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## ABSTRACT

Developing students' ability to use multicultural perspectives and knowledge to think about literature, history, and society is emerging as an important part of a pluralistic approach to education. An ethnographic study examined three innovative eleventh-grade literature-history classes as they were negotiated over 2 school years by a pair of English and social studies teachers with pluralistic goals for curriculum and pedagogy. Reading texts from different cultural perspectives, engaging in open-forum discussion and writing, and participating in other dialectical activities fostered student awareness of the multiple, sometimes conflicting languages for understanding texts and social issues. Teachers provided assistance at points of need, sometimes in the form of posing problems, juxtaposing texts/perspectives (e.g. stories, reports, personal experiences), and initiating multivocal activities, often in the form of conversational strategies for moving from unreflective speech to conscious reflection about personal and others' assumptions and values. In this class, critical thinking and narrative thinking came to develop in a dialogic relationship, what can be seen as a critical-narrative discourse acquired and learned through dialectical talk and activity. These dialogic means of moving beyond sociocentrism toward reflection influenced individual students differently, depending on numerous personal and sociocultural forces shaping the nature of their active response or resistance. Findings contribute to a theoretical framework for understanding how interdisciplinary study of multicultural texts in problem-posing contexts contributes to specific forms of critically reflective literacy practice. (Contains 115 references and 4 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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**Making the Paths:  
Constructing Multicultural Texts and  
Critical-Narrative Discourse in  
Literature-History Classes**

Suzanne M. Miller



National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement

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## Abstract

Developing students' ability to use multicultural perspectives and knowledge to think about literature, history and society is emerging as an important part of a pluralistic approach to education. In this ethnographic study I examined three innovative eleventh-grade literature-history classes as they were negotiated over two school years by a pair of English and social studies teachers with pluralistic goals for curriculum and pedagogy. In particular, I examined how students learned to make sense of multicultural texts in the context of history study, what roles classroom discussion and activity played in developing understanding, and what ways of talking and thinking developed over time. The study's findings describe how the interdisciplinary classroom context evolved into a democratic classroom culture where difference became valued. Reading texts from different cultural perspectives, engaging in open-forum discussion and writing, and participating in other dialectical activities fostered student awareness of the multiple, sometimes conflicting languages for understanding texts and social issues. Teachers provided assistance at points of need, sometimes in the form of posing problems, juxtaposing texts/perspectives (e.g., stories, reports, personal experiences), and initiating multivocal activities, often in the form of conversational strategies for moving from unreflective speech to conscious reflection about one's own and others' assumptions and values. *In this class, critical thinking and narrative thinking came to develop in a dialogic relationship, what I see as a critical-narrative discourse acquired and learned through dialectical talk and activity.* These dialogic means of moving beyond sociocentrism toward reflection influenced individual students differently, depending on numerous personal and sociocultural forces shaping the nature of their active response or resistance. The aim of the work is to contribute to a theoretical framework for understanding how interdisciplinary study of multicultural texts in problem-posing contexts contributes to specific forms of critically reflective literacy practice.

# **Making the Paths: Constructing Multicultural Texts and Critical-Narrative Discourse in Literature-History Classes**

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## **Introduction**

Recent analyses of literacy and literature instruction (Miller & McCaskill, 1993) support the argument that pluralistic approaches to education require changes in curricular content to include voices of cultural groups who have been excluded from literary study in schools. Studies of the status of the literature curriculum in the United States suggest that more works by non-white men and women have been included in the most recent literature anthologies, but only 21 percent of the works teachers reported using were written by women and 16 percent, by non-white authors (Applebee, 1993). Further, the addition of cultural information and/or multicultural literary texts to the curriculum, by themselves, appear to be insufficient for developing pluralistic understandings and attitudes (e.g., Adams, 1995). Research on classroom practice suggests that simply adding multicultural texts to curriculum poses problems, because students have difficulties making sense of literary texts written from cultures other than their own due, in part, to insufficient cultural information and/or resistance to other than mainstream perspectives (e.g., Beach, 1994; Sharma Knippling, 1993; Purves & Jordan, 1993). Teachers and researchers have begun to argue that students limited by narrow cultural perspectives need to engage in discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities supported by knowledgeable teachers who prompt examination of knowledge construction from multiple cultural perspectives (Banks, 1993, 1995; Miller, 1992, 1993; Muhammad, 1993; Purves, 1993; Sharma Knippling, 1993). Developing students' ability to *use* cultural knowledge and perspectives to think about literature, history and society is emerging a necessary part of a pluralistic approach to education.

In the ethnographic research reported here, I address these issues by examining the consequences of interdisciplinary study of literature-history in classes where students had opportunities to reflect about multicultural texts in their historical contexts through open-

open-forum discussion, writing, and other dialectical activities which emphasized thinking critically about perspectives in an effort to develop pluralistic understandings.

### **Framework for the Study**

General frameworks for developing student thinking in classrooms (e.g., Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Cornbleth, 1985; Miller, 1992; Moll, 1990; Newmann, 1990; Resnick, 1987; Wertsch, 1991) suggest that it develops primarily through instructional conversation around coherent "sense-making" activities which are socially meaningful. Particularly useful in explaining how language use and activity prompt new ways of thinking are Vygotsky's theories of a sociocultural approach to mind (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987; Wertsch, 1991). In this view, our cultural signs and tools (e.g., speech, writing, literacy) are social in origin, used first to communicate and mediate contact with our social surroundings; through language-mediated social processes over time, we internalize these instruments to help us think. The crucial role of schooling, then, is to create practical activity in social contexts, so that teachers (and knowledgeable peers) can mediate mastery of and conscious awareness of the use of these cultural tools. In short, our social sense-making activities become our means of thinking, our intellectual activity.

Reading literature has been construed as such a sense-making activity which can contribute to the sharp and critical mind by stimulating attention to dilemmas, alternative human possibilities, and the many-sidedness of the human situation (Bruner, 1986; Langer, 1990, 1992). Studies of English classes provide evidence that students' sense-making in literature discussions supported by teachers can create a dialogic context which influences the development of dialectical reasoning (Miller, 1992; 1993; Paul, 1984). Similarly, studies of social studies classes describe how students develop critical thinking and reasoning as they engage challenging non-routine problems with teacher support for manipulating information and learning reflective strategies (Newmann, 1990; Oliver & Shaver, 1974). The few studies of the influence of literature in history classes (Levstik, 1986; Quiocho, 1984; Ross, 1982) suggest that reading, discussing and writing about historical fiction and biographies provokes strong historical interest/understanding and development of critical thinking strategies. For example, middle school students learned to compare sources and evaluate issues and events from multiple perspectives. Although these studies did not specifically focus on students' developing understanding



promising influences on student understanding and thinking.

Theoretically, multicultural literatures provide the natural forum where readers encounter the "lived experiences" of others' diverse perspectives, thus offering "alternative vantage points on the world" (Greene, 1993). In this view, multicultural literatures (e.g., Latino/a, African American, Native American and Asian texts and authors) can provide opportunities for meeting many goals of multicultural education, where voices interact and students reflect, think critically, increase cultural awareness, decrease ethnocentrism, and create a global perspective (e.g., Banks, 1993; Harris, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

In practice, however, the literature curriculum in the United States still remains dominated by white, male authors from an Anglo Saxon tradition (Applebee, 1993). A few ethnographic studies of diversifying the literature curriculum have reported mixed findings. An ethnographic study of a predominantly white working-class middle school in the South suggested that reading multicultural literature, in itself, will not achieve goals for multicultural education if teachers focus only on literary elements and avoid social-cultural issues of race and ethnicity (Adams, 1995). In contrast, an ethnography of urban-school contexts where teachers negotiated a community among diverse students, considering cultural points of view in literature prompted discourse about diversity and new empathy in students (Athanases, 1994). Other important challenges include difficulties in learning to teach students about multiculturalism in a "participatory mode of critical teaching" instead of an ineffective "coercive pedagogy" or an uncritical response pedagogy (Elshtain, 1976; Sleeter, 1995). We do not know enough about how teachers actually teach for diversity, that is, the "ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is [culturally] inclusive" (hooks, 1994, p.35) and liberatory (Friere, 1970). We have few portraits of how teachers enact literature curriculum and pedagogy aimed at "making space for difference" (Miller & McCaskill, 1993).

In order to describe the influence of interdisciplinary classroom contexts on students' reading and understanding multicultural literary texts, I sought out English-history classes which included a multicultural literature curriculum and discussion of those texts. I used ethnographic methods to identify and study a pair of English and social studies teachers with pluralistic goals for curriculum and pedagogy as they team-taught literature-history classes over two school years. This study of eleventh grade integrated American literature-American history addressed these major questions:

- In these classes, how do teachers and students negotiate the classroom social context, including the roles participants play and the purposes for talk and activity?

- What are the consequences of the interdisciplinary study of American history and multicultural literatures for reading and discussing culturally diverse literature in conjunction with the study of history?
- What does the integration contribute to students' understanding of multicultural texts, multicultural perspectives, and cultural diversity?
- What pedagogical activities and strategies promote students' multicultural and historical understanding and critical reflection?
- What practices of reasoning and critical reflection about culture, literature and history emerge in classroom discussion and activity over time?

The ultimate aim of this work is to contribute to a theoretical framework for understanding how interdisciplinary study of multicultural texts in dialogic contexts can contribute to critically reflective literacy practices.

### Methods

The research approach was ethnographic (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In Phase I of the study I observed several newly formed literature-history classes in upstate New York and talked to teachers, looking for ones who gave students opportunities to read and discuss multicultural literatures in an integrated English-history forum. The first classes I observed did not include multicultural perspectives as a major goal for instruction and kept English and history portions quite discrete, with the history teacher sitting down as that period ended and the English teacher taking over during the next period. On my eighth school visit I observed Sharon's and Ron's class where diversity of perspective appeared to be a key focus in a class integrated by content and activity. Afterwards, the teachers were also able to talk about the purposes for their activities and to analyze the unfolding class interactions in ways that suggested a collaborative, reflective stance; this reflectiveness was an important criterion, since the long-term study would require extended conversations about ongoing class processes and the influence on student thinking. This progressive focusing process for selecting ethnographic cases provides the means of locating the site within the larger sphere of classrooms (Athanasas & Heath,

1995; Nelson, 1983). Sharon and Ron agreed to allow a research assistant and myself to become participant-observers in their two interdisciplinary classes during the 1993-1994 school year. The following year, to triangulate findings (Denzin, 1978) over time in another context, we became participant observers in one interdisciplinary class, in which they enacted the same curriculum as the first year. Each year a research assistant, a graduate student who was also an English teacher, collaborated with me in data collection and analysis.<sup>1</sup>

### Site and Participants

The project site was "Lakeview," a largely white suburban high school in the state of New York with 1500 students (3% Asian, 3% African American and 1% Latino/a) located in a community at the state median on measures of wealth, which included both professional and working class families. Sharon L., an English teacher, and Ron M., a social studies teacher, had each been teaching for over 20 years and had been married for ten. They felt these students, in particular, needed a course focusing on multicultural perspectives, because they came from a more or less homogeneous community. They believed a goal of their school should be "stating outcomes, developing curricula, and providing experiences that address this imbalance." Sharon and Ron had developed their "American Dreams, Lost and Found--Interdisciplinary U.S. History and English 11" course one year earlier, applying for and receiving a waiver for the state-mandated Regents Examination. In lieu of that test, students produced a portfolio of written work, which included a response journal (5-7 pages per week); 2 multiple-source research papers; 22 pieces of writing of mixed creative and expository genres (e.g., children's story, college application essay); an extensive multiple source and media anthology representing a selected historical theme, time period, or event(s); and a culminating American Dream paper, synthesizing students' learning and thinking over the school year (10-15 pages).

To apply to the course, students had to attend an orientation session the year before and agree to do preparatory summer work, including reading two American historical novels, formulating a personal idea of "The American Dream," researching and writing about their own family's history/immigrant experiences, viewing recommended films, and keeping a journal on these activities. The teachers actively sought to comprise the classes to include diversity among students, particularly along lines of race, ethnicity,

and previous academic performance. The two heterogeneous classes of 24 students each were gender-balanced. One included, for example, 5 African American girls and 5 Jewish Americans (4 girls). The other was referred to by our focal student Nick at first as "the white kids' class"; by April he said, "It's really such a diverse class," citing people with one-parent families, different ethnic backgrounds and different working backgrounds ("parents have totally different jobs"). In the second year we studied a third class of 20 students (10 boys, 10 girls, including 1 Latina). Each class was team-taught in double back-to-back periods, separated by Sharon's and Ron's common lunch and planning period, often shared in their room with individuals or groups of students who stopped in to talk.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Table 1 summarizes data collection. In Phase II of the study, we became participant observers in the two literature-history classes, observing the ongoing class activity two to five times per week for 8 months, recording field notes and audio taping examples of student discussion of multicultural texts and activities related to pluralistic approaches to history and literature. In each class we selected from volunteers, five focal students for more in-depth analysis of their responses to the reading and class activity.

With the teachers' assistance, we aimed for a range of perspectives in selecting focal students, particularly attending to gender, ethnicity, and work habits in the class. We used the same process the second year to select 8 focal students. Table 2 summarizes characteristics of the 18 case study students in the three classes, showing their range of perspectives triangulated from their own perceptions and other data perspectives.

**Table 1:**  
**Summary of Data Types & Perspectives from Integrated Literature-History Classes**

	Classroom Observations*	# Focal Students	Focal Student Interviews	Teacher Interviews	Writing Samples
Phase I: Site selection	May-Sept. 8				
Phase II: Participant Observation					
<b>Year one</b>	Sept.-June				
Class A	82	5	15	5	50 & 4 journals
Class B	93	5	14		50 & 5 journals
<b>Year two</b>	Oct.-June				
Class C	38	8	16	2	80 & 8 journals
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>180 &amp; 17 journals</b>

\*Each observation represents a double class period.

**Table 2:  
Profiles of Focal Students**

Name*	Self-identified Perspectives/ Characteristics
<i>Class A</i>	
Kris	Italian American extensive journal active in discussions
Nick	part Choctaw identifies self as athlete
Carol	successful student extensive journal moderate participator
Marcos	takes most classes in "at-risk" program identifies self as anarchist identifies as "working-class" little journal, some extended writing
John	identifies self as fundamentalist Christian moderate participator little in journal
<i>Class B</i>	
Kim	adopted Asian American extensive journal (600+ pp) quiet in discussion
Helen	African American very successful student participation varies by topic extensive journal
Josh	identifies self as orthodox Jewish active in discussions successful student

Rose African American, twin  
journaling during class  
quiet to moderate in discussion

Kris white European  
quiet in discussion  
extensive journal

**Name** **Self-identified Perspectives/  
Characteristics**

*Class C*

Alice identifies with Jewish culture  
athlete  
active participator

Linda Peruvian immigrant  
bi-cultural perspective  
labeled "at-risk" for behavior

Jack moderate participator  
athlete

Jill speaks for marginalized perspective  
(father is paraplegic)  
quiet in discussions  
extensive journal

Cara twin  
quiet in discussion  
unconventional opinions

Gary identified "at-risk"  
very active participator

Bob identifies self as "science person"  
moderate participator

Brock less proficient student  
quiet in discussion

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\*All names are pseudonyms.

In year one, we interviewed the ten focal students from classes A and B three or four times each about their views of the roles they played in class, the purposes for their reading, discussion, and other activities, and their ways of thinking about multicultural texts and social issues emerging in each class. Questions in the semi-structured interviews were used to elicit open-ended responses, check on emerging patterns/themes in other data, and to follow up on a student's earlier comments. We often spoke informally with the teachers after class and kept a record of these in our field notes. We interviewed the teachers formally four times to learn about their purposes for the class in general and for specific activities, and their perceptions of class events, of the success of each focal student's written and oral performances, and of student learning/thinking over time, as related to class goals. The teachers' ways of speaking about knowledge in literature-history interdisciplinary study served to focus further analysis of the class context and students' developing understanding of multicultural texts, cultural perspectives, and critical reflection. In a stimulated recall interview of individual teachers and students, they read transcriptions of class discussions and activities to prompt participants to describe the roles they played, the perceived purposes for the talk and activity, the developing content of, for example, text interpretations, and the thinking processes involved in participation.

All extended written work done by case-study students for the class (response journals and writing portfolio) was collected and photocopied, along with all relevant artifacts related to class curriculum and activity. Data on the high school context included interviews with the principal, department coordinator, and colleagues; school and local community newspapers and school documents, such as course description booklets and community descriptions. Overview descriptions of the class included the documents submitted to the state for the Regents Examination waiver, the letter to students outlining summer work, and a state conference presentation packet describing the class, which was distributed to other teachers. In the second year of the project, we used the same data collection methods, with these changes: we observed twice weekly for eight months and followed eight focal students, who were each interviewed twice. We attended relevant school board meetings related to curriculum and issues of difference in the school. Retrospective data were gathered at the end of this year with individual interviews of focal students from year one of the study (only two were available) and with a focus group discussion with students from the first year of the class (which we had not studied) and the focal students from our two-year ethnography; this group of college freshmen and eleventh and twelfth graders looked back to consider their responses to the class,



including if and how it influenced their thinking and understanding. In the third year, during intensive data analysis, we had several follow-up telephone interviews with the teachers, particularly to elicit their responses to our emerging interpretations.

### **Data Analysis**

Field notes, transcriptions of interviews, curriculum artifacts, observation notes or transcriptions of classroom lessons, and selections of student writing were recursively analyzed for evidence of relevant factors in the developing contexts which affected student response to multicultural texts and influenced critical reflection. Annotation of data, recursive analysis and identification of recurring pattern themes (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) were ongoing throughout the study, allowing me to organize the salient features of the data to focus subsequent analysis.

Using this recursive analysis of data from these different data types and different perspectives, I triangulated (Denzin, 1978) to seek confirmation of emerging interpretations, cross-checking themes generated and refined by progressive analysis. The analysis focused on a descriptive narrative account of learning (Erickson, 1982) and included relevant factors in the developing contexts which affected student response to texts and influenced critical reflection and pluralistic understandings. Data from the second year served as another opportunity for triangulating themes, allowing cross-year analysis of the influences of the class curriculum and pedagogy on another set of individuals. Detailed case studies of individual students triangulated through multiple researcher and theoretical perspectives appear in separate reports (Cliff & Miller, 1996; DeBlaze Tryzna & Miller, 1996; Kueber, 1996; Zigo & Miller, 1996). These four reports represent the analyses of a research group working together over the course of one year to make sense of the influence of the project classes on individual students. Taken together, the papers suggest that the classes generally prompted development of students' critical reflection, but that diverse individual students took up the reading, writing, and discussion in their own ways, constructing the multicultural texts and their classrooms as texts, differently, due to multiple contextual and personal issues.

The findings in the next section focus on the specific character of the emerging sociocognitive context (or learning environment) as perceived by teachers and students and negotiated through talk and activity in the three classes. Along the way, I provide analytically descriptive narrative accounts of developing critical-narrative stances

constructed through the problem-posing (Friere, 1970; Shor, 1992) transactions in the class.

## Results

This section begins with a description of the numerous ways that Sharon and Ron planned for and enacted their integration of subject matter. Following that is an extended vignette of our first observation of the class in the first year of the project, to illustrate how the teachers engaged students in problem-posing activities and multiple perspectives from the very beginning of the course. After that, I turn to specific central themes for closer analysis, demonstrating how each was constructed and functioned in the class. The three classes had some day-to-day differences due to students' choices, interests, and responses; however, the pedagogy unfolded on the whole in quite similar ways with the teachers enacting the same explicit goals and processes. I will draw on examples across the three classes for illustration of themes, focusing at times on differences in how students took up the ways of thinking in their class. I want to emphasize that these themes are separated out for analysis to develop clarity about how thinking and understanding diverse perspectives became focal goals developed over time. In the classroom, however, these themes worked together as organic processes in the dynamic whole. For example, ground rules for discussion in the class included listening and responding to others, respecting others' right to give a different opinion, maintaining safety for sharing. While these could be analyzed as social, group-building processes, they are simultaneously the cognitive basis for the "open-mindedness" necessary to reflective inquiry (Dewey, 1933); and the open-mindedness which developed in the class created, further, the feelings of "safety" and "sharing" which students told us, over and over again, made the class a place where they could talk and think about difficult issues together. Where possible in examples, I will try to demonstrate how the themes worked interdependently in whole activities, both creating and influencing multiple aspects of sociocultural context, multicultural perspectives, and critical-narrative reflection. The stories and voices of the students and teachers thread through every theme to emphasize the multivocal, multistoried conduct of the class.

interdependently in whole activities, both creating and influencing multiple aspects of sociocultural context, multicultural perspectives, and critical-narrative reflection. The stories and voices of the students and teachers thread through every theme to emphasize the multivocal, multistoried conduct of the class.

### **Constructing "Integrated" Curricula: Blurring Literature-History Boundaries**

This course, "American Dreams, Lost and Found," was written by its teachers Sharon and Ron, and sub-titled "Interdisciplinary U.S. History and English 11," but the students and teachers simply called it "integrated." Other English-history classes I observed in phase I of the study were organized by historical chronology, and the two disciplinary subjects remained discrete with topical linkages. Instead, Sharon and Ron choose four generative themes for organizing and integrating their course of study--The Immigrant/Native American Experiences, Justice and Oppression, Labor, and Education. In the written statement about the course given to students (and to New York state for the Regents testing waiver), the teachers explicitly promised "depth of study and analysis" rather than "rote learning of names and dates." They emphasized as purposes, "To demonstrate the interconnectedness of learning; to present history and literature as part of a larger whole, providing insight and understanding into events in history and the causes and effects of those events on people's lives." The stories of people's lives in specific times and places were made available to students in what is commonly separated as fiction and non-fiction--through literature texts and fiction films *and* through autobiography, biography, documentary, and reports.

Literature and history interplayed within each theme, as is evident in the summary of the key activities and texts for each theme listed in Table 3 as well as in the assessment requirements and criteria for the course (Table 4). In the Native American/Immigrant Experience theme, for example, students all read Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and individually read Native American fiction, autobiography, and

**Table 3:**  
**Overview of Integrated Curricula:**  
**Key Activities and Texts Within Generative Themes**

**Theme 1: The Native American & Immigrant Experiences**

- \* Student reports on family history, written and presented orally
- \* Important events in history, as seen through perspectives of different cultural/functional groups
- \* Whole class reads and discusses *The Scarlet Letter* (by Nathaniel Hawthorne)
- \* Whole class produces a tabloid on *The Scarlet Letter*
- \* Why do we believe what we believe? Journal, small groups, large group sequence of discussions
- \* Watch and discuss the film *Avalon* (story of immigration of an Italian family)
- \* Christopher Columbus Trial dramatization with outside research and group preparation
- \* Independent reading of Native American novels, autobiographies, biographies, histories
- \* Individual presentations on Native American books (e.g., *Lakota Woman*, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, *Hatter Fox*, *Black Elk Speaks*, *The Life of Tecumseh*, *Education of Little Tree*)
- \* Watch and discuss films *Thunderheart* and *Where the Spirit Lives* (Native American experience)
- \* Videotape report on Geronimo
- \* Student-written poems from Native American perspective

**Themes 2: Justice and Oppression**

- \* Multiple-source papers researched, written, presented, discussed (e.g., on people--"Rosa Parks, Hurricane Carter & Angela Davis"; "Jackie Robinson, Langston Hughes, and Kareem Abdul Jabbar"; "Nat Turner, Denmark Vessy, and Gabriel Poser," Marcus Garvey and Dred Scot," "Medgar Evers and Emmett Till," "W.E.B. DuBoise and Booker T. Washington"; topics related to specific groups--"Laws and Practices of Discrimination against African Americans," "Black Panthers," "Discrimination against Asians," "Mexican Americans," "Negro Baseball Leagues"; and on periods and events--"The Harlem Renaissance," "Sandcreek Massacre," "Racial Riots," "Wounded Knee 1890-1973," "Cherokee Removal")
- \* Watch and discuss videotape on Maya Angelou
- \* Whole class reads novel *The Street* (by Ann Petrie) & writes responses
- \* Read and respond to Martin Luther King packet of materials, discuss as a class
- \* Watch and discuss the documentary *Eyes on the Prize* (on the civil rights movement)

**Theme 3: Labor/Working**

- \* Whole class reads and discusses *The Jungle* (by Upton Sinclair)
- \* Write short story, rewriting an incident from *The Jungle* in the voice of one of the characters
- \* Read *Labor's Untold Story* excerpt (by Boyer & Morais) and respond in discussion and writing

- \*Watch and discuss film *Matewan*
- \*Read novel *Storming Heaven* (by Denise Giardina)
- \*Read choice of John Steinbeck novel *The Grapes of Wrath* or *In Dubious Battle*
- \*Research a strike in U.S.history, write a script for an in-depth newscast, film the drama, present it
- \*Make links between *Storming Heaven* and other novels, between *The Street* and *The Jungle*
- \*Watch and discuss the film *Out of Darkness*
- \*Multiple-source papers on labor researched, written, presented orally (e.g., on people--Samuel Gompers, Eugene Debs, Elizabeth G. Flynn, Sacco and Vanzetti, John L. Lewis, Helen Keller, Bill Haywood, Albert and Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman, Curt Flood; and on events-- The Lawrence Strike, The Railroad Strike of 1877, NFL Strike,)
- \*Watch and discuss the film *Roger and Me*

#### **Theme 4: Education**

- \*Read and respond to *Savage Inequalities* (by Jonathan Kozol)
- \*Research and present court cases related to segregation, inequality, religion, censorship in U.S. education, small groups
- \*Education Trial, group preparation and dramatization of a case on equality of school funding
- \*Discuss issues from trial and reading related to their own school district, respond in journal

### **Table 4: Assessment in the Integrated Class**

#### Final Portfolio Assessment:

Required for inclusion:

- (1) Portfolio of writing (22 pieces, peer and self-evaluated, variety of genres)
- (2) Learning journals (minimum 5-7 pp./week);
- (3) Anthology of compiled works in different genres, with a paper explaining choices of pieces to represent a student-selected historical topic
- (4) Multiple-Source papers (3-5 sources, 4-6 pages each)
- (5) American Dream Paper (10-15 page perspective paper, a culmination of the entire year's thinking and learning)

The following criteria were taken from Sharon and Ron's Regents Exam Portfolio Rubric for each of the five major components of

*Portfolio of writing* was evaluated for Creativity; effectiveness; experimentation and risk-taking; growth; grammar and usage; required number and genres present.

*Learning Journals* were evaluated for completeness (required number of pages); thoroughness (all required

responses); depth, insight & comprehension; connections to life experiences and to other texts; growth as a thinker and learner.

*Multiple Source Papers* were evaluated for research quality; documentation; thoroughness of treatment; organization and development; skills and mechanics; and overall effectiveness.

*Individual Anthology on a Historical Topic* was evaluated on the inclusion of all required work; Preface as a demonstration of thought and insight; Preface as a demonstration of historical and literary understanding; inclusion of perspectives of women and non-caucasians, evidence of growth and personal challenge, originality and/or creativity

*American Dream Perspective Paper* was evaluated on whether references to the year's work were made throughout; its effectiveness; style and tone; grammar and usage; depth of thought; growth.

biography, which they reported on and discussed with the whole class. Films they watched and discussed included the fictional *Thunderheart* and *Avalon* and the documentary on Geronimo. Students individually researched, wrote and reported on family histories, and also wrote poems about the Native American experience. For the Justice and Oppression theme, students read Ann Petrie's novel *The Street*, watched the documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, and researched and reported on relevant people, groups, events. For the Labor/Working theme students read the novels *The Jungle*, *Storming Heaven*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* (or *In Dubious Battle*) and excerpts from the non-fiction *Labor's Untold Story*; they watched the fictional *Matewan* and the documentary *Roger and Me*, while researching and reporting on people and events related to labor history. By using stories of the lived experiences of individuals or groups, whether autobiographical or fictional, the teachers aimed to have students understand the "effects of [historical] events on people's lives." Students understood this emphasis. One focal student described the literature-history integration in this way: "We talk about the little struggles of people, rather than only the big struggles of countries."

**Expanding the literary and historical canon.** For most students, this cross-disciplinary perspective on American experience was new, but equally unfamiliar were the multiple cultural perspectives, which formed the center of the course and were reflected in the curricular materials, activities and classroom setting. The teachers did not use a U.S. History textbook, they explained to students, because the textbook perspective on American history was a singular one, lacking an interplay of points of view. They

turned, instead, to primary sources, like the constitution, the texts of pivotal Supreme Court cases, diaries and other first-hand accounts; to literature written from multiple cultural perspectives (e.g., of African Americans, Native Americans, Italian and Slovakian immigrants, Appalachian poor); and to works, including film and documentaries, representing other voices marginalized in textbooks, (particularly women, Vietnam War veterans, laborers). A major prevailing project in the class was to question the notion of a singular "American Dream"; students wrote about their initial impressions of the "American Dream" in a summer writing and reconsidered it in a final synthesizing paper after looking at American experience/history all year from multiple non-canonical perspectives.

The room itself represented multiplicity. All four walls were lined with shelves, each section crammed with (mostly) Sharon and Ron's own books representing a voice or theme (e.g., Latino/a, Asian American, economic inequality). They were "book addicts," Sharon told me; Ron felt it was important to "have a library of books in the classroom for sources and things." They turned often to these shelves, recommending literature and non-fiction books for projects and papers or further reading on a topic generated in discussion. Posters filled all available wall space and changed as themes changed--early in the year, pictures of Native Americans, Einstein, an Afrocentric map of the world, photos from the film of *The Scarlet Letter*, a "Love your mother" environmental poster, and two large displays of photographs of students working and playing, in and out of class. One hand-lettered poster on their classroom wall contained what one student told us was Sharon's and Ron's motto: "There is no path. We make the paths as we go."

**Planning for personal, cultural, and transformative knowledge.** Students' using their *personal and cultural knowledge* to make sense of texts through discussion and journal writing was the planned center of the class. Students were required to write five to seven pages (front and back) each week. On my first visit to the class, before a "spontaneous" collection of journals, Sharon said, "Remember that the journals are a chronicle of your thinking and learning...the point is to reflect on process, respond to what's going on in class daily. It is not a diary....We do want to see where you are and what we need to say to help you." Journal responses were required for texts read individually and by the whole class; for classroom presentations on books, films, research topics; for class discussions; and for occasional assigned topics. Each focal student produced between 200 and 800 pages in his or her journal over the school year. From the



ideas and feelings in the journal students sometimes generated topics which then became the beginnings of drafts elaborated and revised to final copies of essays or papers. Sometimes Sharon and Ron asked for volunteers to read journal responses, which prompted others to respond and question, leading to sometimes extended discussion. Students also initiated spontaneous discussions during class by bringing up things they knew which were relevant to the current topic: individuals made connections, for instance, to popular texts, songs, movies, television shows, advertisements and brought in clippings or topics (e.g., an article about Ellie Weisel, a question about racism in their school). *Knowledge of the popular and local culture* became an explicit topic for consideration, when Sharon and Ron asked students about the sources of stereotypes, discrepancies, misconceptions uncovered in their reading, writing, talking, researching, and reflecting. Since they did not use a textbook, teacher's guides, or teacher lectures, *school knowledge* as defined in Banks' knowledge typology (1993) became part of the class as a subject of critique, rather than *the* source of knowing. Instead, *mainstream academic knowledge* from a Western-European perspective and what Banks calls *transformative academic knowledge* from multiple perspectives challenging that canon interplayed dialectically in the class talk and activity (e.g., in multiple source papers).

The integrated curricula planned by Sharon and Ron derived from their notion of knowledge as multivocal, multilayered, and, necessarily, constructed. The emphasis in the integrated class on generating a multiplicity of perspectives and reforming curriculum to reflect the histories and cultures of ethnic groups and women is central in theoretical descriptions of multicultural education (e.g., Banks, 1993, 1995). As important in these classes was what Sharon and Ron did with those diverse materials: their problem-posing pedagogy (Friere, 1970), their means of teaching students to question and construct understanding from the multiple ways of seeing and knowing.

### **Introducing a Problem-Posing Pedagogy--Day Twelve**<sup>1</sup>

The syllabus identified the introductory activities in the course as questioning the idea of "a human history," with emphasis here on the problem of a singular view. On the first day we observed Sharon and Ron's class, the nature of this questioning and of their problem-posing pedagogy was already evident. In the extended vignette that follows I sketch the content and processes of that two-period lesson, very similar in both classes, to



illustrate in story, the focus and nature of teaching and learning in the class.

On this twelfth day of class, as students entered, they greeted each other, slung backpacks onto desk tops, asked to go to the restroom, talked to "Mr. M." or Ms. L (e.g., "I read 50 pages last night!" "Where do I put the final draft of "my family story?") A senior from the previous year's class leaned into the room, to yell excitedly, "I was accepted!" Sharon and Ron both shouted pleased congratulations over the general change-of class-noise. Students took seats in their permanent arrangement, groups of four desks pulled together to form six squares, spread in a rough semi-circle around the room, leaving a central space where one or both teachers or students stood or moved. Our focal student Carol described it, "I like our room this year because it looks like it's set up for discussion; there are kids all around me." A "student helper," Kerry, who had taken the class the year before, sat in a wooden rocker, "The Presenter's Chair." She helped out sometimes in small groups and answered questions about what students could expect (e.g., what kind of objections the judge would allow in the Columbus Trial). The two teachers' desks, both piled with books and papers, were pushed into diagonally opposite corners of the room. When the bell rang Sharon introduced us and asked the class to "think about what you want to tell our guests about what has been happening in our class for the past twelve days, if you could tell them just one thing." She gave them a minute "to just think about what you want to say" and then asked them to speak. They began, in turn,

- S: We met each other and have had lots of conversations.
- S: First, we spoke about our family heritage.
- S: We discuss our journal writing in class and that can turn into a big long discussion--we don't end on some topic, we raise new questions.
- Nick: We have a lot of open-minded discussion. I've already lost a lot of prejudices against things.
- S: We're talking about what in history is important to us and others, how we see history, where we get our view of history.
- Ron: Did we finish that?
- S: No, we didn't.
- Josh: I guess our ongoing discussion is about education and what is the best means of education. Is this the best one or is there a better one?
- S: We talk about the immigrant experience. It's all what people think and

there's no wrong point or answer.

S: We talk about anything and everything. It's good. We find out a lot about each other by what people say.

One by one, these and the other students said they had learned about the importance of perspective and race, family heritage, immigrant experience, thinking, unlearning, and the process of inquiry ("We start with little things like lists and get into big almost philosophical things." "We raise new questions and try to answer them.") They said they had talked about learning experiences and "how the school system has been different for each of us." The most frequently mentioned activity was the importance of their class discussions--"good," "interesting," "important," "in-depth" and "strong" discussions about others' feelings, backgrounds, about the American dream and what it might be, about sharing differences and trying to understand them. Josh, a focal student, related their thinking to their social interactions, "People are sorting things out. The whole social environment is stimulating." I noticed the seriousness with which Nick, quoted above, said, "I've already lost a lot of prejudice against things." (His sense of his changing attitude was borne out in later interviews). Immediately after the last student spoke, a young man said, in a teasing tone, "Our young minds have been corrupted!" and Ron promptly quipped, "I must be doing my job." This confluence of the serious and the playful captures the tenor of many moments in these classes.

Sharon then asked students to continue work on their listing of the "most important events in American history." Each group was working on the task from a different perspective, including recent immigrant, Native American, Latino/a, African American, the wage-earning poor, Asian American. Students took out lists already begun the previous day, read them aloud to their group, and began brainstorming other possibilities. Sharon and Ron circulated separately, pausing at each group, listening and sometimes prompting with "What *else*?" or "Why is that important, do you think?" or, for those trying to limit their list to ten events, "From *that perspective*, which of those events had the greatest *impact*?" Students appeared to be comfortably engaged; those leaning up to look at the paper and those leaning back in their desks were listening and talking. When each student group reported on its Top Ten List, constructed from a perspective, a perceived set of values and interests, the other students asked questions.

For instance, the Native American perspective group listed, "Columbus discovers America, French and Indian Wars, Bill of Rights, Reconstruction, Settling of the West,

Wounded Knee, Trail of Tears, Slavery, immigration, and Hollywood." A student asked, "Why would Native Americans have 'Hollywood' on the list?" A student in the group explained, "because of the film industry and how they were portrayed." A short burst of discussion ensued, about what images students had seen in films ("violent savages") and how Native American images in film tended now to be changing. Ron followed up by asking them to consider what things were named, like "The New World" ("It wasn't new to Native Americans") and "Indian wars." Our focal student Nick said, "It lumps all of them together, when actually they were individual wars." Students did not comment on the Latino perspective group having "Spanish-American War" and "immigration quota" on the list, but asked them why "Big Stick" was there. Sharon said, "Thanks for asking," and another student explained their reasoning.

Their exploration of such "positionality," (Tetreault, 1993)--how cultural, social, historical identities shape perspectives, values, and interests--in these and other activities, problematized the notion of knowledge as neutral, and led students to question what one "knows." After the top-ten listing activity, our focal student John initiated a long discussion sequence when he acknowledged the differences in perspectives on the lists, but also contested their significance, saying, "The events in a textbook are probably in there because *they are important*." In our interviews John identified his views as coming from his orthodox religion and often during the year spoke in favor of a single-culture, what he called an "American" perspective. In response that day, another student told a story about misconceptions about Sioux natives he had read in a textbook. Sharon suggested, "Keep thinking about from what point of view textbooks are written." Nick suggested that textbooks *were* useful as a resource but argued, "It's only one source." After a few turns of students moving back and forth between these views on textbooks, Ron asked students to consider what Nick had said about the usefulness of textbooks. Someone said, "A lot are biased." Ron asked, "How do you begin to develop an idea of what's biased?" A student returned to the importance of using other sources because textbooks represent "what's thought by the person who wrote it; you have to think for yourself about what's true and false." Another student elaborated, we "shouldn't single out textbooks, it's everything that's written or spoken... You have to think about everything."

A few turns later, Ron introduced, as an example, the process of the Texas textbook adoption, where publishers' profits in selling their text to the state led to writing it from a point of view that, he said, tries "not to offend or challenge." Students

considered what point of view that might be, then a student brought up a related current news story--about an all-white Southern town which claimed it had no problem with racism because they had no African Americans. Five students collaborated with details they had heard about how black people had been forced out of town, and how HUD was responding. A story about how one of the townspeople was shown on national television, swinging a baseball bat, shouting to prospective black tenants, led Ron to respond.

Ron: That raises questions about, are there limits to what people can say and do?

Student 1: You can't make a violent threat; you're not free to intervene in others' freedom.

Ron: How about her right to live in an all-white housing plan?

Student 2: As long as she finds a plan where no blacks live, it's okay.

Student 3: We have the freedom to call someone a jerk, but not to rip their throat out.

Student 4: Yes, you have a right to live in an all-white neighborhood, but not by using force, not burning crosses. They spray painted garages with things and intimidated blacks.

I want to comment on this exchange just described, which suggests the kinds of the talking and thinking invited into the class. After a student commented that bias is pervasive, "you have to think about everything," another student raises an issue of perspective in a television newscast, perhaps implicitly connecting "not offending or challenging" in the Texas textbook adoption, to a southern town's point of view, which was being challenged. Ron's question asks students to examine this clash of perspectives from a legal standpoint, the "limits" of its expression. Student 1 answers in a legal style of discourse ("not free to intervene"), but Ron presents an opposing interpretation, perhaps dramatizing the townspeople's perspective about their "right to live" where they wanted. Students 2 and 3 offer judgment rules about acceptable behavior and student 4 summarizes the limits of one's perspective--not by force. The clash of values and interests here was subsequently taken up by another student who made that issue legally complex--police protecting KKK, who were verbally espousing violence. A student told a story about someone being hurt at a rally by police who seemed to be "supporting" the KKK, and beating people gathered to watch. Nick countered with his experience

picketing an abortion clinic where he was attacked by someone and "a woman cop had to protect me, even though she was pro-choice. She was not supporting me, but protecting a peaceful assembly." This "thin line" between supporting and protecting is examined in several additional examples, ending after a student commented, "I realize now I've had a sheltered life." Sharon ended this section with, "As always, nothing is ever concluded. This will be an ongoing discussion."

I want to note the dialectic of the thinking here which, Sharon and Ron always reminded, is not ever concluded, is "ongoing." The nature of the thinking being constructed through conversation in the class is suggested in this episode: raising questions about events and intentions, generating opposing interpretations, looking through others' perspectives, bringing to bear all you know (from television news, from personal experience), moving between lived experience and authoritative discourse (of law, of public statements), seeking out what is problematic or limited in stories and statements. The teachers are inviting students into a discourse (Gee, 1990)--ways of talking, of thinking and of acting--which values constructing provisional meanings together from multiple possible, conflicting perspectives.

The small-group discussion of *The Scarlet Letter* which followed occurred as students were in different places in their reading of the novel. Sharon told the small groups to ask each other any questions they had without revealing the ending to those who hadn't finished and to talk about two points written on the board: "What Puritan values are expressed? What does Hawthorne think about these values?" The group of four girls I sat beside shared current feelings and assessments--"Bad mystery novel," "Strange supernatural stuff," "It gets better." "I've figured it out." Then, two girls explained the plot to one who had not read as far; the girl signed to her interpreter, who translated aloud,

Student 1: Why doesn't she [Hester] take the letter off?

Student 2: She can't, it's a small town.

Student 3: She feels guilty.

Student 4: There's no way society would let her.

In this brief exchange, which they did not examine further, a girl raises a question grounded in a modern American perspective, and her group members try to see through Hester Prynne's perspective to feel the force of her Puritan context to speculate on

possible answers which suggest the play of private and public voices in the book. As they then began to list "Puritanical things," they came up with, "They kill you if you did anything," "They kill witches," "The 'A' was a Puritan thing." Sharon stopped and asked the group, "When I was wearing the letter 'A' earlier this week, what came to mind, in this day and age, if someone were to wear an 'A' and was kept separate from society?" A girl said, "AIDS," and Sharon replied, "Keep thinking about that, about ostracizing people, keep it in mind throughout the book." She left and a girl shared this irony: "You know how we said you *become* your enemy? So they [Puritans] fled oppression and became the same as those people!"

Another group discussed the topic of Hester's pregnancy from the perspectives of various present-day people--women who have been raped, devout Catholics, men who want their children to be born. In the second class, small groups reported to the whole class, particularly about areas of disagreement, and extended conversation occurred about "Puritan guilt" and the modern day Puritan influence on American laws (e.g., laws against adultery in every state). One group discussed the difference in how males and females were treated in the novel and still are today (the difference between "stud and slut" was one example). Many things are interesting in these episodes, but especially prominent for me is how the students (and the teachers) raised questions and tried to understand by seeing through and moving among different perspectives--Hester and townspeople, modern and Puritan, individual and societal. The notion of differences in social rules and power for different groups begins to emerge as students play with interpreting perspectives.

Afterwards Ron said, "In view of the things we've talked about, this seems appropriate, but it always seems appropriate to me to think about these things." He held up a large laminated poster board with three numbered questions in large hand-printed letters:

1. Why do we believe what we believe?
2. How much of what we believe is true?
3. How do we know what is true?

He said, "Wrestle with these three questions in your journal. You might combine what we talked about today in a response. Write these down in your journal. This is an ongoing type of questioning. You may add more questions to these or go back to them



again." Opportunities for students to think about these and other questions in small groups, as a whole class, and privately in their journals recurred, in different kinds of sequences; in each thematic unit Sharon and Ron emphasized the continual response, meaning-making, questioning, and thinking from perspectives expected and prompted in the class.

In this early-year vignette, the teachers' emphasized questions of how we know *and* knowing from a perspective as central problems of the course. Each activity was aimed at dramatizing difference in perspective and problematizing a single perspective or the "truth" of human history. The talk generated around the history-from-a-perspective activity allowed teachers to support students' efforts to make sense of juxtaposed differences in perspectives that called to question the version of history they had been taught. Students were beginning here to challenge the notion of a single, objective truth, particularly as they answered John about the importance of the textbook perspective. The teachers followed the line of student thinking, as they often did, allowing the talk to turn to textbooks, and then to a current news story, but in both cases, to the ways that words, images, events are perceived and constructed from value-laden perspectives. The discussion topic of rights and legal limits when points of view clash took up the theme of ground rules for disagreement, emphasized in this class and important in democratic process. The poster board questions about what we know and how we know it, which students wrote about in their journals, did recur in the class, and over time were questions that students asked frequently about historical and other "facts" and who decides them. In *The Scarlet Letter* small-group activity, literature, too, is considered as a representation of perspectives, but also differently, as a story with access to human intentions. Students share their responses, turn to each other for help with plot and with making sense of the interplay of intentions and actions. In their talk about the story, they juxtaposed past and present, individual and society, gender and religious differences, and begin to inquire into clashing intentions, particularly between those of unequal power, as they live through the felt injustice of Hester's predicament.

The shape of the pedagogy we observed over two years is evident in this first observed lesson. At the center of the course and the discourse Sharon and Ron situated the group's inquiry into how perspectives shape knowing. They structured activities and posed questions which problematized uncritical ways of perceiving. They provided students from the start with opportunities to respond to and reflect on "texts" of many sorts--including this day, history textbooks, television newscasts, *The Scarlet Letter*, a

popular attitude towards AIDS, Hollywood films, and personal stories about protest rallies. Students pursued their questions in dialogue with others in the class; in those dialogues the teachers provided support at points when students needed it, by suggesting other perspectives, different possibilities or generative questions in what became, it seemed to us, their problem-posing method (Friere, 1970).

### Central Themes

#### **Opening a Multivocal Community Space**

The integrated class was different; students told us that and we saw it for ourselves. As we asked about the nature of this classroom social context and how it was negotiated, we began to see the blurring of some of the social and intellectual boundaries students said they had become accustomed to in school. In particular, opening the class to new types of knowledge had a profound impact on students' sense of themselves as learners. From the start, too, teachers introduced activities showing a concern in the class with *who we are*, and *how we know*, in addition to, *what we know*. At the same time, and as part of those questions, the class talked together about *Who are we as a group?*

**The call of stories.** To understand how the context I described in the day-12 vignette evolved in such a short time, we tried to reconstruct what had happened by talking to the students and teachers. We also went back to Sharon and Ron's class the next year to observe from the very beginning, to see for ourselves. During the first two weeks of class each year all students orally shared their family histories/stories of "immigrant" experiences, which each person had researched and put together for presentation over the summer. The assigned task as written in their summer letter suggested, "This project should entail talking to parents, grandparents, and other relatives; reading family diaries or looking at old pictures and documents; writing to governmental agencies; anything else you can think of to help you discover the story of your family." As each story-teller sat in the rocking chair with a written text, a scrapbook, or a poster, students and teachers listened, almost reverently, to each story in turn. The teachers sometimes made a comment to add historical context, to relate the story of someone's grandfather to a book they were going to read, generally highlighting stories as important to "keep with you"



over the year. Students responded to each other, asking questions, seeing similarities. They wrote in their journals, too, making comparisons, setting down responses some hadn't said aloud, such as how moved they were by the hopes and hardships, journeys, illegal entries, deaths, adoptions. Almost last, Kim presented her story of being adopted into an American family as a Korean baby, conjecturing about what might have been true for her. She said to her classmates, "You have no idea how lucky you are to know what your family roots are." Rose responded in her journal at length, pondering, "Maybe her mom was forced to give her up." Sharon felt that Kim "set a tone for honesty and risk-taking, and realizing the significance of telling and hearing stories which were painful, but important."

After the students, Sharon and Ron presented their own stories, as well, revealing important aspects of their own histories which shaped their perspectives. In the story of his Scottish immigrant family, his urban working class upbringing in the Northeast and parents who were pacifists and labor activists, Ron revealed how his own history helped shape his frames of reference toward events in the world. In Sharon's story of her Norwegian immigrant ancestors settling in a small town in the Southwest, the death of her brother, and her activism in the Civil Rights Movement and in civil liberties organizations, she acknowledged how these experiences had influenced her perspectives. Besides as a way for students and teachers to introduce themselves and to get to know others, Sharon and Ron also intended the presentations as a sharing of difference, a consideration of the "impact of cultures on self and beyond self" (syllabus). In part, the collective activity called for students to historicize themselves and others. After her presentation, Alice wrote a powerful poem remembering the Holocaust through Friday night religious experiences with her extended family, which she used as a means of commemorating her family immigrant history and creating a direct emotional link with a larger history.

What became evident over two years was the deep meaning these presentations held for students *as signals* of what was valued in the class *and as stories*. The time and consideration given the stories--the first two weeks of school--signaled some quite new things about the philosophy and the boundaries of the class. The teachers were redefining their students as human beings who all had important stories. In the presentations, some stories did seem to ramble, some were read in low voices, but all were received with equal attention. Everybody's story counted, an affirmation of voice, a valuing of each student's particularity. Students' words and the unfolding of lived lives

really mattered. In each "flesh and blood account" (Coles, 1989) students felt an opening up of the classroom to their lives, most for the first time. Some, like Maria, felt a validation of personal knowledge and culture. She told the story of how her grandfather was assassinated in Peru by The Shining Path, who later apologized for their mistake and how her parents, who had since become U.S. citizens, came to the U.S. as illegal aliens and worked in a battery plant. "I got very emotional giving my presentation, just because I feel like I've been part of it. But it was also nice because it's kind of a part of history to look upon, like being an immigrant, an illegal especially." From the beginning, then, no one remained invisible because each had spoken her story, shared something of who he was. These stories constituted the group more deeply as they learned, in sometimes vivid accounts, of the quests which had brought each of them there. Performing their own stories permitted them to evoke in school the familiar figures of family members as human actors, who were both shaped by their worlds and making choices which shaped their lives. Each class became peopled, imaginatively, by the students' ancestors and living relatives.

Each presentation was actually a story of stories gathered from conversation with relatives and interpreted from documents. In their story-making, students acted as ethnographers triangulating details, selecting from the flow of events "a meaningful and significant sequence impregnated with social values" (Rosen, 230-1), to construct a social memory and, in telling their story to the class, engaged in social action. The lives of students in the historical stories of their families entered into the class an extended, dramatic construction of how story and self can be part of knowing and learning. Sharon told me that beginning with coming-to-America stories gave students the "opportunity to see story as essential in understanding." Across a number of fields of study, the power of stories has been examined as the spur to new ways of seeing (Coles, 1989), as alternatives to theoretical explanations (Mink, 1987), as a means of "narrative thinking" (Bruner, 1986). Some have argued that stories give voice to those "on the margins," create connections with others and understanding of self (Witherell, 1991). "Insofar as we account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama, it is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us" (Bruner, 1986, p.69).

The process of entering into each other's stories and thinking about them together continued throughout year, as a long term project, like their ongoing examination of the

meanings of "the American Dream." When they watched the film *Avalon*, a powerful fictionalized story of Jewish immigrant family experience and their conflict of cultures, students were fascinated by it, making connections to their own and others' recently told stories, "My family was like that!" Students drew on the class stories for explanation and example: "It's like what happened to Alice's grandfather." In his final presentation, Bob referred to Maria's story about how her Anglo step-father had come to respect her Peruvian culture. Students seemed to see their own and each other's stories as a means of understanding the diversity in coming-to-America stories, and of understanding that history was comprised of lived experiences, like theirs. The group stories served as a common text that students held in mind and referred to, as though they were working together to make sense of their past and present. Rose began to wish she could speak Patois, a lost connection with her Jamaican roots. Kim wrote in her journal that she was touched in the immigrant stories and the film *Avalon* by "the very delicacy of the dream (if it does in fact exist, I've not yet decided)." At the end when the character Sam grew old, she found it "terribly sad" when "you're old and alone and the children don't want to hear your stories... We lose our heritage. We lose our depth. We lose our humanity."

At the end of September, each student wrote a character sketch of a family member and some chose to read parts of theirs to the class. These stories were thought-provoking and personal, some about loss of loved ones. Marcos wrote and read aloud a 30-page piece that began as the story of his father, a working-class intellectual and ended as a manifesto, a personal "anarchist" critique of materialism and greed in America. Students were "dumbfounded," Sharon said, at the "brilliance" of the writing from a student they knew had come from the at-risk program. The foregrounding and valuing of personal story influenced all in some way, but profoundly influenced a few, like Kris, who chose to share a story of abuse that she had not articulated, overcoming her silences by speaking in story (Witherell & Noddings, 1993). The class did not dwell in this seeming confessional mode, but did allow students to say what they chose as important to say. Kris's movement over the year from silence to a connected knowing began with a redefinition of herself as someone who, she told us, could teach others through her story: "They don't have to hide behind masks anymore...to share your life is not only enriching to others, but to yourself." (The detailed case study of Kris' developing voice appears in DeBlase Trzyna & Miller, 1996.) In all of these activities students were taking risks and opening spaces for their interactions together, by dramatizing for each other a view of stories as sources of perspectives and knowledge, and so creating a new vision of

themselves as having voices to participate in its making. As Ron put it, "You don't have to wait until you're the president or something in order to have a voice that has some validity, because we have people that have wonderful voices, wonderful stories."

### **Co-constructing "The Learning Community"**

In these early activities and throughout the year Sharon and Ron defined new roles for themselves and students. In their "Course Overview," distributed to students, the first paragraph read,

Philosophy: We shall approach our study as committed learners and teachers, reading, writing and thinking expansively in the process of discovery. We all benefit when we all reach our highest potential; therefore, as a learning community, we will be vigorously engaged in, not only learning, but in assisting, encouraging, and teaching others in our community.

Unlike the teaching metaphors of cooking, gardening, and coaching frequently employed by teachers (Solas, 1992), Sharon and Ron defined teaching and learning as a reciprocal social relationship, occurring within "a learning community" where students and teachers were linked. The recurring themes evident in the philosophy include a "we" identity, interdependence, precedence of group goals, and valuing of cooperation, all prominent features of collectivist cultures and behaviors, as compared to individualist ones (Gudykunst, 1994). As the group and group members acted in these ways, the group purpose solidified; when Sharon asked students to each say one thing "about what has been happening in our class" on the twelfth day described earlier, students focused on group social process, on their talking and thinking together. The students referred to "the learning community," to explain their engaged thinking and active participation, which in the class meant reciprocally talking *and* listening. In interviews, these changes in the familiar teacher and student roles were mentioned by all of the 18 focal students in three classes in an overwhelmingly positive way. Traditional role boundaries were blurred because, as Nick said, "Teachers and students both learn and teach," or as Kris put it, "We are all teachers and we are all students in this class." Maria called it a "kind of hands

on experience, I would say. You pretty much help teach the class...it's formed in kind of a circle, so that everybody is equal and everybody can talk." Students found the atmosphere of the class comfortable and stimulating because their teachers "don't try to control the discussion" and "that is why the issues that make us uncomfortable are able to be talked about freely and in depth" (Kim).

Authority to control their own learning and activity was distributed to students and they took over a great deal of "ownership" of their reading, writing, and talking. Often referred to in the course materials as "adult learners" who were "in charge of" their learning, students negotiated many choices for themselves, ranging from initiating topics and questions for discussion, to choosing which books to read, what roles to play in trial dramatizations, what topics to write about for required papers, what to keep private in journals and what to share with the class, how to evaluate their growth each quarter, and how to synthesize the work of the course. As they described their teachers to us, several students shared some version of what Kris said: "They treat us like human beings." When I asked Sharon and Ron in our first interview what they wanted for students in the class, among other things, Ron said, "to become interested in thinking and wondering...to understand some of their own humanity." Sharon said, "I hope that they become aware that they are human beings with important things to think, important things to say, important things to write...to have respect for each other's person and each other's learnings, and what people have to share with them; the learning community will become important, if it's real." From the perspectives of the students and the teachers and from our views as learners in their culture, this learning community was quite "real," a source of both warm support and intense provocation.

Sharon and Ron's shared interest in students' "becoming" by transforming knowledge through dialogue, takes up a major theme of critical approaches for enacting empowering democratic pedagogy (e.g., hooks, 1994; Friere, 1970, 1985; Giroux, Shor, 1992). From the beginning students were invited to consider themselves active and thoughtful learners and teachers, engaging in democratic give-and -take. Students came to appreciate what each other had to offer. For example, after reading a transcription of a discussion, Nick pointed out an "enlightening" comment Marcos had made, explaining that "even though he looks a little bit different...this kid really does have something good to offer." The talk in the classes, particularly the ongoing discussion, was the social glue that created and sustained community. In contrast, studies of other classrooms without opportunity for dialogue, where thinking about multiple perspectives or cultural issues

occurred mostly in student writing, showed little evidence of students restructuring their understanding or thinking (Miller, 1996). Sharon and Ron's role in the community discussions was to voice critiques and perspectives which were sometimes missing, but not as authoritarian views; the teachers took their turns, as students did, in a "participatory mode of critical teaching" (Sleeter, 1995, p. 416), based in conversation.

Because new roles, purposes, and attitudes were made explicit, repeatedly, students seemed aware from the beginning why they were doing what they did in their class. At times, though, students would question the results, as when Josh, a student accustomed to getting the top grades in his classes, complained during a teacher-initiated discussion about quarterly self-evaluation that others got good grades for their collaboration, risk-taking and effort at completing assignments, rather than the quality of the work. Keisha disagreed with Josh's idea, and Helen supported her, saying that Keisha put as much effort into and gained as much learning from her work as Josh did from his, even if it were true that Josh's writing were "better." Josh responded that low grades are necessary to motivate people to try harder and, then, that traditional grading is necessary in order to improve. He was quite proud of getting the "highest grades" in other classes, information he volunteered to us in interviews, and his deep investment in the hierarchy of grading which had given him prestige seemed to prompt his concern in this incident. The vision he created for us of himself as a future professor may have seemed threatened, if others were rewarded for the process of their work and received academic rewards that suggested they were his equals.

In the ensuing conversation Josh gave his views, other students stated their disagreements, and the teachers took the opportunity to point out, as they often did, how our unexamined language creates unconscious views of things. For instance, in one turn Ron named the competitive view of schooling as underlying Josh's argument: "Is this a comparative thing, all of it? I mean, do we have some standard?...What we're still doing, you're still comparing yourself against one another. Do you realize that?" Josh's competitive, individualist stance ("I'm a solo kind of guy"), his need to stand out as unique and separate from others (Gudykunst, 1994), did interfere with his attentiveness and responsiveness to others' perspectives in discussion and peer responses to his writing. Yet, at other times, Josh expressed enthusiasm about collaborative discussions and a preference for the class collaborative questioning of "You know, what makes us what we are? Why do we think what we think?" Over the year of group talk and activity, through conversations such as this one, he became more aware of his positionality, particularly his



tendency, he said, "to be dominating" in discussion and to speak for others. The tension between his desire for a privileged status and his conscious valuing of collaboration played itself out in numerous transactions, particularly with Rose, a Jamaican American in the class who was also Keisha's less verbal twin sister. Like other students who had felt silenced in school, Rose constructed a stronger sense of voice, power and personal identity over the year of participating in the learning community context. She came to see that what "enhances the class" is "you speak your opinion, you don't really have to, I guess, hold back," She felt that even at "at the end of every heated conversation, everything is back to normal. there's no real tension between anyone." In that context, Rose decided, "I don't like not having anything to say." (The detailed case studies of Josh and Rose in transaction appear in Zigo & Miller, 1996).

Some have argued that to achieve social change, critical pedagogy for powerful groups needs to differ from that for oppressed groups (Banks, 1988; Sleeter, 1995). In the integrated class, the need to learn a critical discourse, which will be taken up more explicitly in a later section, was dramatized through dialogues of difference in these groups within the learning community context. As in the case of Josh, white students were learning "one of the things whites need to work on," that is, "learning to share the spotlight" and "to live with the rest of the world at eye level rather than from above" (Sleeter 1993). With teachers' active scaffolding all year long, students engaged with ideas they found threatening and the presence of difference prompted students to construct for themselves new views of power, in part, by working in a community which included all of them. This class was a community, then, not in the limited sense of cohesive like-mindedness (Harris, 1989) but, instead, as a space where participants generated multiple meanings, raised questions, and considered competing possibilities for the purpose of constructing knowledge out of difference. Respect for individuals' stories, responses, interpretations, beliefs was the center of community which led, over time and through activity and conversation, to a respect for and expectation of multiple perspectives on texts, events, and issues. Bob described the value of each different perspective comprising the class; he said, "The class wouldn't be the same if anyone of the people wasn't there...like when Jason was gone everybody knew it...It's such a big web almost." By the end of the year, Kris saw herself as part of a "network of people who spread multiple possibilities." The metaphor of network or web emphasizes mutual teaching and learning, blurring the boundaries of who learns, who teaches, and what constitutes learning; in the context of Kris's work over the year, detailed in her case

study (DeBlase Trzyna & Miller, 1996), her words suggest, too, her new vision of herself as an active member of a democratic community, not only in the class but also in her life.

Key aspects in developing the community were blurring teacher and student roles, supporting a collectivist rather than individualist culture, and using conversation to construct new spaces in a "participatory mode of critical teaching" (Sleeter, 1995). Participation in the community was initiated and guided by ground rules, some of which were made explicit and others of which emerged in the talk and activity. One of the explicit themes of the class which became an important expectation for participation was "entering into," a multi-layered concept with social, emotional, and cognitive meanings, which I turn to in the next section.

### **"Entering into" a Participatory Mode of Understanding**

The notion of "entering into" the conversation as equal participants was central in the learning community, and the nature of that stance was constituted through recurring talk and activity. By beginning with student family stories and taking them seriously, the teachers initiated an openness to the differences in Americans' histories. As Sharon and Ron invited the personal into school, they also invited students to "enter into" their joint project of understanding as a whole person, with feelings and thoughts, with questions and answers, with responses and prejudices. In what follows I illustrate the participatory stance that students were learning, an intellectual *and* emotional attitude which prompted awareness, understanding and contradictions.

As constructed over the year, "entering into" on one level referred to a participatory stance, the beginning of the process of pursuing understanding similar to "wholeheartedness" (Dewey, 1933), "openness" (Gadamer, 1976), or "reaching out with one's whole self" (Heshuius, 1994). Rosenblatt (1978) emphasizes the "aesthetic stance," of fully attending to the lived-through experience of the literature as an event in time. Wolf (1994) emphasizes the shift of perspective, the "stepping in to create the vision," of the characters' ways of seeing the world in, for instance, historical dramatizations. Since Sharon's and Ron's intent was to have students reconstrue themselves, their country, and the world from critical, empowering perspectives, they demonstrated and constructed such a participatory stance as necessary to a "participatory way of knowing," (Heshuius, 1994), the beginning of understanding necessary for both conversation and critique.



Sharon described what she "would like the students to do whenever they tackle a text, or a new idea or a topic, is to look at it with enthusiasm, 'Here's a new something to find out something about,' and to be a little bit, if it's a topic, to be a little bit skeptical about a single source, and if it's a piece of literature, to feel that it is accessible to them, at some level." When I asked Kim if she approached reading any differently than she had before. She said: "I try to sort of read in between the lines more. Sort of like taking what they have printed on the page, and then going through that, and finding out what they're really saying...they sort of taught us how to do that." I asked her how the teachers did that and she answered:

I think just by giving us the book, or whatever, and having us read it, or watching the presentation, and then asking us, 'So what does that say to you? What does that mean to you?' And, we were asked to give our own opinions, and that was something that teachers usually don't do. And having to put your own thoughts and minds into something, that helps...it's not something that's just totally separate. They're asking what you think about it. And that was a new thing to begin with in a classroom.

This enthusiasm Sharon spoke of seems akin to Maria's idea of putting her thoughts and mind into something that is not "just totally separate." Ron added the idea that this "entering in" should be "communal." All of self--and all one knows together in community--entered into their activity; they did not partition off life experiences from literature, ignore the lived experience in past events, bracket out history in literary texts, and did not exclude emotions and personal knowing in school. As one student on day 12 put it, "We talk about anything and everything." In discussion students mentioned television shows, songs, cartoons, advertisements, the stuff of their world to help them make sense. Sharon said and believed, "Nothing's irrelevant; everything's relevant if it adds to our understanding."

**Entering into literary stories.** When these teachers invited story and the personal into the study of four generative themes of history, in part they did it by treating literature as another source of knowing, the lived through experience that potentially would allow students to participate in knowing from other places, other people, other times. Sharon and Ron invited students "to enter the life and mind" of Lutie Johnson and other

characters and provided the journal as a tool for understanding through a feeling/thinking conversation with texts. These journal responses were framed as opportunities to "capture thoughts and feelings," to understand and make sense with all of ourselves, not as evaluated performances. Students tended to use their "closest at hand" language (Martin, 1976), informal expressive language (Britton, 1970) closest to their speech. As they verbalized what ran through their minds about the many "texts" in the class, revealing the ways they construed the texts, themselves, the world, the journal became a problem-posing space, a tool for their own response and understanding. As Nick began *The Street* by Ann Petry and responded to this "excellent" novel in his journal; he quoted a line, "She shivered as the cold fingers of the wind touched the back of her neck, explored the sides of her head." This language moved him: "Discussing oppression and using the wind and the street as key players offers a whole new world." He noted how well the author goes "from reality to sub-reality, if that's a word...describing the thought sequences so vividly that it passed through my mind once or twice, is Ann Petry [actually] Lutie? Probably not, but maybe close." In talking about her response to *The Jungle*, Maria enters into the symbolic imagery,

The comparison between the meat and the immigrants [might be made] because they had that job [slaughterhouse], but at the same time they were treated almost as badly as the animals were. And sometimes when you're reading the book, you wonder are you better off being an animal, or are you better off being an immigrant? And my parents are both immigrants, so.

Maria enters into the story through the metaphoric language and strong personal connections which prompt her aesthetic reflection. Her journal entries preceding this one demonstrate her engagement with her feeling/thinking responses which led to these interpretations. Remembering her own the immigrant story, "that helped a lot. When you connected the immigrant experience from the book, to the immigrant experience of relatives, a lot of times they were very similar, and it was almost scary. Cause that could be my grandfather." Both Maria and Nick have been drawn into the story by its vivid physical action and equally vivid felt experience. Students often responded to literary narratives in their journals with such "concern for the human condition" in the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness simultaneously (Bruner, 1986, p. 16). "The

'dual-landscape' view is appealing in suggesting how the reader is helped to enter the life and mind of the protagonists: their consciousnesses are the magnets for empathy. The matching of 'inner' vision and 'outer' reality is, moreover, a classic human plight" (Bruner, 1986, pp. 20-21)

The journal was used often as a means of entering into further discussions with the life and mind and conditions of the characters in texts. The conversation about *Avalon* began with students reading from their journals, saying which lines from the movie struck them. These read responses led to talk about motifs--city versus country, present versus past--relationships among family members, and then to the question of whether we romanticize the past and to students' ideas about how the American dream, a prevalent theme of the movie, influenced their own lives. When Ron closed the discussion, he told students, again, about the "inconclusiveness" of their talk, and asked them to continue their conversation in their journals, emphasizing that both Sharon and he enjoyed reading what students had to say. The notion that the journals "continue the conversation," emphasizes the conversational view of reading in the class. This stance resonates with philosophical positions: "To understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue....a text yields understanding only when what is said in the text begins to find expression in the interpreter's own language" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 57).

"Entering into" this dialogue to understand meant perceiving, feeling, thinking and acting as a "self in transaction," (Bruner, 1986, p. 69), allowing in the whole self, not circumscribed by boundaries. Such aesthetic response and reflection act against our tendency to "intellectualize" oppression and injustice, by distancing self, making detached reports, instructing others what to do (Sleeter, 1993). As Bruner (1986) describes the power of the story, it produces an alternative to intellectualizing, a kind of narrative thinking dealing with human intention and action, the psychic reality of the particulars of experience. During the year, Josh struggled with his sense of loss of privilege in a community where all voices were valued, not his above the rest, as I described earlier. At the same time he intellectualized oppression, giving detached advice to the African American girls in his class on what *they* should do about racism, picking apart their arguments for logical flaws. Then, his experience with deeply felt response to literary texts, for example, *The Street*, moved him, perhaps for the first time, to "see through minority position perspectives" (Sleeter, 1995):

I get the feel that Petry is writing from personal experience, because of the personal tone. She doesn't only write as a woman, she writes like a woman who knows what it feels like to feel the things and experiences Lutie Johnson felt. The whole thing with the landlord looking her over & her thoughts of how he wanted to take advantage of her were scary.

His discomfort with "looking through diverse others' eyes" (Greene, 1993) was profound, at times, but here and later these perspectives dramatized for him a world that he, literally, had been unable to see or feel. Dewey (1934) describes the unique way that aesthetic experience can become the initiator of "wide and large redirections of desire and purpose," as "a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration (Dewey, 1934, p. 349). Josh's redirection of purpose began as he experienced new possibilities for human relations—the scariness, for instance--which he had not found with his logical thinking about oppression.

For Ron, entering into stories was engaging voices and coming to understand that we all have voices. As he described students reading a children's book called *Encounter*, from the point of view of a child who sees Columbus's ships come in and then the destruction which follows, he described its impact:

It's a voice, that I think begins to reinforce the idea that we don't have to rely on brilliant people, people thought to be brilliant, or having degrees or whatever, to tell us what to think, or to interpret the world. I think that the children's story just lends itself, along with a lot of other things we do. We talk about the characters in the story of West Virginia, [*Storming Heaven*] with no education, but yet the kids are drawn to those characters.

Literature was used to provide this vision of diverse people with voices, with stories. Which books had more influence on students' perspectives? Sharon said,

I think it depends. I think kids would range all the way from, truly, *The Scarlet Letter*, depending on what their personal experience with the books was, to *Storming Heaven*, which the kids loved, to *The Jungle*, which Nick thought was so incredibly powerful, to *The Street*, which some kids said

changed their whole perspective and understanding of the African American culture. So it depends. I think the kids would all vote for *Storming Heaven* for their favorite book, but I think it's the most accessible, the most poignant. I mean, I think it can get to your heart and you can get through it.

"Entering in" was being drawn into listening to others' voices, letting people "get to your heart." Such perspective-taking through a feeling/thinking dialogue with the text formed the center of narrative thinking in the class. Students and teachers' efforts together encouraged each to live through the times/ the places/ the experiences. Some students felt these lives personally and, in dialogue with the play of voices in these texts, were transformed by new knowing.

**"Entering into" history: Dramatization as a tool.** Perhaps the historical analogue to aesthetic reading was "entering into" courtroom simulations, dramas requiring expressive choices in the world of imagination within real world constraints (Wolf, 1994). The Columbus Trial was frequently mentioned when we asked students what made them think more deeply in the class. Some students acted as defense lawyers, some as prosecutors, some as witnesses, and some as jury; all read and reported on Native American literatures at the same time. Students took on roles of witnesses and lawyers and were forced to consider the dialectic of perspectives on the question of whether Columbus was guilty of genocide and other crimes. As students planned to call witnesses from any time in history, the movement between the prevailing frame of reference of Europeans in the fifteenth century and those of other times and places provoked further consideration of the play of conflicting perspectives (e.g., How would Christ or Oliver North see the actions of Columbus?).

Students had engaged in long-sustained efforts at researching documents, selecting possible witnesses, writing depositions, collaborating on the prosecution or defense team, considering counter-arguments for potentially damaging lines of reasoning, practicing examination of witnesses. In one defense team meeting, for instance, Cara briefed her staff, reminding them that they needed to decide on whether to call Queen Isabella as a witness. They discussed whose authority would work better in court. The Queen had once pardoned Columbus, they found in their research, and they discussed the divine right of a monarch, wondering whether to put that in the opening statement. Jeff

pointed out that the swearing in includes the words, "so help me God," and Bob thought they should include in their statement that "her will is God's will." Cara argued for calling "the Pope because he was actually benefiting in trying to Christianize the Indians. Maybe that would work." Bob suggested that they use the argument about "state of mind...the state of mind of the people was that they were trying to help." Cara agreed that would be good for the Pope, but not for the Queen, "plus they [the prosecution] could argue that Columbus gave a lot of the orders." Bob had watched the videotape of the trial from the preceding year and briefed the team on strategy related to rehearsing the opening statement, the actual statute of limitations, addressing the bench properly, making motions, etc. They complimented each other on good pieces of research for their emerging argument. The level of intensity and seriousness interspersed with comic relief was similar in all of the preparations. Students moved back and forth from the historical research and trial procedure to reasoning about the place of human intentions and potentially persuasive arguments.

Then, on the days of the trial, they dressed up formally (suits & ties and dresses), played roles, used legal discourse, negotiated with the judge, counselor, witnesses, jury. All entered into the world of the imagination within the real world constraints of acceptable evidence and lines of questioning. The "transformations that drama offers" (Wolfe, 1994, p. 43) were compelling for students--this trial was the event of the year, by most students' accounts. As the Columbus trial began, Sharon intoned the bailiff's formal "All rise. The Federal District Court of New York State is now in session....The Honorable Judge M. presiding." Ron, dressed in a black robe, over his jeans and t-shirt, took his seat at the "bench," his straight gray hair, ponderous voice, and impressive legal discourse, key elements of a convincing performance. The jury sat opposite him and the defense and prosecution teams opposite each other, circumscribing a rectangular space where the attorneys stood while examining witnesses. The tone of Josh's opening argument demonstrates the drama:

Thank you, Your Honor. First, we would like to thank the members of the jury in advance for your time and patience...What we, the prosecution, Haley and myself, present to you is not evidence. We will provide a road map...Imagine a murderer broke into your house and killed your family. Now imagine that your house is the land which Christopher Columbus invaded...genocide, kidnapping, destruction of the environment,



and destruction of indigenous cultures. [Introduces witnesses] Sonya will play the role of an Arawak Indian named Tiki, Becca will play DeLasCasas, Rose will be a sailor and an Arawak slave brought back to Europe with Columbus...Len will show how Columbus mistreated the land. Pedro de Las Casas was a first-hand witness and will show that Columbus's crew members thought that what he was doing was wrong; Albidinia, a slave killed and beaten, will show this was the reason her people were killed off the face of the earth. Now the defense will try to go against us, but we will show that Columbus was a greedy man and shares the responsibility for the crimes we have mentioned....We will discredit the witness Queen Isabella, who will try to prove that she gave Columbus orders to do these things...When you hear, you will see that Columbus is responsible and you will have no choice but to convict him because, after all, he is a perpetrator in your house.

In response, Helen made her opening statement, first apologizing to the jury for having to spend precious time for "such an outrageous trial":

You will see that our kind Cristobol Colon is not guilty of any of these scandals. They will try to prove his guilt, but there is no angle at which the truth cannot be seen...Cristobol Colon is an honorable and decent man. We will call Samuel Eliot Morrison, a well respected historian who has traveled the routes of Columbus...Robert Jackson who will connect these proceedings with Nuremburg,...Oliver North, who will show that following orders is not sufficient evidence for conviction...We also have witnesses who know what an honorable and decent man Cristobol Colon was...Queen Isabella...You will see the truth and you will see that this case is a scandal. It is despicable and outrageous. I will remind you that you are obligated to find my client, Cristobol Colon "not guilty" unless the prosecution proves otherwise beyond a shadow of a doubt.

During this trial, the level of intensity remained high throughout. In the between-class breaks the lawyers practiced their lines of questioning or their redirect examination strategies; only a few people left the room. In his examination of his own expert witness

on the Arawak culture (Sonya), Josh established that, based on the de Las Cases journals and Columbus's log, the natives were enslaved by Columbus and his men, who had guns and were in search of gold and spice. The historian/sociologist from Harvard detailed behaviors such as cutting off natives' hands if they "did not find gold for Columbus." Josh asked, too, about "what was happening in Spain at this time?" The witness revealed that the Moors and Jews were being expelled and the Amaridians forcefully conquered; murder, rape, and stealing were common. She concluded, when Josh asked, that the Spanish would find what Columbus was doing acceptable.

In her cross-examination, Helen, as defense attorney, began with the witness's (Sonya's) "expert" status, asking finally the source of her information about "the thoughts and feelings of my client" toward the Arawak.

- Sonya: Yes, in Columbus's journals he says he was not fond of them.
- Helen: Well, I can say I'm not fond of Mr. J. over there (Josh), but I don't think you can say that I am brutal because of it.
- Sonya: That depends on your actions...
- Helen: You keep saying 'they' but nowhere do you actually say that my client did any of these things himself. Do you have proof that my client is part of this they?
- Sonya: When I say "they" I mean Columbus and his crew.
- Helen: Not all European explorers?
- Sonya: No.
- Helen: Did Colon himself chain native people together at the neck?...
- Josh: Objection. the defense is trying to use the affidavit as material evidence. [Helen was reading from the expert's affidavit. In order to limit the scope of the trial, they had agreed not to admit material evidence]
- Judge Ron: It is the right of every attorney to use the affidavits.
- Helen: If it will please the prosecution I can refrain from using the affidavit any further...[to witness] You said We don't all agree. You want the court to consider you an expert, but what you're presenting is not a unanimous opinion of all experts?



Helen, then, in lengthy questioning attempted to discredit the expertise of the witness. In this trial simulation, the jury was permitted to caucus briefly and ask 3 questions, as well. They asked the expert how many natives had been killed in the first month, if Columbus were in charge during the first month, and if there were any direct proof or records that Colon ordered these inhumanities to happen. The trial proceeded with ceremony and seriousness; attorneys wrote in journals about staying up late at night to go over their lines of questioning; witnesses and jury members wrote about what good evidence was presented, what lines of reasoning were compelling. It was during this trial when Rose, who until that time in class had spoken infrequently in her own voice, was almost ejected from court for yelling out as an Arawak during the cross examination of Columbus, "You killed my people!" Blistering journal entries centered around swaying opinions. After two periods of sequestered jury deliberation, Columbus was found guilty of kidnapping, destruction of the environment and genocide.

The observing and participating adults were moved by students' taking control, drawing on multiple sources of knowledge, and passionately engaging in their public performance by acting through new perspectives to interpret in this alternative world. In the scenes described here students interrogated the notions of expertise, of positionality, of sources of knowing, of the accuracy of people's stories, and explored story as the means of developing persuasive coherence (Was Columbus a criminal breaking into our homes or a good man smeared by an outrageous scandal?). In their journals, in the courtroom, in the jury room, students were confronted by multiple conflicting stories and needed to construct a point of view by evaluating languages and beliefs, assumptions and values. Students were thinking critically and reciprocally within or among opposing points of view, a dialectical reasoning (Paul, 1984). Remarkably, this was no mere play acting for any of the 18 focal students (nor did it appear so for any of the 68 students in the three classes). They had entered in an imaginative space where the assumptions, values, languages and beliefs that shape feeling and thinking were examined in human situations where the outcome "really" mattered.

In his final interview Nick cited both trials as "highlights" of the year, because they could get a "really good" perspective on "how the whole judicial system works." He played a fictitious character who was an environmentalist and "General Yamashita, he was an infamous Japanese general from World War II who was hanged for his war crimes after the Nuremburg trials...And collectively we [the prosecution team] made a decision on who we called to make our cases strongest." In the trial on educational funding, Nick

was on the jury, and so "got to see the process from both points of view." I asked Nick, whose father was a history teacher, how he would respond to teachers who thought trials take too much time from covering historical material. He said,

I'd say, who really decides what those facts are? It's such a gray area, because one event that seems to be clear cut can be totally different from one perspective and the other. When we say 'stipulated facts' are just material [to be covered in class], when we use phrases like that, then it's really, you know, history is a living thing, and that just sounds dead. I think by doing things like the trial and other things like the anthology papers, you get like a real idea of what goes on.

Nick's metaphor, that "history is a living thing," interrupts the notion of history as a fixed chronology, and suggests the rich power of the simulations. Maria's response to the Columbus trial suggested another outcome of this kind of learning:

I really liked the whole Columbus trial, because I have an Inca background, and I just thought it was done very nicely, cause ever since third grade, it's been "Columbus Day," Columbus is a hero...I always thought Columbus was a pig. But after the, like, the whole trial, I realized, okay, maybe he's not so bad, because he didn't really understand that it was bad. And on the other hand, everybody always thought Columbus was a hero, and they understood that maybe he's not so good, because he did a lot of things that were bad. I really liked that.

For Maria, a first-generation American whose parents were native Peruvians, through the trial her voice has become part of the conversation about Columbus in school and her image of Columbus ("a pig") has been somewhat humanized. Loewen (1995) speculates that the nationalistic, optimistic ideology of history textbooks ("Columbus is a hero"), can become a burden for students of color, of working-class parents and for females who know a different reality. In Maria's class, Columbus was found guilty of manslaughter and not guilty of genocide, as they deliberated on his actions from the perspectives of his time in tension with perspectives at other points in history. "They made him pay, but it wasn't all his fault," Maria said, considering that "where you live and what time period" influences beliefs and actions.

The idea of "entering into" in order to understand literary texts and historical time periods was sounded by Maria in her distinction between "hard core learning" where "the teacher just tells you what you're supposed to learn" *and* what she felt happened in the integrated class: "You learn to live it. You learn to live what you're learning." The effect, she described in Spanish and translated, "which means it's like a recorder, it's like *in* your head, it gets engraved in your brain."

### **"Back and Forth"--Dialectical Tools for Critical Perspectives**

Several sets of dialectical movements--"the back and forth" Kit called it--characterized the class, including the recursive movement between the private and public (e.g., private journals to public discussion to private journals), between fiction and non-fiction texts (e.g., *The Jungle* and the Statue of Liberty inscription) or among social-cultural perspectives (e.g., early Europeans and Native Americans). As students "entered into" lived experiences in reading literature and dramatizing history, the teachers scaffolded activities and provided tools for developing critical perspectives, as well. Through sequences of problematizing activities, problem-posing discussions, and opportunities to think about their thinking, students became aware of multiple possible viewpoints on the world which existed simultaneously and learned to use teacher-provided tools to consciously consider those possibilities and their implications.

The sequence of activities related to listing the top 10 events in U.S. history exemplifies the planned dialectics in the class, and the discussion surrounding that sequence exemplifies the spontaneous ones. No one questioned this task, which had wording reminiscent of a late night TV talk show, when Sharon and Ron asked students to make their "personal top-ten list," in their journals. The teachers emphasized that they were to consult no one, do no research, simply to make the list from their own perspective. In class, students shared these lists in small groups and then were asked to come to a group consensus, a task that led to passionate debates in some groups. Afterwards, Sharon and Ron asked students to write about the process of coming to consensus in their journals. Then, the groups reported on their consensus list. After each group report, the teachers asked each individual in that group to read his/her account of and response to the consensus conversation. This juxtaposition of the consensus document presented in the public sphere with the private lived through experience of

each individual threw into relief the differences and revealed how private voices fared. Some individuals explained their group strategies for negotiation, such as using a more general category of weaponry to include machine guns and atomic bomb; some gave accounts of individuals' persuasive abilities in swaying the group; some recorded their dissatisfactions with the group list, such as Cara, who could not convince her group to include TV. The teachers listened and asked a few questions, sometimes to name processes, "So you had different opinions on what was important and what wasn't important, so they just left part of it out because they couldn't reach consensus. Keep that in mind." Sharon and Ron pointed out group assumptions: "Without it being said, you seemed to make the agreement that this list was the 'things that shaped the country.'" To this Jack replied,

Jack: Well, I mean the country is only the people that make up the country, if it's shaped people's lives, it's probably shaping the country.

Ron: Which is what Sara said, I think, didn't she?

Sharon: Which is a nice thing to start considering.

Ron: Yeah, that's a thought to hang onto.

Jack's assumption is based on the logic that what shapes private lives in a democracy is what shapes the public sphere, as well, a relationship Ron and Sharon call to question in this and other activities. After that Alice, an athlete and softball player, read her response, saying in part, "I noticed that we were the only group that put baseball on it [the list]. I'm sorry but baseball is not as important as Vietnam."

Ron: Was baseball the one that you added last?

Alice: Yea, cause I didn't want it on there.

Ron: Then why did you agree to it?

Alice: Because Lyn brought up a good point, that it did help liberate blacks and give them more rights. But, and then I was thinking about it last night, if it helps liberate blacks and give them more rights, then shouldn't it go under, like, Civil Rights? You hit the ball with a little stick and you run around the bases, what's the big deal?

Ron: You eventually agreed to it, but you're still thinking about it.

Alice: I'm thinking about it now, how is that, that's not culture, that's a sport-

Dick: Sports are a big part of our lives-

Alice: Wait a second-

Ron: [to Dick and a few other voices who talk at once] Wait a minute, she's still talking. [to Alice] There you go.

Alice: Culture is a book. Culture is reading books. Culture is experiencing different things

The dialectic is becoming part of Alice's thinking, as she considered "last night" her further thoughts on the group consensus. Ron casually emphasizes "still thinking about it," in a move that names the ongoing dialogue in which she has become a player. Ron bounds the topic, "What we are not going to do is debate the baseball issue, but I would love to see you do that in your journals, that's really important. What we want you to focus on is the debate itself, think about that for a minute." Students are quite agitated and continue on for awhile raising the importance of baseball heroes, of Reggie Jackson. Sharon quips, "Reggie Jackson was definitely important, he was one of my classmates in college. He was a very important person." (Students laughed.) They continue with group list reports juxtaposed with each person's response to their consensus process. Sharon and Ron prodded for further analysis, "So you didn't feel in that group that you were slighted, because you had different views? Or quieter ones?" Maria concluded, "It had a lot to do with values...It's not bad or anything, it's just different...different values and that's what it is in, like, everything."

At the end Ron asked the students to write, again in their journals: "We have to set the stage for you to draw some conclusions. On the basis of what has taken place today, what you need to write about tonight is, Who writes history? Who writes those textbooks? How are those decisions made? We want you to think about where history and historical events and their importance is decided. All the textbooks, history texts that you've had over time, think about what was included, what was left out, why, just ponder those things, because that's going to be very pivotal to our work in the next eight months." This list of questions, a heuristic for thinking about issues of privilege and the power to name things, about whose voice counts in our representations of history, became part of the students' language tools, their critical-interpretive practice. The need for asking such questions was dramatized in this and other activities structured by the dialectics of responding, thinking socially, rethinking, and, often, thinking about their

thinking. The debriefing on this activity did last all year long, as the teachers and students interrogated its meaning to their larger inquiry into the meaning of the American Dream.

Most activities and issues in the classes evolved in a dialectic, including the repeated movement from private response in journals to public response in small group and then large-group discussion, and finally back to the private journal responses to summarize some net gain of thinking from these dialogues. These dialectics encouraged a dialectical reasoning, that is, for thinking critically and reciprocally within or among opposing points of view (Paul, 1984). In this view, being confronted by issues where multiple standpoints can be plausibly developed, we need to construct a point of view by considering opposing lines of thought to construct tentative, conditional knowledge for ourselves. This activity requires that we become aware of the assumptions, values, languages and beliefs that shape feelings and responses and be able to empathize with the reasoning of those who disagree, but using multiple sources of evidence construct a reasoned judgment based on careful consideration of what is left out, what is highlighted, and how the whole is being interpreted.

#### **Teaching as a human dialogue--discussion, scaffolding, and intertextuality.**

I believe the most important dialectic of the class was in the dialogic relationship of the students with the teachers. Sharon and Ron saw teaching as human dialogue, a social relationship, as "a human drama, not a mechanical device, not a static space" (Petrosky, 1992, p. 164). Ron was clear that he did not want to be "shepherding" students or to be a "priest" with "an obligation to present truths to people about democracy." Sharon said their strategy was to approach everything as communal because, "It's pretty hard to learn something by yourself." Ron agreed, "I can't imagine now, doing anything without it being a community enterprise." Teaching students to think and understand through discussion was something they learned to do together over time.

Sharon and Ron's belief that all learning is social emerged as they taught the class, as they "entered into" this American Dream project with students, "engaged honestly," and saw what happened the first year:

Sharon:           What people always mention about the class, students and people who visit, a pivotal part of the class, something I didn't even appreciate until I watched it happen, which is



the discussion part, the vigorous discussions, and the practice at putting into words things that kids might be thinking, and kind of trying it out, and feeling real safe to try and articulate and feeling strong about some things, and just getting a chance to discuss...And I would like to think that I knew that but I didn't.

Ron: No, I didn't either....

Sharon: Tangible learning took place, their ability to articulate their ideas, their ability to listen to other students, and that's something that people can notice right away when they come into the classroom that the kids talk to each other, and listen to each other...I notice the tenor of the class changes when we don't have those discussions...the kids tend to lose some of their cohesiveness.

Ron: It's like food for them

Sharon: Yes, it's that important...

As Sharon and Ron talked together to sort out the importance of dialogue--as cohesion, as food-- in the class they turned to its possibility of opening up spaces for thinking. As Ron put it, "I guess that conversations, those arguments, that engaging, opens up some surface in the brain, in the thinking, for other possibilities, other perspectives, other ways of looking at things. That's part of going back to the dinner table. That's very natural for me." The talk, they found, energized and made purposeful their larger inquiry, as Sharon said, "Mostly what I've learned is I think most kids care about really important things, at least things I think are important, and given the opportunity, will do an incredible amount of work to develop learning and teaching around important issues and ideas." Sharon and Ron were genuinely interested in what students thought and how they could be helped to consider further, other perspectives, possible alternatives and solutions. They began with the notion that "discussing big questions" was possible for students by negotiating possibilities together. For Jill, an active listener and moderate participator, "There's so many different people, people who are more technologically minded, people who are more environmentally minded, more culturally oriented, and so they think of things, that I would have, they would have never occurred to me." She wrote extensive responses to discussions which, she said, made her think more deeply. For Maria, at first, she said, "I



used to be scared of it [discussion], I have no problem speaking in public any more...I can connect everything and make it make sense, and then say it. Like I'll have things that click in my head, one idea leads to another. Things make a lot more sense."

A fundamental tool of Sharon and Ron's supporting this thinking and learning process, teaching students to "connect everything and make it make sense" was providing responsive assistance to students as they pursued meaning. The teachers provided contingent support to students during whole-class and small group discussions, in response to journal entries, while students were planning a trial or deliberating on a verdict. This instructional scaffolding (Langer & Applebee, 1986) was built into the sequences of activities to follow every reading of literary and other texts--in journals, discussions, self-reflection, synthesizing papers--students were always being prompted to think further about their responses and their thinking. But scaffolding also took a conversational form during discussions and in responses to student writing. When I asked Jill what role Sharon and Ron played in discussion, she synthesized the nature of their assistance and theorized about their motives, as well:

They kind of mediate the class discussions, they seem to be very in tuned to when things are going more towards the surface, then they'll come up with a question, or something for us to think about. They'll always say something to think about, and then we end up talking about it. That brings everybody back to the kind of things that I think, the kinds of "truths" that we're trying to come up with in this course...They'll say, 'Oh, remember that we also have to look at things this way, too.' And they spend a lot of time, I think, trying to get students to do the thinking for themselves...trying to get other people to do things on their own for a change.

Jill has captured here, the way that the teachers followed the line of student thinking and made responsive moves with new perspectives, information, and questions, "mediating" structures (Vygotsky, 1978) which over time assisted students' learning a dialectical thinking.

***Scaffolding heuristics and awareness of self-directed inquiry.*** Sharon and Ron explicitly respected the shaping and problematizing value of their students' different languages and

the importance of those voices to the class conversation. This attitude of the importance of what students had to say sometimes was emphasized in conversation. During the small group sharing of the ten most important events in U.S. history in early October, Ron asked Raina to read her journal entry, after several others already had shared their responses to the task of having to come to consensus in their group. Raina, who had already spoken during her group report, said, "No," and Ron encouraged her, "We'd like to hear":

Raina: No, you wouldn't, because I didn't understand the assignment, so I wrote as a whole, not as a group[on the whole activity, not just on the small group consensus discussion].

Sharon: Good

Ron: That's all right.

Raina: No, you really don't want to hear it. You really don't want to-

Sharon: Will you do it later, as soon as you realize that we also want to hear observations as a whole?

Raina: That's what I wrote.

Ron: Raina, there will come a time, when you will realize that all of the ideas are valuable, because they give us things to think about, and so,

Sharon: Additionally, for those of you that don't realize that yet, much of what we say, of course, is relatively ambiguous. Many of the assignments are somewhat nebulous. And part of that is so that, I don't know if it's exactly what you would call planned, but the idea is that we think important things will come out of your fertile brains, and I know that's true over time and [in my] experience, so that if you heard the assignment, or the instructions differently, and then came up with some other observations, they're equally as valuable because they look at the bigger picture, so try to think of, when you think that you've done something different than some of the rest of the class, don't think that as negative necessarily, think of it as potentially positive, that might give you a different perspective on your work.

Ron: I was in a group, and you remember this because you were in the same group and we were given a poem.[gives extended example of a poetry response group he and Raisa were in together in] ..I was doing the same kind of disclaiming you are doing now and it was the idea that there are sets of directions to be followed, and where *you* go with that, maybe becomes the interesting thing, and adds new pieces of stuff to our thinking. Anyway, just a thought, we've all been to where you are right now, in one way or another.

Taking time out here to comment on attitudes towards the nature of the thinking in the class emphasizes the conscious attention the teachers gave to habits of mind, including respect for one's own language and thinking. This is a relatively long interlude in the discussion, taken to support Raina and to attend to becoming consciously aware of how we all shape personal understanding in ways that make sense to us ("what I wrote") and how our different ways of doing that prompt thinking in the social group. Their views of thinking and planning of activity in the class are based in this valuing and conviction--that "important things will come out of your fertile brains." Students' spontaneous part of the conversation is part of what the class depended on and the teachers planned for. Helping students construct this "perspective on your work," included underscoring metacognitive awareness of and respect for their own self-regulated processes as they pursued "relatively ambiguous" questions.

Many scaffolds asked students to reconsider their own processes of interpreting and thinking. For instance, after reading a poem aloud Sharon asked students to think about what they needed to do, whether to read it silently or hear it aloud again, providing alternative strategies for meaning-making by focusing attention on flexibility and individual differences in "what works best" They asked students to return to their journals and to drafts to reflect again and direct the processes of their own thinking. In reports on small group *Scarlet Letter* discussions, for instance, a student had little to say about what her group had discussed; Sharon asked, "Was there anything you disagreed on?" a brief question which assisted the student in reporting to the class and provided a strategy for becoming aware of the dialectic of thinking which spurs discussion.

In discussion Sharon and Ron also shared, at points when students needed it, descriptions of what they as adults do when they read and write to provide strategies for thinking and understanding. Explicit sequences of questions were posted and used to

approach texts. For instance this one: Who is speaking? What is the speaker's agenda? What voices are missing? This sequence became the basis for a critical stance toward text, which I will take up in detail in the next section. Another important heuristic in the class was the one for "making connections," which was explicitly taught, required, demonstrated, and applauded. Often in class one of them would say, "I just made a connection...." In journals Sharon would write "G.C. (Good Connection)" when students related something to their lives or to other texts and issues previously discussed in the class. Synthesizing papers at the end of each sequence of activities allowed students to reconsider all of their responses and thinking and reformulate a provisional, final piece of writing which required making connections among the work(s) of the quarter. As Maria saw it, "We're kind of taught *how* to think, which is not taught *what* to think...you have to catch everything, you have to put it all together...everything connects to something else." The power of the heuristic was everywhere evident in the class. When Cory gave his presentation on *Indian Country* by Matthiessen, for instance, he ended by saying, "I tried to make a connection and I think I can make a connection to *The Scarlet Letter*. People are afraid of the dark, hostile forest and the Indians are always puzzled at how the white man could be so hostile toward the forest. They can see that the fear is self-contrived, made up within themselves." As Cory fills in the darkness of the forest not only with the perspective of Hester and Pearl, but also with a quite different perspective of Native peoples, he is able to conclude, that they "could never be exiled alone because the earth is always with them." In this example and throughout the class, the connection heuristic functioned to generate a larger understanding congruent with the stated purpose for the integrated class: "To demonstrate the interconnectedness of learning; to present history and literature as part of a larger whole, providing insight and understanding into events in history and the causes and effects of those events on people's lives."

Both teachers provided historical and literary information and contextual details, conversationally, as those things became significant to the conversation or activity. Ron explained to students "run on the bank" and related economic theories of the era as they discussed *The Jungle*. He asked what students knew about Jim Crow Laws as they talked about *The Learning Tree*, and he and Sharon initiated talk to fill the gaps. Dave had done his multiple source paper on Jackie Robinson and volunteered an explanation of how Jim Crow Laws influenced his life. Sharon asked two students to look up "Jim Crow Laws," and Ron read an entry from a resource text to the class. In another lesson Sharon gave background on the Apache before reading *Apache Flute Player* and explained intertextual

references, such as religious allusions when they came up. In this way, teaching and learning were construed as a play of texts--of teacher explanations recalled from other texts, of student research on multi-source texts, along with classroom resource texts. Given this view, the student role in discussions could grow as the year progressed, as they had read more texts for independent reading, multiple source papers and out of school texts to which students became more attentive in light of the many "ongoing" problems posed in the class. Entering into texts, then, is the essential component of learning, if learning is construed as a personal connecting of texts, an intertextual play of understanding. "Entering in" and, then, "connecting" were scaffolded heuristics for thinking and learning construed as necessary to an intertextual dialogue.

Another kind of text, of course, was the texts of students' lives, experiences textualized as stories and explicitly interpreted in the class as perspectives students could bring to any topic of discussion. Those who spoke less often, like Maria, saw an important role for herself in the class, "Because of my background, I might make people a little more aware of what they say." To explain, she gave an example of a time when the class was talking about Mexico City and Alice asked how people could raise their children in such pollution. Maria said "That's when I got a little upset...and I was like, wow, what is this? and I go, 'You expect them to move? You think they want to be there? They don't have any other choices.'" She responded to Alice from the perspectives of people living in Mexico City, a view Alice has not considered, but one that Maria has dwelled in, what she called a "Latin American" perspective. She was particularly aware of the critical question scaffolded by teachers: What voices are left out? The recurring strategy of looking at situations from other missing perspectives is evident here, and seen as necessary because, as Maria pointed out further, "Not everyone has choices like people in Lakeview do, no offense." Maria elaborated, to explain to me about the class and about the suburban school community, "That's another thing we're taught, that Lakeview is Lakeview, but the world is not like Lakeview."

The long-term problem for the class, making a coherent definition of The American Dream, which went beyond Lakeview, served also as a guiding inquiry which provided a structuring problem for the intertextual work of the class. After some conversation or an activity, the teachers often reminded students about making connections to the guiding question. In the African American unit, after a conversation about the motivations for the south wanting to secede and the Black Panthers calling for black separatism, Ron suggested: "You might want to think about tying some of these

ideas into the bigger theme of the American Dream, and remember all of us talked about immigration, immigrants from other places, and why they came here, and did they come to remain separate entities, or did they want to blend it? Was that part of the dream? I mean there are connections here with that larger picture and in your own families." As Ron, here, moves from a specific conversation back to the whole structuring problem they were pursuing together, that introduced a dialectical movement, which situated their work together, reminded of the purposeful nature of their talk and activity, and directed attention to the personal coherence they were trying to create out of the multiple sometimes conflicting texts and perspectives.

Analyses of why the fundamental tool of providing responsive assistance in goal-directed activities is not used often in schools (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) suggest that giving sensitive assistance requires knowledge of students' abilities to perform the task, which can be difficult with large numbers of students and short time periods for instruction. Sharon and Ron provided students with what their student Nick called "major tools for understanding" in journals and discussion where students made visible their responses and thinking, so generally they knew where students were and, as Sharon put it, "what we have to say." They also created longer two-period blocks of time by integrating their subjects and assisted each other in making sense of where students were in their "duet."

*The "duet" of collaborative teaching.* Sharon and Ron themselves worked as partners with respect for each others' differences. In part, their own dialogue shaped the dialectic as students noticed their intellectual and social differences and relationship. Together they used dramatization, their own stories, questioning and turning to each other for information, a demonstration of authentic intellectual conversation among adults.

Sharon once told me that she and Ron collaborated in class as a "duet," a notion that students often echoed. Like many students, Kit thought Sharon and Ron were "great" because they "complement each other so well," like the voices in an improvised song. Their human drama was lived moment to moment, and their intellectual and human relationship provided an image of adult interaction the students mentioned again and again. Students could not usually tell where English stopped and history started up, and did not see Sharon and Ron as disciplinary voices. As Kim put it, what made them effective was, "it's just the people that they are." Kit found them "so funny" in their differences, perceiving him more likely to "go on a tangent," Sharon more likely to bring

them "on task," In her presentation on *Black Like Me*, Lyn explained how the white male author altered chemically to appear black feared for his life in the south in 1959. Sharon explained about some whites expecting "Uncle Tom" behaviors at that time and gave an accessible definition that included the student slang, "kissing up." Ron suggested it had been seen as a "survival technique," and Sharon remembered something said by a character from *Roots*, which many had seen,<sup>2</sup> "I'll just take these dumb blackies off your hands." This followed:

Ron: I think women learned to do that, maybe in the past, more so than now-

Sharon: Yes, dear. (students laugh)

Ron: Yes, the male always wins, you know, you learn certain behaviors, which may be survival type behaviors, but-

Sharon: Yes, dear, I agree. (laughter)

Sharon had moved to explain the sociohistorical context for the response and gives students access to a concept ("Uncle Tom") by naming it and relating it to student experience. Ron elaborates on that to provide the human intention ("survival") in political context. Sharon uses a film example to give the named concept a voice. Then, their impromptu drama connected the racial issue to the broader one of stereotyping and silencing. Since students knew Sharon's thoughtful reflection quite well, the discrepancy, her "double-voiced" response and a false acquiescence, demonstrates sharply some of the human (here gendered) implications of not having a voice. The complexity and power of this dialogic teaching is evident, I think, in this improvised song.

The engaged, connected nature of the duet did not hide from students that Sharon and Ron had differences in attitudes and processes. In an interview they were explaining important strategies for students to learn. As Ron came to see questions as strategies, he listed,

Ron: Does any of this matter? How does it matter and to whom does it matter? And why should it matter? Those are the kinds of things.



Sharon: I think those are his kind of underpinnings, and mine are connections...They make those connections and these kids talk so much and think so much more.

The critical stance in Ron's statement and the connecting stance in Sharon's suggest their stronger tendencies, for both did both. In Sharon and Ron's duet students found a powerful image of a critical intertextuality. They provided a dramatic enactment of the play of discourse, an important feature, Boomer argues, for scaffolding growth in powerful literacy for students: "An internal image of the whole act takes hold in the mind and body as soon as we imagine ourselves doing what we see others doing with pleasure or effect. The child acts and the adult interacts with the child, treating him as though he already knows...The dance has begun....the adult enters into the dance and shows variations upon the theme, demonstrating new possibilities, and naming what is happening, weaving around the new act with new words" (Boomer, 1984, p. 576). In this dance metaphor we have another living image of Sharon and Ron's mature reflection, as they actively engaged in evolving their constructions of experience with flexible responsiveness, between themselves and with their students. Alice described the gracefulness of their conversation which looks like they speak "right off the top of their heads," but she feels, "they've thought about it for awhile, to...It's like their own little secret to make us think a little more."

In numerous ways the teachers scaffolded inquiry by providing at points of need the critical question, the missing explanation, the needed information, and the big picture of the inquiry they were all engaged in together. The teachers saw as their roles as maintaining the conversation with different voices to engage students in a dialectical discourse, a form of conversational practice for "creating a whole, a coherent way of making sense of the discordances and discrepancies in experience" (Buchmann & Floden, 1992, p. 8). The dialectic of Sharon's and Ron's discourse, their personal/disciplinary concerns with connection and with critique, their structuring of the numerous dialectical activities and tools, and their intertextuality constructed a community-based discourse which students interiorized over time.

## Co-Constructing Critical-Narrative Discourse

As adults who themselves moved comfortably and powerfully between disciplinary perspectives, Ron and Sharon shared with students their ways of thinking about conflicting meanings and voices, what I came to see as critical-narrative discourse, a powerful means of understanding and critiquing ways of using language, or discourses. I use "discourse" here as Gee (1990) does to refer to ways of using language to think and act based on a set of values and viewpoints constructed through shared history and stories in a group; these are sometimes unconscious socially learned languages for understanding the world in words (Bakhtin, 1981). The critical-narrative literacy developing in the class served as a kind of "meta-discourse," that is, a language used to critique authoritative and other dominant discourses in texts and talk. In what follows I turn to the disciplinary and other discourses that the teachers in conversation valued, demonstrated, mediated and critiqued, and then to the kind of literacy students were, thereby, learning through the dialogues among these ways of knowing.

## Problematizing Knowing by Juxtaposing Disciplines

**Differences in history and literature texts.** The major texts of history and literature classes generally represent two different ways of knowing and understanding. A number of theorists have offered explanations of these differences as language based. The history textbook and the novel might be distinguished in this way: "Discursive speech can fix definable concepts better and more exactly. Artistic expression abstracts aspects of the life of feeling which have no names, which have to be presented to sense and intuition rather than to a word-bound note-taking consciousness" (Langer, 1957, p. 94-5). History textbooks are often comprised of transactional uses of language focusing on externally structured and verified tools of explicit analysis; whereas, the poetic uses of language in literary text focus on internal coherence of the personal ways of construing, intensifying the implicit through deliberate organization of words, images, events, ideas, (Applebee, 1978, p. 128; Britton, 1970, p. 177).

Theorists also suggest that there are sharp differences in the ways of knowing resulting from these disciplinary language uses. Bruner suggests: "There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of

ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another" (Bruner , 1986, p. 11). The logical-scientific mode of thinking and world-making deals in establishing general causes through procedures of verification, to test empirical truth in consistent, non-contradictory language which transcends the particular (Bruner, p. 13-14). This paradigmatic thinking may appear in history textbooks (e.g., the four causes of the civil war) as formal abstractions, transcending the particular. Narrative thinking focuses on lived experience, specific human action in context of inner intention: "The inseparability of character, setting, and action must be deeply rooted in the nature of narrative thought," (Bruner, 1986, p. 39).

These theoretical ways of conceptualizing the differences between the disciplines provide some useful distinctions but do not deal with two points important to the class--the "authoritative" type of discourse actually found in history textbooks and the "story" aspect of history. Vygotsky (1971) examines the distinction between "prosaic" stories aimed at clear direct, communication about real life situations and "poetic" stories, with attention directed from the reader's experience and world view toward the story itself. The important movement toward understanding in literary story comes from the reader toward the lived-through experience of the story with its resolution of conflicting emotions, what Rosenblatt (1978) calls the "aesthetic stance." The empirical story of events in history are focused primarily on understanding information to be acquired or solution to a problem outside the text, the "efferent stance." Langer (1990, 1995) distinguishes between reading for literary and informative purposes as guided by different concerns--maintaining a point of reference or reaching toward a horizon of possibilities. She suggests that the kinds of texts read for specific purposes in the context of instruction will influence the thinking students develop. The nature of history textbooks, does complicate the history-literature distinction. Critiques of history textbooks (e.g., Loewen, 1995) call to question whether these books are sources of logical analysis: "The omniscient narrator's voice insulates students from the raw materials of history" and from historical analysis, from the "furious debate informed by evidence and reason" (p. 5). In this view, these books do not exemplify historical thinking. What we can say, though, is that the empirical narratives of history attempt to tell the way it was in the world, while the literary narrative of the novel tends to tell of the inner human struggle in the vicissitudes of the world.

One argument for the integrated class was to interrupt the perceived fragmentation of the curriculum and, instead, allowed students to do what the syllabus

suggested: "To demonstrate the interconnectedness of learning; to present history and literature as part of a larger whole, providing insight and understanding into events in history and the causes and effects of those events on people's lives." Blurring boundaries did provide multiple sources of knowing available to create connected understanding. Another result of the integration, though, was juxtaposing the two types of texts, and the disparity between the discourses of literary texts and historical textbooks posed problems of knowing in the competing discourses for understanding. The tension prompted thinking and a lively search for coherence, which Sharon and Ron actively orchestrated. The theoretical grounds for such an approach suggest its possibilities: "The differences and incongruities that characterize the disciplines of knowledge, moreover, likewise characterize life and action; they challenge students' capacity to form intentions and make connections whose reach, complexity, and flexibility indicate their learning's worth. Though learning depends on structures, it is also fostered by enticing uncertainties, eye-opening experiences, and honest difficulties. Hence denying or eliminating conflicts within and among the disciplines is foolish." (Buchmann & Floden, 1992, p. 5).

From the beginning Sharon and Ron aimed to empower students by enacting a new epistemology, new social relations, a language and process of critique, and a new awareness of competing discourses (Gee, 1990), or social languages for understanding the world (Bakhtin, 1981). In the next sections I will present activities and scenes from the class to illustrate how students became aware of languages for understanding, engaged in cross-disciplinary critique, and began to engage in critical-narrative discourse.

**Literary narrative as a social problem-posing space.** Reading a literary text opens a problem-posing space, one marked by a process of exploring opposing impulses, a gathering of different voices and perspectives into a personally satisfactory whole (Bakhtin, 1986, Dewey, 1934; Gadamer, 1976; Rosenblatt, 1978). What distinguishes our reading of literary text as compared to other texts is our "trafficking in human possibilities, rather than settled certainties" (Bruner, 1986), our reaching toward a "horizon of possibilities" (Langer, 1990) rather than verifying meaning through a linear process. The possibilities for developing and valuing what has been construed as aesthetic or narrative modes of knowing are theoretically rich. Reading and thinking about literary stories "leads to conclusions not about certainties in an aboriginal world, but about the varying perspectives that can be constructed to make experience

comprehensible" (Bruner, 1986, p. 37). Literature within itself is multivocal, already in dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981), providing multiple perspectives in the voices of characters.

The problem of point of view is narrative literature's problem (Scholes & Kellog, 1966, p. 276): The story takes shape primarily by the point of view through which the story is filtered. Point of view controls the reader's impression of everything. Gadamer (1976) emphasizes the active dialogue which begins in an openness to possibilities and speaking for the text, taking the text into oneself in the form of one's own language. Yet entering into conversation with multivocal texts is to enter "an unresolvable ambiguity," a disparity of understanding in different points of view, and, so, the problem of the authority of the narrator.

Literary texts, thus, invite readers to consider a number of competing meanings or stances (Beach, 1995) which are constructed socially, often by past reading experiences in classrooms. Maria distinguished the aesthetic stance toward text treated as multivocal in Sharon and Ron's class from a classroom approach she described as "tell what you're supposed to have interpreted" in her earlier English classes. "From *To Kill a Mockingbird* last year, you are supposed to realize that 'real courage is going to a battle, and knowing that you're going to lose.' Okay, good, maybe I picked up something *different*, but I can't say *that* because that's wrong." Her perception that "there's an outline and you have to pick up certain things," presents the text as already structured, a meaning in itself. In Sharon's and Ron's class the text was treated, instead, as an occasion for meaning making.

In this view, the underlying theme of story incorporates "a plight into which characters have fallen as a result of intentions that have gone awry" because of circumstances, the nature of the actors, or the interaction of the two (Bruner, 1986, p. 21)--but the nature of the characters, intentions, circumstance, are not determinate in the polyvocal space of literature. The reader's "own particular temperament and fund of past transactions to the text, lives through a process of handling new situations, new attitudes, new personalities, new conflicts in values. These he can reject, revise, or assimilate into the resources with which he engages his world" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 173). In this class, students learned from the beginning how to listen to the play of voices, the means of hearing how the language was coming from a perspective, and to enter into a dialogue with the text's multiple, competing social languages.

**Learning to hear the voices.** Considering this play of sometimes conflicting social voices, some explicit, some subtle, gives new importance to something Ron explained about the necessity for reading--it must "become communal. When you read literature, if you just read it yourself, and you don't share and talk about it with other people, there's less meaning." After students finished reading all of *The Scarlet Letter* in mid-October, whole-class discussion of the completed book began with student questions. I want to represent a stretch of talk to present the tenor of sustained discussion and the nature of Sharon's assistive role. (Ron was not present during this part of this class.) The turns of talk are numbered sequentially.

1. Alice: Why do they keep calling Pearl the "elf child?" I don't understand that. It doesn't make any sense.
2. Sharon: We have to remember what the history of this is.
3. Alice: Why elf? What is that to represent?
4. Sharon: Anybody?
5. Jack: I think, wasn't it earlier in the book, when Hester brought Pearl to see the clergyman, because they wanted to take Pearl away from Hester. Like he talked about how, when the minister asked, 'Where did you come from?' you know, and like, and she implied, "the rose bush." Like elf was sort of like, I don't know, "not-of-god," I guess. I don't know.
6. Cara: Well, they always used to say that she has this elfish smile, and I think it was just that she kind of looked like an elf, and she was always by herself, like elves are, kind of.
7. Gary: Well, I don't really know the history of elves, but somewhere I think they come from forests or something like that, so they come from evil according to the Puritans. And so, Pearl came from evil, which would have been Hester.
8. Jan: But they don't say that elves are evil.
9. (students talking)
10. Student: An elf will represent good.
11. Sharon: Yeah, Keebler cookies, that's a good example. So let's think about Hawthorne writing this. When did he write this?

12. Jack: 1850
13. Sharon: We also have a sense of what he thinks about Pearl. Is Pearl something that manifests evil?
14. Student: No
15. Sharon: After all was said and done, not at all. But probably the community was still very questioning of her and her origins and saw her as an 'elf child' in that negative way. So I suspect that he was kind of showing us through the eyes of the community, but the outcome of the book kind of tells us that he thought something different. Which is something we need to think about, the book in general. What does Hawthorne think about Hester?
16. Lyn: I think he likes her, because he didn't write anything negative about her. He showed her as strong, as loving to Pearl, so I think he likes her.
17. Dick: I think he feels sorry for her.
18. Jack: I think he didn't really show an opinion. Like he just sort of told the facts, of what people were like, and what they did and stuff
19. Sam: It's told subjectively, although he might tell it like it's the truth, Hester might have been a sniveling little whiny person, but if you like her, you know, he treated her good in the story, you know what I mean. So my feeling is that he sort of liked Hester as a character because he treated her well in the story.
20. Sharon: I think that that's something that we need to remember about every time something is written, is that as objective as it seems to be, the words are there to shape our thinking very much, and he has presented Hester as very noble, patient, rising above all of those things. How does he portray the general Puritan community?
21. Cara: Kind of like they don't want to be happy. Everything is wrong to them.
22. Bob: Kind of like sheep, they follow whatever they are told by the minister.
23. Alice: I think he portrays them as being snobs, something is not done in a certain way, then that's, they think it's like impure and they sinned. They have a snobby way of doing things.



24. Gary: I'm just wondering if this book caused a lot of shock, being, because I hadn't heard of many books being, I mean from this time period where they would have an adulterous minister as the antagonist, and an adulterous protagonist.
25. Sharon: Very nicely observed...

Alice's question about meaning begins this sequence and Sharon (#2) reminds students to consider the historical context. Alice (#3) reframes the question as one of symbolism, a literary tool. Sharon (#4) turns the question back to the class for them to pursue, her customary move. Jack, Cara and Gary then collaborate to answer. Jack returns to the text to cite a relevant conversation, Cara (#6) speculates about the appropriateness of the representation of Pearl from the Puritan's perspectives. Gary (#7) reasons from "the history of this," his knowledge of the Puritan's perspectives, that "elf child" refers to evil.

Sharon (#13) comes in, then, to support students' untangling of the play of perspectives in the novel. Using Pearl as an example, Sharon (#15) emphasizes in the context of the story that some of the language, like "elf-child," seems to represent Pearl "through the eyes of the community." This dialogue within novelistic discourse between the Puritan community view and Hawthorne's view is a key point in demonstrating the play of perspectives in the novel. Sharon asks students to consider Hawthorne's view of Hester. Students see her portrayal as a loving parent as positive or sympathetic (#16-7). When Jack suggests that Hawthorne "told the facts," though, Sam (#19) quickly puts in, "It's told subjectively although he might tell it like it's the truth." He supports his notion with an example of how "treatment" in text is not the same as reality. Sharon underscores this point about seeming (third-person narration) objectivity masking persuasive intentions (#20), in literary text and in anything that is "written," then further pursues the issue of perspective, this time in Hawthorne's "portrayal" of Puritans. Her language picks up Sam's notion of how characters are "treated." Students collaborate on a short list of negative qualities portrayed by Hawthorne somewhat indirectly (#21-23) through the conflicting actions and intentions of characters. The focus of this stretch of supported talk was on the dialectical nature of the literary text, already formed within itself as a play of opposing forces. Gary locates the book within its historical contexts when he asks about the reception of the book.

Literary discourse worked against the authoritarian Puritan voices because its dialogic space includes multiple voices and lived-through experiences of Hester and the

minister. Students needed to learn how to make sense of this multivocality, needed strategies for learning to listen to the play of voices and to construct some understanding of what "perspective" means. The critical analysis of the "intentions" of the minister's discourse was complemented with narrative thinking, where the psychic reality of consciousness--what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel--leading to narrative construction of intentions. The irony of the minister's asking Pearl, his own secret child, where she came from, and then branding her with language that, students generally agreed, suggests her evil source is part of the multivocal layering Sharon is helping students to hear.

The teachers demonstrated and encouraged intertextual and life connections, but they interrupted singular, monologic notions of characters and events. An example occurs in Nick's journal, as he wonders whether *The Street* "could have been written in Russia during the time of Peter the Great or any other time period [because] the story's basic principles, ideas and things are ageless...It's not a story about Lutie, a woman in the Harlem in the 1920s. It's about human nature." Sharon responds: "Are there many perspectives necessary for a 'human nature' concept---?" In a later section of his journal after many intervening experiences, including seeing *Shindler's List*, he ponders that, "Sometimes bad people do good things like Shindler. This leads me to think there is no such thing as good people and bad people. Maybe there's just people and people's actions." Sharon comments: "Excellent proposition." The teachers were supporting students' hearing the play of social voices in novels, the tensions and differences--not silencing them with a final, unifying theme and not accepting the authority of narrators simply because, as Sam put it, they "tell it like it's truth."

**"Jumping out of water:" What literature contributes to history.** Ron explained that "It's hard for history teachers to think of doing anything other than using a history book. It's like fish not understanding that there could be other perspectives in water that they swim in." For Ron, one reason to use literature with history was this: "We're jumping out of the water to gain another perspective."

"Can anyone say a priori that history is completely independent of what goes on in the minds of its participants?" (Bruner, 1986, pp. 42-3). Our focal student Kim made a similar distinction in her interview when I asked about what in the class made her think more deeply:

Just everything that they [teachers] presented has given a different perspective and different view to think about than what they write about in textbooks. You know, you get [in textbooks] a paragraph on this thing, and that thing, and they don't tell you, I mean, they'll give you the facts, they'll give you the date, and how things happened sequentially, but you don't get into the lives of the people and how it actually affected the lives of real people.

The "real people" Kim spoke of included characters from *The Street* and from the film *Thunderheart*. I asked her to imagine that some people might be skeptical about using literature in history class. She responded:

All the books we've read, *The Jungle*, *Grapes of Wrath*, was about a time period in history that, I mean, they'll teach you in class, but you don't learn about the people, and how they had to move, and how there was no work, even though there were little flyers all over the country saying that there was. I mean, you, they'll go through the statistics of how many people moved to California, and that sort of thing, but I mean that's all you have, and you have this bundle of facts and you don't know what to do with it. And you regurgitate it back on this little piece of paper for the test, and then you forget it. But if you read a book like *Grapes of Wrath*, and you realize that those are people, and they're real, and they have to go through that, and they are kicked off their land...having the literature brings you into the experience, I think.

Kim insists here that the events in the literature they read are "real," and that only through such stories can she know "what to do with" the "bundle of facts" from history textbooks. Her argument again echoes Bruner (1986): We need narratives to "constitute the psychological and cultural reality in which the participants in history actually live," to understand the "life stuff" of history (p. 43), and, I would add, to hear a play of multiple voices on that history.

## Interrupting the Authoritative Voice with Multiple Narratives

**Multiple source assignments.** For the multiple source paper students gathered information from different sources and, based on what they found, presented a coherent story to teach to the class. In the first paper on either African American or Native American events, issues, or peoples, each student got three topics and were asked to "develop some perspective on what's connecting these people in some way." For the second group on one labor issue topic from a suggested list, students had to see more to the lives of people involved than was commonly known. Ron used Helen Keller as an example of someone taught about in elementary school, known for overcoming disability, but not known for her being "an advocate for factory reform. She was a socialist, she opposed war, she was a pacifist, she was a woman's rights advocate...Andrew Carnegie was so infuriated with Helen Keller because of her views, he said one time, 'That young woman I want to put over my knee, and spank her.'" The transaction of real people and events in tension--the story including the external events and the intentions of actors--was the important element of the task. As Kim wrote her multiple source paper in the first person she moved among perspectives and felt, "if you are sitting in the middle of it...you learn more." She similarly felt herself moving within historical perspectives as an active participator in the debate on education. In these dialectics Kim felt "my view became wider."

The texts students read, for example during the African American theme, also suggested multivocal possibilities for history reports. Jack and Bob both read *To Be a Slave* and recommended it. They liked the play of voices from different people: "It was pretty neat, I mean the stuff comes from everywhere...I think this is the way to write about something historical, to find documented history and take quotes, even though it's all from individuals, and it's not supposed to be looking at it as a whole, if you take the individuals and get a sampling, a cross section." Ron provided the name, "oral history, more and more people are saying exactly what you're saying. That's a way to get a feel for a time period. Instead of, 'let's interview Dan Quayle and find out what the 80s were all about, let's make him one of many.'" Other students presented to the class their chosen books--e.g., *Life of a Slave Girl*, *Black Like Me*, *Miss Jane Pitman*, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, *Strange Fruit*--and these texts presented another play of voices of males and females of color in slavery, at the turn of the century and in contemporary cities. Short discussions broke out all during these sharing sessions, with inter-textual

connections serving as an oral multiple-source consideration of racism, slavery, injustice, and The Civil Rights Movement. In such a play of stories and texts, it was difficult, for example, to construct slavery as it is portrayed in history textbooks, as an "uncaused tragedy" not linked to racism (Loewen, 1995).

**"Realizing you have a voice:" Critiquing textbook accounts.** On a day when Sharon was absent students in groups compared topics they researched in their multiple-source activities with the account of their topic in the school district's U.S. history textbook, *The American Pageant*. During one group's report back to the class, different views of the textbook within the group prompted lengthy discussion. At the front of the class in panel presentation format, the group (Erin, Jan, Mark and John) summarized their search for references to Asia and Asian Americans in the 950-page book; they found a few sentences on Cambodia, Vietnam covered extensively, Japan "covered extensively because of the trade war," four pages on Korea, four pages on China, two pages on Asian Americans. John concluded, "I think it was a balanced and fair text. If anything it was biased towards minorities, it talks about protestors, it acknowledges the Indians as 'the oldest Americans.'" Generally, John's stance toward history was his preference, he told me, for "standardized history that you see in the textbook"; his view of knowledge was, "There's always a truth and an incorrect view, so I think we could present it in a more unified front, as what America in general values."

After John spoke, Mark reported, "I found the opposite of John. I thought this book was ethnocentric." John disagreed, talking at some length, concluding that the textbook is "the best method we have now...the purpose is to be as objective as possible. Regarding literature, the author is not attempting to be objective." This challenge to the use of story is taken up by the class later, but first Mark returns to the textbook for an "example of why I think this book is biased...He reads a sentence about immigration, which begins, "'What prompted this new flocking to America was...'" He [the writer] says, '*This is why,*' like it's the absolute truth." Mark notices here the language of the book (e.g., its use of nominalization without an actor) as a marker of the speaker's stance toward knowledge, an existing truth without a knower or interpreter, without a doubt.

Mark and John's different perspectives spurred an extended, sometimes heated conversation. I want to highlight a few exchanges to characterize how some in the class were beginning to critique authoritative discourse with growing conviction, while still listening, considering, and responding to opposing positions. After Mark's comment

about the text tone of "absolute truth," Ron asks a question which moves students to consider treatment of marginalized groups as another marker of a monologic view:

1. Ron: How does the book approach difference?
2. Mark: In most cases it uses numerical information...
3. Nick: How many pages are in the text?
4. John: 950.
5. Nick: So out of 950, 73 pages seems like a small amount [of references to Asia or Asian Americans].
6. John: I agree it's minimal, but it's an adequate amount because its an American history text
7. Nick: Wouldn't it be biased?
8. John: Everything is biased. Everything is written from some point of view, but the intent is to be as non-biased as possible.
9. Kris: So, you've come to the conclusion that it's somewhat biased?

John does not respond right away to Kris (#9), and Millie asks the group a different question, which I will return to shortly. To begin this sequence, Ron (#1) makes an assistive move, asking about how the textbook approaches "difference." This question is generated from a three question heuristic Sharon and Ron had introduced earlier in the year: Who is speaking? What is privileged? What voices are left out? Mark has already raised the issues of the textbook speaker privileging his own version of truth--immigrants "flocking to America"--and Ron here reminds subtly of the need to consider how those people marked "different" may be the missing voices in the text. Mark's response (#2) suggests he has already noted that representation of difference occurs by counting numbers of people, not including their perspectives, which seems to lead Nick (#3) to inquire into representation in the textbook, but construed as amount of space, the number of pages. John's answer (#6) reveals a position he has not voiced before, that the struggle against bias is necessary because all writing is from a point of view. This formulation contradicts John's often repeated monologic vision of a single "American" perspective, his concern about "looking at [history] from our own perspective, and not the perspective of every little minority." Kris (#9) seeks acknowledgment from John that they do now share some common ground in his assertion that "Everything is biased." Immediately Millie speaks for the first time, to revisit the question of representation:



10. Millie: Does it deal with Asian Americans in the U.S.?
11. John: Specifically on Asian Americans? Specifically, two pages.
12. Millie: How can you say it's fair, then, when Asian Americans make up more than 2% of the population?...
13. Ron: Was there anything on the Japanese Americans in internment camps?
14. John: Just the bare facts.

Millie (#10) returns to the most glaring example of marginalized perspectives in the group report, but does it conversationally, asking John a question, not informing him; she is using the same conversational style Ron uses (#13) when he next assists by raising the specific incident of internment camps in a question to help focus the critique. Lori then looked up the textbook paragraph on Japanese American internment camps and read it. Ron raised a question about whether "objectivity" fits the passage: "I wonder, when dealing with human conduct and behavior if it [objectivity] is appropriate. Would you have wanted that paragraph to be different? These people were put in a camp because of their race. This is something to think about." No one takes up this consideration until later, but it is noteworthy that Ron is opening up spaces for reflection, not concluding or insisting. Candy asks how much of the material was war-related and suggests that that might be a bias. At this point Pam and Leo collaborate to suggest the textbook is incomplete because pragmatically "there is not enough room." Still, they suggest that the text could be used "just as a guideline." Ron reminded students about the power issue, which had been dramatized for them in the top ten events in history activities: "We are talking about how do we select what goes in and who does the selecting." Marcos, in his characteristic sardonic tone, explained his understanding of the selecting, related to positionality and power: "It's the view that conforms with your bias that you think is unbiased."

Ted then raised a new concern, which seems to me a return to Ron's question about whether "objectivity" fits the internment camp passage: "I think it's important that a history book include something about the people." The talk quickly became fast-paced as Pam and Andre argued for "straight facts" in textbooks and using stories in other texts, while Nick felt that the "stories of the people" should be in the textbook: "Not every class is going to be like this where you get a chance to look at all those other books. Most



classes are going to be straight textbook." Nick has raised a concern with how knowledge is represented generally in textbooks, naming the missing perspectives as "stories of the people." The bell rang for the between-class break, but John and Erin stayed, deeply engrossed in talk about the fact/bias problem.

When the second period of the class began again, Ron asked if someone had been talking when the bell rang and several hands went up. He asked a student to take over, with "Mark, if you could be in charge, that would be great." Small moves like these recur with both teachers and signal, explicitly, student control of the talk. Kris spoke first, taking up Nick's final point about stories and Ron's question about objectivity in human behavior to construct a response to Andre:

15. Kris: This is for Andre. Just wondering, if you were in a concentration camp and someone was writing about that in a history book, wouldn't you want the story of the people in there to be in the book?"
16. Andre: What is a fact? It should just tell what happened.
17. Mark: Facts can also be quotes from people.
18. Kris: [to Mark] But he says if it's not in there [textbook], go read another book.
19. Pam: If there's 9 million people in the population and you want everyone's point of view, that's what you guys are saying. If a text just had facts, it would be thin.
20. Marcos: We could make a book with all facts, but what would be the point of reading that book?
21. Lori: It's like, you know there was a Russian Revolution, but you don't know what it was about.

Kris (#15), who wrote in her journal that reading the native American stories has "set a fire" inside her, asks the class to look through the eyes of someone in a concentration camp to understand the importance of people's stories being represented in history. Despite her passion for this topic, she addresses Andre thoughtfully, with an explicit appeal to look through others' eyes to understand the human consequences in these public events. Andre (#16) names a problem that has been implicit in the talk about the nature of "facts"--what are they?--and Mark (#17) contends that what people have to say, their

stories, would count as "facts," a redefinition to include subjectivities in the factual. Pam's (#19) individualist stance is evident as she again reduces the problem to a depoliticized one of too many views (9 million!) and limited space. Marcos (#20) and Lori (#21) take up her "just facts" idea and collaborate briefly on the idea that history needs to include people's stories in order to understand "the point" or "to know what it was about." They are arguing the need for a narrative knowing. Before going on to the next small group presentation, Ron comments:

While we were having this conversation something occurred to me, a quote, 'There is no path. We make the path as we go,' as we live, as we think, as we learn. Then there's the other idea, 'There is a path and you're going to follow me, this is the right way.' It strikes me that you [perhaps Lori, Kris, Mark, Nick, Ted] are believing that you can make your own path, what you value, who you are. You are realizing that you have a voice. In the future you're going to stand up and express your viewpoint. You [perhaps Pam, Andre, John] seem to be saying that you should explore and compare *and trust*, to make up your own mind.

Ron re-frames the discussion here through the metaphor of path, suggesting students are motivated by stances toward knowing, perhaps ideologies, which have potential consequences for living. His metaphorical literary discourse suggests the import of students' voices as world views and ways of being in the world. He connects their conversation to the possibility of action. The contrast between those who make paths and have a voice and those who follow paths and trust is gently drawn. One might argue that Ron missed an opportunity to make more explicit the politics of the power to name and to silence. Rather than neglecting to instruct with a sharply powerful conclusion, Ron, I believe, has chosen a more difficult path for himself. Both he and Sharon carefully maintain conversation with all students, regardless of their views. As Sharon often said, referring to her sense that students were in-process, still reflecting and growing, "They are not finished yet." Sharon and Ron did not subvert the dialogical process by privileging their own interpretations. The dialectic, the "ongoing" conversation remained more important than the specific content of each conversation.

Ron explained in an interview:

Many people, teachers, parents, they want to fix kids immediately. And they believe that they have to intervene aggressively and fix somebody, and if they don't do it right away, either they failed or the kid is less served and he's always going to be that way. And I think that's one of the benefits of looking at the longer range. Because we're not constantly trying to fix everything, day by day. You know kids do things and say things that a lot of us trust, they're just experimenting. They're trying to learn how to live, and if you take a little longer view, then I think you're not as frustrated. There's that possibility down the road, even for John.

As long as safety for ideas prevailed, the dialogic stance maintained the intellectual and social relationships among all students and what they brought, including their differences and biases. Sharon and Ron did not treat their students as objects to be deposited in (Friere, 1970), nor as mere reproductions of social privilege to be restructured. They respected students' potential to reconstruct themselves in problem-posing dialogue.

In short, as Ron said concluding this discussion, "The key is that we're willing to have a conversation about it." In the quoted episode, students had examined the nature of bias, facts, truth, objectivity, and people's stories with some passion, returning to the text for examples; with assistance from Ron they had considered a concrete instance; reflected on issues of power, voice, and silencing; and considered again how stance shapes views. This discussion was a piece of a four-day activity which students often referred to in our interviews; generally, they were dismayed at the interpretations, omissions, or distortions they perceived in textbooks as inadequate to present the person, event, or problem they had come to know so well from multiple report and narrative perspectives. In this sequence of assignments, students by the end begin to feel the missing voice of lived-through experience and some found that problematic. In the stimulated recall interview Nick pointed out Marcos's "enlightening" comment about bias in this sequence, and wondered about John's positionality:

Asian Americans really are an important part of the U.S., and this whole thing took place when we were studying immigration, and so it was really on my mind because we were reading all those things and it surprised me that it wasn't as much on John's mind...it sounds like he's taking the, I don't know, the easy way out, saying that the way they *tell* us is right.

Here the voices of Nick's mind included consideration of previously excluded others. The social voices of living language and lived experience were becoming part of the way students thought about history, in the same way that these voices were part of constructing their multiple source papers and discussions. Nick and others had begun to seek those missing conversations and missing stories excluded in texts and talk. For some students who found no mention of their multiple source topics in history textbooks, Sharon told me, "They start getting angry at what has not been available to them." Kit, for one, was disturbed to find "the history book glossed over a lot of things" on Sacco and Vanzetti, her multiple source paper topic. On the other hand, Ron noted with satisfaction, "If something was covered fairly well, they were able to evaluate, they thought that they had the confidence to say, 'They did a pretty good job with this.' They're talking about the *textbook*. I mean, it was great! They realized that they had some information, and some knowledge and confidence." In place of the authoritative tone of the textbook, students collaborate to analyze a problematic issue, in this case an opportunity to "investigate knowledge-producing practices" by engaging in reflexive critique (Salvatori, 1996).

**"More than just an intellectual process:" Narrative critique of authoritative texts.**

The ongoing journal responses provided clear evidence of how the dialectic of authoritative discourse of textbook history and the narrative discourse of literature prompted reflection and evolving understandings. Kim spoke infrequently in class discussion but wrote an extensive journal over the year. During the first unit of study she read, besides *The Scarlet Letter*, three texts written from Native American perspectives--*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, *Black Elk Speaks*, and *Laughing Boy*. She used her informal journal writing to express her sadness and anger over the "cover-up" in school history about the development of the United States. At the beginning of November she wrote:

They say this country was built on the belief in freedom of all kinds, freedom of religion, of the press, freedom of speech--never believe it. It was built on the blood and broken bones of Native American women, children, infants, and elders. And on the sorry efforts and eventual deaths of the braves who fought cannons and guns with bows and arrows. The

massacre at Wounded Knee speaks for that. White soldiers opening fire at retreating women and children. And they called them savages. Ha!

Kim's disillusionment with "this country" is presented here as an opposition between the constitutional historical language of what "they say" about the ideals of American democracy and the narratives of America's treatment of Native Americans. She brings together this authoritative voice in dialogue with the stories of lived experience. Of the two voices interacting in her journal text, the previously silenced Native American one "speaks" to her more persuasively about injustice, leading Kim to feel a deep irony in the popular representation of Native Americans as "savages," another monologic--single-perspectived--construction.

Kim later continues this conversation, this time implicitly between the discourse of American history textbooks, which she had previously not questioned, and a new critical discourse she is constructing out of the Native American narratives she has read.

Let's see, what has America done that's good? I'm sure it's done something beneficial. Well, in the earlier years, it expanded its borders, pushed west, brought civilization to the wild, untamed land. That's good, right? Hmmm. In doing that, we also pushed the Native Americans off the land. (What right did they have to be on our land before we claimed it? Rotten savages.) We put them on reservations. Because of us, they starved. Because of us, they began to lose their culture, and we were too stupid to see what was slipping away. Because of us, many of them were left without even their pride intact. That would be too much to leave them with. Demean the enemy as much as possible. That's our policy. Because of us, our slender view of the Native Americans is reduced to the stereotypical, feathered, 'How, white man,' Indian. Gee, that's not too good.

Looking at the language of history texts ("expanded its borders, pushed west") *through* the language of the lived-experience in narratives ("without even their pride"), produces for Kim a binocular view. We can now hear her words as "double-voiced," (Bakhtin, 1981), as in her ironic use of "brought civilization to the wild untamed land," which she problematizes in opposing the abstract heroic words "pushed west" with the concrete

"pushed the Native Americans off the land." She mediates the bitterness of her response with a dramatic conversation between languages, her own ironic commentary, and deliberate understatement--the narrative-novelistic language for expressing conflict and discrepancy. She includes herself now in the "we" that earlier was "white soldiers," and her discomfort with this position prompts the further dialogue of her thinking. She moves her attention temporally, too, from the Western expansion period to present day, linking popular stereotyped representations of "Indians" to historically constructed attitudes and language as the sources of these images. She dramatizes the voices "hidden" in the single authoritative discourse to account for expansion: "What right did they have to be on our land before we claimed it?" animating its orientation to uncover its social significance, its unpleasant motivations (greed) and assumptions (only we have rights). Her emerging critical awareness that textbook language is not predetermined truth, but a social language constructed from a perspective is evident here and throughout her journal.

As Kim read *The Street*, she reflected on discrimination and stereotypes of people of color. This thinking prompted her to tell a personal story in her journal, a narrative which showed the kinds of discrimination she experiences in school and problematizes further the textbook version of equality:

I'm listening to this class...talking about indifference and having or not having time to do anything about discrimination aimed at oneself. Today, in the library, I was sitting in the far, far back. It was very peaceful, just walls and walls of books and me. Then three male students from Mr. P's class started 'stalking me,' imitating 'Chinese talk,' and doing stupid stuff like that. And I ignored it, because I was used to it. Then they started throwing books at me. Damn good thing their aim was so lousy. For a long while I didn't do anything (indifference), until I began feeling sorry for the poor abused books. So, I picked them up, walked straight to their table, dropped them in front of their stupid faces and said, 'Yours, I believe,' and went away. I thought I was being brave in their faces. Now, I'm considering that all I really did was to dare them to throw the books at me again. But, since they did stop throwing books, I guess it doesn't matter.

Kim moves from the abstract topic of responding to discrimination raised in class discussion to generate an illustration in a concrete personal narrative. Into a peaceful scene of herself in the library intrude the voices of males "imitating 'Chinese talk,'" actions Kim says she is "used to." Kim spoke infrequently in class, her manner was somewhat diffident. This choice she made, to pick up books which had been thrown at her, walk across to the boys who had thrown them and speak directly to them appears as a startling difference in behavior. Instead of "ignoring them," because she "was used to it," she chose not to be "indifferent" or silent, but to act. Kim links her action directly to the conversation in class about doing something about discrimination aimed at oneself. This story becomes a representative anecdote, prompting her further thinking about her thinking and an awareness of herself as a meaning maker and actor in the world. Through the reading, writing, and talking in the class, Kim has been reconstruing America as a country of many stories, problematizing the notion of one common voice; in this entry she takes from the class dialogue her reflections about indifference towards discrimination as opposed to action, and acts to interrupt the unjust stereotyped construction of her ethnic identity by others. The dialogue has opened up for her new possibilities for action and change. Her empowering discourse calls to question the language that construes her here as a target, a silent object; she subverts the monologue by acting and talking back. As Kim reeses the power of the word to shape our seeing, she begins to resee possibilities for reshaping herself and the world (Friere, 1970).

Shortly after, Kim reflected on her definition of the American Dream, the ongoing class project. She wrote: "What kind of Dream was it or is it now for the Native Americans, the Black people, All the minorities? They treated them like crap and turned around and said, 'This is the country where all men are created equal--where there's freedom, freedom, freedom!' The discrepancies between the public discourse of equality in democracy *and* the lived experiences of marginalized people (including her, sometimes) continue to converse as voices in Kim's writing. As she becomes more cognizant of the world-views within these different ways with words, the notion of the "American Dream," reminds her of another discourse of public persuasion, of selling. The repetition of "freedom, freedom, freedom" echoes the language of advertising: "Well, I never had much faith in the A.D. anyway. I always associated it with real estate commercials." The contradictions between idealistic words and concrete actions prompt further her dialogic reflection. Kim's multivocal thinking is evident here as she moves



dialectically among voices in order to understand these world views, actively thinking about her own choices of language, her own ways of shaping the world in words.

In her final paper synthesizing her provisional understanding at the end of the course, Kim compares America to a corrupt faith healer in need of healing itself, pushing money and possessions as a cure-all to any unsuspecting fool. Yet she says, too, "And now, I'll say something amiable about this land we live in, something in defense of it. In another place, in another time, I probably could not have written this paper without some evil repercussions. It's reassuring to know I can write this paper without being arrested as a dissenter." Kim has not rejected this voice of what America aspires to, here "freedom of speech," but she no longer privileges it as the only truth. She recognizes the competing voices, the plural and even contradictory meanings of America as necessary in "this land we live in," this democracy. Her resisting of a singular view of America as oppressive and unjust is an important part of what Kim has learned. She has come to value dialogue of voices and to resist monologue, a single, simplifying truth, regardless of its content. In an interview, Kim explained that students know about a lot of "terrible" things like the Holocaust, but it "stays in Europe, it doesn't come here." Learning what actually happened in America "seemed more honest about this country. I mean there are wonderful things that come out of this country, but there are also things that people don't like to look at, but they need to, and these are the things that our class is making the students do, is making them look." She chose "realization" as a key descriptive word for her in the class because "All the things I've been learning have caused me to grow."

The teachers all along were helping Kim to orient herself among the incongruities and potential disjointedness of the multiple perspectives. For instance, in her journal, Kim wrote about her growing awareness of intolerance in America, "It frightens me that people can close their eyes, their ears, and their hearts and pretend it doesn't happen." She considers, on the other hand, "I wish I could say that I owe nothing to this country, but I do, damn it, I do. I think I'm going to write a play." Kim apprehends these conflicting stances as the stuff of literary texts. Ron nudges her to move beyond this dichotomy in marginal questions, "How can we 'settle' for things not quite 'pure' or 'perfect'??--The Puritan legacy perhaps?? What do you think?" The journal dialogue of Kim with herself about the class is in further dialogue, here and throughout, with the teachers; Ron at this point suggests that she think further about whether her longing for "pure" goodness for America may be a "Puritan legacy." Kim's journal response to the film *Thunderheart*, included a question, "Taking children out of school at

gun point? That is justified by looking for one, lone man?" Ron gives a quoted answer in another's voice, "law and order." This comment is itself a naming from a frame of reference different from the narrative lived-through discourse of the film, an ironic gap. The comment is one possible response given from a particular valuative stance about the need to suppress conflict in the world; the question raised is what is "justified" by the need for "law and order." In this conversation of voices, Kim feels compelled to speak. She wrote about how reading the Native American novels had "killed any illusions about this country I had left. I know things now. I can't just close my eyes any more. And at the same time, it hurts to look. It's so comfortable to just close your eyes." In his marginal response, Ron places her thoughts and feelings into a larger structure of learning and growing: "I suspect that we learn most when we are somewhat 'uncomfortable'--and understanding is more than just an *intellectual* process or task. What do you think?" He provides no final answer, but he does provide a way of valuing Kim's growth and helping her to think about what's involved in her learning and thinking.

Kim moves back and forth between public and private languages, from history and literary perspectives creating a dialectical structure, a conversational "unity" provoked by the differences. As Kim talks to herself here, we see what kind of language is on its way inward to become her voices of the mind (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Through multiple recursive conversations with self, with texts, with others, Kim moves among multiple conflicting languages and meanings for the same thing. She is developing the ability to imaginatively put languages in dialogue, to look at one language or perspective through the eyes of another and realize the limits of any one language or perspective on the world. She is learning the means of not being entrapped in one seemingly predetermined language, one point of view.

As she and other students have entered into conversations with each other and multivocal texts they are becoming knowing participants in what Bakhtin (1981) calls a "dialogic imagination," able to "interanimate" languages or perspectives as a means of thinking critically about the world. Specifically, in this class, the teachers and students constructed what I see as a "critical-narrative discourse" acquired and learned in their dialectical talk and activity. As the language of critique and the language of the literary narrative have become conversational partners with authoritative language, students were learning to move among these conflicting languages and meanings for the same event, becoming conscious of silenced voices, of multiple perspectives, and of the limits of monologic ways of knowing. Critical-narrative discourse provides a dialogic stance

toward the authority of written and oral texts; the particular dialogues of concern are between authoritative discourse (such as history textbooks) and multivocal discourses (such as literary narratives and critical heuristics) which interrupt these monologues. Further, the sometimes skeptical language of critique is in a dialectical relationship with the generative language of story, a form for creating human coherence out of inevitable conflicts and tensions and for becoming conscious that understanding is more than just an *intellectual* process or task. Critical-narrative discourse assumes multiple possible meanings from multiple possible perspectives, and the need for constructing one's own meaning from this web of meanings, of social languages (Bakhtin, 1981). The dialogue of voices provides the occasion and the means for taking responsibility for making sense and making connections in an honest human coherence comprised of conflicts and tensions which admit growth and change, not a singular truth (Buchmann & Floden, 1992). In Sharon and Ron's terms, they all "make the paths as we go." I take up the nature of this critical-narrative dialogue as it continued to play out in the class in the next section.

**"Ongoing dialogue of history and stories and events": Internalizing critical-narrative discourse.** Dialogue of the Private and Public. Literature, Bruner (1986) has argued, functions to "open us to dilemmas, to the hypothetical, to the range of possible worlds that a text can refer to...Literature subjunctivizes, makes strange, renders the obvious less so, the unknowable less so as well ...Literature, in this spirit, is an instrument of freedom" (Bruner, 1986, p. 159). Literature as "an instrument of freedom" gained power in the class when the class situated texts within their social-historical contexts. If literature provided understanding of the human consequences of public events, then, history provided the sociocultural public context for personal experience and action. Ron viewed the possibilities for the integration in this way: "Everyone has stories and those stories are not the ones we get in the history books--those are stories but they're very select, such a narrow range...so if we want a larger perspective so the kids know what time it is, and what day it is, they're going to have to hear other stories and the stories come from literature and from people's history." His notion that the larger historical perspective--"what time it is, and what day it is"--depends on stories is echoed by Sharon: History and literature are "wonderful subjects around which we can look at how people live their lives and make decisions about how we're going to live our lives." In both of these formulations the focus appears to be on students situating themselves in

the world of public events and private lived lives for future action. To this end, Sharon hoped for an "ongoing dialogue of history and stories and events" in the class. In the sequence that follows from an October discussion of *The Scarlet Letter*, we can see what such a goal sometimes meant. This sequence occurs shortly after the section of the "Elf-child" already described. Students had written journal entries and discussed in small groups while they had read the book. This was the final whole-class discussion.

26. Dick: I have a question about the scarlet letter. Was that like a physical thing, or was it like mental? You know, because at the end of one of the chapters, like way back when, they said that it was glowing and stuff, I don't understand.
27. Sharon: Do you think it really was?
28. Dick: I don't know.
29. Erica: I always thought that it was like sewn in, until she threw it off. I didn't understand, did she wear the same dress?
30. Sam: I did think that it was physical, because the glowing thing was, that was like a story.
31. Dick: Yeah, it was like burned into her.
32. Alice: I just thought of this. But I'm thinking that maybe they make her wear the scarlet letter, for the same reason that Jews had to wear the star of David, so that people would be aware to stay away, and I was just thinking that.
33. Sharon: Excellent comparison. Because what was that star attempting to do?
34. Alice: Trying to stop people from giving Jews the same rights that they had.
35. Bill: to alienate them.
36. Sharon: The alienation, possible humiliation, degradation, whatever they thought they could do as a punishment.
37. Ron: Can anyone think historically as Alice did with the star of David? Can you think of how you could confront that, as a group of people, if you thought that in fact labeling people that way was detrimental, a denial of their basic rights as human beings?

38. Jack: In Switzerland, they like allowed the Jews to escape to there, and then everybody in Switzerland wore the star of David, when the Nazis tried to invade it, they couldn't tell who was Jewish.
39. Ron: Yes, they expect people to play by the rules, and everyone put on the star of David.
40. Alice: It was Denmark, I think it was Denmark. The King didn't feel right just to make the Jews wear the star, so he made everybody wear it, including himself, so when the Nazis came in, they were all confused.
41. Sharon: What a set up, if only I had the right CD with me. We will play a song for you tomorrow, that tells the whole story, an incredible ballad
42. Student: Who sings it?
43. Sharon: Fred Small
44. Cara: I was thinking, over the summer, I read an article on Billings, Montana, where they had neo-Nazis smashing windows of Jews and everyone in the whole town put up Minorahs in their windows, so they could no longer tell who was Jewish and who wasn't, the whole town rallied around everyone.
45. Sharon: Incredible
46. Ron: Those were two examples that had come to mind, one 50 years ago, and one last year. There may be others, but sometimes people feel powerless, and they don't realize that maybe in numbers there is power. They think of other kinds of power--people who have uniforms or positions of power--and therefore they feel that there's nothing that can be done about orders and things they have to do...What ways have people found over the centuries and over the years, to confront those things? That's something to think about.

The metaphor of the scarlet letter poses a problem for Dick (#26)--was it real or imagined? Much of the novel was about the multilayered meanings of this letter, and Sharon (#27), as always, turns the most interesting questions back to the class. This stretch of talk is rich with implication. At first the literal, material nature of Hester's letter is considered, but Sam and Dick together (#30-31) understand it metaphorically, "like a story," or psychically, "burned into her." Dick's own metaphor of "burning," with its associations of branding and pain, reveal his own indwelling in the meaning of the text, the landscape of Hester's internal consequence for the external actions witnessed by the Puritan community and the reader. Perhaps with this metaphoric leap, Alice makes a leap of her own, an historical connection to the "Star of David" Jews were forced to wear by Nazis. The implicit connections between "burning" and branding of Jews in the camps is unstated, but Alice has written about this fact in her journal as she explored her own family heritage. Sharon (#33) asks a brief question, providing a scaffold to help Alice (#34) complete her analogy and Bill (#35) elaborates. Sharon (#36) briefly synthesizes their narrative-historical insight about alienation as a punishment for being different. She has perhaps spurred their thinking along these lines from the start by wearing the letter "A" herself as they began the novel, asking students in small groups what it might mean.

Ron (#37) moves to identify Alice's comment as "historical thinking," and asks students for other examples, real or imagined. Jack and Alice (#38 & 40) collaborate to provide a striking example of collective action, against the Nazis. Sharon (#41) remembers a song about the incident (which she does play for them the next day). Cara (#44) provides a recent example of the same kind of group resistance to oppression from neo-Nazis in the United States. Sharon and Ron are impressed (#45 & 46) by these telling stories, and, I believe, by the "incredible" collaboration. Ron takes his turn in the conversation to point out the similarities of the stories in the "power" of people jointly to overcome abusive intolerance of difference.

This is, indeed, as Ron says, "something to think about." Students were learning about the power of collective action and commitment, these "habits of the heart" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985), through the power of metaphor and story. The critical-narrative discourse, drawing on narrative and historical thinking, is creating new assumptions about possibilities for human action in society. I would argue that these kinds of conversations were not happenstance, but carefully prepared for in the talk and activity of the class. They stand in stark contrast to the literature class experience Maria described where they committed to memory monologic statements, themes, about the



nature of human courage. That approach to finding the theme of *The Scarlet Letter* could, I believe, lead to students rejecting the book as old-fashioned and boring. Jill volunteered that "it seems like a dry old book, but we had so many discussions about it, and talked about how it related to things today, that it didn't seem that way at all."

I want to note too, that the language of the novel in the historicizing dialogic context of the class seemed to prompt students' thinking along these ways. The kind of community in which Hester was forced to wear a scarlet letter was one requiring suppression of the inner world, the private life, one in which human needs, imaginations, dreams were to be resisted or controlled (Baym, 1962). Hawthorne tried to become a good citizen in Puritan society, but then wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, "a book that gave voice to a deep rejection and defiance of social regulations" (Baym, 1962). Bakhtin (1981), in his theory of novelistic discourse, argues that the novel is an unstable, undefinable, historical genre, generally resistant to authoritative discourse, "associated with the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought." In this view, the novel resists hierarchy, privileges, norms because of its "double-voicedness," its dialogue of voices recorded in ordinary language-in-use. Hawthorne resisted the multiple social judgments of his life in Puritan society; when he "takes up his pen on behalf of the socially ostracized woman" he rebels against the Puritan values, "defends the indefensible and, in so doing, finds the courage of his own convictions" (Baym, 1962). This language of rebellion saturates the action and language-in-use of the text.

At one point before the scaffold, where she herself had been publicly humiliated as an adulteress, Hester whispered to her child Pearl, "We must not always talk in the market-place of what happens to us in the forest," as she tries to quiet Pearl, to keep her from speaking publically to the minister, to hide her secret father's hidden adultery. Hawthorne's "intense inner defiance" enters into the social languages of the novel, in the ironic narrative tone of Hawthorne's resistance in the words Hester speaks to protect another's hypocrisy. Such polyvocality provides resistance to public authoritative discourse and is the distinctive subject matter and language of novels, generally. The metaphor of Hester's (perhaps Hawthorne's) "scarlet letter" posed a problem of imagination for Dick in the discussion sequence, and in seeking out the meanings of its "glowing" and "burning," the students began to imaginatively indwell in the lived experience of the private life different from and in tension with public authority. They had, thus, through metaphor begun to "imagine the familiar hearts of strangers" (Ozik, 1989, p. 283 cited in Greene, 1993, p. 13). In that intersection of voices of the class and



the conflicting voices of the novel, the symbolic image of the scarlet letter opened students to the human dilemma of tensions between public and private selves, "presenting a past that reaches into the present, into *our* present" (Greene, 1993). As they imagine Hester's isolation as a human being marked by public Puritan authority which denounced her, Alice perceived the living link and moved forward in time to our present, to another public discourse defining and alienating "other."

Ongoing conversation about literature texts in their sociohistorical contexts prompts Alice's connection, I believe, as an opportunity for historical understanding of the literary text and vice versa. Ron pushes for further "historical thinking," explicitly about acting on awareness of injustice in public forums. Students understand immediately this question about the possibility of collective action, it seems. Their startling examples prompt Ron to suggest that such resistance helps to redefine power away from uniforms and authoritative discourse and toward a social life based in dialogue and joint action. Sharon and Ron's aim in the class, to connect literature to its social historical context, redefines individuals in relation to their social worlds. The conflict between the private lived experience and the authoritative public discourse becomes the subject of imaginative dialogue in literary text--and then in the class. Narrative discourse in dialogue with singular authoritative discourse produces critique of the univocal perspective as suppressing the multivocal in *The Scarlet Letter* and in the class community. In the space of this dialogue, individuals can be re-defined as actors in a social world who have voices and who can act collectively to interrupt the voice, the actions of social injustice.

On the other hand, resistance to entering the dialogue of voices in the novel or the class leads to quite different thinking. John's univocal stance of "there is an absolute right and an absolute wrong to everything," prompted him to hear only the voice he perceived as "truth" in the novel: "*The Scarlet Letter* I enjoyed very much, because I'm interested in Puritan Society, and find I have a lot in common with them." John's resistance to dialogue in general appears here as an alignment with the authoritative coercive perspective of the Puritans, which he connects to "*the American view.*" There is evidence that many students reading multicultural literatures or other texts written from unfamiliar perspectives often resist entering into the novels or read them from mainstream perspectives in ways that subvert the play of non-mainstream voices, something like what John has done (Beach, 1995). In this class the answer was to historicize the novels, to support students in learning to hear the voices, and to bring the perspectives together in

dialogue. Such a dialectical response promotes resistance in the same manner as the polyvocal novel, but only for those who enter into the conversation.

Theoretically, then, the discussion sequence described earlier takes up a major focus of the novel, that is, examining the impersonality of public spaces, the problem of what Bakhtin (1981) calls the authoritative voice being split off from private voices, those internally persuasive languages of lived experience. The discussion sequence brings these languages together in dialogue, in a dialectical response. And such "resistance to dominant ideologies can potentially lead us to rethink human agency and lived experience" (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991, p. 3). The discussion sequence analyzed here is one early moment in an ongoing dialectic of resistance to the authoritative voice, but it provides a window on the critical-narrative method the teachers supported.

**Possibilities for connectedness and community action.** This tendency to make sense intertextually by moving between literature and history was strong in the class. As Alice responded to *Storming Heaven* she wrote in her chapter 10 entry:

I feel bad because the club got arrested. I think it was just an excuse for the police to have some fun being brutal. When they started singing in the jails, it reminded me of the *Eyes on the Prize*, when the blacks were singing as they were being taken away for something they believed in. Now is that right? I don't think so.

As students pointed out the power of collective action and commitment to justice, Sharon and Ron noticed and responded in journals and discussions. Here Alice connects fictional resistance related to the coal miners on strike in West Virginia with real life resistance related to the Civil Rights Movement. The thematic organization of the class, their growing base of common texts, and their recurring conversations encouraged this intertextual dialectic between human experience in fiction and the possibility for action in the real world. In response to Alice's connection, Ron wrote: "Pretty heady stuff--for the hills of W. Vir. or for that matter, anywhere?"

The teachers knew that students needed help orienting themselves in a world of multiplying and sometimes disorienting interpretations. Many of the literary and historical texts they selected provided visions of lives lived connected to social community. Sharon and Ron themselves served as a human demonstration of critical

dialogue and democratic action, and they provided images of people working in joint action for social justice. On the wall a large poster "Never doubt that a group of thoughtful committed persons can change the world" was surrounded by posters of Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth and Martin Luther King, Jr. After the class had seen *Eyes on the Prize*, Jeff had compared racism to a complicated maze, that does have a way to freedom. Ron asked him if there were always a way out. Jeff responded that he had given this "a lot of thought" and he figured there was: "It's just whether or not you can realize that your part in getting to the way out, might not be in your physical lifetime ..maybe my grandkids will have freedom." Ron said, "Maybe that's the answer." He reminded them of a person in the film who returned south to fight the civil rights battles, and when asked why, said that his life would be part of something that happened in the future, that was more important than his life. "Maybe that was his perspective [too]." Often, joint action as alternatives to racism, competition, and individualism provided a center from which to imagine change.

Students, over the year, more frequently considered fictional text in its historical context, often bringing joint action against social injustice to the attention of the class. Brock noted in his presentation on *The Learning Tree* that he did not think "they could ever win" in Mississippi, but blacks and whites worked together and prevented segregation of an integrated school. In the presentations of independent reading Jeff presented *Freedom Road* by Howard Fast, set after the civil war. Gary responded:

I think it's like kind of cool that you put the ex-slaves and poor whites as one group together and they got along...It's kind of cool, because the poor whites are going to, a lot of times, ends up like Klansmen and stuff down there, so it's really cool that you could get them working together, instead of hating each other's guts. And the other thing is, like whose book is that, I want to read it.

The teachers announced a local appearance of Elie Weisel, a writer and survivor of a German concentration camp, and offered extra credit for "stretching" to anyone who could attend and report to the class. This awareness of and connecting to the social life of the community was a common move during the year. Sharon commented on the "ecumenical" nature of Weisel's talk and the groups which sponsored him: "All of those groups coming together for one reason, to diminish the power of hate and intolerance.

Really, people who work toward good certainly have more similarities than differences. Does anyone else have anything to say?" Kris, who had been moved in hearing Weisel, said, "I think hate starts with not listening to people. I never think of myself as hating, but sometimes I'm too concerned with myself to really listen to other people." The entering into others' lived experience has become a forum to "really listen," when those people/characters are connected to their sociohistorical contexts, their social lives.

Entering into the intertextual dialectic evolved on several levels simultaneously through the social discourse. Often they looked back on what they read throughout the year, through writing and talking which asked students to think again, and through students self-initiated reflecting on the texts from the year and their own histories as readers. Unlike descriptions of literature classrooms as places with no memory or time for looking back, these students actively made intertextual links by "reading with memory"(Wolf, 1988) both literary texts and the social history out of which they were produced.

Reading and discussing multicultural literatures constructed spaces where students could discover humanizing possibilities (Greene, 1993 ). But further, moving to imagine those spaces and those people as possibilities for America opened up the real possibility of "a truly common public culture, one responsive to the long-silenced cultures of color" (Gates, 1991, p. 712), the many cultures of silence. The kind of "connectedness" Sharon and Ron spoke of seemed to create a coherence in the form of a web of multiplicity, a uniting of voices within community conversation about difference. The students and teachers entered into the unifying form of novels and films to experience the conflicting social voices at play. The notion of a feminist dialogics based on Bakhtin's vision of dialogic imagination "overcomes the public-private split," by breaking down the "separation of public rationality and private intersubjectivity" and by reinventing a shared ethics and egalitarian values through dialectical response, "in intersecting public and private worlds" (Bauer & McKinstry, 1991, pp. 1-2). In part, this intersecting is what was happening as students learned a critical-narrative discourse.

### **Making Many Paths: "An Epistemology of Pluralism"**

Qualitative changes in the students' thinking are evidenced in their self-perceptions, their discourse as a group in class, and in the changes overtime in their ways

of approaching problems of understanding and constructing their knowing. Over the year in the integrated class, the students internalized the critical-narrative community discourse strategies differently due to multiple personal and sociopolitical differences, with some general movements quite similar across students. In what follows I trace some of those differences.

**On the struggle of silence and power.** Some students engaged in complex, circuitous journeys of change in this dialogic pedagogy, depending sometimes on their perceived sense of their own power. Josh, a European American, talked often in discussion and wrote less often. As a successful student who sometimes dominated class talk, Josh struggled with listening to perspectives he did not share, sometimes longing for a history class where students demonstrated their knowledge of "the facts" to win top grades. Over the course of the class, he actively engaged with Rose, a Jamaican American struggling to develop a sense of her own voice and identity. These conversations, actual and imagined ones, *and* his emerging empathy for the perspectives he lived through in the multivocal literature, made Josh rethink and shook his sense of his position as a liberal savior of people of color. After a year of reading multivocal texts, and being moved by Native American and African American ones particularly, he began to feel voices missing in texts; for instance, he wrote that Thoreau "spoke of the rights and responsibilities of men, but what of the women?" When he chose to write his character sketch on a figure from *The Grapes of Wrath* creatively, by gathering the female characters together as a "group character," he concluded, the women are "not treated as equals, but instead as ensemble extras who help support the main characters, but whose inner lives aren't as important." Josh here demonstrates the dialectic of the critical stance-- Who is speaking? What does the speaker privilege? What voices are left out?--and the narrative stance--What is the nature of the inner lives of diverse other people? His putting these two languages in dialogue in his paper demonstrated the power of the critical-narrative discourse he was learning in the integrated class.

On her part, Rose remained largely silent, but wrote ongoing responses in her journal to the events of the class as they transpired; at times she was simultaneously angry and self-effacing as she considered issues of racism and injustice, but then cut short her writing when strong feelings arose. She spoke in discussion occasionally, preferring to speak in the voices of a Native American character in the Columbus trial or of Rosa Parks for her research paper presentation. Over time, Rose came to see that other females

in the class, both black and white, could, by speaking, "make a difference" in how others' thought and felt and in how they seemed to feel about themselves. By the end of the year she had begun to speak in her own voice more often, posing critical questions in discussion and in her writing and pursuing them. The detailed story of Rose and Josh and their transactions (Zigo and Miller, 1996) is dramatic, in some ways a microcosm of potentials. As Rose was beginning to create a new social self through her voice, Josh, was beginning to glimpse his own privilege. He began to see how he could enter into stories, share power with those he had earlier wanted to speak for and save, and to learn from those emergent, powerful voices different from his own. In part, their story is one of beginning to reconstrue learning as a power-sharing dialogue rather than as a power-winning competition.

**On the importance of difference.** One student who was not much changed in his thinking still served to influence others' thinking. The interdisciplinary nature of the course was problematic for John when he understood that literature was treated as another perspective on historical periods or events. His concern for "the truth" inhibited his consideration of perspectives, in general, and he generally refused to "enter into" perspectives within activities of the class. John did not meet the precondition for genuine understanding of perspectives--openness to new possibilities (Gadamer, 1976); he did, he told me, "laugh at these arguments as foolish," but he also did consider during the class how to make counter-arguments for the opinions he opposed (such as equalizing school funding when he functioned as a defense lawyer in education trial). His fundamentalist religious stance provided him with "truth," he said, so "I rarely change my views." (The detailed case study of John appears in Cliff & Miller, 1996.) Yet John's participation presented an alternative perspective on almost every issue, serving at first to demonstrate religious difference in a class which had little ethnic diversity. Later, after many conversations together, students felt uncomfortable if there were too much consensus. Both Nick and Marcos sought out John's opinions if he did not speak, feeling that to understand an issue they needed to hear his alternative perspective, needed his different view to prompt their thinking further.

Students in that class also came to respect Marcos--the self-proclaimed anarchist labeled by the school as academically at-risk--for his intelligence and thoughtfully critical view of capitalism. During the year, he pushed everyone's thinking in discussion and through his writing, though he maintained his distrust of institutional, educative process



and posited a generally negative view of humans as greedy, status-seekers. His American Dream paper synthesizing his thinking across the work of the year demonstrated his change. From the beginning, his cynicism and caustic insight were evident in his summer journal, for example, in his response to the film *Dances with Wolves*:

The actor's decision to live with the Indians (hence jeopardizing his job and life) is good to ponder at a time when, if you're curious as to what someone is all about, you don't ask what that person thinks or believes, but rather what that person does for a living. To most, money is everything. To take from the poor and give to the rich, like a crazed robin hood. Make money and everything else (mind, heart, soul) will take care of itself. With such huge brains we are still slaves to our stomachs--even when our stomachs are full.

Marcos had selected his own "code-name" after a Latin American revolutionary, and the raging, restless "brilliance" the teachers saw in him is hinted at here. He gives voice to what he elsewhere named "the occupational prejudice of the middle class" and their materialist motives and answers that position with his vivid literary judgment--"like a crazed robin hood." Early in the year, he moved from his initial impression that "the american dream looks and smells like bile" to the notion that it is "different for different people. To a Native American the american dream might be that the europeans go home and take their clocks with them." As they read and talk more, he wrote: "Here I am thinking of the close links between the unsaid reality of the american dream (that my neighbors, boss and friends will all be white men) and its close links to fascism." He sees "control" and "getting ahead of everyone else" as the dreams of "boring and superficial" people. Over time, the work of the class created the possibility of a new image for a different America, "a dream of something real, substantial, and fulfilling." By the Spring, Marcos, although he did still "refuse to capitalize," wrote in retrospect, "My dreams on the American Dream change":

The American Dream is that because something is law it will be enforced, because something is an 'inalienable human right' it will be protected, that what happened in nazi germany could never happen here, that we have freedom of the press or speech, or that we used to have them, that the



police follow the laws and do not beat or torture people, and that the supreme court will protect our constitutional rights.

This dream he has mixed feelings about, calling it "a blind hope for blind justice," but as a provisional "replacement of what religion used to try to do." He ends his final paper with a poem, "On Standing, Rather than Sitting" by Ned Spain, which says, in part, "But it is true that if many dream the same dream/In reality that dream incarnates."

**On being included at the kitchen table.** Kim's journey was somehow different and somehow the same. Kim, who had been so moved by the Native American literature, did not "enter into" African American texts at first. She spoke in her reader response journal about *The Street* by Ann Petry as giving realistic portrayals of "poorer people who have to work." This distancing of herself from these "others" began to change as she engaged in class discussions of texts and took a more dialogic stance toward the reading: "If you put somebody into the shoes of another person, so to speak, then they, they're not liable to forget that...There is definitely lots of different ways to look at a certain incident." As she moved to considering the perspectives of others, her stance shifted to a more empathetic and critically reflective one. She became aware of multiple silenced perspectives, and the dialectic necessary for her own understanding: "In a regular American history class, they'll teach you about the presidents, about all like the rich white men, and all . They don't teach you about like, the coal miners, and everything they went through, and all the strikes and unions." In response to a question about Americans needing a common "cultural literacy," she said: "There isn't one dominant American viewpoint, because there's too many different kinds of people, and too many different cultures here...You have to broaden [children's] horizons, and show them all these different groups. I mean, the children they're teaching are not just white children." As Kim and other students became aware of their language for self-understanding, they were coming to see themselves anew by "understanding the historicity of self" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 49).

A story Kim told to exemplify her changed perspectives was a conversation she had with her mother as they were passing a wealthy neighborhood bordered by a trailer park. "My mother said, 'Imagine what it is like to live in those beautiful houses and have to look out and see a trailer park! I said, 'Imagine what it is like to live in the trailer park and have to look out and see those beautiful houses, knowing you can't have one?'" Kim told us this story as evidence of how her thinking had changed. Looking through and

questioning perspectives in the class created a new way of thinking, what I have called a critical-narrative discourse for reflecting on her life and stance toward others. She saw the class as "a network, kind of like, you'd have two teachers teaching the students, and then the students taking what they've learned and spreading it around. And you do grow, I think, and your growth causes other people to grow." Kim said in her final interview that she and several students decided:

to make a paper, or a journal, they called it, on discrimination and everything that's happening in the school, outside of the school. I think part of the reason I wanted to participate in that was because of the class, the things that I've been learning, and things that nobody else has bothered to teach me before. It makes you want to do something about it, the way that they talk to you about it, the things that they show you, just makes you want to get up and do something.

Kim responds to social injustice here through joint action with others, a central concern examined in the class. In his response to Kim's journal after he read about "the library incident" and the "pathetic little boys" who mocked her, and threw books at her, Ron wrote at length. In part, he wrote:

Your writing, observations, caring, attention to things is so extraordinary and fine...Kitchen tables are burned deep in my memories--fond ones--not for food intake, but the nutrition of discussions, arguments, socializing, living, laughter, crying, all that good stuff I associate with friends and kitchens (we had no family room)--It was always the gathering place for friends/family--and it's been great having you here at the table--[and hearing your] nice mirror reflections that clarify rather than distort.

Kim responded, "It's a great honor to be included at the kitchen table."

**On being left with questions.** Nick, who in an early journal said people see him as "a dumb jock," felt that through the "open conversations" in the class he had "lost some prejudice against things." By the end he spoke eloquently about how we are all socioculturally constructed/positioned: "Instead of listening to people's ideas on issues...I

now wonder why he reacted to it that way, and then looking at his background and then thinking, why I would react to it that way I did, looking at my background, and trying to find a parallel to why we reacted differently." Nick frequently asked for John's opinions in discussions as he increasingly hunted for the play of possibilities for issues and texts, for the voices left out. In his final anthology project, entitled "Freedom," he moved among literary and historical texts, trying to make sense of "the deep rooted images burned into me since the birth of 'America the beautiful, home of the free'" and the "betrayal" of the Native American. He talks about a song called "Pocahontas," which is "icy poetry to the ear laid over a gentle and haunting acoustic...The beginning caused anger and disgust for the listener, but it left me with a good feeling of unity and different people just talking." For me, Nick captures here some of the play of literature and history, of difference and unity in the class, of how the anger, even disgust, can be mediated in the dialogue among differences. But in the spirit of the class, Nick's thinking is "ongoing:" he concludes his final paper this way, "Like Sitting Bull of the great Lakota, I am left only with questions."

**On making new paths.** Throughout the year of entering into "inner lives" through diverse people's eyes in stories connected to their histories and engaging in critical dialogue around them, students were developing "an epistemology of pluralism," (The New London Group, 1995, p. 13), not just a respect for and appreciation of difference, but a felt need for the broader vision they experienced through the play of difference in their learning community. Sharon and Ron actively engaged the different subjectivities students brought to school as resources for learning, invited multiple subjectivities into the conversation through multivocal literatures, and provided critical tools for seeing through new eyes, issues of power and positionality. Many students spoke of their changes eloquently. When I asked Maria if any questions or quotes or phrases stood out for her in the class, she said:

'It takes a whole village to raise a child.' And I kind of consider each of us a child, and then my peers are actually helping us learn, and teaching us how to be better people. And we walk out in the hallway, I know it sounds kind of cheesy, that just by taking integrated English and U.S. History that it could possibly change a person, but you, nobody can understand it

unless they sit in the class. It really can change the way you look at people.  
I've changed.

Sharon and Ron approached their classes with important questions for students: How do I want to live my life? That question connected to another important question for our country: What kind of social life do we want to create for a multicultural democracy? The critical-narrative discourse opened up problem-posing spaces for dialogue about literature, history, and the possibilities for joint action in the dialectic private-public sphere of the present. The class provided the means to critique a "textbook America" where every problem has been solved or is about to be solved and the origins and importance of collective action have been distorted (Loewen, 1995). I think the paths these teachers are making and the ones these students will make as they "walk out in the hallway," open for all of us new possibilities.

### Discussion

**Teacher agency.** Sharon and Ron enacted a transformative pedagogy in their integrated classes in concert with their students; they negotiated the sociocultural context for an interplay of "the resistance and the cooperation of others," as the primary opportunity for reflection and action (Dewey, 1930, p. 317; 1933). Critiques of schooling as reproducing inequities of the political-economic system are important and necessary. Yet as a singular emphasis they can produce a pessimistic paralysis among educators, rather than prompting a vision of school as an "important locus for progressive social change" (Gutmann, 1987; Howe, 1992). There is something hopeful about this team who saw teaching as a human drama, pedagogy as necessarily unquiet, and schools as a site of struggle among competing discourses.

We know that teachers act within and can be constrained by a wider school organizational context (e.g., Sleeter, 1992) and, potentially, by the constructions of multicultural education policy making (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995). Teachers can also play an active reciprocal role in reconstruing the structures and norms within their educational context which influence their practices (Rosenholtz, 1991). Sharon and Ron found ways to enact their teaching in the sociopolitical realities of their school, including creating compelling arguments for their state education department and for their local

school board to support their transformative pedagogy. They were conscious of silencing and its consequences and worked to "open up structured silences" (Weis & Fine, 1993) in democratic public spheres of their classroom, their school, their state. They shared with students the story of their proposing and gaining local and state approval for the integrated class in concert with other educators. In doing so, they served as living images of an active civic form of life and the rewards of such collective responsibility (Bellah et al., 1985).

**Enacting a dialogic, transformative pedagogy.** Sharon and Ron's transformative pedagogy was a radical re-seeing of teaching-learning as simultaneous and reciprocal. From their perspectives, learning was necessarily social, occurring through talk and joint activity within a supportive collectivity. They engaged students in a re-seeing of themselves as human beings with stories, knowledge, feelings--all aspects of a person construed as necessary in order to fully understand another person, a text, an event. Sharon and Ron constructed their dialogic pedagogy (Miller, 1992) around discussion and a valuing of what students brought with them to class, including the wholeness and difference of themselves.

Their focus on "entering into" conversations and texts, including literary ones, provided opportunities for students to experience the dialectic of intention and action in literature, of multiple cultural perspectives in texts of all sorts, of the differences in perspectives within the class, and of the different stories of human experience. This play of different kinds of knowledge, ways of knowing, and views on the world problematized school knowledge/historical knowledge, creating a problem-posing/problem-solving environment.

The context, what the students and teachers called "the learning community," emerged through their joint activity, by talking and thinking about problems together. This process of simultaneously creating the social and the cognitive was one of a number of instances of "blurring" categories that are sometimes treated as distinct. The lines were similarly blurred between literature and history, between past and present, between student and teacher, between classroom and the world. As pre-formulated categories began to break down, problematizing knowledge which had seemed "true," Sharon and Ron further juxtaposed texts, times, opposing views, to pose problems not visible before, to prompt more extended questioning and sense-making with the social support of the learning community. They initiated and supported a critical examination of how our

histories/stories and our visions construct our world. They did not treat students as objects to be deposited in (Friere, 1967), nor as reproductions of social inequality to be restructured. Instead, they saw students as children verging on adulthood with biases and prejudices, stories and habits of mind, and with the potential for reconstructing themselves in social dialogue. Always, they emphasized that process as "ongoing."

In the community problem-posing space for understanding diverse multicultural texts and confronting problems together, the teachers assisted children to learn adult dialectical habits of mind, by lending their "structuring consciousness" (Vygotsky, 1978), providing strategies, questions, interpretive and critical moves at points when students needed them. Sharon and Ron had visions of a multivocal community, of different human faces and different human voices transacting in the moment-to-moment play of the class, and were at the same time looking ahead of students' development to what students might become with social assistance. This social space became what Vygotsky (1978) called a "zone of proximal development," where what students could not do alone, they learned to do with their teachers and peers who provided the social provocation and support for questioning their views of themselves, others, their country (Miller, 1996). Students received responsive support to help them meet their present goals (e.g., of understanding texts or ideas) and at the same time to extend those goals (e.g., to question texts and understand a multicultural America). In light of additional perspectives, critical challenges, a new text or cultural voice, an unexamined assumption, an unexpected complexity—teachers and students provided strategies, questions, information, comments to assist the group, sometimes, in reconsidering the entire problem or task. Eventually this support in the form of heuristics, tools and strategies moved inward to form new ways of thinking in individuals. What students learned generally in the provocation and support of their learning communities in the class was a critical-narrative discourse requiring both seeking out diverse voices/stories to learn from them, and also critiquing any voice/story which presented itself as the *only* one. This critical-narrative discourse defined and created the community, in a dialectic of transformative thinking.

**Difference within unity.** The central theme of the integrated class was *difference within unity* and conversation about difference was its central method. These conversations occurred among/about differences within their learning community; in the play of opposing voices within the form and content of the literary text; through the dialogue of social languages within journals and other writing; in the dialectic of authoritative



historical and multivocal narrative discourse; and, generally, through the dialectic of unity and difference in their talking and thinking about America.

Through these processes of recurring intertextual, interdisciplinary, multicultural dialectics students became aware of multiplicity: of different languages "for conceptualizing the world in words" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 291-92) (e.g., in their immigrant stories, interpretations of texts, views across texts); of the opposing voices within the story of the literary text (e.g., of Puritan society and Hester and Hawthorne); of their own internal conflicting views and languages (e.g., in Kim's languages for representing America as a just democracy and also as an unjust colonizing force. By looking at one of those languages--the authoritative historical discourse--through the eyes of other ones--a critical discourse and a narrative discourse--students began to disrupt the monologue, put it into conversations with other voices, problematizing its singularity, its "truth." To differing degrees students came to *this* awareness: the apparent unity--of one's language, of the community, of the literary text, of the individual, of history--was constructed linguistically out of diversity.

This insight that living language is never unitary prompted student problem posing supported by adult conversation. In these activities students were developing what Bakhtin (1981) called *a dialogic imagination*--becoming aware of multiple, conflicting meanings for the same things; imaginatively considering one social language through the voice of another; and learning how to consciously choose from among the dialogue of possibilities to make their own provisional, coherent meanings.

**Multicultural literature in a critical-narrative discourse.** Literature is becoming recognized as a source of knowledge "about the complexities of human existence" in many disciplines (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Coles, 1989; Zuckert, 1996). Changes in the literature curriculum have been frequently called for by multicultural reformers as a new source of understanding in classrooms. This study suggests that diversifying the literature curriculum was important, but also crucial was what the teachers and students did with those texts. In this class, using literature as a form of knowing and understanding in conversation with the historical context of stories prompted engagement and thinking. These multicultural narratives introduced previously unseen events into the portrait of America and history, provided representations of the world which included the perspectives of groups who had been largely silenced. "Entering into" multicultural literatures, films, and stories and considering them through their journals and discussions



allowed students to feel the essential humanity of the characters as thinking, feeling subjects, to see through diverse others' eyes. The multivocal literary stories interrupted the monologues of authoritative discourse (such as history textbooks) problematizing singular "truth."

As students learned to view historical "fact" through the lens of human significance and consequence in stories, they learned that understanding is more than just an *intellectual* process or task. Our "sensitivity" to the forms of our cultural narratives, Bruner argues, "provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us." The literary part of what I have called a critical-narrative discourse assisted students in reconstruing a social world peopled with diverse others and themselves, as actors and co-constructors in that world.

It was this narrative part of the dialectic--"the back and forth" Kit called it--that provided a powerful complement to critical questioning through the generative language of story, a form for creating human coherence out of inevitable conflicts and tensions. Critical-narrative discourse assumes multiple possible meanings from multiple possible perspectives, and the need for constructing one's own meaning from this web of meanings, of social languages (Bakhtin, 1981). The dialogue of voices provided the occasion and the means of taking responsibility for making sense and making connections in an honest human coherence comprised of conflicts and tensions which admit growth and change, not a singular truth (Buchmann & Floden, 1992).

The thoughtful conversation and the portraits of students transforming themselves in conversations with diverse texts and people provide evidence of what learning and thinking and new ways of seeing can emerge through critical-narrative dialogue. Through their dialectical reading, writing, and talking in the integrated class, they were constructing critical-narrative discourse about difference and constructing for themselves what they believed and how they should act. In other words, students were learning a secondary critical discourse for reseeing themselves and their world (Gee, 1990), and learning an endangered second language, a cultural capacity for social connection and responsibility (Bellah et al., 1985).

In interviews most students from the class challenged the notion of a common history/culture in the form of a list of things every American should know *because* the idea was formed as a single-voiced authoritative discourse. They posited, instead, a common ground for a diverse humanity--conversation among differences valued as

sources of knowing, understanding, and acting together, a notion congruent with what Greene (1993) calls "an expanding community."

**Habits of the heart.** Lasting contribution to students' democratic orientations comes from how teachers and schools treat students, authority, controversy, and culture in classrooms and schools (Bridges, 1979; Sigel, 1991). From the first orientation meeting in June through the first days of class and throughout the year, Sharon and Ron's first order of concern in each class was negotiating "the learning community." The social fabric of this context was the central issue in every students' response to the class; they emphasized safety, trust, respect for difference, cooperation, and joint activity, both in and out of class. The students' and teachers' joint roles as teachers-learners, their learned inclination to "enter into" texts and conversations, the perceived sense-making, question-asking purpose of their collaborative talk and activity--together created the their sense of themselves as a democratic learning community. Together they re-examined the stories of America's past and present; in doing that, they created new possibilities for talk and activity across differences, providing a vision of a dialogic, multicultural democracy.

To teach for cultural pluralism and provide for multiple voices as legitimate and enriching takes patience and courage. The teachers provided regular, extended time for students to talk and act together. They exhibited and supported respect for the dignity of all students, and in every case chose to maintain the conversation with different voices, above any other goal. John's monologic resistance to multiple perspectives and Josh's struggle with listening to "minority position perspectives" (Sleeter, 1995)--both were treated as voices to be engaged, considered, challenged. On the grounds of respect for students and of the need to have authentic dialogue across difference, Sharon and Ron demonstrated how we ought to live in conversation with the many-sidedness of human experience to be heard in diverse voices. As frequent voices of dissent, John and, to a lesser degree, Josh, served to prompt others to construct their own evolving sense of coherence about events and ideas made complex by the honest difficulties. This coherence, which included consideration of overlapping conflicting voices, was "a form of connectedness more hospitable to change and growing imagination" (Buchmann & Floden, 1992). Respecting the dignity of students for the common cooperative good presents an image of social engagement, a form of public life students felt and valued. These conflicting voices also spurred analysis of controversial issues and stances toward knowing, a means to learn "thinking coherently about social life" (Loewen, 1995, p. 4).

Sharon and Ron provided students from the start with the means of initiating their own inquiry and the opportunity to pursue their questions in dialogue; they provided support at points when students needed it, often providing another perspective, possibility, or generative question in what became a problem-posing dialogue (Friere, 1970), the basis for Shor's (1992) democratic pedagogy and Giroux's (1992) pedagogy of possibility. Dialogue and reflection about their own and others' "lived experience" set alongside each other problematized for students the singular vision of American history textbooks and opened students to the necessity of multiple perspectives, and to the social need of reading the world (its multiple perspectives and power relations), as well as reading the word (Friere, 1970).

I see the purpose of the class as seeking to understand the many stories and positions within the larger democratic community and critically questioning any story which represents itself as *the* story of America. Sharon and Ron and their students created "in microcosm a transformed set of relationships and possibilities for social futures" (The New London Group, 1995, p. 13). Sharon wished she could communicate the importance of this attitude: "If teachers [just] knew it wasn't something unattainable, or something magical...students have to feel their ideas are important and that they are learning in community." Ron said these classes were "a renewal of faith and hope, I keep continually hoping that they'll make their way and things will get better." I believe that what happened in these classes can serve as a microcosm of *democratic community--of valuing difference and talking/acting together for change*. As an unfolding democratic drama, Sharon and Ron's transformative, dialogic pedagogy is an act of courage--and of hope that it is possible in schools to learn and teach these "habits of the heart" (Bellah et al., 1985).

My account of the integrated class is based on the texts of class lessons and student writing and on my formal (transcribed) and informal conversations with Sharon, Ron, their students, the principal, with the members of the research teams<sup>1,2</sup> and with scholars and teachers from several fields of study referenced here, including critical pedagogy, sociocultural psychology, educational philosophy, and postmodern literary criticism. As the teachers and students in the cross-disciplinary class did, I found that some problems of understanding "are necessarily transdisciplinary" (Bellah et al., 1996, p. 283; Toulmin, 1982). From these multiple perspectives, I have construed the integrated class as a social sphere created by teachers and students, a space where they could produce a critical-narrative discourse to unsilence voices and problematize neutral

views of knowledge; in this dialogue, a kind of collective action in the class (Friere, 1985), the group examined what America and we as citizens have become, and what we no longer want to be (Giroux & Simon, 1989). The principles and practices of democracy were learned amid difference, through dialogue.

In her case studies of successful students from a wide variety of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and social-class backgrounds, Nieto (1994) concluded that "schools and teachers need to affirm, maintain, and value the differences that students bring to school as a foundation for their learning." Instead of instilling the "American Dream" of material success through melting pot assimilation, the one Marcos so despised, Sharon and Ron were creating another chance to dream, the means "to envision other possibilities beyond those imposed by traditional barriers of race, gender, or social class" (Nieto, 1994). In the integrated class, "American Dreams, Lost and Found," students awakened to consciousness of alternative ways of being and were learning to imagine and act for a better state of things in reciprocity with others. They created together the critical community necessary to the resurgent dream of a multicultural democracy, through what Maxine Greene (1988) calls "the dialectic of freedom."

Nick, much changed through the integrated class, argued that his new desire for understanding from multiple cultural perspectives "makes for democracy," both for their class and as the "hope" for the country. He summed up an imaginative possibility: "America is not really a place...It's just an idea that hasn't been explored, a new frontier." In such a case, the integrated class can serve as an image of possibilities for joint exploration, steadily reminding, "We make the paths as we go."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Most students in this first observation are not named, because we did not know students at this time. We have named those identified during the conversation.

<sup>2</sup> Sharon and Ron had a weekly after-school film festival which was optional for students. All of the films related to topics being discussed in the class. Students attended and wrote responses in their journal, and sometimes brought up these films in class. Watching and responding to films was one way to get credit for "stretching" in their quarterly self-evaluations.

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