that perhaps not all students shared her love for reading. Consequently, she perceived the necessity of including other instructional methods:

> I think that reading is very valuable and I can't, it's hard for me to understand why people wouldn't want to do that just because I always have, and I have a real love for reading, but there are other ways to teach the same thing . . . watching, for instance, like [a] movie or whatever, a lot could be taught be doing both things. . . . reading would be the main priority but it can't be the sole priority.

Julie's dual goals for instruction gave rise to a dilemma when she considered actual high school teaching. She stated that students should have knowledge of a great number of texts; but she also perceived value in spending time on a work of literature so students would reach a thorough understanding of it. One solution Julie considered was to teach portions of texts:

> As far as time is concerned, I just feel, I feel like there's so little time and there's so much that I want to do. And I know that I have to narrow down my approach and what I want to teach and look at things more thoroughly instead of just, you know, giving them glimpses of a lot of things.... Maybe some time can be alleviated by not doing entire works.

Julie discussed teaching only portions of two of the six texts she had selected for an 11th grade curriculum. She apparently wanted students to be aware that historical novels on war, such as *The Red Badge of Courage*, existed. Julie did not think this would require reading the entire text:

> I might not even have them read the whole book, might be studied just so students know that that kind of literature is out there.

Julie also did not think reading *The Scarlet Letter* in its entirety would be necessary. She discussed summarizing the plot for the students, and then focusing on particular aspects such as the scarlet "A" and Hester's child:

> I hesitate to think that I would use the whole book, because it's a good book and it's worthwhile, but I really think that a lot of things that I want to teach can be done without doing the whole book.... I definitely would want to teach them about Hester and the way women were looked at, the whole scarlet letter, the "A" thing.... I would want them to know the basic plot, I think that might be done through just explaining it to them, and then having them look at particular chapters and saying, "Look at how this happened," or "Look at what happened here." With the little girl. You know, how her upbringing is different and maybe relating it to some other little girl in literature.

In this quotation we hear Julie's concern that students learn specific information about canonical texts—their plots, the values and attitudes they reflect, their connections with other texts. This seems consistent with her belief that information about and from these texts is the currency of Hirsch's cultural realm.

Hirsch's model. Julie's idea of teaching some texts in depth and only portions of others parallels Hirsch's (1987) model of a two part curriculum. He proposes that students acquire "extensive" information, small bits and pieces which enable them to effectively communicate in society, while at the same time engaging in "intensive" study of particular texts. The extensive knowledge is that which everyone should know; the intensive knowledge is more flexible and pluralistic, forming the mental model into which the other information fits. Julie seemed to be following this model—perhaps knowingly, perhaps by reinventing it—when she discussed in-depth instruction of texts which would interest students and selective instruction of other texts.

Julie's Responses to a Specific Text: "The Raven"

One of the tasks we asked Julie to do was to read "The Raven" by Poe (for the text of this item, see Appendix B). We asked her to discuss her interpretation of the poem, if she would teach it, and how she would teach it. Her responses reflected how she brought together the various components of her conceptions of teaching and learning literature.

After reading "The Raven," Julie stated that she would definitely teach it. She returned to her idea of students reading certain authors, including Poe. In this, she appears to be in the company of school textbook publishers who have made Poe the fourth most frequently anthologized author (Applebee, 1991). Justifying her conviction that students should read "The Raven," Julie repeated her canon and cultural literacy argument, again saying that she felt obligated to teach students important texts:

> I think Poe is worthwhile learning. And "The Raven" is a really good representation of his work.... It's a very important piece of poetry that I think students deserve to know, and if I don't expose them to it, I can't assume that other people will. And, I don't know, I feel like that with a lot of literature. It's almost like an obligation to teach it to them.

Julie also discussed student interest as a reason for teaching "The Raven." She thought the students would enjoy reading it as much as she did, and that there were numerous instructional possibilities:

> I just think that it could lend itself to so much. It's interesting. I enjoyed it when I read it. And, I mean, I can't base an assumption on that saying that my students would enjoy it too, but I think that they would.

Julie also looked inside the poem and thought it was worth teaching for its own sake. She saw value in the poem itself, beyond issues of cultural literacy and student interest:

> But to teach it for itself there are a lot of valuable things in it . . . the whole iambic, the whole meter thing. That's pretty interesting. . . . Also, "nevermore," the re-occurrence of that word.

Julie's own interpretation of "The Raven" included the literary elements she had discussed as being important. She talked about a universal theme, a characteristic of the canon; she thought about what the poem meant for her personally; she looked into the text itself, questioning Poe's choice of words and his rhyme:

> I think that largely he's talking about fear, something that is really scaring him immensely, using the raven as a means of getting that across. . . . I just picture this being home by myself and hearing things and I think that maybe being really frustrated with something. I think he's saying a lot of things, maybe questioning things, when some things are just very frustrating and you can't really understand them and you might never. It makes me think about the rhythm, the rhyme, why did he choose to do this?

Julie imagined that she would begin teaching "The Raven" by asking for the students' personal reactions. This is consistent with her belief that readers need to "get into" literature, and that personal interpretations are important and valid. She thought that she would then direct the students to look more closely at the text and end by asking them to relate the theme of fear to their own lives:

> I think, first of all, I would really want to know what they thought about the poem. This is a pretty general question but I would want to say, "What did it make you think about, what did it make you feel?" And then start getting into it a little, and saying, "How does the speaker feel about the raven." . . . And then, I really would want to ask the question, "What would your raven be?" You know, "What would the thing be that would frighten you so badly?"

Julie had stated earlier that the poem itself had value in the way it was written. She said that she would include this aspect in her instruction, focusing on how Poe creates the feeling of fear. She wanted to help the students examine his choice of words and discuss how they contribute to the mood of the poem:

> The whole tone that Poe writes in, I think that I would kind of make that an emphasis. You know, how he uses certain words to show fear and terror and something that is just so frightening. And it's just a bird but he makes it just incredibly intimidating.

One of Julie's goals in teaching "The Raven" would be for students to continue thinking about the poem outside of the classroom after studying it in class. She mentioned the "values" in the poem, a term used in reference to canonical texts:

> I would want them to think about it on a different level and to think about the poem and its questions after the poem was done, and after we had shut the anthology. I wouldn't want it to stop right there. . . . I would want them to still think about the poem and its values and things like that.

Julie's belief that all students can benefit from reading certain texts surfaced again when we asked her about teaching "The Raven" in rural and inner city schools. She recognized that these students had different experiences and interests, and so would change her method of instruction. However, Julie again stated that she would teach the same content in all settings:

> I wouldn't change what I wanted to teach . . . because I don't think that you can make assumptions on what those students can get out of what you want to teach. But how I did that would probably change.

Summary

Julie believed strongly in the merits of the canon, both in terms of its usefulness in understanding common references and in the values taught through its themes. She also felt that readers have personal relationships with texts, developing various interpretations and coming to better understand themselves through the stories they read. Julie connected these conceptions of literature, sometimes standing elements from each side by side and sometimes intertwining them. She always kept in mind what she perceived as her

obligation towards students: to "expose" them to important pieces of literature that they "deserve to know." And in her mind, "important" literature meant the traditional canon.

Julie appeared unaware that her conceptualization of literature included two very different, and possibly conflicting, views. She was satisfied with her reconciliation of these issues, and yet the question of what will happen in her high school classroom remains. Will her instruction successfully include universal values as well as promote personal insights in a culturally diverse population? Will her students learn common societal references as well as develop an enjoyment of literature? Or will her students become alienated from texts which are foreign to their own experiences?

Reflections in a Cat's Eye: The Case of Mona

Margaret Atwood, in her novel *Cat's Eye*, simultaneously develops multiple themes. The overarching theme is that of a woman figuratively re-constructing her life as she returns to the town in which she grew up for a retrospective of her art work. Through this reflection the narrator develops such themes as: the creation of gender roles, the cruelty of children, the natural egoism of individuals, the role of schools—both in the classroom and on the playground—in the creation of personalities, the inability of an individual to see herself or to understand another's motivations, and more.

The narrator spends her first years with only her parents and brother. Her father is an entomologist who spends most of the year with his family in the north woods of Ontario. When he takes a teaching position at a university in Toronto, the narrator first enters school full time. She appears to be about seven. The school she attends has one entrance marked for boys and one for girls; before entering, the students line up at the appropriate door. Now, instead of playing solely with her brother, she learns what it means to be a girl through her newly acquired friends—which is reinforced in school. These friends are "chosen" because they happen to live on the same side of the stream as she does. We do not even learn the name of the narrator until about the time she enters school. Clearly, at the same time that her gender role is being shaped, so is her identity.

The narrator uses her favorite cat's eye marble as a talisman which allows her to escape the emotional abuse her girl friends inflict on her during elementary school. After a time, she puts this marble—along with the memories and, she believes, the emotions associated with it—into a red purse which she stows in a steamer trunk in the basement. Subsequently, she dissociates herself from her friends. This metaphorical storage of her memories is so successful that she can later become friends with her former tormentor. However, the narrator then turns the tables on her. The negative experience she had with her "friends" leaves a lifelong fear of other females that contrasts with her affinity for males, an affinity that originated in her relationship with her brother.

The art that she creates—much of it produced before her conscious recollections of that time resurfaced—seems to emerge from these stored memories. While looking through the trunk in the basement with her mother, she finds the cat's eye marble: "I look into it, and see my life entire." During the retrospective, she toys with the idea of destroying her paintings because she can no longer control them, "or tell them what to mean. Whatever energy they have came out of me. I am what's left over."

At the end of the story, the narrator considers the destruction of her art because, having seen her life entire, she no longer feels the "wrongness, awkwardness, weakness; the same wish to be loved; the same loneliness; the same fear." Rather, she realizes, those feelings were forced on her by her old tormentor who herself had always felt them, the narrator just had not realized it. Now she would like to "give her something you can never have, except from another person: what you look like from outside. A reflection. This is the part of herself I would give back to her."

At the center of the story we are about to tell is Mona. She "loved" *Cat's Eye* because it "made me think about my life retrospectively, just [as] she's doing in the novel." Like the narrator of Atwood's novel, Mona seemed to be re-constructing her life at the same time that she worked on a number of subthemes. Mona said she was reading this novel to help her better read the world around her. She too wanted to give her students something. In her case, it was giving them the capability of reading the world reflected in the literature they read. She too felt that others were intent upon imposing a way of being on

her that she found painful. "I think when I got into college, I had to do so much more reading that was academic that reading became a chore." In her case, it was professors who wanted her to attend only to what she viewed as *academic*, analytical ways of reading literature. Unlike Julie, who worked to intertwine her competing conceptions of literature, but like Atwood's narrator, Mona appeared to keep her competing conceptions packaged separately. In her case, she kept the teaching and assessment of the professors' perspective on reading literature in a position side by side with—but separate and distinct from—her own *personal* perspective on reading literature:

> When you go into a [university] course you might have five novels to read . . . and you're not really stressed to enjoy it. I mean you're not expected to get, you're not encouraged to get aesthetic value out of it. You're just encouraged to read it and pull out some symbolism or just to become familiar with a certain author and a certain time they wrote or a certain classification of literature like romanticism . . . I think it really takes away from the pleasure of reading. . . . [T]hinking about being an English teacher [has] made me reevaluate how I read and what I read and it's made me say, "Wait a second, this is not fair. I've not been reading for pleasure, I've been reading for classes." It's made me think consciously to read more for pleasure.

Mona was a thoughtful and intelligent student of the world. The current, popular characterizations of preservice teachers do not seem to cover her. She was aware of a variety of interpretations of literature's value and purpose. She was thoughtful about literature as a human construction—both the texts themselves and their subsequent categorization into genres, periods, etc. She manifested none of the knowledge deficits that some argue are common among preservice teachers.

Mona used her knowledge to perform well in her subject matter and methods courses. At the same time, for her *personal* development and her enjoyment, she read literature to help her critically examine the world around her. For Mona the reading of life and the reading of books were the same kind of reading: She "read things that happen in life . . . reading in a metaphorical way, reading people, reading events, being able to see connections between things that happen in the world and things that happen in your personal world. I think literature does all that."

Based on her description of her course work, it would not be fair to say that she found her preservice teacher education experiences intellectually unchallenging (Kramer, 1991). She described student teaching as "hell"—but not without its satisfactions. She apparently spent considerable time thinking about herself as a reader as she planned her student teaching. Her selection of material was grounded in her goals for her students. At least one of her students, in a conversation with Mona, validated her choices. She also talked about her reflections on the experience and how these would lead her to reconceptualize a unit she had taught.

Mona was nearing the end of her college career during the time we interviewed her (for a description of the interview, see McDiarmid, 1993). She had "gotten" the material that the English department had been teaching her. In the interview she demonstrated this in her discussion of literary criticism, her analysis of "The Raven," and her discussion of a variety of texts we asked her to classify as literature or not literature (see Appendix C). She expressed the feeling that she had done well in her teacher education courses and in her student teaching. We saw evidence supporting this in the way she talked about her purposes, goals, and assessment ideas for teaching *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Mona seemed to have developed both substantial subject matter knowledge and the kind of critical thinking and intellectual flexibility being called for in recent documents advocating reform in teacher education (e.g., Holmes Group, 1990; Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, 1989). She demonstrated familiarity with the traditional literary canon. She seemed aware that some argue that knowledge of the canon is critical to being "culturally literate" (e.g., Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987). In contrast with Julie who selected only canonical texts, Mona recognized a need to broaden the range of texts that students encounter, to incorporate the work of African-American, Asian-American, and other authors of color. Her understanding of literature appeared to blend the rationales for both sides in the debate. Yet, she said she felt unprepared for teaching.

> I just personally think my own experience has been too academically oriented. . . . The stuff I learned did not help me figure myself out. . . . I know a lot about being a student and I know a lot about schools, but I really don't know much about the real world. . . . I don't feel like

> I can tell kids what it's really like to live in the world. I can tell them what it's like to be good students . . . [but], in the long run, how is that going to help them?

She told us that a week after the third interview she was planning to move West and—like Huck Finn—search for experiences in the "real world." Mona was looking to these experiences to expand her horizons—"I'm taking my own course right now"—which would help her feel that what she had to offer would have validity for students. Mona said that she had only had *academic* experiences—even though she alluded to extensive experience in retail sales and food service.

Mona talked about strongly conflicting goals—her personal reasons for reading; the moral and political imperatives she felt; the purposes she saw being advanced by university English departments for English majors; those advanced by professors of methods courses; the desires of parents, administrators, and fellow teachers in high schools; the structures of curricula; and, last but certainly not least for Mona, the needs of her students. She seemed to be trying to reconcile her personal reasons for reading with those advocated by the various educators with whom she came in contact. She said that she felt the very things she thought literature could and should do for people were left out of her courses. She viewed reading literature as a path to helping her learn to read life. Her personal growth, she appeared to believe, was developing dialectically through reading literature and reading life—each fostering the development of the other. The inner conflict between these personal and academic purposes, which may not have been explicit to Mona, seemed to be fueled by her apparently unconscious assumption that her purposes and goals for reading were the same as her professors. She did not seem to question (or have been questioned about) her assumption that her *personal* approach, which mirrored what she wanted to promote in her students, was the norm.

Mona's Background

Mona had just completed her student teaching in the fall prior to the first interview and had graduated and received her certification by the third interview in July. She student-taught in a racially diverse, low-SES high school in a medium-sized, midwestern city. As a high school student herself, Mona had decided she wanted to become a teacher. However, on entering the university, she "floated around" as "kind of a vague English major" before again deciding to become an English teacher late in her sophomore year. Although born in Germany where her father was stationed in the military and where he had met and married her German mother, Mona, like many of those who become teachers in the United States, spent many of her formative years in a small, mostly white, semi-rural community—in her case, in the midwest.

As a college student Mona performed very well by traditional measures (3.85 GPA on a 4.0 scale), getting A's even in courses she described as so "vague" she did not know what to study. Mona appeared to be very concerned with what she felt she should be responsible for knowing as a teacher: subject matter, students as learners, students as adolescents. For example, she felt that her program requirements focused on cognitive psychology but ignored adolescent psychology. She chose to take such a course even though it was not required because she wanted to know what would be occurring emotionally and biologically, not just cognitively, within her prospective students.

During the interview, Mona proved to be articulate, well read, familiar with a variety of critical theories, and in many ways keenly aware of herself in relation to the world. Her description of her background presents a person who was aware both of what she knew and of what she felt she needed to know to be a good teacher. What it does not show is an awareness of how her view of reading literature as a primer for reading life might differ from most other prospective teachers.

Mona's View of Literature

Mona said she had not thought much about how she defined literature prior to this experience. We presented her with a variety of written texts (for a list of titles, see Appendix C) asking her to classify each according to whether she considered it literature. She told us she was looking at each text and getting a "feeling" about whether it was literature. This feeling seemed to come from a variety of characteristics she associated with literature, including "artsyness" (e.g., in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* where the "format is very odd"), "informative" (e.g., the History text

which was "academic" literature), "making theories or talking about society" (e.g., *Ebony* magazine), "intent of the author" (e.g., Ezra Pound "intended ["In a Station of the Metro"] to be literature."), "high" literature (e.g., "dead white men" literature "like Milton or Dante"), and Shakespeare (who she considered "beyond the canon").

Mona's classification of these texts shows the complexity of her thinking. She classified literature according to what she might consider genres: high, academic, text book, scientific, fantasy, contemporary, etc. She also took a different cut, using the "intent of the author" as a way of determining which texts she viewed as literature—a criterion that "emerged as [important] as I was talking." This further appeared in Mona's characterization of Bill Waterson (the creator of "Calvin and Hobbes") as having a "higher purpose" in contrast with other comic strips. Intent was not sufficient, however, as in the case of rap music, where those that have "deep messages about black culture and what it means to be black" are literature, but much of rap is not. She thought the *New York Times* was not literature because its purpose was solely to inform. The advertising copy we showed her was "even more dubious" because its intent was "to inform but maybe falsely." These criteria seem to correspond to ways of thinking about texts Mona encountered in her course work. She seemed to perform the text classification using mostly the *academic* approach she had learned through her college experiences. Only in discussing Shakespeare did she mention using the text to help her read life or using this aspect of literature to defend her judgment about a text.

Mona's Reading of Literature

When describing her youth, Mona didn't talk much about her family. She characterized them as neutral about reading—they were not particularly interested in literature. Conversely, as with Julie, reading was "just always an interest" of Mona's—it was "like a hobby." Mona described herself as a reader of books since second grade. During her elementary school years she read what she regarded as typical adolescent books: Nancy Drew, the "Ramona" series, L. E. Wilder, *Anne of Green Gables*, which she distinguished from "the classics" (which she did not identify at the time but, given later comments, we may guess that she meant the traditional canon). Reading made her "feel good." She was attracted to reading because it introduced her to "different people" and placed her in a "different world"—Mona "could really be taken away" when reading. She did not talk explicitly about reading in high school but we do know that at that time Mona intended to become an English teacher. We can only conjecture that she felt literature to be important and interesting enough to design a career around teaching it.

Listening to her talk about her college English courses, we get the impression that the reasons for reading she encountered in these courses did not match those she had developed in her personal approach to literature. She talked explicitly about two different ways of thinking about literature she encountered in college. One—critiquing society through literature—complemented and the other—critiquing literature academically—conflicted with her view of reading literature as a path to better reading of life.

In her favorite English course Mona "came to read literature more as a criticism of society.... I think it was one of the first classes that made me criticize literature and what literature we do read, what's in the canon." This idea, which complemented her previous approach to reading, surfaced repeatedly in our conversations. This explicit use of literature to look at society seemed to be what gave expression to her early, implicit approach to reading: her vicarious meeting of other people and her experience of different places through literature. Mona also spoke frequently of the *academic* aspect of college English courses. This aspect seemed to be centered around learning about authors and their time periods along with the symbolism, alliteration, metaphor, meter, etc. in the text. This academic aspect was something that she had been introduced to in high school. As will become apparent when we discuss her views on teaching and assessment, Mona seemed to keep this approach to literature separate from her *personal* approach to reading. She seemed to accept it apparently because of the emphasis it received in her formal education but seemed unsure of how to accommodate this approach to her personal uses of reading.

For Mona, literature could have different meanings for different people, what counted as literature could vary across individuals or groups. She seemed to argue that the faculty in her English courses expected their students to assume that what they were reading was literature and the

students' responsibility was to learn the text, the author, the time period, and how to analyze it—it was not the students' responsibility to determine the value of literature, either in a general sense or for their personal lives. This again was mirrored in the separation of *academic* and *personal* approaches to literature in her views of teaching and assessment.

The Value of Literature

Mona disagreed with the view she apparently discerned in the description of the traditional humanist perspective on literature we gave her (see Appendix D) because,

> I don't think there's one "True and Beautiful" with capital letters.... I think there's different aesthetic values. I think... a different culture's idea of truth and beauty is not going to be [valued] in dead white guy literature.... I guess I just find that repressive. It cuts off certain view points.

She also argued that professors think they objectively define literature. For Mona, however, what each individual makes of a text constitutes its value: "I mean, you've got 'The Raven.' It's just text with words. It doesn't have any value. We put the value on it." She argued that if the individual does not get value from a text, it is not valuable. The sobriquet "literature" and the delineation of literary periods are "shaped by scholars who come along later"—they are "constructed and created" by people rather than being self-evident. Mona hypothesized that introducing multiple critical theories to students would help them see that even "these people who make up the canon, these mystifiers disagree." She wished she had experienced the kind of discussion which would result from such an introduction when she was in high school.

About her favorite college English course, Mona said that much of its value to her was that the instructor taught them to use literature to criticize society and to be critical about "the way we see people." She reported that this course first encouraged her to be critical of literature and the canon. This experience led her to take several "feminist classes." These seem to have exposed her to the political aspect of literature. "I think I was, I would have to say, sexist when I was in high school. I polarized myself into this role of what a male is and what a female is. And I think that [high school students] should start questioning that because it took me until college till I really questioned that." As we show later, she acted on this new awareness in choosing to teach *A Doll's House* during student teaching.

While reacting to the summaries of literary theories we gave her (see Appendix D), Mona talked about how society influences both the author and the reader's approach to the text. For example, if she read two texts and knew that the author of one was a local writer and the other was a famous author, she would read "the local work cynical[ly] while I'd approach the other one in a different way and I know that's not right." What appears to surface in this comment is the *academic* side of her approach to reading. Even though she disagreed with the idea of a canon, she would be (and knew she would be) influenced by the reputation of the author of a text—a reputation owed largely to the academics who define the canon. This was apparent when Mona immediately classified *Native Son* as literature "just because of reputation" even though she had not read it. Although she disparaged the role of the canon and the male professors who, in the main, establish it, she recognized the power of the canon in influencing her reaction to texts. She later argued that women authors have been discounted by society in the same way she would discount the local author.

She lamented that "a lot of politics are involved in [decisions about] what you teach in high school and college" rather than "enjoying literature for literature's sake." Her exposure to literary criticism also contributed to her perception of the political aspects of literature. She argued that traditional literary theory that apotheosizes "dead white men" tends to exclude females and non-Europeans. Mona characterized teaching inner-city kids as particularly political because they are "disenfranchised," they aren't "part of the group that made up this literary world," they "really couldn't participate in making these rules that we are supposed to follow." As she reflected on the interview, Mona expressed concern about our question that asked if she would alter her selection of texts to teach according to the demographics of the school. She said it "bothered" her that "there's even a consideration that you would have to teach something different, politically, in

different schools." The factors Mona said she would consider in such decisions were more centered around how the students could make connections between the text and their own lives.

As a child, Mona had read to be "taken away" and to be introduced to different people and places. Thus, Mona objected to the sentiments she saw expressed in a description of the New Criticism: "[I]t says, 'experiencing the meaning requires hard-nosed, rigorous, objective analysis of the text.' I don't agree with . . . those adjectives. It just seems like [critics] want you to pick apart and use a bunch of literary terms I don't like that at all." For the most part, the courses she took during college narrowed her focus to what she considered *academic* analysis of literature. The single exception, her favorite course, led her to view literature as a tool to understand society. Mona said that while thinking about her student teaching, she realized that she had gotten away from the reasons she had been drawn to reading in the first place. She expressed a belief that it was important to "have some type of personal, emotional reaction" to literature to appreciate it and she started carrying around a book "at all times." She had just finished *Cat's Eye* over Christmas break and was reading *Surfacing*, also by Atwood. These novels helped her to "think about [her] life retrospectively, just like how she's doing in [*Cat's Eye*]."

Mona expressed the feeling that the "stuff I learned [in school] did not help me figure myself out." She thought that if her teachers had "stressed more all along to not worry so much about getting A's but to worry about what the material means to me, then maybe right now I would feel more focused in my life." While she thought that she understood the material in her courses "really well," she did not understand how it could help her as a person. She felt "like a trick was played on me. . . . I got all these '4.0s' [A+] but what do I do now?" As we will show in the next section, Mona was reluctant to enter teaching because she did not want to re-enact this scenario with her own students.

For Mona, literature was "as important as math and science." She argued that to be an informed, intelligent person, "you've got to know how to read critically." This critical reading "broadens your mind." But not everyone benefits: "[I]t would be great if everyone just read and became better people," but there are "people who read literature who are not better people because of it." Moreover, one must have experiences reading literature to cultivate this critical ability. Mona seemed to view the reading of literature as accomplishing this by enhancing the reader's awareness of the world. She also argued that one should read "things that happen in life . . . reading in a metaphorical way, reading people, reading events, being able to see connections between things that happen in the world and things that happen in your personal world." Mona seemed to believe that reading literature accomplishes this by introducing the reader to people and ideas she doesn't usually meet.

The objection Mona expressed to the *academic* reading she perceived her English department to advocate was apparently not *because* they looked at symbolism, metaphor, meter, etc. Rather, for Mona, the professors' "non-aesthetic," dual purposes of acquainting students with the author and time period and requiring them to learn literary techniques had the effect of depriving her of the pleasure reading had once afforded her. Interestingly, Mona indicated she had not even noticed this as it occurred—that only in thinking about and planning for student teaching did she realize the change which seemed to leave a void in her life.

Teaching Literature

As she prepared to student teach, Mona asked herself, "Why are we teaching English? . . . What purpose does literature have?" One of the purposes Mona attributed to teaching literature was to "pass on some kind of enthusiasm for reading." She argued that she herself needed to be enthusiastic about any text she taught in order to get students to feel enthusiastic about reading—she felt a need for a "personal reason for teaching literature." She indicated that her enthusiasm came from her personal connection with what she read. She said she had had difficulty teaching an early American literature class because she found the texts (John Smith, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, William Bird) boring. Privately, she agreed with the students who said "we're supposed to learn this stuff in history."

The approach of the anthology used in the school where she student-taught was to "give the kids a sense of early America" by following American writers chronologically. For Mona, this was clearly a sense of early, *white, male* America. She preferred another textbook she had seen that included both traditional and contemporary authors, along with voices representing a greater variety of cultures. That text presented some of these works in the first chapter and then returned to the chronological development of American literature. She argued that students *want* to talk about contemporary literature. She seemed to argue that students would develop an interest in the texts based on their personal relation to the contemporary works. Mona could then use this interest to help them find value in the early American, white, male literature. The students could use their new knowledge of a variety of cultural experiences in early America to better understand what was occurring at the time the texts were written. Almost as an afterthought, she expressed the view that one reason for teaching American literature was to help students get a sense of the writers who make up the American canon. This seemed to be a reflection of the *academic* focus of her college courses.

As a student teacher, Mona chose to teach *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen for pragmatic reasons: she was familiar with it and it was available in the school book collection. However, there were other texts she could have chosen. Mona "wanted something . . . that would get the kids to think about women's role in society. I wanted them to be more critical about that." She saw Ibsen's play as a text that could get students to think and be more critical about roles to which women have historically been limited. She expressed a belief that high school students "don't know much about life"—even though they think they do. Thus, she seems to have chosen this piece hoping that in reading it, they would enhance their ability to read the world.

Mona expressed the feeling that high school students struggle with their identity just as Ibsen's heroine, Nora, "doesn't know who she is. Think about who you [the students] are.... What would it take for you to get to know yourself?" She said she felt rewarded by an entry in a student's response journal which "made everything worth it—the whole hell of student teaching." This student had written that the play made her think about her own relationship with her boyfriend. Mona thought that was "wonderful. That's exactly what I wanted them to think about." Here again, Mona appeared to believe that literature should serve the same purpose for her students that it did for her: to further their reading of the world and understanding of self.

Yet, Mona wondered if secondary students were ready for such interpretation. She argued that "You have to have experience with reading literature and appreciating it," which may be too much for the "common [high school] sophomore." For this reason she said she would give her personal reaction to, for example, "The Raven" to model a reaction to literature. Mona said she felt that it was her responsibility to get students to value reading but also for her to accept them where they were when she was teaching. For this reason, she discussed helping students bridge between visual and print media. She would try to help students become more "visually literate," more "active seers": "You can treat a film just like a book," she argued—one could "read" a movie as a way of thinking about reading life, just as with literature.

Mona's reaction to a description of the New Criticism view of literature highlighted her apparent beliefs about the role of students as readers. She interpreted part of the description we provided as saying that "the reader needs the critic to tell them how to feel about the text." She disagreed with this stance: "I think the reader can experience the meaning of a work without a critic coming in and telling them how to feel." She told us that she was thinking about the critic as the teacher and the reader as the student. She said it was important that students learn to "be their own critic[s], . . . their own authorit[ies] because I think that's something I've learned late." She described her efforts during student teaching to help the students become "capable of experiencing the meaning more deeply and intensely." She expressed the belief that teaching multiple and conflicting literary theories would help make the learning more personal for students by helping them question the discipline. Thus, she seemed to conceive of her role as helping the students find their own way to make the text personal and valuable for themselves. For Mona, this meant developing her ability to read life. This appeared to be her goal for her students as well.

Mona described her "role as a teacher . . . *not* for them to recognize metaphor, symbol, structure, rhyme." Rather, she wanted to help her students "see the work as a whole as valid to themselves and . . . worthy of their time." She argued that if students would see the work as a whole as valid for themselves, they would "experience the meaning of a work." To Mona, young people today take things at face value which is why "literature is hard for kids to analyze at first. . . . Kids are grounded in immediacy," asking what can this do for me now in my life. For example, when explaining what students could learn from *Romeo and Juliet*, Mona talked about love, the fickleness of love, relationships, feuding. She then went on to say that gang members could relate to it through *West Side Story* and the issue of racism could be raised by considering what would happen "if Juliet was white and Romeo black." Here she appeared to create a mental picture of a class of students (not unlike those where she student-taught), picture "where they were," and suggest possible ways of interpreting *Romeo and Juliet* to make the text personally relevant for those students.

While discussing how she would teach "The Raven" by Poe, Mona said she thought she would want her students to appreciate the poem on a dramatic level first. She would want them to appreciate the subtlety; but she expected that they would have trouble doing so. She expressed concern over the instant gratification that she believed preoccupation with television and video foster. To counter this, she thought she would strive to help her students appreciate the "sadness" of the poem. She would then try to help them see how Poe's language gets at these themes—the repetition, the alliteration, the rhythm, the rhyme scheme—by "talk[ing] about literary terms like alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm." She contrasted a surface level appreciation—limited to aesthetics such as rhyme, meter, the sing-song rhythm—with a deeper appreciation for the psychological aspects, the structure (what each stanza adds), and the personality and character development of the narrator.

On the other hand, Mona thought "it's so easy [for students] to take things at face value. That's why I think literature is hard for kids to analyze at first—because the teachers say, 'No, there's something else there. You just read that line . . . literally. You've got to get underneath the line.' And, I think that's a hard concept." Mona went on to talk about her courses where teachers have modeled analysis of poetry: "I think that's why it's important we're given the strategy in a lot of my English classes of having a poem you've never seen before and saying to the class, 'Okay, I've never seen this poem before and we're going to analyze it now.' . . . If you have a poem you're seeing for the first time, you let the kids in on your process." Here we see Mona's inclusion of the *academic* approach in her own teaching.

When we asked Mona which six texts she might teach from a list we gave her (see Appendix A), she chose three from the traditional canon and three from the "alternative" canon—that is, literary texts by authors of color (see McDiarmid, 1993). Her selections included: one text which had "really moved" her and had a "human message that you can understand at any age" (*Our Town*), one which had a "really powerful" impact on her (*The Invisible Man*), one which was a "good, valuable piece of literature" (*The Color Purple*), one which was "the best of Fitzgerald" and she liked "his prose and the story" (*The Great Gatsby*), one which was "written by a black American" and is "important because it talks about his life and slavery" (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*), and one because it was one of Mona's favorites, had "room for philosophy," and which students could "relate to" (*Hamlet*). When we asked if there were texts she would teach that were not on our list, she said she might teach something by Amy Tan because it was important to give students a sense that literature is still being written. She also suggested that reading Tan would give students a value of experiencing a text by a woman of color. Mona's criteria for selecting texts included characteristics of writing ("Fitzgerald is really understated and . . . I think we need training to pick out understated things that might be important."), her personal reaction to a text ("I saw a production of [*Our Town*] last summer. It was just incredible, it really moved me."), and, teachability (She rejected *Death of a Salesman* because "it's too old for kids."). We see in her construction of this list the *academic* approach she resisted and her own *personal* approach to reading along with pragmatic pedagogical concerns.

Mona seemed to try to keep her *personal* approach to reading and the *academic* approach she felt was promoted in her courses compartmentalized. When asked what she thought of "The Raven," Mona said, "It's beautiful. . . . The rhythm. The lines. And some of the words. . . . Just the way the words have rhythm and the alliteration of the 's' sound, it's just a sad story." Later, when the interviewer asked if there were things she would add in looking at the poem as an English major, Mona responded, "I guess if I had to write a paper about this for English class, I would trace some kind of development in the stanzas, what each stanza adds to the development of the story, how the structure of the poem itself adds to the meaning. . . . Look at it in a larger scheme."

On the one hand, Mona's ultimate goal for students was that they should develop the same approach she had toward reading—an appreciation of the beauty of a work and a personal connection with the work. At the same time, she used what she perceived as the goals of her formal coursework to support her arguments for how she would teach. This separate but not quite equal—she seemed to value the *personal* more than the *academic*—approach is even more visible in her beliefs about assessment.

Assessment of Learning of Literature

While student teaching, Mona said she would ask students for an initial, personal reaction to literary texts. She argued that this would help them develop a personal connection to the work and foster the creation of a "personal, authentic reaction . . . a personal emotional reaction" to the text.

She said she would test for "academic stuff" with questions such as: "Give an example of an allusion in 'The Raven'."; "What is the significance of the repetition?"; and, "What is he doing when the plot opened?" She would also ask questions that would force the students to "extend themselves beyond the text." She argued that these latter questions allow students to be more creative, allow them to be the character, and to think about the text in the students' own terms. These questions should require students to use information of their own. She suggested that she would count each type of assessment—the *academic* and the *personal*—as half of a test grade. This again seemed to show the way she held these two approaches separate but not quite equal, compatible but not quite connected either.

When describing what an incorrect answer to a question she would use for assessment of *Romeo and Juliet* would look like, Mona said sadly, that it would indicate that the students "didn't read it, really." In the context of the entire interview, she did not mean that the students had failed to read the words of the text, but rather that the students had not thought about the text as she would want them to—comparing relationships in the real world. Again, we see how reading for Mona meant a close connection among the reader, the text, and the world.

Summary

Just as Mona felt formal education provided no help to her growth as an individual, she appeared to feel it was no help in thinking about teaching with these multiple and competing goals. She learned considerable amounts of "stuff" about literature but had also decided that knowing the "stuff" of literature is neither enough to assure her personal fulfillment nor to assure her development into a good teacher. The university experience that she valued most involved reading literature to develop a critical stance toward society. In other words, her focus was less on literature as an object of analysis and more on literature as a window on the world.

That Mona held the *academic* and *personal* approaches separate but not quite equal is apparent in her responses to some of the activities in our interview. In performing the classification task, she only strayed from the *academic* stance when discussing Shakespeare. In contrast, when responding to our tasks set in the context of reading, Mona revealed that her *personal* view of literature permeated her thinking about teaching. Although she would involve students in the academic task of analyzing texts, her primary goal would be helping them forge a personal relationship to the text. How she would do this was less clear (to both her and us).

But finally, Mona valued literature, like the protagonist of *Cat's Eye* valued her art, as a source of reflection. In Mona's case, reading was a chance to see oneself reflected in the Others of literature. This for her was the wonder of literature. When this happened to one of her students during student teaching, Mona felt this student's insights made the entire experience worthwhile.

For those involved in teacher preparation, Mona represents a bit of an enigma. On the one hand, she appeared to reject what she viewed as a narrow, pedantic approach to literature she encountered in university. On the other hand, her inclination was to help students find some relationship between their own ideas and literary texts—a tenet of reader-response approaches to teaching. Although she seemed to resist much that she encountered at university, she emerged with a sense of purpose most in the English community would applaud. For whatever reason, she seemed unconnected to the support available in the English community. We wonder how her thinking would have developed had she made such a connection.

Conclusion

What we have presented in these cases are two sides of the same coin. Both Julie and Mona are successful students of literature and of teacher education. On one side is Julie who espouses the cause of the canonists—tempered by reader-response sentiments. On the other side is Mona who offers her own version of the reader-response approach—but whose edge is hardened by "academic" concerns.

Both of these prospective teachers loved reading and had since they were young girls. We get a sense that Julie and Mona had developed—*prior to their university experiences*—a view of reading literature as an opportunity to reflect on themselves and their lives. In both cases we also get a sense that they wish to pass on the enjoyment and value they experience as readers to their students.

For both students, the faculty in their university courses seemed to advocate a different perspective on what to value in literature and how to engage with it. Julie took from her coursework an impression of the intrinsic value of the canon while Mona gleaned an analytical approach to interpreting literature. In neither case do these prospective teachers see reflected in their university courses the view that one reads literature to learn more about oneself or experience aesthetic pleasure. Both prospective teachers selected what they judged to be the best elements of the theories presented in their coursework but held firmly to their own prior reasons for reading.

Although Julie's views of literature may be unpopular with many academics, others, especially some of those most concerned about the education of poor children, might agree with her. Mona's views, on the other hand, would elicit the opposite reaction from each camp—support from a large portion of the English faculty and opposition from those concerned that progressive views of knowledge and pedagogy offer poor children little access to the "culture of power." Yet neither student had much opportunity to articulate their views in their subject-matter courses where they could have been examined, elaborated, challenged, or debated. Both students reported that prior to the interviews we conducted with them, they had not been asked explicitly about their views of literature. Apparently, their instructors made no overt attempts to identify their views of literature.

These cases raise questions for those involved in preparing teachers, particularly those in English departments: How do we elicit from our students their personal theories of literature and reading literature? That is, how do we get them to say what they really believe rather than what they think we want to hear? How do such beliefs, frequently deeply and tenaciously held but under attack from many quarters, become the focus of instruction? How do we challenge deeply held beliefs and, at the same time, respect and honor views that differ from our own? How do we engage prospective teachers in the roiling debate over which texts to teach, how to teach them, and which texts are best for different school settings?

Incumbent on all of those who prepare teachers is to consider both the importance of supporting undergraduates as they learn to reason for themselves and, at the same time, ensuring that high school students—especially those historically denied access to critical knowledge—receive the best possible education. How do we best do this? If these purposes might best be served by ensuring that prospective teachers express their tacit theories and examine these theories in a safe, respectful environment, how do we create such an environment?

In some ways, Julie and Mona enter teaching without a primary benefit of university preparation: a view of reading literature and the reasons for so doing that has been refined and sharpened, questioned and challenged. Such a view would be

animated by the holder's appreciation for other views and would provide confidence and clarity of purpose for a notoriously uncertain activity—teaching.

Notes

[1] The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of G. Williamson McDiarmid and Diane Holt-Reynolds, whose ideas and suggestions were instrumental in writing this publication.

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APPENDIX A

4	Text	Author	Have read & WOULD include	Have read but WOULD NOT include	Haven't read but WOULD include	Haven't read & WOULD NOT include
	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	Angelou				
	The Fire Next Time	Baldwin				
	Forever	Blume				
	The Red Badge of Courage	Crane				
	Soul on Ice	Cleaver				
	Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass	Douglass				
	The Invisible Man	Ellison				
	The Great Gatsby	Fitzgerald				
	The Miracle Worker	Gibson				
	The Lord of the Flies	Golding				
	A Raisin in the Sun	Hansberry				
	The Scarlet Letter	Hawthorne				
	The Old Man and the Sea	Hemingway				
	Their Eyes Were Watching God	Hurston				
	Woman Warrior	Kingston				
	A Separate Peace	Knowles				
	To Kill a Mockingbird	Lee				
	Call of the Wild	London				
	Autobiography of Malcolm X	Haley/ Malcolm X				
	The Crucible	Miller				
	The Death of a Salesman	Miller				
	The Song of Solomon	Morrison				
	The Chosen	Potok				
	The Catcher in the Rye	Salinger				
	Hamlet	Shakespeare				
	Macbeth	Shakespeare				
	Grapes of Wrath	Steinbeck				
	Of Mice and Men	Steinbeck				
	Huckleberry Finn	Twain				
	The Color Purple	Walker				
	Ethan Frome	Wharton				
	Our Town	Wilder				
	Glass Menagerie	Williams				
	Black Boy	Wright				
	Native Son	Wright				

APPENDIX B

To help us better understand how the research participants thought about written text, we asked them to read "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe. We first asked if they were familiar with Poe; with his writing in general; with "The Raven" in particular. We asked their opinion of Poe's work, and their opinion of him as a writer. We then gave the participants a copy of "The Raven," which they read silently. After they had read the poem, we said: "I'd really like to know what you think of this poem. Tell me about it."

After they had discussed the poem, we further prompted:

> If you think of this poem from your perspective as an English major, is there anything you'd add? Anything about your original analysis you'd especially want to highlight or explain differently? Is there anything you feel would be less important or not important at all?

We also asked gave the participants information about Poe's life, and asked if this knowledge influenced how they thought about "The Raven." Through these questions we hoped to observe their reasoning and thinking about text, both as readers and teachers.

To help us better understand how the research participants thought about teaching literature, we pointed out that "The Raven" was often found in high school anthologies. We then asked:

> Would you choose to teach it if you found it in the anthology your students had been assigned? Could you explain what factors might affect your decision?

> Imagine that you were going to "teach this poem": What would you focus on?

These questions were designed to place "The Raven" within the context of the classroom, allowing participants to express their ideas regarding literature instruction around a specific example. We attempted to further focus their discussions by providing descriptions of particular school settings. We were interested in how these might affect their responses:

> Let's say you were teaching in an inner-city high school where reading scores have been low for a number of years. Again, "The Raven" is part of the curriculum. Most of the students are African-American. Most of the students come from impoverished families. How would you approach teaching the poem in such a setting?

> Now, let's say you were teaching in a rural high school. Most of the students are white and come from low-income families. Most come from families that belong to the fundamentalist church in the community. Again, "The Raven" is part of the district curriculum. How would you approach teaching the poem in such a setting?

Throughout the interview, prompts were designed to elicit further discussions and explanations of statements. For example, participants were often asked questions such as "Is there anything else you would like to say about this?" and "Why do you think that's important?" We attempted to create a casual, non-judgmental atmosphere where participants felt as though they were sharing ideas, not being tested on them.

APPENDIX C

The Complete Works of Shakespeare

The Origin of Species

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

Native Son

A novel by Stephen King

A contemporary romance or fantasy novel

A high school or college textbook

New Yorker magazine

Ebony magazine

People magazine

The *New York Times*

The *State News*

A "Calvin & Hobbes" cartoon

A color magazine advertisement

A memo

A copy of the lyrics of "Total Control" by the Rap group, "Guy"

A copy of the poem, "In a Station of the Metro" (Ezra Pound)

A copy of the poem, "The Ball Turret Gunner" (Randall Jarrell)

APPENDIX D

Literary Criticism #1

A **work of literature** is a self-contained world. The meaning is found within the text itself. The various parts of the text may conflict or be in tension. The form or structure of the work pulls these parts together into a coherent whole. The form *is* the meaning.

Since a literary work contains its own reality and its form is its meaning, knowledge of the intentions or the life and times of the **author** is *not* important for understanding what the work means.

Similarly, since the work exists in and is its own world, **society** has little influence on the meaning of a text.

The **reader** must experience the meaning of the work. However, experiencing the meaning is not simply a matter of responding subjectively and/or affectively to the work. Experiencing the meaning requires hard-nosed, rigorous, objective analyses of the text.

This is where the **critic** comes in. The critic cannot merely paraphrase the meaning for the reader. Indeed, since the meaning of a work is its form, it cannot be paraphrased. "Close" reading—attention to the use and meaning of words, symbols, metaphors and structure—is required. The critic helps the reader learn to do this close reading.

Literary Criticism #2

The reader largely determines the meaning of a **work of literature**. Nevertheless, the text sets constraints on the meaning that the reader can find because its language and structure elicit certain common responses rather than others.

One group of critics who adhere to this idea claim that all **authors** necessarily have an intended audience in mind when writing. Other critics argue that meaning is created by reading; thus the reader is really the **author**.

The **reader** plays the central role in both of these views. If the author writes for an intended reader (audience), the reader effectively controls the meaning of the text. If the reader is the author, then the reader creates whatever meaning the text has through the act of reading.

Forces within **society** affect the backgrounds that authors and readers bring to a text. Similar backgrounds and perspectives lead author and reader to create meanings for a text that are compatible.

The **critics** define and write about the respective roles of the text, author, reader, society, and critics. Some critics primarily describe how and why these roles developed and are the way they are; other critics attempt to demonstrate how the reader functions as author of what is read.

Literary Criticism #3

A **work of literature** exposes the reader to other points of view, other imaginations, other emotions and actions, and enables the reader to see more and further and, hence, to become a better person. The traditions and cultural values found in the greatest literature represent some of the finest sentiments and achievements of the species: particular notions of the True and Beautiful and of enduring moral and aesthetic values; an affinity for the "eternal" human truths; a sense of a shared humanity and a deep and abiding awareness of the importance of democratic ideals.

The **author**, particularly the author of a great work, creates a world so powerful and alive that a reader actually experiences themes that are ageless and comes to understand universal truths.

The **reader**'s role is to discover the meaning of the text, a meaning that transcends the time and circumstances in which it was written. In discovering this meaning, the reader also learns about her or his own existence and shared humanity as well as his or her individuality and distinctive heritage. A reader reads to become a more complete and better person.

The ideals and truths depicted in literature can only imperfectly be realized in **society**. But by reading and becoming a better person, the individual contributes to the improvement of society as a whole.

The **critic** helps the reader to learn to read critically, to find the meaning more readily. The reader thus becomes capable of experiencing the meaning more deeply and intensely and, hence, gains increased pleasure and understanding from reading.

Literary Criticism #4

A **work of literature** has no fixed or constant meaning. A single word can be defined in multiple ways; and each definition of a given word is a definition of that word by default: that is, because it is *not* the definition of a different word. Each of the myriad words, separately and strung together, impart to the text an uncertainty and indeterminableness. Other texts, past and future, entwine with a work. Also present in any work are faint suggestions of alternative texts that are absent only because the author chose to write the one written.

The words used and the meaning the **author** wants cannot coincide; notions about the author's intention and original meaning are merely empty phrases.

The **reader** will find at most an ebb and flow of shadowy meanings that fade, reform, fade again.

What is true of a single work is true of Literature as a whole; and if Literature cannot capture and hold meaning, can there be any ultimate meaning in **society**?

The role of the **critic** is to "defamiliarize" the text: to enable the reader to see that the appearance of meaning is but illusion; to expose as rhetoric claims that the traditional moral and cultural values transmitted by "Great Literature" are immutable and eternal truths. It is through this rhetoric that traditional authority and privilege perpetuates itself.