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ABSTRACT
                Suggesting that the common classroom practice of
literature instruction is antitheoretical and counterproductive, this
paper elaborates theories of reading processes, discusses children's
responses to literature, and proposes suggestions for classroom use.
The first section of the paper outlines what literature instruction
is expected to contribute to children's learning. The second section
of the paper discusses three models of the reading act: reading as
transmission, reading as transaction, and hermeneutic reading. The
third and fourth sections use notions and insights from the second
and third models to describe, analyze, and synthesize children's
response to literature. The final section of the paper discusses
principles to facilitate children's learning: literature instruction
should encourage learners to approach a text as an experience to live
through; teachers and students should assume the same role--a unique
individual literary reader and experiencer; and young learners should
be invited to respond to literature with their emotions, personal
associations, memories, judgments, and intertextual relations. The
paper concludes by suggesting instructional activities that (1)
acknowledge that learners' personal responses are valid; (2) provide
learners with a wide variety of literary works; (3) create a
non-threatening classroom environment; (4) demonstrate and encourage
the use of multiple media for expressing messages; (5) create
collaborative classroom climate; (6) meet the expectations of the
examination board and help learners get through them; and (7) foster
awareness of personal and interpretive-community perspectives and
then expose the learners to other perspectives. Contains 27
references. (RS)

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NURTURING CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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In a recent survey of "excellent literature programs"
in this country, Applebee (1990) found that the
majority of the supposedly well-informed teachers
still adhere to traditional approaches to literature,
including focusing on traditional canon of texts,
emphasizing New Critical techniques of textual
analysis, and leading students toward a received,
canonical interpretation. The common classroom practice
is still "overly text-centered" (p.61).

As will be made clear in the ensuing paragraphs,
Applebee's observation, valid or not, indicates that the
common classroom practice of literature instruction is
antitheoretical and it is, therefore, counterproductive.

This paper will (1) outline what literature
instruction is expected to contribute to children's
learning, (2) elaborate on theories of reading processes

in general and reading literary text in particular, (3) discuss how children respond to literature and what their response entails, and (4) propose some practical suggestions for classroom use.
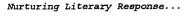
I. FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE INSTRUCTION

In this paper, literature is thought of as a work of art that "seeks to please the person who made it and the person who attends to it" (Purves et al., 1990a, p.11). Literature, as Purves et al. further suggest, is what the reader perceives and recreates as one as a result of transaction with literary work.

Literature instruction, according to Rosenblatt (1990), should help learners to

> develop a discriminating attitude of mind,
> a readiness to question and to reject
> anachronistic or unjust assumptions, but a
> willingness also to accept and build on what
> is sound in our culture.... (foster) the
> growth of the capacity for personally
> meaningful, self-critical literary experience.
> (p.106-107)

In a somewhat different way, Purves (1990b) has laid out major functions of literature instruction as, in his own words,

the development of what one might call "preferences," or "habits of mind" in reading and writing...to read aesthetically and to switch lenses when one moves from social studies to poetry... to develop something called "taste" or the love of "good literature"...(to inculcate) specific sets of preferred habits of reading and writing about that body of text termed "literature" (p.88).

Building on what the two scholars have proposed, it seems safe to reformulate the tasks of teachers of literature as, among other things, (a) to allow learners to explore and then reflect on their emotional reactions during and after every transaction with (literary) texts, (b) to encourage learners to explore and then reflect on the cultures of the world they read about and critically learn their own culture through the artistic uses of various media of representations, and (c) to help learners to develop literate (or educated) habits-- including appreciating multiple ways of expressing feelings and ideas, being open to diverse forms of literary work and ideas which differ from their own.

II. THE READING ACT: THREE PERSPECTIVES

The traditional approach to literature, that Appleblee characterizes as "text-centered," is based on the assumption that the text is self contained. That is to

say that the meaning is within words, readily available on the text, and the job of the reader is to find and retrieve it (Weaver, 1988).

Commonly termed as reading-as-transmission, this model perceives the reader as a passive participant in the reading act. From this perspective, the main objective of reading/literature instruction is to impart to the learner sets of skills to enable her to extract meanings from texts. It follows that teachers who subscribe to this model generally teach their students to "relate reading with correctness" (Smith, 1992, p.630).

According to Smith's (1992) observation, over time, this model of reading/literature instruction can lead learners to approach all reading halfheartedly because reading becomes not-more-than retrieval of information that is mediated by the teacher-- as the only authority to judge its correctness.

Contrary to the reading-as-transmission model, that implies passivity of the readers' mind when "comprehending" a text and one-way nature of reading process-- i.e. originating in the text and ending in the reader-- empirical studies by psycholinguists and sociolinguists have shown that meaning does not reside

within the words on the page (Weaver, 1988). In comprehending a text, readers actively create meaning, and in so doing they bring into the text their background knowledge about the topic under discussion, sociolinguistic conventions (e.g., genre schemes, discourse structures, and story grammar-- as appropriate), their intentions, expectations and purposes of reading, their values and beliefs that they already have in mind (Smith, 1988; de Fina et al., 1991; Rosenblatt, 1989). Therefore, meaning is not contained as readily available in the text, but it is derived from the "interaction" between the content and the structure of the author's message and the experiences, prior knowledge of the readers.

In other words, reading is not a one-way process, but a two-way transaction between the mind of the reader and the language of the text (Rosenblatt, 1989, 1990).

Or, as Smith (1988 has put it,

> Reading--like writing and all other forms of thinking-- can never be separated from the purposes, prior knowledge, and feelings of the person engaged in the activity, nor from the nature of the text being read (p.179).

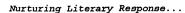As experience, feelings, and reading purposes (that

would result in reading stance either predominantly
aesthetic or predominantly efferent, to use Rosenblatt's
terminologies) can vary from one individual reader to
another (or even "intrapersonally" at different reading
transactions), reading is necessarily a subjective-
personal engagement of an individual reader with her
whole-self in transaction with the text. As Probst (1988)
puts it, literary experience is "fundamentally an
unmediated private exchange between a text and a reader"
(p.7). As a result, comprehension or interpretation is
"relative"-- in that it is colored by the reader's
personal idiosyncracies-- because, basically, every
interpretation of a work of literature is a personal
reconstruction of the "original" work as a result of
dialectic interactions between the message in the text
and an individual reader in a particular internal-state
and reading context (Clifford, 1991; Smith, 1988).

Or, in the words of Eeds and Wells (1989),
"depending on the life of experience, the attitudes, the
personal literary history of the reader, what she lives
through as she reads the text will vary" (p.5).

That is to say that , as embedded in different
stances as a function of reading purposes, this reading-

as-transaction model perceives personal meaning that results from personal engagement as not only legitimate but also desirable. This is because "personal engagement is a necessary prerequisite to understanding and evaluating complex works of literature" (Rogers, 1991, p.409).

From this perspective, therefore, there is no such thing as the correct interpretation of a text, even though it does not mean that we cannot judge the relative (degree of) validity of differing interpretations of a single work. Relative validity of various interpretations is possible because there exists some relatively fixed socially constructed "reality" and linguistic conventions external to the reader-in-transaction-with-the texts against which each individual interpretation can be assessed.

Based on this model, the main objective of reading/ literature instruction is to ensure that learners have adequate opportunities to experience and live-through the reading for personally meaningful purposes, and to help them fulfill such purposes by themselves (Smith, 1988; Probst, 1988). In this way, learners are encouraged to be fully engaged, both their mind and spirit, with
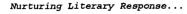
(literary) texts (Probst, 1990).

The third model is what Purves (1993) calls "hermeneutic" reading (p.352), which is based on an epistimological assumption slightly different from reader-response and/or transactional theories, and is radically different from the reading-as-transmission model. In hermeneutic reading, to use Purve's words,

> ...meaning resides in the negotiation among readers in an interpretive community, <u>not</u> in the text, in authorial intention, or in the individual statement concerning the significance of the text (p.352).

In this model, Purves further suggests, the reading of literature is geared toward explorations of possible meanings, interpretations, arguments, conjectures and speculations. Here, in this model, (literary) texts are treated as both open documents (such as discursive essay, speculative prose, philosophy, etc.) and as expressive and creative writings as well. Of particular concern here is conscious raising about the position of individual person relative to a wider social context (as an interpretive community) and their mutually-shaping nature.

Related to reading as a personal and communal act,

Chase and Hynd (1987) have this to say:

> The act of reading, thus, engages the reader
> both in highly personalized schema reflecting
> one's position in a community of readers
> shaped by mutually agreed upon values, tastes,
> and opinions (p.530).

In sum, every model has its own concept about the nature of text and its meaning. For instance, as noted before, reading-as-transmission model assumes that the text is complete in itself. The text represents an objective reality which is detachable from its readers, because readers, in this model, are only passive outsiders. It follows that reading becomes finding the correct meaning-- the content in the print. The teacher's responsibility is then to see to it that her students "get" the right stuff out of the reading. This practice, over time, makes the learning readers feel uncomfortable with their own interpretive ability, forcing them to rely on the teacher as a mediator in finding what the texts mean (Smith, 1992). The teacher's mediation here can be counterproductive for children's learning because, as we know from research, without being personally engaged, readers will not learn anything (Smith, 1988), since personal relevance is the basis for all learning.

It is, therefore, apparent that reading-as-transmission

model-- that Applebee referred to as "traditional approach" as cited previously, is antitheoretical and it is, very likely, counterproductive.

In contrast, the second and third models, even though each has its own theoretical assumptions that are not necessarily the same, both are built upon solid research-based foundations. Research in cognitive psychology, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and other "interpretive" sciences in general seem to lend support to the notions of humans as creators and users of symbols, as cultural beings, and other notions indicating the active nature of human being.

In the following sections of the article, some notions and insights from those two models will be used to describe, analyze, and synthesize children's response to literature, and then some practical suggestions for classroom teachers will be set forth.

III. RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

Barbara Hardy (1969) has theorized, as cited in Huck (1990), that human being's construct (ours included, of
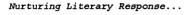
course) are in fact stories that we tell ourselves about how the world works. Along the same line, Smith (1988) maintains that "human brain is essentially a narrative device. It runs on stories" (p.178).

If narrative (hence <u>literature</u>) is a basic way of organizing experiences and is a primary act of mind, it seems safe to assume that literary work can serve perfectly well as fuel for the reading process, because reading process, according to Goodman (1976), is "a constant search for meaning" (cited in Huck, 1990, p.126). And when students are led to see that they have a role in determining meaning they become more actively involved in reading (Brozo, 1988).

In other words, literature can contribute to the reading process for its meaningfulness. And meaningfulness, according to Smith (1988), is the basis for all learning.
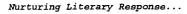
So compatible are the narratives with the way humans think and feel that it seems just natural that even very young children would respond to literature in some way. Researchers in the field of (children's) literature have documented how (young) children (and adult readers) respond to literature. For instance, based on her

ethnographic study of 90 children aged 5 to 11 years in an authentic school setting, Hickman (1981) has reported that, when responding to their literary encounters, those young children displayed a variety of behaviors: some were verbal-oral, some were verbal-written, some other were expressed in arts (e.g. drawing, collage), and still other responses were reflected in physical expressions and movements (from body stances to dramatic enactment), depending on the individual child's internal state and experiences with literature in particular and life in general. More specifically, the researcher listed the children's various literary responses under such categories as "listening behaviors", "contact with books", "acting on the impulse to share", "oral responses", "actions and drama", "making things", and "writing" (p. 346).

Other interesting research findings are those drawn from the works of Eeds & Wells (1989) and that of Cox and Many (1990). Eeds & Wells (1989) have documented some evidence showing that children as young as ten could participate in discussing works of literature that indicated the cognitive processes of (1) articulating the process of constructing simple meaning, (2) creating and
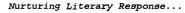
sharing personal stories that are in some ways related with the reading or discussion, (3) participating as active readers-- making predictions, hypotheses, and finding their confirmations or disconfirmations as they read--, and (4) gaining insights about how the author had communicated her message to the readers and supporting with relevant interpretations from the text their evaluations of the rhetorical strategies of the author. In a report of their one-year study, Cox & Many (1990) have indicated that reading literature encourages children to imagine and picture a story in their mind, extend the story and hypothesize about it while reading the work and making literary responses.

Currently there are ample studies related to topics similar to what Hickman has done. Generally they confirm that young children are very responsive to literature, and they respond to every literary transaction in a rich variety of ways.

IV. NURTURING RESPONSE

A first essential step before one can find a way to nurture children's response to literature is to identify what processes children go through before, during and
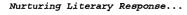
after their transactions with literature. Unlike adult readers whose "internal processes" can be elicited using protocol-analysis techniques, young children's internal cognitive/emotional operations, in most cases, can only be "seen" indirectly.

Although currently there is no single agreed upon "taxonomy" of children's responses (which is understandable because of complex and unique nature of human's emotions and thoughts), some scholars in this field have attempted to identify and sort out some essential "components" of literary response. For instance, Bleich (1975) suggests that response contains two basic elements: affects and associations. When children engage in transactions with literature, they simultaneously submit their emotions/feelings to the text and, at the same time, make associations with their life experiences in general and with other texts they have ever read or heard (intertextuality).

Probst (1990) contends that there are two different but equally legitimate processes for reconstructing (making meaning of) literary texts: expressive-introspective, and inferential-explicative. The former looks into affects, life experiences as well as

intertextual associations, and thoughts awakened by the reading. This process might lead literary responders to formulate their response in the form of personal narratives or journal exploring memories evoked as a result of the literary encounter, and/or in the form of imaginative literary work of their own. In contrast, the latter (i.e. inferential-explicative process) can lead the readers to enter into the text, making critical analysis, writing essays on the basis of their own understanding of the literature being read.

Using different terms, Purves (1990b), building on some notions originally proposed by Rosenblatt, has this to say:

> Responding includes <u>decoding</u> (making out the plain sense of the text or film) as well as that mental <u>re-creation</u> of the text that Rosenblatt refers to as the "poem"-- which is to say the cognitive, emotive, and aesthetic experience in a totality. ...<u>Articulating</u>...[covers] a wide variety of ways by which students let people know what their response is. [It] is... bringing the re-creation of what is read into the open (p.88).

According to Purves (1990), in school, "these public articulations are the stuff of learning" (p, 89). Taken together at the level of an aggregate-- i.e. a community of interpreters-- children's literary response is a

social, cultural activity.

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning higher-order cognitive processes like reading and writing has its origins in social interactions, proceeding from "interpsychological plane" (between individuals) to the "intrapsychological plane" (within individuals) with the assistance of knowledgeable members of the culture, adults or peers. Using this social-constructivist theory as a framework, it seems logical to assume that we can use social environment and dialogue as powerful "tools" for further nurturing children's response to literature. That is, to encourage learners to consciously enjoy and reflect on what they read and the way they read it, and to continuously compare and contrast their personal voices and various ways of expressing them with those of more experienced literary responders through mutually-supporting social interactions.

A. Importance of Human Context

As noted in the preceding paragraph, one of the basic learning theories proposed by Vygotsky is that children learn higher psychological processes through their social

environment, optimally with adults' guidance. The importance of human context for the enrichment and development of children's response to literature has been supported by empirical research. For instance, an ethnographic study by Hickman (1981), as cited previously, has indicated the phenomenon. "In quizzing each other about the book, the two girls were quite consciously copying their teacher's tone and her manner of asking questions" (p,351). Elsewhere, Hickman (1984), upon reviewing empirical research by Hepler (1982) and Kiefer (1983), concluded:

> The classroom community also furnishes its members with a pool of ideas for representational responses.... (T)he children in a community of readers support each other in "doing what readers do." (p.282)

The teacher, as a knowledgeable member of the culture, can play many roles in nurturing children's response. Hickman (1981, 1984) suggests that the teachers serve as a model (demonstrating her passionate-literate stance toward literature and her various educated literary responses), and a leader in the literary talk. The term "leader" here refers to someone who gives a
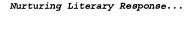
direction and the necessary support to ensure the smooth and productive flow of the discussion, by giving orienting questions, reassuring comments, supporting feedback, etc.

Depending on children's level of confidence in making independent elaborate interpretations, it is important that the teacher relinquish her authority gradually. While continually providing teacherly support, she needs to put herself as an equal member of the community of readers and share literary experiences. When interpretive authority is shared among the members, as Bleich (1975) puts it,

> The whole activity of reading and literary involvement becomes an interpersonal affair with genuine give and take, and authority flows openly where it belongs-- from personal integrity and persuasive capacity of the critic-reader (p. 63).

B. The Role of Dialogue

As suggested in the preceding paragraphs, initially learning children are unable to function independently on tasks; they need assistance of an adult or more capable peer through a process called "scaffolding"-- a process that enables children to carry out a task, or achieve a

goal which is beyond their unassisted efforts (Palincsar, 1986). For its effectiveness the scaffolding should follow the contours of children's individual growth (Searle, 1984). For instance, when the young learners demonstrate increased competence with a certain task, the teacher should gradually withdraw the scaffold for that particular task.

As we can imagine in the process of adults-children scaffolding interactions, the adults here need to make sure from time to time whether the children need more or less help at a certain point in time. In order to do this, adults need to listen to what children have to say. In other words, the provision and adjustment of the support is mediated through dialogue (Palincsar, 1986).

Dialogue is similar to a casual conversation but with a very clear focus-- constructing shared meaning. Here, through dialogue, children "move" together toward "understanding, disclosing, and constructing meaning" (Peterson, 1992, p.103). Dialogue naturally emerges as people call forth others and respond without forethought or plans. Dialogue is a spontaneous, give-and-take proposition.

Through dialogue, young readers who (have) read the

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same book/story would share their understanding, probe one another's mind for meaning. In dialogue, one's arguments would be confronted with someone else's counterarguments. Through this dialogic interaction children would have the opportunities to test their understanding, hypotheses, speculations, and then "revise" their ideas in cooperation with other learning individuals on the basis of mutual-need and shared values governing the interpretive community. In this situation, one person does not control the meaning-making process, but joins with others to make sense of experience.

In literature studies (and other "interpretive sciences") it has become common to use written dialogue as a way of sharpening understanding and sharing experiences and concerns with other members of the learning group. Writing dialogue even to oneself (e.g., learning log) can make a great contribution to learning-- through "learning log" children can record their spontaneous reactions to literature, their questions, their wonders. With or without learning buddies they have "something written" from which they can start reflecting, contemplating, and exploring for possible further refinement. Like oral dialogue, written dialogue can

serve as a powerful learning tool.

Research by Palincsar (1986), for instance, has clearly shown that the groups of fourth-grade children that were taught using dialogue in a scaffolded instruction performed better than their peer who were taught in ways that did not contain dialog features. In the words of Palincsar (1986):

> Those groups whose dialogue shared many instances of the features cited earlier are actually functioning far more independently of their teachers on the final days of instruction. ...(W)hen these students were given transfer measures on their ability to apply the four instructed strategies, their gain scores exceeded those the comparison groups by about 100 % (p.96)

As dialogue is spontaneous, inherent as a trigger here is a common interest. As Peterson has argued, "dialogue happens best when there is a true interest in the topic and problems they [learners] are having in making meaning" (p, 108). And when this happens, as suggested previously, teachers may justifiably expect that her young children would develop into critical and sensitive readers and writers.

V. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

As suggested earlier, a piece of literary work is never meaningful nor complete in itself because it is full of gaps. It is complete only after the reader fills the gaps with her background knowledge (about the topic, about how reading works, about how to use strategies, about psycho-sociolinguistic conventions), her reading purposes, and reading contexts--physical, psychological as well as ideological (Clifford, 1991; Smith, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1989; Duffy & Roehler, 1987).

This research-based theory should inform us that the reader plays the decisive role in the meaning making. On the basis of this assumption, I believe that we should not only abandon our prepackaged commercially prepared teaching materials (or the lock-step basal-based instructional procedures) but also commit ourselves to the mission that we should facilitate children's learning. And to translate that professional commitment into sound instructional practices, some principles should be followed.

A. Approach

Following the lead suggested by Richards and Rodgers (1986), the term _approach_ here is used to refer to the
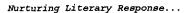
theories of literary study and the nature of literary understanding. As suggested in the definition of literature cited earlier, literature is not only those works produced by "literary masters"-- the elite group that has had the privilege to formulate and impose the criteria of literariness-- but also the works by contemporary writers irrespective of their social, educational, religious, and gender background. The forms of literary work are not limited to those prescribed in the literary tradition (i.e. novel, drama, poetry) but include all things that are meant to entertain the feelings of the creator and those attending to them-- everything that evokes human responses (Purves et al., 1990a).

Those multiformal literary works, as suggested in the earlier part of this paper, should not be treated (e.g. dissected, worked upon) as a packet of factual information with detachment and dead feeling, but should rather be read as an experience-- a subjective experience to live through.

This subjective nature of literary experience presupposes personal involvement of the reader in the literary work she is enjoying. And this personal

involvement presupposes meaningfulness and personal
relevance. According to Frank Smith (1988),
meaningfulness, personal relevance and personal
involvement are vital conditions for learning to happen.

It is only after these conditions are met can we
justifiably expect our young learners to gain valuable
knowledge and experiences from their literary encounter.

B. Design

Literature instruction should encourage learners to
approach a text as an experience to live through, and to
process it with reference to their personal feelings,
life experience, and intertextuality-- relating whatever
they read with their previous literary and life
experiences (Bleich, 1975; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Rogers,
1991). In other words, the primary objective of this
response-nurturing literary activity should be to provide
learners with <u>personally meaningful</u> literary experiences,
through <u>personal involvements</u> in literary events and
activities, such as reading literary works, making
personal response to them, writing and talking about
them, enacting them, and reacting to them using various
forms of literary responses.

In order to ensure learners' personal involvement,

the selection of reading materials should be made on the basis of their "potential to interest the students" (Probst, 1988, p. 33). To do this, we cannot leave it to textbook writers or anybody else external to the classroom community. We classroom teachers are definitely in a better position to know what our students' concerns are, what their personal preferences in terms of literary texts, and what literary experiences we deem (most) important for them to live through. To acquire the necessary information, a survey on students' reading-interest-profile might be in order. Or, we can provide children with a wealth of literary collections (all types of literature for all levels) from which students can make their own choices; and on the basis of the pattern of their personal choices plus those of our own educated choice, we select classroom reading-writing materials.

Students' personal choice is vital here to ensure that they find in what they read and experience a sense of personal relevance and meaningfulness. Parallel to this, the classroom learning-teaching activities should be organized and implemented in a way that encourages children's personal involvement both as unique individuals as well as in their role as a member of a

classroom community or a literary club.

C. Classroom Procedures

Unlike traditional classroom practices in which the teacher serves as a mediator of meaning making and the central authority on whose head <u>the</u> correct interpretation rests, in this response-nurturing activity every classroom member (the teacher and her students alike) assumes the same role: a unique individual literary reader and experiencer, and, at the same time, as a member of interpretive community (Bleich, 1975; Rosenblatt, 1989). Parallel to this personal as well as social-communal nature of literary experience and interpretation, learning-teaching activities should be geared toward the development of the students as readers and writers of literature. This can be approached through a balanced combination of individual reading, personal-response writing, dialogue, group discussions, and other forms of interactions among the members in and outside the classroom.

D. Suggestions for nurturing literary knowledge, skills, literate dispositions and sensitive feelings

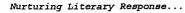Reading-writing is thinking and feeling (Bleich, 1975).

Given that interpretation is a function of the reader's background knowledge, text, and reading situation, interpretive reading is necessarily personal-subjective. As a reading act is personal, its impacts in the form of both emotional reaction and intellectual understanding are also personal in that they tend to be colored by idiosyncratic nuances and variants.

Considering the nature of subjective interpretation and the nature of literary work, whose main function is to entertain human emotion, literature cannot be perceived as an objective entity per se that should be approached with detachment and "dead feeling." Rather, it should be enjoyed as human <u>experience</u>, as <u>subjective</u> experience, because there is no such thing as literary work unless there is a subject, or a reader, who perceives the piece as a work of literature (Bleich, 1975).

Taking all those into consideration, we should acknowledge the personal significance of literary experience by inviting the young learners to respond to literature with their emotions, personal associations, memories, judgments, and intertextual relations (Bleich, 1975; Probst, 1990; Purves et al., 1990a). This means

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that we should open up possibilities for differing interpretations. We should, therefore, no longer expect to find one single "correct" interpretation of (literary) texts.

In order to translate the spirit of those pedagogical principles into instructional activities, the following suggestions are proposed.

o <u>Acknowledge that learners' personal responses are valid</u>

One way to translate this into classroom activities is as follows: every time children have literary encounter, ask them to share their <u>feelings</u> (e.g. like, dislike, etc.), to relate the work or the feelings evoked by it with their life experience, and with other text they might have ever read. Teachers should put themselves as classroom members and participate in the activity with an "equal" role as participants: to share their feelings about the piece, and make associations with their life experience and intertextual relations. As more knowledgeable members of the culture, however, teachers should also demonstrate their interpretive sophistication (just a little bit) beyond average-learners' current interpreting ability. In this way, the literary/social interactions can result in a good model for learners to
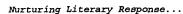
see and try for themselves.

o <u>Provide learners with a wide variety of literary works</u>.

To make the children's literary experiences as close as possible to real life reading, use materials which vary in difficulty, genres, topic, and length. In assigning individual reading, give individual children options so that they can pick one that is most <u>appealing</u> to them. This "reading appeal" is vital here to ensure that the children are willing to relate to and personally involve themselves in the work they read.

o <u>Create a non-threatening classroom environment</u>.

To foster their confidence and independence in processing literary experience and making personal response to literary work, learners should feel free from fear of condemnation. A nonthreatening atmosphere would encourage children to take a risk in making meaning and in forming ideas. Research supports that risk-taking is a very important part of the learning process. To support this, teachers should be accepting, appreciative and reassuring in commenting on students' personal responses.

o <u>Demonstrate and encourage the use multiple media for expressing messages</u>

By demonstration, introduce the children with a
variety of literary responses: written/oral verbal
responses, dramatic reading, pantomime, collage, shape
and/or concrete poems, illustrations, etc. By
demonstration, encourage learners to experience
expressing their ideas using those media.

o <u>Create collaborative classroom climate</u>

Parallel to the subjectivity and communality of
literary interpretations, encourage children to <u>share</u>
their personal responses (both orally and in writing)
with other readers (from other classes and/or grade
levels). Group work is beneficial (Andrasick, 1990).
Establish "reading-writing buddies"-- a literary club
that would enable learners to comfortably share their
reading and writing experiences, and discuss both
differences and commonalities of their literary
interpretation. This can lead the learners to the
awareness that reading-writing involves the social act of
communication as well as individual reflection.

o <u>Meet the expectations of the examination board and
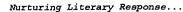help learners get through them</u>

In many cases, the curriculum is mandated by people

other than classroom teachers such as the authority in the office of the Ministry of Education. In a situation like this, classroom teachers are normally held accountable for what they have taught through the evaluation of students' skills, perhaps using a standardized test format which is developed based on the notion of reading as transmission. The challenge here lies in the fact that while we teachers are concerned about learners' development as independent (literary) readers and writers, the test format requires teachers to get the students prepared to be evaluated in terms of their knowledge of literary facts/ information: e.g., periods of literary history, classifications of genres, titles of certain books and their authors, major characters involved in certain stories, etc.

To prevent children from failing the test, we teachers should do two things: to continue promoting learners' confidence in their interpretive capabilities by putting them in every literary discussion or cultural dialogue (Probst, 1990), and to familiarize the learners with literary information and "test expectations" by incorporating discussion on it in the context of literary dialogue/ or group discussions.

o <u>Foster awareness of personal and interpretive-community perspectives and then expose the learners to other perspectives.</u>

Together with children, enter into various literary experiences such as reading (e.g. poems, short stories, mythologies, short novels, etc.) and watching films or live performance of plays, and, together with them, do "exploitative" literary activities in response to the literary encounters. There are a great deal of possibilities for this, among others, through dialog journals, process logs, and reading-response journals (Andrasick, 1990).

All of those literary-response activities can lead the learning individuals to the understanding of others' interpretations in relation to their own personal interpretations. To make this happen, learners should be given ample opportunities to <u>share</u> their experiences and thoughts, to encounter and get exposed to different perspectives, and-- with teachers' guidance-- to <u>talk</u> about them among themselves-- members of the literacy club.

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