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ABSTRACT

A study examined how a teacher, researcher, and students moved beyond literal, lower-level thinking and response activities and engaged in literature study that promoted meaningful discussions and deeper-level responses and understandings. The study combined two research paradigms, action and interpretative research. The classroom teacher and researcher discovered and developed a pedagogy for improving literature instruction which included demonstration, facilitation of group process, and construction of meaning. At the same time, they observed and interpreted the manner in which the students independently engaged in literature study. Results indicated that: (1) literature can be a tool for children to identify their own fears, joys, and hopes through the character's eyes; (2) students went beyond the literal comprehension of literature by constructing interpretations together and making connections to their lives; (3) student choice of books, ways of making meaning, collaborative goal setting, and group decision making were motivating and crucial to successful literature study; (4) transmediation of students' responses included discussion, journals, and drama, and changing of sign systems assisted them to revisit the text in multiple ways and build layers and levels of thinking, understanding, and interpretations of the novel and its themes; (5) students developed a beginning understanding of historical events through the novel and their examination of other nonfiction sources of information; and (6) a struggling reader was capable of successfully engaging in literature study--although experiencing difficulty in reading, he exhibited thoughtful responses during discussions and activities. (Contains six figures and 142 references; sample forms and transcript conventions are appended.)
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FIFTH GRADERS' SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION
OF MEANING IN RESPONSE TO LITERATURE:
CASE STUDY RESEARCH

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
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in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how a teacher, researcher, and students moved beyond literal, lower-level thinking and response activities and engaged in literature study that promoted meaningful discussions and deeper-level responses, and understandings. It combined two research paradigms, action and interpretative research. The classroom teacher and researcher discovered and developed a pedagogy for improving literature instruction. At the same time, they observed and interpreted the manner in which the students independently engaged in literature study.

The research questions were:

1. What are the various ways students choose to respond in a literature group?
2. What are the general characteristics of those student responses?
3. What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the group? How do students interact with their peers when responding to a piece of literature?
4. What are the various ways a teacher responds in a literature group? What is the nature of teacher responses and what purposes do those responses serve?

Key sources of data were provided by: a) audio- and video tapes of a small group responding to literature; b) fieldnotes of classroom observations and reflections throughout the school year, including the teacher and researcher demonstrating multiple ways of responding to literature; c) a teacher journal and interview reflecting the teacher's thoughts about reader response; d) photocopies, videotapes, or actual student work samples; and e) interviews of each student who participated in the case study group.

The major findings were:

1. Literature study includes themes of critical-social justice. Literature can be a tool for children to identify their own fears, joys, and hopes through the character's eyes. These stories can help us make sense of the human condition, challenge our thinking, and help us know ourselves more completely and with greater compassion.

2. The teachers' instructional roles included demonstration, facilitation of group process, and construction of meaning. Students were invited to go beyond the literal comprehension of literature by constructing interpretations together and making connections to their lives.

3. Student choice of books, ways of making meaning, collaborative goal setting, and group decision making were motivating and crucial to successful literature study.

4. Transmediation of students' responses included discussion, journals, and drama. The changing of sign systems assisted them to revisit the text in multiple ways and build layers and levels of thinking, understanding, and interpretations of the novel and its themes.

5. The students developed a beginning understanding of historical events through the novel and their examination of other non-fiction sources of information.

6. A struggling reader was capable of successfully engaging in literature study. Although he experienced difficulty in reading the words of the book, he exhibited thoughtful responses during discussions and activities. This student reminds educators that reading is more than calling the words on the page.

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CHAPTER I

STUDENTS RESPONDING TO LITERATURE: WHAT MATTERS?

Many teachers have moved beyond using only a basal reader in their classroom. They have incorporated picture books, novels, and other pieces of text as major parts of daily reading instruction. The transition to literature-based reading has led to changes in materials, but not in the underlying beliefs and methods for teaching children to read (Short & Burke, 1996). Some teachers' instruction seems similar to traditional basal reader lessons. For example, students are engaging in vocabulary drills, and completing comprehension worksheets to glean someone else's predetermined meanings from the selections they read (e.g., Huck, 1996; Walmsley & Walp, 1989; Zarrillo & Cox, 1992).

The commercial market is flooded with novel units, study sheets, mass-produced activities and questions to accompany many novel titles commonly purchased by educators. How do teachers and students move beyond these literal, lower-level thinking and response activities? How can students respond to literature in multiple ways, and interpret literature using higher levels of thinking? How do we engage students in literature response activities that lend themselves to deeper level and more meaningful understandings, responses and discussions?

These broad questions were the starting point for my inquiry into literature study with one fifth grade classroom.

My view of schooling is to provide students with opportunities to explore the human experience through quality pieces of literature. Reading can serve as a springboard for such reflections, if students have access to avenues for discovering their reactions and insights concerning the human condition.

In student-centered classrooms, children are allowed to choose their materials and activities for literature study. They explore their interpretations of text in multiple ways: through discussions, writing, art, or drama. Through these sign systems students can consider their personal experiences and backgrounds to: a) live the human experience, b) explore human emotions, c) interpret the story world, and d) communicate their understanding through language, writing, or artistic expression. This practice promotes an understanding of themselves as readers, members of a classroom community, and the world.

The teacher's role is to demonstrate more meaningful responses to literature. This is facilitated by acting as a literature group member to share thinking and reactions toward a story. Students are "scaffolded" in their construction of meaning by asking questions, nudging, and supporting their thinking beyond the literal levels. This view of literature instruction moves students beyond lower level thinking and interactions with books.

Thus, when considering reading as a transaction between reader and text, utilizing students' varied backgrounds, and inviting them to respond in multiple ways; deeper-level literature responses and understandings of text can result.

Informed Practice and Inquiry

Over the past few years, I have given considerable thought to the range of

learning activities that contribute to richer, deeper understandings and responses to literature by the students in various grade levels. Literature discussion groups are a part of good literacy practices in most classrooms. We have learned more about the responses of students to literature, about social interactions, and about the importance of background experiences in interpreting texts. However, few studies have investigated the integration of these components in regards to students' response to literature.

I consider my viewpoint of literature study to be nontraditional compared to many elementary educators I have worked with. My practice is informed by a transactional view of reader response, in which students' rich intertextual backgrounds are brought to the process of responding to literature, and children are invited to transmediate their responses to literature using multiple sign systems.

For this study, I examined three theories and research that describes the complex cognitive and social journeys that students transverse in learning, interpreting, and responding to their world and to a piece of literature. Educators need to consider the important information to be gained from these theoretical frameworks in thinking about and planning for multiple ways for students to respond more meaningfully to literature.

The first of these theories is reader response theory. Rosenblatt (1938, 1978, 1991), developed a theory called the transactional approach to reading. The text is simply ink on paper until a reader comes along. The "poem," is what happens when the text is brought into the reader's mind and the words begin to function symbolically. Then these symbols are translated into images, emotions, concepts, and idiosyncratic meaning-making. The "poem" is the result - a new experience that emerges and becomes a "part of

the ongoing stream of the reader's life experience."

The second conceptual framework when thinking about or planning for literature study instruction is intertextuality (Barthes, 1979; de Beaugrande, 1980; Kristeva, 1980; Lemke, 1992; Bloome & Robertson, 1993). The theory explains how students use their multiple 'texts' or social, cultural, linguistic, literacy background and life experiences in responding to literature.

The term intertextuality is a metaphor used for the constant construction and reconstruction of meaning as readers "transpose texts into other texts, absorb one text into another, and build a mosaic of intersecting texts" (Hartman, 1990, p. 2). As students act and react to each other, they use language and other semiotic (sign) systems to make meaning, to constitute social relationships and to take social action.

Intertextual relationships are constructed by students as part of how they act and react to each other. In order for intertextuality to be established in reading and writing events, a proposed intertextuality must be recognized, be acknowledged, and have social significance (Bloome & Robertsen, 1993).

Bakhtin (1981) has contributed to our understanding of the social aspect of intertextuality. He describes the role of social interactions among students as they construct interpretations or responses to text. This process can be described as the reader traveling through a character or situation as deeply as possible, while keeping sight of personal experience. During the journey, the reader creates meaning as a new whole that is achieved in dialogue between the self and others. While understanding is uniquely situated in the individual, reading also implies taking on multiple roles, voices, and perspectives of others in understanding literature and in analytical thinking in general. Bakhtin (Holquist, 1990) refers to the "interlocative self" which "can change places with

another--that must, in fact, change places to see where it is" (p. xxvi).

The third conceptual framework is transmediation (Harste, Burke, & Short, 1988). This occurs when meanings formed in one communication system are moved to an alternate communication system (e.g., from reading to drama or peer discussion to writing). Knowledge is recast in a new form of expression. Through transmediation students are provided the opportunity to reflect consciously on their concepts (Eisner, 1982) and to elaborate and form new connections between existing concepts (Siegel, 1984). Learning occurs when students create a personal interpretation.

Children can move from reading text to responding or interpreting in multiple ways. In the classroom responding to text can include drama, art, music, discussion, or written response expressed through reader response logs. These multiple communication systems facilitate learning in ways that stimulate imagination, enhance language learning, and expand existing understandings about the readers and the social and cultural world in which they live.

Thus, when educators consider reading as a transaction between reader's background, text and peers, and invite students to respond to literature in multiple ways; they can move beyond the literal level of answering questions about the characters, setting, and plot.

During the past few years while I transcribed, analyzed, and wrote this dissertation, I engaged in conversations with committee members and colleagues, continued my professional readings, and analyzed my data. After I had written Chapter 2, the case study students helped me discover how important dramatic reenactments and conversations about critical-social justice were to their process of constructing meaning. These interesting and enlightening theories and research about drama and the exploration of critical-

social justice in literacy education are described as a retrospective look at the research literature in Chapter 6.

THE RESEARCH SETTING: A FIFTH-GRADE CLASSROOM

During the 1994-95 school year, I collaborated with Brenda Manzke, a beginning fifth-grade teacher, several days a week, to plan and co-teach reading. This instruction involved reading from the district-adopted literature anthology to introduce a new topic or theme found in the novels we were reading. However, the majority of the year was spent reading various novels. Several of these novels connected to the topics of study during afternoon social studies and science lessons (e.g., the ocean, American Revolution, Civil War, multicultural experiences...). The other books contained themes of social injustice, friendship, and homelessness.

The teacher and I demonstrated response activities for the class and small groups of children. These response activities included acting as a group member (e.g., "grand conversations", Peterson & Eeds, 1990) in literature discussions and demonstrating personal ways of connecting to a story, for example: a) sharing individual responses to moral dilemmas of the characters, b) making connections to our lives, c) comparing the story to other texts, d) expressing our confusions and questions, and e) making predictions about the story. Other demonstrations of activities included: literature response logs, literature jobs, reader's theater, and assisting students in designing various charts, graphs, or posters.

During September through January of the following school year ('95-96), the teacher and I continued to demonstrate a variety of ways of interacting with one another and literature. Each demonstration was followed by the students selecting one novel from three or four choices. The small groups were invited

to experiment with response activities we had demonstrated.

These response activities included: a) reader response logs (Flitterman-King, 1988), b) discussions involving efferent and aesthetic stances (Rosenblatt, 1978), c) several literature jobs (i.e., investigator, illustrator, and question writer, (Daniels, 1994), d) reader's theater (Siddall, 1995), e) vocabulary strategies, and f) student-selected and designed projects (i.e., Moffett & Wagner, 1992).

The students chose how they read their books. They used a combination of silent and oral reading at school and home. While the small groups were meeting to negotiate their responses and construct meaning, the teacher and I rotated to demonstrate our responses to the novels. We shared our questions, encouraged students to respond aesthetically, and "scaffolded" them for new understandings or for overcoming any difficulties they encountered.

The dissertation case-study began in February 1996. The fifth graders were given three novels to choose from: The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson (Lord, 1984), Felita (Mohr, 1979), and The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973). These novels deal with the themes of cultural differences, discrimination, social injustice, and the mistreatment of people.

I chose to study one group of students who selected the book The Slave Dancer (see Chapter 4 for rationale for selecting the group). They were given four weeks to read their novel. The students were directed to choose how their group would read and respond to the book. Their choices were based on the variety of teacher demonstrations that were given earlier in the school year.

The children read their novel silently and aloud at school or home. They participated in activities which included: (1) written responses in a journal, (2) writing and performing skits, (3) art projects, (4) studying self-selected

vocabulary, (5) discussions of the mistreatment of slaves and other themes, (6) making comparisons to life, (7) an inquiry about slavery in reference materials , and (8) creating mid-book and end-of-book assessments. These multiple, student-selected response activities seemed to provide students with broader and deeper understandings of the story and themselves (Complete description in Chapter 5).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research studies that have been conducted concerning elementary school students' encounters with literature have focused on students' responses to teacher directed activities or research interventions.

There is a need for studies which examine students' responses in classroom settings in which literature study is a natural component of literacy instruction. This inquiry describes the processes through which the student responses are evoked, the meanings they hold, and the role of the teacher in demonstrating meaningful responses to literature.

PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation contributes to the field of literacy, case study research of fifth graders' social construction of meaning in response to literature. It provides a broader view of students' responses to literature and teachers' interactions with children in the classroom. The study provides insights, instances, and examples that might be used by teachers and administrators as they observe, plan for, and evaluate the responses of the elementary school students with whom they work.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were guides to observation and participation in the classroom:

1. What are the various ways students choose to respond in literature groups?
2. What are the general characteristics of those student responses?
3. What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the group? How do students interact with their peers when responding to a piece of literature?
4. What are the various ways a teacher interacts in literature groups? What is the nature of teacher responses and what purposes do those responses serve?

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This first chapter introduces the area of inquiry. Chapter Two provides an overview of the theories and research that inform my practice and study. Chapter Three describes the methodology and procedures, followed by Chapter Four which details our demonstrations in preparing students for literature study. Chapter Five contains categorized transcripts that resulted from my analysis of the data. The final chapter summarizes important implications of this study for effective literature study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review summarizes the theories and research of reader response, intertextuality, and transmediation. These three broad areas provide a framework that informs my practice and guided this dissertation inquiry. They hold the potential for assisting teachers and students to engage in more meaningful literature discussions and response activities. My study also contributes valuable research information for instructional practice that may be used in most classrooms.

The students in my study constructed layers and levels of meaning as they moved from reading to writing, to discussion, and to occasional dramatizations. This transmediation or movement from one sign system to another, facilitated the students in revisiting the text and their interpretations, and prompting richer understandings of the novel.

While the group constructed meaning using various activities, their responses took the form of efferent and aesthetic stances and the making of intertextual connections. Efferent stances are literal responses involving basic comprehension elements such as character, setting, and plot. The aesthetic stances are more personal reactions, emotional responses, expressions of opinions, or making judgments about a characters' behavior.

The third type of student response examined are intertextual connections. These are comparisons of the story to experiences, books, movies, television, or people that are a part of childrens' lives.

Another important consideration of my study are the group dynamics. There were deliberate processes involved when the teacher, the students and I came together to explore a novel. The fifth graders were "scaffolded" by teacher demonstration of thinking and responding to literature and by making suggestions to the group. The students made decisions about how to engage in literature study and collaborated and cooperated in the construction of meaning.

The theories and research reviewed in this chapter support my study and describe the complex cognitive and social journeys that students transverse in learning, interpreting, and responding to a piece of literature. Educators need to consider the important information to be gained from these theoretical frameworks and research studies in thinking about and planning for multiple ways for students to respond more meaningfully to literature.

Reader Response Theory

Historically, one of the debates of literature instruction was the relationship between the reader, the meaning, and the text. During the 1920's the instructional approach to literature was largely didactic--a function of the need to "socialize" increasing numbers of immigrant students to the dominant American culture. In the 1940's, 1950's, and early 1960's literature was characterized as a "discipline," with its own procedures and specialized knowledge. The text became disconnected from the reader; it was an "object" of study, and instruction focused on the intellectual rigor required to obtain the meaning from the text (Beach & Marshall, 1991).

Since the late 1960's social changes associated with the civil rights

movement, the Vietnam War, and politically active groups, influenced the way literature was viewed. Instruction emphasized the study of literature in order for students to understand themselves, their community, and their world more thoroughly (Beach & Marshall, 1991).

Currently, literature instruction focuses on the reader's response in which there is a transaction between the reader, the meaning and the text. Such views of reader response were developed by Rosenblatt and have been promoted by Iser, Fish, Bleich, and Probst. Britton also contributes to our understanding of the important role language plays in learning. This section describes the work of these researchers and theorists.

The seminal work of Rosenblatt (1938) continues to contribute to our understanding of transactional analysis with literature. She contends that the meaning is created by the reader from both the cues on the page and the past experiences "evoked" by text. Rosenblatt suggested that the reader symbolized or resymbolized the text, evoking images, emotions, and concepts, and that in the process the text became the literary work or "the poem." Therefore, the reader's past social, cultural, linguistic, literacy experiences (e.g., intertextuality) greatly determined the meanings that are created (Rosenblatt, 1985).

The research of Rosenblatt (1978) makes a distinction between aesthetic and efferent stances toward reading. Both stances are always present in any reading event, but differences between events occur because one stance is emphasized by teachers or readers over the other.

An efferent reading stance involves the reader's focus on facts to be remembered, concepts to be tested, or actions to be performed after reading. These efferent stances toward reading are considered the traditional response many educators emphasize with students (Sacks, 1986; Walmsley & Walp, 1989;

Zarrillo & Cox, 1992).

Alternatively, an aesthetic reading stance involves a focus on what the reader is living through during the reading event. The reader attends not only to the story, but also to the feelings evoked, the associations and memories aroused, and the images that pass through the mind during the act of reading.

Several examples of an aesthetic stance are: visualizing scenes or characters, experiencing emotions evoked, putting self in the character's shoes, passing judgments on characters' behaviors, living through the story, or hypothesizing alternative outcomes, (Cocoran, 1987; Cox & Many, 1992; Many & Wiseman, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1985). Out of those elements the reader creates their understanding of the text.

This description by Rosenblatt and others, of the lived-through experience toward reading, suggests that students have the potential to make intertextual connections with life experiences and texts. Literature that has been read aesthetically also offers greater potential for connections with future texts or life experiences.

Along with an aesthetic reading stance, Rosenblatt (1982) stresses the importance of having readers respond to literature in a variety of ways in order to expand and deepen their experience with that text. She states that after reading the initial function of the teacher is to support the child to deepen the experience; to return to, relive, and savor the literature. These multiple ways of communicating or transmediation of response could include, first reading a text, next communicating responses in small group discussion, then writing, art, or drama activities.

The epistemology of transactional theory returns the responsibility for learning to the students. Knowledge of literature is not found or something the teacher

can give to students. Rather, it is to be created by the individual through exchanges with texts and other readers (Probst, 1987). "The literary transaction in itself may become a self-liberating process, and the sharing of our responses may be even greater means of overcoming our limitations of personality and experience." (Rosenblatt, 1984).

Presently, Yenika-Agbaw (1997) recommends alternatives to Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic stances. She suggests that children read literature with a "postcolonial" and "critical multicultural" lense to discover connections between their life and print. These stances are described in Chapter Six as part of a retrospective examination of current research literature which relates to the results of this study.

The theories of Iser (1980, in Tompkins), contribute to a transactional view of literature study for students. He suggested that the literary word involves the reader and the text in a different way:

The convergence of text and reader brings the literary word into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. (p. 50).

Iser proposed that the reader is involved in making meaning from the text by filling in the gaps in the work, by supplying the portion that was not written. Although Iser does not suggest a specific instructional practice, it is implied that when readers engage in conversations about texts, their understandings are created, extended, or deepened (p. 80).

Fish (1980) argued that meaning is contained in the experience that one had when actually reading the text. Literature is not an object, but the events that unfold in readers' minds when they read books. However, Fish expanded his notion to suggest that meaning is socially constructed by the "interpretive

community.”

In an interpretive community the judgments and perceptions of readers come from the opinions that are shared by the group to which the readers belong. A literature-centered classroom, according to Fish, is one in which both common perspectives and individual variety are accepted (pp. 348-50).

Over twenty years ago, Bleich (1975) argued for a revision of the traditional instructional basis for the study of literature (e.g., answering questions about the characters, setting, and plot). He contended that knowledge is made and not found. When we read, text is converted into symbols as our emotions and intellect direct us, and then we interpret the symbols we have created. Bleich places emphasis on the reader’s active reformulation of text and does not acknowledge the text as having an active role.

The work of Probst (1988; 1991) extended Bleich’s research by writing that there are no standard text interpretations; the meaning comes from within the reader’s subjective response and reflection on that response. Like Rosenblatt, Bleich would support classroom literature study that focuses on student-centered interpretations and approaches.

Recently, Probst (1991) wrote that classrooms and the curriculum are frequently stumbling blocks for allowing students to express and develop their individual responses. Students are generally trained from their first experience in school to produce answers to multiple choice questions, to find out precisely what they need to know, to accumulate information and develop skills. In addition, students, and many times the teachers, perceive the educator as the source of knowledge. Consequently, the study of literature in school negates individual responses. In contrast, Probst states, “The literature experience is fundamentally an unmediated, private exchange between a text and a reader” (p.

655).

In addition to Bleich, Probst (1988) drew on Rosenblatt, Iser, and Fish, to suggest a pedagogy based on response and analysis of the story world. He recommends four conditions that encourage response based teaching of literature:

1) Receptivity: The teacher must establish an atmosphere in which students feel secure enough to respond openly, but must not deceive them into believing that initial responses are sufficient. The classroom must be cooperative, with students and teachers building on one another's ideas, using rather than disputing them.

2) Tentativeness: Initial response must be treated as a draft, as something to build on, modify or reject.

3) Rigor: Unconsidered, unexamined response is simply the first step in reading. What must follow is rigorous analysis; searching for one's assumptions, drawing inferences about one's own attitudes and those expressed in the text, and considering other points of view offered by students or the teacher.

4) Cooperation: The group must achieve a level of trust that will allow discussion of response, which is discussion of the self; it must accept tentative, groping statements and the necessarily uncertain progress of the talk; and it must respect both individuality and the constraint of logic and reason. (pp. 25-27)

Probst suggested that these conditions were at work to greater or lesser extents in response-centered classrooms. His second notion of tentativeness can be compared to Barnes' (1976) concept of exploratory talk. Exploratory talk includes "hesitations and changes of direction; tentativeness shown by intonation, assertions, and questions in the hypothetical modality, inviting

modification and surmise; self-monitoring and reflexivity (p. 3).”

This type of talk emphasizes the process of learning rather than the product and helps create a framework for understanding. In contrast, if a teacher requires a more polished answer or “final form” is desired, then less exploratory talk is likely to occur. When students realize there is no pressure to construct “the right answer,” the outcome of a peer discussion often includes many new insights and applications in a meaningful context (Samway, et al., 1991).

Britton (1972) also contributes important theories to the role that language plays in learning. He distinguishes between two distinctive language stances that we adopt: participant role or spectator role.

As participants, we use language to interact with people and things and make the wheels of the world... go around. As spectators, we use language to contemplate what has happened to us or to other people, or what might conceivably happen... We improvise upon our world representation... to enrich it, embroider it, to fill its gaps and extend its frontiers, or to iron out its inconsistencies. (p. 8)

According to Britton, both language and writing may function in expressive, transactional, or poetic ways. Expressive language is the means of exchanging opinions, attitudes, and beliefs in face to-face situations (1971, p. 207-208). Change from expressive to transactional speech or writing occurs when participant demands require that language be used “to get something done in the world” (p. 169). The move from expressive to poetic function occurs when language in the spectator role is used to present “an object to be contemplated in itself and for itself” (p. 175). In moving toward the transactional function, expressive language becomes more public and explicit, and implicitly, relying on the formal arrangement of sounds, words, images, ideas, events, and feelings, to give resonance to items (p. 177).

The talk used in literature study groups assumes participant and spectator

roles and transactions between expressive and poetic language. Students use “participant” language to make decisions and get things accomplished. “Spectator” language, similar to Rosenblatt’s aesthetic stance, is used to construct meaning by evaluating, judging or enjoying stories. Britton (1968) contends that students display growth in literature responses as they gradually perceive complex relationships between characters and story events.

Summary of Reader Response Theories

Historically, one of the debates of reader response critics was the relationship between the reader, meaning, and the text. This investigation used Rosenblatt’s (1938) transactive view of reading, particularly efferent and aesthetic stances of students as a theoretical foundation. Further, Iser (1980, in Tompkins), Fish (1980), and Probst (1988) make a case for student-centered interpretation of text. Their theories consider students’ rich backgrounds and social interactions between peers to negotiate meaning from stories. Finally, Britton (1972) describes the important roles language plays in learning.

Research on Children’s Responses to Literature

There is a long history of theory and research that indicate a strong relationship between talk and learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990; Barnes, 1976; Halliday, 1982). Even though researchers have requested teachers to encourage more talk in classrooms to promote learning, instructional practice continues to be dominated by the teacher talking and the students listening.

Research studies conducted during the past decade continue to report the powerful influence children’s talk and interactions with peers has on their learning (Cazden, 1988; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Golden, 1986; Newkirk & McLure, 1992; Peterson & Eeds, 1990; Samway et al., 1991). This section describes some of

those studies and their findings that guided this research study.

When children are provided opportunities to share their ideas with peers, many beneficial outcomes can result. Leal (1991) conducted a study that suggested two benefits of peer-group discussions of literature. The study involved nine groups, with six students in each, from first, third, and fifth grades. She read aloud one text a week to each of the nine groups and invited the children to discuss their thoughts and ideas within their group. Small group discussions were recorded and transcribed.

Leal's study suggests two main benefits of peer group discussions. The first benefit was to allow students rather than teachers to serve as catalysts for discussion topics. When one child expressed his or her personal knowledge, the prior knowledge of other children was activated. These shared thoughts stimulated further ideas from others in the group and resulted in the collaborative construction of meaning for all (Cazden, 1988; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). In essence, shared prior knowledge about a particular topic or text becomes "corporate knowledge" and part of the discussion group's textual understanding.

A second benefit of peer group discussions was the opportunity for assuming complementary problem-solving roles (Cazden, 1988; Palincsar & Brown, 1984, 1988; Palincsar, Brown, & Martin, 1987; Vygotsky, 1962). In the midst of group discussion, one student can find meaning or an explanation for a problem from another child. Where one classmate lacks sufficient understanding, another may serve as the tutor. In essence, the group members take turns instructing each other.

Commenting on the implications of cooperative peer efforts, Vygotsky (1962) advocated "What a child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (p. 101).

Vygotsky (1978) argued that “problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers” enables children to expand their understanding and learning. This occurs within the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.114) that exists when a child interacts with a more experienced mentor, usually an adult, who leads the child through scaffolded information to a level of increased understanding. These beneficial effects may also accrue in peer interactions when a more informed child spurs peers to consider other perspectives and rethink prior knowledge, leading to new interpretations.

The next seven studies describe the important role of students’ talk in response to literature. These studies support the argument that at any grade level students can engage in meaningful discussions about the story world.

A team of researchers, Martinez, Roser, Hoffman, and Battle (1992) conducted a study to examine story time discussion with 20 second graders and how two specific interventions changed teacher and students’ talk. These interventions were: (a) the use of individual response logs by the teacher and children, and (b) the use of a discussion framework for promoting the sharing of responses. The teacher’s discussion guidelines included eliciting students’ story observations, unanswered questions or wonderings, and connections to the literature. A total of six literature sharing sessions with students were video- and audiotaped. Each taping was followed by a debriefing interview between the researchers and teacher. Data from the transcribed videotapes were used to identify the changes in discussion patterns associated with the introduction of response logs and the teacher guidelines.

These story talk interventions were associated with changes both in children’s responses to books and in the teacher’s strategies, adding to our understanding of the role of each in storybook discussions. The students demonstrated

increased percentages of responses classified as “offers literary criticism” and makes “personal associations.” The teacher changed instructional language by decreasing the number of “elicit answers” and “informs the children.”

When teachers begin to reconceptualize the storybook reading event as a time for sharing reflections about literature, rather than as a time for “gentle inquisitions” (J. Higgins, cited by Eeds & Wells, 1989), then dramatic changes can occur in the types of responses that children express.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the study was the changes made in teacher’s beliefs about young childrens’ capacity to respond to literature in a meaningful manner. These reconceptualized beliefs of the storybook reading event included: (1) possessing an understanding of the literary responses of which children are capable; (2) selecting literature for its potential for rich and varied story talk; (3) understanding the direction for literature study with young children; and (4) valuing a story as an aesthetic piece of text (Martinez et al., 1992).

A second research study looking at the capabilities of third graders’ response to literature was conducted by Wiseman, Many, and Altieri (1992). They designed an inquiry to consider the impact of three different methods for guiding seventy-five third graders, from six classes, to respond to literature. One method attempted to enhance students’ aesthetic experience of the story. A second method guided students to recognize their lived through literary experience and had them analyze the ways in which the author or illustrator made their personal aesthetic experience possible. The third method allowed the students to determine their focus of the literature discussion.

The findings of this study have implications for educators concerned with providing students with opportunities to experience literature aesthetically and to

develop their background knowledge in analyzing literary elements.

Students who analyzed how the literary elements affected their reading experiences were just as likely as children in the purely aesthetic discussion group to respond from an aesthetic stance. These researchers suggest that approaching literature where analysis of literary elements occurs does not diminish the students' ability to view the literary work as a lived-through experience.

The research protocols from this study support classroom approaches that encourage a wide range of responses. The researchers suggest future research needs to examine a range of instructional approaches for students to respond to literature.

A third piece of literacy research is a case-study of fifth grade students' response to literature in a variety of contexts (McMahon, Pardo, and Raphael, 1991) . These dimensions included written and oral responses to short stories, articles, picture books, and a chapter book. The settings included working individually, small group and whole class discussions; and participating in interviews.

The researchers indicate that the student's responses were influenced by their cultural background and prior knowledge, their growing awareness of elements of literary text and genre, and by the content of the text itself. There were times when the students exhibited both efferent and aesthetic response. This study suggests that through writing, and talk, elementary readers are capable of response to literature that parallels that of older, and perhaps more sophisticated readers.

In addition, Eeds and Wells (1989) contribute to our understanding of how fifth and sixth grade students and teachers gathered to talk about a story they had

already read. The researchers were interested in exploring whether these groups would address story elements of literature when talking about the books. Data collection included field notes, transcriptions of discussion sessions, and the teachers' journals.

The analysis of the data yielded four major categories of talk:

1. Constructing simple meaning: The students shared their impressions, problems or ideas they encountered while reading. They sought an agreed-upon meaning.

2. Personal involvement: The children tended to 'fill in the gaps' by discussing personal stories evoked by the reading and discussion.

3. Inquiry: The fifth and sixth graders hypothesized, interpreted and verified meanings from the readings.

4. Critique: The group discussed what they liked or disliked about the readings.

The participants in this study used language to share and challenge their responses to text. However, groups engaged in these discussions to varying degrees, which the researchers suggest was due to using "teachers in training" and their lack of experience in working with children. For example, one of the teachers focused so much on maintaining the conversations that the educator missed exploring, expanding or responding to many comments that the children offered.

Although much was learned from their study about students' and teachers' "grand conversations", Eeds and Wells concluded with the following perceptions:

The fact that rich discussions occurred even with novice educators makes us wonder what types of discussions might occur when teachers are

experienced, knowledgeable about literature, and share their own personal transactions with the text and not insist that theirs is the only possible response. (p. 28)

“Grand conversations” were also investigated with first graders after three pieces of literature had been read aloud to them (McGee, 1992). The study extended Eeds and Wells’ examination of the nature of children’s talk in literature study groups in four ways: (1) the response of first graders were examined, as they discussed stories that had been read aloud to them; (2) teachers followed the leads offered by children’s comments in the first portion of grand conversations; (3) during the second portion teachers asked one interpretive question designed to help children explore the significance of the whole story; and (4) a scoring heuristic different than Eeds and Wells was used to score student responses.

McGee felt that a scoring heuristic adapted from Garrison and Hynds (1991) more closely reflected the transactive theory of reader response. This heuristic used five categories representing a continuum of responses, ranging from “attention to the text” to “evocation of readers’ experiences and emotions.”

The five categories of response included:

(1) Reader bound statements: Talk that reflected attention to the evocation of readers’ reactions to their own experiences with life or literature.

(2) Reader-focused reflections: Statements that reflect attention to readers’ personal reactions to the work including statements of personal beliefs, inferences, interpretations, and evaluations of characters or events based on the reader’s emotions, values, and knowledge.

(3) Integrated paraphrase: Language that summarize or retell events from the story in readers’ words.

(4) Text-focused reflections: Talk about the author’s techniques, the

structure or organization of the text as a whole.

(5) Text-bound statements: Attention to text language including talk about words from the text or attention to the illustrations.

A sixth category, was added to the scoring system. This was not found in Garrison and Hynds' study since these researchers examined students' written responses.

(6) Conversational maintenance: Statements that carried the conversation forward rather than provided substantive information or responses about the text.

The results of McGee's study indicated that the majority of student's responses fall within "reader-focused" reflection category. Students evaluated the work, applied personal reactions to understanding the story, and made inferences, interpretations, and generalizations. Nearly one-third of all students' responses across the three stories were inferences or interpretations.

These results are similar to those Eeds and Wells indicated with fifth- and sixth-grade students. The first-grade children in McGee's study also constructed meaning by retelling or summarizing events from the story. In addition, they shared personal experiences and events from other stories, made hypotheses, and used evidence from the text or their own inferences to support hypotheses.

Finally, students in this study evaluated the characters, events, and stories as a whole. These results are similar to Garrison and Hynds' (1991) study of more and less proficient college readers. These older readers, like the young first graders in this study, reflected on the text from their own perspectives as readers.

Two years later, McGee, Courtney, and Lomax (1994) conducted a study to understand the teachers' role in "grand conversations" to stimulate first grade

students' engagement with literature.

The teachers read a story aloud to their students and then initiated a conversation by asking an open-ended question such as, "What do you think?" Educators were encouraged to ask one interpretive question during the conversation. These types of questions helped the children focus on interpreting and generalizing about story characters and events.

Conversations were tape recorded and transcribed. The researchers broadly analyzed instructors' talk to uncover the roles played in these conversations. Five major teacher roles emerged: (a) Facilitator, (b) helper/nudger, (c) responder, (d) literary curator, and (e) reader.

The most frequently occurring roles that encouraged children's active participation in "grand conversations," were "facilitators" and "helpers/nudgers." In these roles, teachers encouraged first graders to clarify or expand their responses or to provide a rationale for their thinking. They also nudged children into seeing alternative possibilities in interpreting stories.

The research studies previously described, focused on the responses of elementary school students. The rest of this section describes similar findings by researchers who explored the construction of meaning in literature groups with middle school students and teachers.

Golden (1986) observed two groups of eighth grade students' and teacher's talk in literature discussion with three short stories. For this classroom, talk was a natural part of instruction and did not need to be taught to the students or teacher during the study.

The analysis of the group discussion was organized around how participants' talk reflected ideas about character, plot, narrator, and reader.

Golden offered three observations about reader-text transactions:

(1) The students' aesthetic responses were characterized in four ways: (a) they integrated information from the text to talk about characters and plot; (b) the children returned to the text to support their views; (c) participants filled in gaps when explicit information was missing; and (d) they referred to other texts or personal experiences.

(2) The group discussions contributed to their responses by confirming, denying, or modifying their construction of meaning.

(3) Eighth graders' responses were influenced by the text when discussing characters or plot.

Golden's results support a viewpoint that students are capable of working collaboratively to expanding their basic understanding of text with aesthetic and intertextual responses.

More recently, Langer (1990 & 1995), used a think-aloud procedure with middle school students to explore the talk used to explain their response to text and the thoughts this language represents.

From the data, Langer suggested reading is an "act of envisionment building" or interpretative in nature. The readers assumed four stances which were "momentary... subject to change in response to subsequent thoughts that may be (but not necessarily) text-based" (p. 231).

The four stances were:

(1) Being out of and stepping into an envisionment, in which readers used their prior knowledge, experiences, and surface features of the text.

(2) Being in and moving through an envisionment, in which readers are "carried along" through their meaning-making, using information from the text, their own experiences, and prior envisionments as they read.

(3) Stepping back and rethinking what one knows, in which the

envisonment is used to influence readers' prior knowledge, rather than vice versa.

(4) Stepping out and objectifying the experience, in which readers react to the content of the selection, the story itself, or the reading experience.

Thus, Langer discovered the metacognitive capabilities of middle school students to verbalize their meaning making with literature. She corroborates the findings of the other studies in this section (e.g., Golden, 1986; Garrison & Hynds, 1991), that students' responses range from efferent or text based to more aesthetic or personal stances toward a story.

Summary of Children's Responses to Literature

The seven studies reviewed in this section indicate that reader response groups are a viable and productive method for students to interact with peers, teacher, and literature. These studies further suggest that students of most grade levels are capable of using talk to construct efferent and aesthetic stances to text.

In addition to the research described in this section, the students in this study displayed responses that focused on story themes of critical-social injustice. They discussed, wrote about, and dramatized the mistreatment of slaves and crew members on a slave voyage. These types of responses were not anticipated prior to the collection and analysis of the data. A further description of the results and research literature are described in Chapter Five and Six.

Although researchers indicate positive results with literature response groups, the tension between research and practice continues to exist. The implementation of transactional interactions with stories seems nonexistent in most classrooms. Instead, there seems to be a reliance on traditional methods of answering the teacher's questions following the reading of a piece of literature

(Sacks, 1986; Walmsley & Walp, 1989; Zarrillo & Cox, 1992).

The studies in this chapter provided valuable information for classroom practice, data collection and methodology procedures for framing my study. However, most of these studies emphasize teacher directed methods. The significance of student ownership and choice in selecting literature and response activities seems nonexistent .

Furthermore, many of these studies fail to describe the importance of intertextual connections that students can make to literature. The value of students transmediating responses from reading to writing, to discussion, to drama are lacking. Also absent are descriptions of how teachers demonstrated multiple ways of interacting with literature in order to expand and deepen students' responses.

Despite the positive results these researchers identified there are many unanswered questions:

How do teachers engage students in literature response that move beyond the literal elements and explore the lived experiences of the characters? What happens to students' responses when teachers demonstrate transmediation (changing sign systems) in responding to text? What role does intertextuality play in the responses of teachers and students?

The Theory and Research of Intertextuality

Intertextuality plays an important role in our lives and literacy learning. We make connections across past and present experiences in order to construct understandings of ourselves and the world (Short, 1993). In fact, learning can be defined as a process of making connections and searching for patterns that help us make sense of our lives (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

The second theoretical and research area reviewed for this study is

intertextuality. The information described in this section provided a valuable framework for understanding the complex backgrounds and connections the students used when responding to a story. It begins with several definitions and continues with research studies that support the theory.

The process of interpreting one "text" by means of a previous experiences can be labeled as intertextuality. The "text" can be defined as prior literary, social, cultural, linguistic, or other life events that students may draw upon to connect to a text they are reading, writing, or talking about (Barthes, 1979; de Beaugrande, 1980; Kristeva, 1980; Hartman, 1992; Bloome & Robertson, 1993). In addition, Kristeva (1980) defined intertextuality as a form of dialogue with the reader's experiences. This dialogue can occur between texts produced through writing, reading, speaking, watching, and listening.

Thus, a "text" is any chunk of meaning that has unity and can be shared with others (Short, 1986). A song, poem, a story, dance, mathematical equation, or sculpture are all "texts" from which learners can draw connections as they construct their understandings about a current evolving text.

The theory of intertextuality as a central process of meaning making is extended through Rosen's (1984) work with narratives. He argues that narratives, creating stories from our experiences, are basic thinking process which provides us with a way to organize daily events, so they do not remain fragmented, meaningless, and unconnected.

We search for harmony both within and between evolving texts as we read, write, talk, draw, sing, dance, or dramatize. In our search for cognitive peace, we create tensions that propel learning forward and results in discovery of suspected and unsuspected connections between current and past experiences. These constructions result in new understandings of past and present discourse and our

views of reality (Rosen 1984).

The importance of students having past “texts” available to make connections needed to learn has been demonstrated in early research on background knowledge (Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Langer & Nicolich, 1981). The influence of using our past to comprehend during reading has been described in research studies which examined how metaphors and analogies served as bridges between familiar and unfamiliar knowledge (Hayes & Tierney, 1982; Pearson, Raphael, TePaske, & Hyser, 1981).

The difficulty with these comprehension studies has been the focus on written text to be comprehended, as opposed to multiple experiences that readers bring to learning. The researchers assumed that the learner will make the same kind of connections and reach the same meaning as them.

In the next portion of this review, there are six studies that describe research concerning the intertextual connections that students use when responding to the texts they are reading or writing. Students have demonstrated their use of intertextual connections in a variety of situations. These include students’ comparisons to stories they have previously read when engaging in present reading and writing tasks (Cairney, 1989; 1990); participating in literature groups (Short 1986), reading “text sets” (Short, 1991; 1992a; 1993) and interpreting literature (Beach, Appleman, & Dorsey, 1994) . Bloome and Robertson (1993) also contribute to our understanding how intertextuality is socially constructed.

The first study reviewed in this section was conducted by Cairney (1989) to investigate how the reading and writing of first-grade children was affected by previous textual experiences. The qualitative study was conducted over ten months in one first grade classroom during their language periods, for two hours a week. Data consisted of field notes, interviews with the teacher and students,

personal journals of the researcher and teacher, and a collection of literacy work samples.

The results of the study indicated that (1) the writing of young children was influenced by texts that have been read to them; (2) intertextual ties were often made consciously, but sometimes occurred unconsciously; (3) there were no strong academic ability differences that affected students use of intertextual connections; and (4) intertextuality is a richly social phenomenon, not just a cognitive process, involving the application of background knowledge to produce a new text.

Later, Cairney (1990) conducted a two-year study in which he investigated the question, How is the reading and writing of children in sixth grade affected by previous textual experiences? Eighty students were interviewed to find out if they were aware of links between stories they had read and the ones they were engaged in writing. Responses to the questions concerning links between books read and their own writing were generally spontaneous and indicated that most students were aware of intertextuality. Seventy-two students (90%) were aware of intertextual links, whereas eight (10%) were unable to recall specific instances.

Patterns emerged in the analysis of the interviews that suggested seven reoccurring patterns in the way readers link texts they read and those they wrote: (a) use of genre, (b) use of character as a model, (c) use of specific ideas without copying plot, (d) copying the plot but using different events, characters, and settings, (e) copying the story, (f) transferring content from expository to narrative texts, and (g) creating a narrative from several other narratives.

An often taken-for-granted implication of Cairney's studies is that classroom teachers should provide a variety of reading and writing genres for students. These experiences have a significant impact on the intertextual histories of

children, which they draw from when reading and writing.

Short (1986) examined how to construct learning environments based on collaboration and inquiry that would encourage and support the making, recognition, and exploration of a wider variety of intertextual connections.

Literature groups were one way to involve learners in particular ways of thinking and working together as a collaborative community. The characteristics of these groups included: (a) common commitment, (b) valued diversity, (c) equal value of contributions, (d) fluid roles, (e) shared vulnerability, and (f) decision-making through consensus. These features promoted students to make intertextual connections to the books they were reading.

Another way to assist students in making intertextual connections is by using text sets. They are a collection of conceptually related books organized around a theme, author, genre, or topic, and used as a strategy to engage students in reading, writing, and talking. Short (1991;1992a; 1993) examined their use with third- and sixth-grade students in making connections across literature and life.

The children read several books from the set and together explored comparisons and connections across the books and their lives. The readers were encouraged to first share their "lived through" aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1978) with other readers and then to reflect on and analyze their responses and connections.

Several groups brainstormed lists or constructed webs of possible comparisons or connections. Other students physically sorted books, some listed characteristics and categorized them, while others divided up books by theme.

The third- and sixth-graders made connections to: (1) elements of the story; (2) lives of the authors or illustrators; (4) life experiences and previous texts; or

(5) new experiences. After their discussions, the groups presented their findings to the rest of the class.

Field notes were taken as they read, discussed, and presented their sets to the class, and the literature discussions were either audio- or videotaped. Short also collected charts, webs, literature log entries, and other written artifacts produced during the discussions.

Short concluded that the text sets strategy and the focus on searching for connections became a conscious part of how students and teachers thought in other situations (i.e., math and science). They were more aware of the need for connections and the ways they could go about searching for these connections.

It was also noted that students made a more conscious search for connections in later discussions and brought in broader experiences when everyone in the group had read the same book. Thus, text sets highlight intertextuality, the process of making meaning across present and past texts and life events.

The research of Beach, Appleman, and Dorsey (1994), also contributes important insights about the role of intertextuality to enhance older students' learning. They conducted two studies of adolescents' ability to use intertextual links to interpret literature. The results of one study indicated the degree to which eighth grade students specified and elaborated on links between texts to explain characters' actions. In their second study with high school juniors, some students developed more proficient strategies for defining links than other students, differences seemed due to prior reading and classroom experiences.

These two studies suggest that, in addition to the amount of leisure literature reading, learning to define intertextual links is a learned discourse practice that contributes to understanding texts.

They suggest that instructional activities can influence students' ability to define links. Teachers may foster intertextual links by organizing literature units around thematic, topical, cultural, historical, or genre connections between texts. They can demonstrate through discussions that connections between texts can be made. Educators can also encourage students to reach beyond the scope of the present literature they are reading and draw on their own unique prior reading experiences to make intertextual connections (Beach et al., 1994).

Intertextuality can also be thought of as a social construction. Bloome and Robertson (1993) investigated this construct by conducting a microanalysis of three students during a first-grade reading lesson. The lesson involved a teacher-led discussion of a story the class had read in a previous lesson. They described intertextuality as located in people's social interactions, adding to the interpretation of the event.

The microanalysis suggests how teachers and students may use intertextuality (a) to define themselves and each other as readers and as students, (b) to form social groups, (c) to identify and validate previous events as sources of knowledge, and (d) to construct, maintain, and contest the cultural ideology of the simultaneously occurring teacher-class and peer-peer interaction.

The view of intertextuality as a social construction broadens current understanding within the field of literacy locating intertextuality in the text, in an individual's mind, or in a combination of the two.

Beach (1996) offers a theoretical model of contextualized reading that draws on current social-cultural models of reading and is related to intertextuality. Contextualized reading focuses the reader, "to read texts as part of a complex set of social relationships and belief systems." It involves the reader's ability to interpret social contexts, to read what is happening in the story, to determine the

characters' interactions and behaviors and the underlying social-cultural purposes and consequences of those behaviors. Readers also compare their text interpretations to the social-cultural meanings in their everyday experiences. Thus, it is the process of reading and interpreting texts by blending social and cultural contexts and their lives.

Summary of Intertextuality Theory and Research

The intertextuality studies reviewed in this section describe how students can draw from previous social, cultural, linguistic, or literary experiences to interpret literature. These connections contributed significantly to their understanding and interpretations of the story and made the novel more meaningful and pertinent to their lives.

The Theory and Research of Transmediation

The final theoretical and research area reviewed for this study is transmediation, describing how readers interact with literature in a variety of ways, in order to expand and deepen their understandings and interpretations (Rosenblatt, 1978; Cullinan, 1982; Hickman, 1981).

Transmediation occurs when meaning formed in one communication system is moved to an alternate sign system (e.g., first reading, then writing about it, to discussion or dramatizing responses). Knowledge is recast in a new form of expression. This process of recasting our knowing is the essence of literacy (Harste, Short & Burke, 1988, p. 12). Through transmediation students are provided the opportunity to reflect consciously on their concepts (Eisner, 1982) and to elaborate and form new connections between existing concepts (Siegel, 1984). Thus, the main task of teachers is encouraging children's imaginative engagement with symbolic forms of language that develop their awareness of the way in which words work.

In this section the theories and studies of seven researchers describes the importance of transmediation in literature study. Through the media of writing (Emig, 1977 & 1983; Hancock, 1991), various forms of art (Seigel, 1984; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994), dramatic expression (Wolf & Enciso, 1994), and a combination of sign systems (Hoyt, 1992; Weston, 1993) students represent their responses.

Writing, as defined by Emig (1977 & 1983), is an unique verbal form that is graphically recorded and has an innate capacity for promoting learning. It involves the fullest possible functioning of the brain, involving hand, eye, and brain, which marks a powerful multi-representational mode for learning. Through writing students are transmediating their reading into another form of communication, offering an additional form to respond and enhance their interpretations of text.

A classroom study conducted with sixth grade students examined response journals to reflect on four realistic fiction books (Hancock, 1991). Categories of response were derived from over 1,500 literature response entries. Broad areas of response included personal meaning making, character and plot involvement, and literary criticism. Hancock's study promotes writing as one method for readers to express their personal responses as they venture through the pages of books.

The next two researchers explored students' response to literature as they moved from reading to drawing. Seigel (1984) explored the transmediation of students from reading to expressing the meaning constructed using sketches. Seigel suggests that students had to invent ways of expressing their written language experiences in the medium of art. Thus, they had to reflect in a different way on their reading in order to discover ways of expressing it in drawing.

Drawing in response to literature was also investigated, using a case-study, by Smagorinsky and Coppock (1994). The researchers revealed a number of processes involved in creating a drawing based on a story. The student drew on personal experiences to empathize with one of the characters and establish a picture perspective. The process of drawing was a dialectic function that helped mediate thought and activity.

These two studies contribute to our understanding that students may use drawing to represent their literary interpretations. Too often mediating responses in multiple ways goes undeveloped for many students. It is suggested that typical methods of evaluation are narrow and preclude a range of vehicles for meaning construction (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994).

Dramatizations are another activity students can engage in to transfer their reading into another media and promote additional ways of thinking about a story (see Smagorinsky, 1999). When students use drama activities (e.g., readers' theater, in-role, dramatizations, improvisations, etc...) to respond to texts, they are facilitated to "consider the content and context of their language and provides a means that allows clarification, restating and subsequent comprehension of text" (Booth, 1998). The continual cognitive activity involved in drama aligns well with current theory which regards literacy as active, strategic, and social in nature.

The research of Wolf and Enciso (1994) and other drama educators (e.g., O'Neill & Lambert, 1982; Heathcote, 1984; and Edmiston, 1993), discuss drama as a medium for text interpretation that enables readers to enter and alter the multiple worlds of literary and personal experiences. In dramatic enactments, the possibilities for expression expand. These enactments can take the form of improvisation, pantomime, reader's theater, interpretative readings, or acting out

scenes from a story.

Drama also extends beyond what can be accomplished verbally to include other sign systems--gestures, eye gaze, use of props, sets, and costumes. All of these dramatic languages allow readers to depict and critique both the personal and social meanings they experience during reading.

Responding to literature with drama activities has the potential for children to communicate much more than they can effectively verbalize. It benefits students whose learning styles, cultural backgrounds or English as a second language may prevent them from answering a teacher's questions about a story (Wolf, 1993).

However, Wolf and Enciso find that children are rarely given an opportunity to try on the multiple perspectives available in dramatic interpretation. Drama (as many of the arts) is seen as an extracurricular rather than a central activity (Gardner, 1989).

The final two researchers investigated students' use of multiple sign systems to respond to literature.

Hoyt (1992) researched the many ways of transmediating meaning using readers' theater, discussions, and clay and paint projects. Third grade, Chapter 1 students were able to process meaning about elephants in ways that deepened and expanded their understanding. She concluded that with the support of multiple communications systems, learners with special needs brought life to the words on the page.

Additionally, Weston (1993) used teacher-researcher qualitative methods to study fourth grade students. They were given choices using writing, art, or drama to interact and explore the information and materials they had been reading.

Her results indicated that the children responded along the continuum Rosenblatt (1982) identifies as efferent at one end to aesthetic at the other. They were involved in meaning making for themselves and their classmates. Weston concluded that as teachers become comfortable with taking personal risks and support the choices of children, rich expressions of learning can result in a classroom .

Summary of Transmediation Theory and Research

The research reviewed in this section, describes and supports the valuable role transmediation plays in students' learning. It requires the learner to shift perspectives by moving from one communication system to another and enhances learning.

Children need to be encouraged to use sign systems other than language in order to develop their full cognitive and communication potential (Eisner, 1982; Siegel, 1984). Students need to discuss their books, respond through writing, art, and drama. This movement enhances a child's thinking, understanding, and interpretations of literature.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter represents an overview of the theories and research that contributed to framing my study. A body of research was presented that focused on the role of talk in reader response groups. These studies have added to our understanding of the important role of language in the transactional analysis of literature between students and texts (Leal, 1991; Martinez, Roser, Hoffman, Battle, 1992; Eeds & Wells, 1989;...).

Separate research described the significant role of intertextuality and the contributions students' multiple backgrounds bring to their responses to the story world (Rosen, 1984; Cairney 1989; 1990; Short 1986; 1991; 1992b; 1993;

Bloome & Robertsen, 1993; Beach et al., 1994).

Additional studies have suggested the importance of transmediation and how shifts in communication forms can deepen students' interpretations and understandings of texts (Hancock, 1991; Siegel, 1984; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994; Hoyt, 1992; Weston, 1993).

Although researchers have investigated a variety of perspectives concerning reader response, the tension between research to practice continues. My study expands the body of reader response research by providing a case-study of literature study. The inquiry also explored questions that have remained unanswered in each of the reviewed studies. For example, how does a combination of transmediation, intertextuality, and transactional reading influence readers' responses to literature? Transcript examples in Chapter 5 describe how these processes functioned and the role they played in one fifth grade group.

This investigation explored response in its complexity, and brings some clarity and understanding to the ways readers transact with text, incorporating their intertextual background, and transmediating their responses to a story. It also describes the role of the teacher and the group process in literature study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This case-study was conducted in a fifth grade classroom during their literature study. During the first semester of the school year (September-January), the role of the teacher in demonstrating multiple responses to literature and acting as a participant in the small groups, as well as general responses of the class, were documented through my field notes, audiotapes, and the classroom teacher's journal. Starting in February, formalized data collection focused on the response activities occurring within one small literature group, as they independently responded to The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973). The role of the students' transmediated responses, their efferent and aesthetic stances, and their intertextual connections to the novel were documented.

The research was guided by four questions which served as a framework for observing, participating in, and understanding how a teacher demonstrates responses to literature and scaffolds students' responses to literature. This particular case-study describes how five students chose to respond to the book, The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973), during nineteen, fifty minute, literature study sessions. The research questions were:

1. What are the various ways students choose to respond in a literature group?

2. What are the general characteristics of those student responses?
3. What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the group? How do students interact with their peers when responding to a piece of literature?
4. What are the various ways a teacher responds in a literature group? What is the nature of teacher responses and what purposes do those responses serve?

Qualitative Study

This dissertation combines two research paradigms, action and interpretative research. I was not testing a problem and solution, but sought to explore possibilities of how the students, classroom teacher, and I could co-construct meaning for a novel. Our processes are described in the chapters that follow. They are embedded in the data analysis chart (figure 3 & 4), illuminated through the various transcripts and interpretations in Chapter 5, graphically represented in a model for literature study (Chapter 6), and implied in the findings and classroom implications section in Chapter 6.

My research task was to reflect, interpret and understand the meanings that were operating within the group (Carroll, 1996), and at the same time reflect on my interactions that impacted the groups' literature study.

Edmiston and Wilhelm (1996) define the mixture of research paradigms that frames this study as action research. "Action researchers are a hybrid between ethnographers and phenomenologists since they are interested not only in the social realities of the culture they are a part of, but also their own experiences as they take action in particular contexts. However, they also want to learn from their experiences, to act more effectively to achieve their goals."

Taylor (1998) uses the paradigm of "reflective practitioner researcher" to describe the "desire to understand more about pedagogical strategies so a teacher can develop into a more competent professional." He describes this

research process as a rigorous, ongoing, investigation of daily classroom practice, characterized by active reflections as literacy events are occurring. The goal is to teach ourselves about our students' responses or lack of responses and determine an instructional course of action.

Brenda Manzke and I formed a partnership which jointly planned, implemented, and reflected in and on our instructional practice. Our relationship permitted us to listen to each other, to learn from and build on our evolving understanding of literature study. We collaborated, reflected and asked questions to determine our course of action in the literature group. We also reflected to ask interpretative questions like: What could we have done differently to support students' deeper more meaningful discussions? How do the students' dramatizations transmediate their construction of meaning? What meaning do discussions of the the social injustice of slavery hold for the children?

Our process was recursive and reflexive; we examined and reexamined how our language and behaviors facilitated students' learning. Over time, we proceeded in an action research cycle--an ongoing spiral of steps: planning, taking action, observing, and reflecting (Edminston & Wilhelm, 1996).

This dissertation also used an interpretative paradigm to analyze the students' interactions and responses. I stepped back to watch how they chose to study the book. I interpreted the literature study group as I participated, overtly and covertly, watched what happened, listened to what was said, asked questions and offered support to the students. Thus, I was not only a participant in their literature study, but also an observer of their group.

The data were analyzed in an interpretive manner to determine the categories and codes of responses. There were not predetermined categories or codes through which data were collected or interpreted (Taylor, 1996).

This study of literature response differs from the research in the literature review section in several ways. First, this study expands the body of reader response research and explores questions that have remained unanswered in each of the separate studies. For example, how does a combination of transmediation, intertextuality, and transactional reading influence readers' responses to literature? This investigation explored student responses in their complexity, and attempts to bring some clarity and understanding to the process of readers' transactions with text, readers' intertextual backgrounds, and the transmediation of their responses.

Second, the studies that do exist acknowledge the importance of talk as a means to generate and negotiate meaning. However, many of these studies focus on talk as the only means of constructing response to literature. There seems to be a lack of description of the combination of writing, art, or drama in response to literature.

Third, most of the studies reviewed in the related research do not seem to describe an action research or a reflective practitioner approach. This study provided us with a systematic and rigorous way to investigate our practice. The assumption behind action research is that through careful study of their practice teachers will improve their teaching (Winter, 1987) and ultimately "transform their teaching practices" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1988, p.13). Crucial to action research is both the understanding that change is occurring and the commitment of the researcher to seek the meaning of that change within a broader context.

Finally, the contribution of the teacher-research movement validates this type of study concerning the students' response to literature. This study involved a collaborative relationship between the fifth grade teacher and me. This collaborative relationship included co-teaching, planning, reflecting, evaluating,

and interacting with the students during daily reading instruction. The teacher-researcher movement, growing out of educational action research, is designed to allow reflection and interpretation of “meanings” as they emerge from the study. McCutcheon and Jung (1990) have called this the “shifting paradigm work” within the family of action research.

Summary

The significance of this study was its grounding in the theories and research of literature response, transmediation, and intertextuality and following the process and procedures of the action and interpretive research paradigms (Taylor, 1996; Spradley, 1980; Bissex & Bullock, 1987; Lincoln, 1990; Guba, 1990). This was a study of a “meaning question” rather than a “problem solving question.” Within this paradigm, my role as researcher and participant in a literature response group related this inquiry to action research. In action research, the teacher and I participated in the demonstrations of literature response (described in Chapter 4) which shaped the direction of the emerging changes within the students’ responses. We also incorporated an interpretative stance by taking a step back to observe, reflect, and interpret the children’s independent responses to a novel.

The Participants and The Classroom Setting

The following section provides a description of the school and the classroom in which the study took place. The five participants in the case-study literature group were selected from a class of 25 fifth graders, enrolled in a Midwestern public school. The student racial mixture of the school included 85% white and 15% Hispanic, Asian, Indian, or African American. The students came from low, middle and upper-middle class socioeconomic levels. The children in the fifth grade classroom were mixed academic ability and were established by the fourth grade teachers from the previous year. Students were divided among three fifth

grade teachers based on academic strengths, special education labels, ratio of girls and boys, and English as a second language. Permission was received from all the parents in the classroom for their child to participate in the study (Appendix A).

The criteria for placing the students in small literature groups was based on the novel title they selected, a range of reading abilities (low, average, and high) as determined by the classroom teacher's observations, and a combination of boys and girls. During February 1995, one small group was selected for the major data collection. This group was selected based on a range of reading and academic abilities, and a combination of two girls and three boys.

The criteria for selecting Brenda Manzke was based on my observations, conversations, and interactions as a reading specialist with this teacher during the 1994-95 school year. Her literacy instruction was an example of "best practice" in the field of education. She seemed to have an understanding, at a classroom application level, of the importance of the transactional approach of the reading process, the role of student intertextual connections, and the significance of the transmediation of responses. This teacher built a community of learners in which student choice, talk, inquiry, self-assessment, and multiple responses to literature are valued and promoted. Brenda Manzke also expressed an interest in participating in an research study.

Data Collection

The data collection process in an interpretive, action research study is a recursive process. This recursive process involves data collection, data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing / verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Key sources of data were provided by: a) audio and video tapes of a small

group responding to literature; b) fieldnotes of classroom observations and my reflections throughout the school year, including the teacher and I demonstrating multiple ways of responding to literature; c) a teacher journal and interview in which she reflected her thoughts about reader response and the interactions of the students; d) photocopies, videotapes, or actual student work samples; and e) interviews of each student who participated in the literature group in which the data was collected.

These multiple sources of data collection were used to triangulate the data (Kamil, Langer & Shanahan, 1985) and improve the probability that the findings and interpretations are credible (Denzin, 1978).

Audiotapes and videotapes. The audio and video taped data were collected during nineteen days of the groups' literature study of The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973). I transcribed the audiotapes and used them to analyze the students' and my interactions. The videotapes were used to visually support specific sections of the transcripts described in Chapter 4 and 5. This analysis examined their response activities, efferent and aesthetic stances, and intertextual connections made to the book.

Fieldnotes. Following the model of Bogdan and Biklen (1982) fieldnotes documented and described how the teacher and I demonstrated multiple responses for the students and interacted with them in their small groups during the first semester of the school year. During February I described in fieldnotes the students' and my interactions and the response activities they chose, reconstructed pertinent dialogue to support transcripts, and reflected and interpreted the students' and my behaviors.

Teacher journal. The teacher was requested to keep a journal of her reflections throughout the school year. These reflections focused on her

instructional role, responses to the students, her questions, concerns, or opinions toward literature study. This data was used to document the role of the classroom teacher in supporting students engaged in literature study.

Teacher interview. At the end of the study the teacher participated in an audiotaped interview to share her reflections about the students' response to literature (Appendix B). Again this data source documented the role of the classroom teacher in supporting students' literature study.

Student interviews. After the group completed their 19-day study of The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973), each student was interviewed, concerning their opinions about literature response instruction during the school year (Appendix C). These interviews were conducted by me, 1 to 1, outside of the classroom. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. These interviews provided positive reflections of the students' thoughts and opinions toward literature study in their particular classroom. Although their comments supported how they studied literature, they are not included within this document.

Student work samples. Actual student work samples or photocopies were collected during the 19 days of their novel study. These work samples include reader response journals, mid-book and end of book tests that the students created, drawings, and videotapes of their drama projects performed at the middle and end of their literature study.

Time Line

Phase 1 of this study occurred during the 1994-95 school year (Figure 1). My role was to work as a reading specialist with this fifth grade teacher and her students. I collaborated with the classroom teacher, five days a week, 50 minutes a day, to plan and co-teach reading. This reading instruction involved reading from the district-adopted literature anthology to introduce or support

themes found in the novels we were reading. However, the majority of the year was spent reading various novels. These novels connected to the topics of study during afternoon social studies and science classes (e.g., the ocean, American Revolution, Civil War, multicultural studies...).

The teacher and I demonstrated response activities for the whole class and small groups of children. These response activities included acting as a group member in literature discussions and demonstrating deeper ways of responding to a story. For example, sharing personal responses to moral dilemmas the characters were going through, making connections to our own lives, comparing the story to other texts, expressing our opinions, wonderings, questions, and making predictions about the story. Other demonstrations of response activities included literature response logs, literature group jobs, reader's theater, and assisting students in designing various charts, graphs, posters, or drama projects.

Phase 1

September 1994-January 1995
Collaboration with the classroom teacher to informally explore literature group instruction
Data collection: field notes.

February-May 1995
Pilot study of one small group of students responding to a novel.
Data collection: field notes and audiotapes.

Phase 2

September 1995-January 1996
Teacher & researcher demonstration of literature response activities.
Data collection: field notes & teacher journal.

February 1996
Main data collection from one small group of students responding to The Slave Dancer.
Data collection: fieldnotes, teacher journal, audio- and video tapes, teacher and student interviews, and student work samples.

Phase 3

March-May 1996
Transcribing audiotapes
preliminary analysis.
Informal visits to the classroom.

Figure 1. Phases of the study

A pilot study was conducted during February-May 1995. I observed one group of students for the kinds of talk they engaged in, how they negotiate the reading of their novel, and what types of response activities they chose. Data was collected by audiotapes, transcribing, and coding seven days of discussion and responses. I wrote in a personal journal to reflect my thoughts concerning the students' interactions and responses. The classroom teacher and I had ongoing conversations to discuss and reflect on how the students were doing and determine what our next instructional plans would be. This pilot study provided me with preliminary data for shaping the dissertation questions, methods and procedures.

Phase 2 of the study was conducted during September 1995 through January 1996 (Figure 1). The teacher and I demonstrated a variety of ways of responding to literature. Each demonstration was followed by students working in their literature study group to try out the activity. These response activities included: reader response logs (Flitterman-King, 1988), using efferent and aesthetic stances (Rosenblatt, 1978) in response to literature, literature discussion jobs (Daniels, 1994), reader's theater (Sloyer, 1982) and student-selected and designed projects (i.e., Moffett & Wagner, 1992). The students chose how they read the book in their small group. A combination of reading aloud and silent reading at school or home was suggested. While the children were meeting, the teacher and I took turns with each group to demonstrate our responses, share our questions, encourage students to respond aesthetically, and scaffold their process as they negotiated their responses and constructed meaning.

The main data for this study was collected during nineteen, 50-minute, sessions in February 1996 (Figure 1). The five case-study students selected The Slave Dancer from a choice of titles including The Year of the Boar and Jackie

Robinson (Lord, 1984), and Felita (Mohr, 1979). The students participated in their group based on their novel selection. The teacher and I considered the range of reading and academic abilities, and a combination of girls and boys in each group, but the predominate criteria for group formation was the students' novel choice. There was an additional group of five which also studied The Slave Dancer. The other literature groups in the classroom included one group of four and a group of five that studied The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson and a group of five which studied Felita.

For a variety of reasons I selected one particular Slave Dancer group to conduct the research study. Based on my teaching experiences, this group seemed to have a range of personalities, discussion abilities, and interacted well with one another. The group consisted of three boys and two girls. Their academic and reading abilities ranged from identified learning disabilities, to average-, and above-average abilities, determined through the classroom teacher's experiences in working with them throughout the school year.

The teacher and I selected the three novels based on the following criteria: a) they contained themes or issues that may generate meaningful literature discussions, b) they appealed to children's' interests, c) children's' literature consultants from local bookstores or journal publications recommended them, d) the books coordinated with multicultural issues being studied in the social studies curriculum, e) the books were a part of the district collection available for classroom use. However, I purchased newer copies of The Slave Dancer that had larger print and an updated cover illustration than those belonging to the school district.

The students were given 19 sessions to read, respond, and study their novel. They were directed to choose how their group would study the novel. The

majority of the data was collected from one Slave Dancer group as they read, responded, and negotiated their responses to the novel. The audio and video taped data were collected during the 19 sessions of their novel study. The teacher interview and student interviews occurred at the end of the novel study.

Phase 3 occurred during March-May 1996 (Figure 1). During these three months I transcribed the audiotapes, and conducted preliminary analysis of the data. I continued to visit the classroom to informally observe and interact with the students and classroom teacher.

Data Analysis

Following the suggestions of LeCompte and Preissle (1993), the processes of data collection, coding, and analysis was recognized as "inextricably linked" and a cyclic process that shaped the on-going work. Information gathered and feedback from the field was used to develop techniques and strategies for coding and analysis. Research questions were redefined as the meanings that participants attached to things became clearer.

The initial task of organizing and analyzing the data sources was a challenging process which caused continual cognitive dissonance. My eight month analysis journey is described to provide an example of my process for other researchers.

Analysis of the data began simultaneously with the data collection process. Each time I entered and left the classroom I jotted down field notes detailing my impressions, conversations with the classroom teacher, my interactions with the group, and other interesting group talk that occurred.

During my transcription (Appendix D) of the 19 audiotapes, containing over 900 minutes of literature study talk, I kept a running journal of student conversations and interactions that indicated deeper-level interpretations of the

text. This running journal also included my commentaries, interpretations, insights, and summaries of each session. This initial analysis was informally shared through conversations with the classroom teacher. Her feedback and input during these conversations were considered part of the analysis process.

The next phase in this inductive process was “making sense” of the data. The goal was to attempt to uncover embedded information from the literature group context and make it explicit. Two subprocesses were involved which are labeled as “unitizing” and “categorizing” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Unitizing is a process of coding data into units. These units are best understood as single pieces of information that are interpretable in the absence of any additional information. A unit began and ended as the students changed the topic of conversation. The units were marked by hand, in pencil, during my reading and rereading of the transcripts. Some unit examples were: discussion of a particular story event, reading a reaction from literature log, asking a question about a character's behavior, discussing the beating of a slave, comparing one's self to the main character, teacher explaining a description of slave hold, and teacher asking why they were beating the slave.

Next, these units for each session were cut into strips of paper. This resulted in thousands of strips of conversation which I organized into categories for each session, on eight-foot long sheets of bulletin board paper. These charts provided a visual display of each session and allowed the manipulation of these units into various categories that began to emerge. When I was satisfied that each unit was placed into a proper category, they were glued on the paper. Some of the taped dialogue was inaudible. Other conversations did not fit neatly into a category. These units were saved until the end of my categorization process and attempts were made to organize them or they were labeled as insignificant to this

study.

Categorizing is a process of organizing the coded data units into specific categories. These categories provide descriptive information about the context from which the units were derived. Examples of categories include: intertextual connections to the story, recognition of social injustice and human mistreatment, teacher scaffolding of group, and decision-making to facilitate the group process.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) described this categorizing process as “constant comparative method.” This method involved sorting units into temporary categories based on similar features or characteristics. As the temporary categories accumulated a number of units, I generated criteria or rules that served as the basis for inclusion or exclusion decisions. The criteria changed as each unit was categorized. Eventually, every unit of data was assigned to a category based on a specific criteria.

My analysis was also assisted by notes I made while transcribing, field notes, video-tapes, interviews, teacher journal, and students' work. These additional data sources provided supportative documents for my interpretations.

Third, I typed a list of all the category names for each session to facilitate comparisons across 19 sessions. Then I reread the dialogue in each category to select the best representation of each particular category. I had many more samples of dialogue than I could use for this dissertation. I selected examples that seem the most crucial to this study. These excerpts are displayed in Chapter 5.

After categorization of the transcribed units, I began to select key sections of the transcripts to assist in the reduction of the data, to pursue the process of data display, and to begin to draw some initial conclusions. These key sections of transcripts provided a list of the richest transcripts to be used in the final analysis

process. Additionally, selected video tapes, student work samples, field notes, teacher journal entries, and participant interviews were used, as appropriate, to reinforce the analysis of selected transcripts and provide triangulation of data sources.

Finally, I wrote and revised my interpretations of the conversations by explaining why it is important and the meaning it represented for the students and me.

In summary, the research process has been a recursive one of revisiting the data, narrowing it down, making interpretations and describing it. The discovery of relationships began with the analysis of initial observations, undergoing continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, and continually examining the process of category coding. Events were constantly compared with previous events, and new categories and new relationships were discovered (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Thus, utilizing data from the transcription of audiotapes, detailed information and reflections in the fieldnotes, selected portions of videotapes, teacher journal, interviews, and student work samples, coding and analysis looked for answers to the four research questions (Figure 2).

Data Sources Used to Answer The Research Questions

Questions

1. What are the various ways students respond in a literature group?
2. What are the general characteristics of those student responses?
3. What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the group? How do students interact with their peers when responding to a piece of literature?
4. What are the various ways a teacher responds in a literature group? What is the nature of teacher responses and what purposes do those responses serve?

Data Sources

- audio- & video tape transcripts
- field notes
- teacher journal
- student work samples
- teacher & student interviews

Figure 2. Data sources used to answer the research questions

Themes and Categories for Teacher Responses

I began analyzing the teachers interactions with the case-study group, session by session, after transcribing, reviewing field notes, rereading summaries of my impressions of each session, and cutting units of talk from each transcript and gluing them on oversized charts. These hundreds of units of teacher talk were manipulated into many categories, and the categories were eventually defined under two themes and six categories of teacher response and interaction (figure 3).

The research questions concerning the teacher's role in students' literature discussions were also used to guide this analysis process. These questions were: 1) What are the various ways a teacher responds in literature groups? What is the nature of teacher responses and what purposes do those responses serve? The answers to these questions are embedded in the data analysis chart

(figure 3), illuminated through the various transcripts and interpretations in Chapter 5, graphically represented in a model for literature study (Chapter 6), and implied in the findings and classroom implications section in Chapter 6.

Teacher Response and Interaction

Facilitating the Literature Group Process		
Supporting the students in their literature study process	Asking the students questions about their literature study process	Requesting or suggesting students to engage in a particular group process
Facilitating the Construction of Meaning		
Sharing insight, opinions, and responses to the story	Asking questions about the story	Shaping, guiding, and supporting students' responses toward the story

Figure 3. Themes and categories for teacher response and interaction

Themes and Categories for Students' Responses

The process of analyzing the students' responses proceeded in a similar manner as the analysis of teacher responses. I revisited field notes and the summaries of my impressions for each session. I coded the units of students' talk, and manipulated the units into categories, session by session. These categories were then eventually defined under two themes and eight categories of students' responses (figure 4).

The research questions concerning the students' responses during literature discussions was also used to guide this analysis process. These questions were: 1.) What are the various ways students respond in literature groups? 2.) What are the general characteristics of those student responses? 3.) What meanings do students attribute to those responses within the interactions of the group?

How do students interact with their peers when responding to a piece of literature? The answers to these questions are embedded in the data analysis chart (figure 4), illuminated through the various transcripts and interpretations in Chapter 5, graphically represented in a model for literature study (Chapter 6), and implied in the findings and classroom implications section in Chapter 6.

Students' Response and Interaction

Literature Group Process				
Decision making about the groups' literature study process	Organizing the session for literature study	Collaborative talk to maintain the flow of the session and accomplish group tasks		
Transmediating The Construction of Meaning				
Generating questions to explore story meaning	Collaborative talk to explore story meaning	Responding to the story with an efferent stance	Responding to the story with an aesthetic stance	Responding to the story with an intertextual connection

Figure 4. Themes and categories for students' response and interaction

This chapter presents the justification for using qualitative methods for investigating literature study with a small group of fifth grade students. A description and sequence of the data analysis process is described. The next two chapters will focus on the patterns that emerged during data analysis and what those patterns reveal in regards to the role of the teacher in facilitating literature study and the nature of students' responses in their literature study group.

CHAPTER IV

GETTING READY FOR LITERATURE STUDY:

TEACHER DEMONSTRATIONS AND STUDENT INVITATIONS

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I describe the journey Brenda Manzke, a beginning fifth grade teacher, and I made towards literature study with her students. Next, I show how our teacher demonstrations promote meaningful literature discussions and response activities. In the final section, I outline the selection process of the case-study students.

Our Journey Toward Literature Study

This section describes how one classroom teacher and I arrived at our instructional practice of literature discussions and response activities. We will never reach a final destination of one philosophy, theory, or practice for literature study. The interesting and exciting dynamics of discussion and learning is that we are continually changing as teachers and students.

I began teaching 16 years ago as a special education teacher. Later when I was teaching "regular" elementary grades, I realized how little preparation I had for teaching reading and language arts. In my first year teaching 25 third graders, with a 10 year old basal, I had to figure out how to teach reading that was motivating and productive for the students and me. Thus began my journey towards literature-based reading with discussions and meaningful response

activities as crucial components of a literacy program.

My career has been a journey with many turns, challenges, and disappointments. I consider myself a life-long learner, always reading, reflecting, and experimenting with theory and practice. My philosophies about education are evolving.

Over the years, I experimented with commercial novel units, worksheets, cooperative roles, and literature circle jobs. I created literature-circle jobs, roles, rubrics, and clever response activities for the students. However, I was not satisfied with the students' discussions and responses when using commercial and teacher made materials. I began to realize that student choices and active participation were missing when I imposed these materials on the children. I asked myself, "How can I demonstrate for students authentic and meaningful ways to discuss books without all the "basalized" materials?"

My field notes, one year prior to my case study data collection, expressed my questions of inquiry about literature study and my frustrations with commercial materials:

How do I get deeper-level literature discussions with students? What is the role of the teacher and students? How can students relate to literature in more sophisticated ways; almost adult-like responses? How do teachers demonstrate meaningful discussions for students?

Most teachers use literal questions, worksheets, and assigned jobs for literature discussions. I've observed many students obsessed with getting the "right" answers when filling out response forms. These worksheets tend to focus students on story elements, lower levels of responding to text, and little discussion.

I want students to personally relate to the characters, themes, or moods found in the literature. Students need to socially negotiate that meaning found in texts. (Field notes 1/22/95)

Later I recognized why more meaningful and deeper-level literature discussions need to occur in classrooms:

The purpose of reading is to get meaning, to possibly live through the eyes of the characters' experiences and emotions. This way of relating to literature, in a more personal manner, may help students understand themselves, peers, and the human condition. These goals of reading may result in higher levels of thinking and deeper, more meaningful discussions.

Reading can be more meaningful and interesting for students than answering a bunch of teacher or basal questions. Students can transmediate with text through writing, art, drama and talk; drawing upon their intertextual backgrounds to construct deeper meaning. (Field notes 1/22/95)

Recently, I was hired as a reading specialist for a Midwestern school district. This role afforded me opportunities to collaborate with various teachers and students, to demonstrate and experiment with diverse aspects of a literature based literacy program.

During that time I met Brenda Manzke, a beginning fifth grade teacher. I was impressed with her manner of conducting literature discussions with her students. She valued student choice of books and response activities. Brenda demonstrated a variety of ways of responding to literature (e.g., journals, art, music, drama, conversations). Her classroom became the birthplace of my inquiry into literature study without the overuse of popular commercial materials that seemingly dominate many classrooms.

Following the collection of case study data, Brenda Manzke shared with me why she values the power of discussions:

I think literature discussions are really revealing about the child, to find out what experiences they have. You can tell which children have had meaningful discussions with their parents about things at home and which ones need that discussion here at school. That's a reason why discussions are so important. A lot of kids never have discussions with people about what's going on in their lives or about anything. (Teacher interview 3/18/96)

Similar to my evolving views, Brenda's philosophy about reading instruction had changed:

Originally I had a more traditional, whole class reading instruction format. There were specific, focused skill lessons. The students were evaluated on mastery of skills and quality of responses to predetermined teacher questions.

During the past three years, I have moved to a discussion focus. I am using a novel based curriculum that allows flexible grouping, meaningful literature discussions, student choice in what they read and response activities. (3/21/96, Boston, MA. National Council of Teacher's of English, Presenter notes.)

During an interview with Brenda Manzke, she compared the construction of meaning in literature study to constructing meaning in life. She believes there is more to literature discussions than just discussing a story. Literature study can be like examining our lives:

I think life in general is a process of constructing meaning. As you go on, you go further and further, it's not necessarily from reading a book that you construct meaning, but everything in your life you build on. I think children need to learn how to do that. That's never really taught to them in traditional schooling experiences. It's never really taught to them how you can take something and personalize it, take ownership of it. Most of the time we're looking for specific canned answers. (Teacher interview 3/18/96)

I observed, collaborated, and experimented with Brenda Manzke during literature discussions and response activities for two years. During the first year, I observed Brenda's students during their study of Island of The Blue Dolphins (O'Dell, 1971). This observation, one year prior to the case study, is an example of the kinds of responses she valued in her classroom:

They told how they felt about certain parts of the story and what they would have done in that situation. They compared themselves to the characters. The students told personal stories connecting to similar circumstances of the characters in the story. They asked questions to clarify story events. The students hypothesized what would happen if certain things happened in the story or to the characters. They predicted what they think will happen next in the story. (Field notes 1/23/95)

Toward the end of our two year collaboration, I collected one month of case-study data for this dissertation. Brenda allowed me the freedom to work with one group of students to investigate my literature study research questions.

Teacher Demonstrations

This section describes teacher demonstrations leading up to the case study data collection (Sept. '94 - January '96). These demonstrations were used to guide students toward independently responding and interacting with literature and each another.

The classroom teacher and I witnessed the valuable instructional power of teacher demonstrations. We heard many educators use the word "modeling" to teach students how to respond in learning situations. In my opinion, when a teacher models learning, the expectation for students is to imitate or copy those behaviors. In contrast, teacher demonstrations value students' close approximations towards learning circumstances. Meanwhile, the teacher scaffolds, facilitates, and supports students in their learning as their approximations draw closer to the desired outcomes. Ongoing instructional demonstrations give students options, choices, and a range of ways of responding during literacy experiences, that modeling seems not to provide.

A month after the case study data collection, at a National Council of Teachers of English Conference in Boston, MA, Brenda Manzke shared with audience members our use of teacher demonstrations for literature study:

Students are use to traditional, more structured reading programs in which they try to find the answers the teacher wants. They need to ease into literature discussions by the teacher demonstrating different types of responses to literature and gradually adding more varied activities (e.g., journaling, dramatization, art, music, community service projects, or vocabulary study).

It can be difficult to demonstrate for the kids the actual art of discussion. They are not use to being able to freely state opinions. They haven't learned how to respond to others. The teacher needs to demonstrate: 1.) listening to others, 2.) giving feedback, 3.) going beyond the literal elements of a book to deeper issues such as themes, relationships between characters, relating story to their own personal experiences, etc...

This doesn't sound like it will happen, but it does! As the year gets underway,

you lead less and become more of a facilitator. Eventually kids make up their own reading calendar, assign themselves work, lead their discussions, write questions for their own evaluations, and create projects that will amaze you. The teacher's job is demonstrating discussion and occasionally refocusing them. (3/21/96, NCTE, Boston, MA. Presenter notes.)

During our first year of exploring literature study (1994-95), we took a step back from the students to observe their independent interactions in their literature study groups. Brenda and I had spent half the school year demonstrating multiple ways of responding to books and interacting with the groups daily (e.g., journaling, dramatization, art, music, or vocabulary study). Now it was time to decrease some of the teacher "scaffolding." We wanted to observe how students would independently engage in literature study.

We offered the students three book choices dealing with the themes of prejudice and social injustice: In The Year of The Boar and Jackie Robinson (Lord, 1984); Night John (Paulson, 1993); and Mississippi Bridges (Taylor, 1990). We chose these novels because of the storylines dealing with the treatment of people of color in the United States. These stories provided a narrative background for studying similar topics during their afternoon social studies class. These books also represented appropriate content and reading levels for fifth graders. Field notes, one year prior to data collection, described our goals for the students' independent use of literature study:

The students chose their two favorite books to read. Then they are placed in groups based on their selection. Brenda and I discussed how the kids would work in their groups. The students picked literature response journals, readers' theater, discussion, or projects to respond to their books. The students selected the number of chapters to read and what they would like to do after reading a certain number of chapters or pages. Brenda and I met with the groups 3-4 times a week to touch base with their group process, guide them, or discuss important issues in the book. (Field notes 2/8/95)

Brenda and I gave book talks to the class about each of the three titles. We described the plot and the possible themes to explore in each story. The

students wrote on slips of paper their top two book choices. If students were not in a group based on their first novel choice, they received their first choice with the next novels. We gave them directions of what we wanted them to do in their groups:

In your groups, you are to come up with a plan for how you are going to read the book, how much you are going to read each day, and how you are going to share the book with the class. We want you to go beyond the literal level and respond personally to the story. (Field notes 2/14/95)

Several days after the novel groups had met to discuss and respond to their books, Brenda was absent for three days. I was curious to see how the students would interact in their groups without their classroom teacher. Would they maintain their discussions despite their teacher's absence?

Brenda has been absent for three days. However, the kids have been able to maintain their reading and multiple ways of responding. The substitute teachers have spent their time working with an English as a second language boy. The kids are choosing to read their books aloud, silently, in or out of school. Then the groups were writing in a response journal. Some of the groups were working with vocabulary words by using context clues and a dictionary. Most groups were choosing to do some type of language arts project which included making models or dioramas of scenes from their stories. (Field notes 2/17/95)

My reading specialist role provided me with opportunities to work with diverse groups of students in the school. Usually students referred to me by teachers were having difficulties with reading. One particular group of fourth graders were sent to my office for assistance with a novel they were reading in their classroom. Since I was experimenting with literature discussions in Brenda Manzke's fifth grade classroom, I wanted to observe how similar discussion demonstrations could work with a small group of struggling readers.

The field notes below were written a year prior to my case study data collection. These notes were part of my reflective process to understand how

literature study might work with a variety of groups of students. These reflections describes my attempts to support a group of five, fourth grade readers labeled as remedial to have meaningful literature discussions. They seemed capable of having meaningful discussions of a story, with teacher support, despite their lack of reading ability.

The Cat That Was Left Behind (Adler, 1981) seemed to be above their instructional reading level. I gave them a descriptive introduction to the book, read chapter 1 aloud and stopped periodically for their responses. One student commented: "That's not fair that the boy's mother gave him up for her boyfriend."

The themes or issues of the book seem important. Less able students or younger students can respond in meaningful ways by having stories read to them. (2/6/95)

On the second day I continued to support these students in having purposeful discussions:

We're reading a book at their frustration level, but at their interest level. Their instructional level seems to be second grade. I'm having to read most of it to them because their decoding is so poor, which seems to affect their comprehension. They are interested in the story.

I find myself asking more teacher-directed questions than just responding to the book. It seems like they need the questions to guide their thinking. Maybe they aren't use to giving their opinions or feelings about a book? Maybe the book is too difficult for comprehension to occur? Before we read today, I had them write a response in their journal. Their responses were insightful, summarized the story, and added their opinions to the situation the main character was in. (Field notes 2/7/95)

My inquiry into literature discussions and response activities continued for a second school year (Sept. 1995 - Jan. 1996) in Brenda Manzke's fifth grade classroom. Beginning February 1996, the case-study group was audio and video taped studying the novel The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973). A tape recorder was placed on the groups' table to provide a more reliable source of capturing the

dialogue. The audio tapes were used for transcription. The videos corroborated selected dialogue and provided a visual display of students' interactions.

The children grouped themselves based on their novel selection. There were two groups of five which read The Slave Dancer, two groups of five that studied The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson (Lord, 1984) and a group of five which read Felita (Mohr, 1979). The students planned how they read and responded to their book.

For a variety of reasons I selected one particular Slave Dancer group to conduct the case-study research. There were two girls and three boys in the group. They were academically and socially representative of their fifth grade class. Their academic and reading abilities ranged from identified learning disabilities, average, and above average abilities. I also wanted to be a part of this novel because of my appreciation for the strong themes and subject matter contained in the book.

Brenda Manzke and I used September 1995 through January 1996, to demonstrate ways of discussing a story, responding using multiple sign systems, "scaffolding" students' responses, and acting as a group member in the students' literature groups (i.e., grand conversations). Once again the second half of the school year we stepped back from the groups to observe their independence in their literature groups.

We were apprehensive about the behavior and academic levels of the students that were assigned to her classroom during the 1995-96 school year. The fourth grade teachers "warned" us that the students were "challenging" to manage and their academic "performance" levels were low.

Brenda shared her anxiety about this new group of students:

We started school this past Thursday, and I'm really beginning to realize how much work I have cut out for me. I'm feeling very anxious because I don't know

if I can do the same types of activities in reading this year, as I did last year, with the same degree of success. I keep thinking it's probably just the beginning of the year jitters, but I do know I have a much wider range of abilities than in the past. I worry they won't be able to adapt as easily to a more open and flexible reading program. I guess that I am forgetting that last year, our beginning reader's theater projects began with monotone reading of the text and gradually evolved into beautiful and meaningful projects. There is hope!
(Classroom teacher journal 9/3/95)

We felt confident that by building a safe classroom community in which every voice is honored, valued and heard (Henkin, 1998), encouraging participation, and earning students' trust, their reputation of being "difficult" could be compensated for and overcome. Our previous successes with last year's group encouraged us to attempt similar demonstrations and scaffolding with these children. We felt that crucial tenets for successful literature study were allowing students to choose the books they wanted to read and the ways of responding.

Toward the end of the 1995-96 school year, Brenda spoke about the value of student choice and teacher demonstration in an interview I conducted with her:

I believe in students having choice in what they do. I think that's crucial, because if they don't, they're going to lose interest and not put effort into anything they do. You have to give them choices in the activities they do and the types of reading they do. Because just as adults are different, kids are all different; what their interests are, what they like and don't like. I think you have to expose them to different genres, but by giving them some decisions in what they read will make a difference in the effort they put into it. I think you have to demonstrate for them types of responses. That's probably the most powerful instructional tool, demonstrations, whether it be demonstrating how to ask higher level thinking questions, conversations skills or ... demonstration, demonstration, demonstration. (Teacher interview 3/18/96, following data collection)

Brenda Manzke began the 1995-96 school year involving the students in an author study and the text sets of Chris Van Allsburg. While she read aloud Sweetest Fig (Allsburg, 1993), she demonstrated how to interact and respond to the book:

Students listened from their desks as the teacher reads to them and walks around showing the pictures in the book. She uses voice tone and intonation to make the story interesting.

Brenda asks the students, "Where do you think this story takes place?" She offers her insights and opinions about the story, "I wouldn't want my tooth yanked." "What's a fig?"

She continues to read the story to the students, stopping at various intervals to ask the group questions and demonstrate her responses to the story. A group of boys offer brief comments at their table group. The kids laugh at the funny parts. She says, "Look at the evil look on his face." "Poor dog." Brenda asks, "What's happening?" "What do you think?" "What do you think might happen?" (Field notes, beginning of second year, 9/7/95)

After reading the picture book she asks the students to write a response in their journals. She invites the students to:

Take 5 - 10 minutes to write a response. "What are you thinking?" As you write in your journal, trust yourself, your feelings, thoughts, connections to your life, and characters. How does it make you feel? What images are formed in your mind? Look at the pictures in the book. What do they remind you of?

Brenda reexplains, in Spanish, the journal directions for two Hispanic children. I suggested to her that they look at the book together and invite them to draw a response to the story. (Field notes 9/7/95)

Following their journaling, Brenda had the students share their responses at their table groups. She asked for volunteers to share their journals with the whole class. She praised the students' efforts and specifically described how the students' responses went beyond the literal story elements and interpreted the story in a personal manner. Next, the students distributed reading texts to read Wreck of The Zephyr (Allsburg, 1983). This new story allowed the students to practice discussing and responding in their journals. After introducing the story by giving a brief synopsis, the teacher gave directions to the class:

I want you to put yourselves in groups of 2 or 3. Spread out around the classroom and read the story aloud to each other. Afterwards we will discuss

the story as a class. I want you to pay attention to the pictures. "How is the story similar or different than the fig story?" "What is the author's writing style like?" "What are the elements in the story?" (Field notes 9/8/95)

The following day the students discussed the story as a class and made charts in their small groups comparing and contrasting the Sweetest Fig (Allsburg, 1983) and Wreck of The Zephyr (Allsburg, 1993). Each group shared their charts with the class.

For the next two weeks, in small groups, the students read, discussed, and responded in their journals to eight other Chris Van Allsburg books. As a culminating response activity the class generated a list of common characteristics among the eight Allsburg books (e.g., the characters had a lesson to learn, mysterious endings, magical elements, characters didn't heed warnings...)

At the end of September and during October 1995, Brenda involved the students in the study of the topic of pioneers and Native Americans. This topic coordinated with their afternoon social studies classes. She also read aloud daily, Where The Broken Heart Still Beats (Meyer, 1992), to assist students in building background and to generate class discussions about the topic.

Brenda began this literature study by reading aloud the picture book, Brother Eagle, Sister Sky (Jeffers, 1991). She periodically stopped while reading to demonstrate her aesthetic stance and intertextual connections to the story. The class was asked to respond with their comments about the story. After completing the picture book, a class discussion about the author's messages and their reactions to the story occurred. Her goal was for the students to discover the themes of injustice of the pioneers taking over the Indians' land, the Indians' being forced off their land, and the importance of ecology in preserving the environment.

Once again she followed the demonstration lesson by using the district-

adopted reading text for the class to practice their literature discussions and responses. The students placed themselves into groups of three to read Tonweya and the Eagles (Robe, 1993).

Brenda began this Native American story by having them read the forward and stopped them to think about and discuss five questions that she wrote on the board: 1.) What did you learn about the Sioux Nation from the forward? 2.) In what ways is it similar to our culture? 3.) How do you think Chano felt when he was sent to school? 4.) How would you feel? 5.) What did they mean when they said Chano was like "A bridge between two cultures?"

After their discussion of the five questions, they finished reading the story aloud or silently and were invited to select one or two of the questions to write about in their journal.

On subsequent days, the small groups shared and discussed their journal entries. Volunteers shared their journal responses with the class. Starting with this class period and the rest of the school year, we told the students they did not need to raise their hands to speak, "Just start talking." "We want our discussions to be natural, like a conversation with a friend."

As volunteers read their journals, Brenda paraphrased their responses and encouraged other class members to respond. The purpose of this session was to demonstrate active listening and conversational responses with each other.

Next the students were given the opportunity to create a project to celebrate the Native American story, communicate the author's message, or assist them in understanding the themes of the story. We explained these projects to the students in the following manner:

We know you have completed "cutesy" projects that are at a literal level of comprehension. Your project goal is to go beyond the literal level, to explore moods, themes, morals, lessons, emotions or connections to your life and the world. In several days, your group will be presenting your project to the class.

Each group member must share with the class: 1.) why you choose this project, 2.) how it helped you understand the story better, 3.) what part of the story your project represents, and 4.) anything else you would like to tell the class about your project. (Field notes 9/21/95, prior to case study data collection)

The small groups of students worked on their projects for two days. They drew pictures or made dioramas. Upon completion of their projects, each group presented them to the class, answering the four questions described above.

Field notes describe my excitement with the students success of going beyond literal comprehension and thinking about the story in a critical manner:

I was impressed with how well the students were able to state how transmediation helped them in their understanding of the story (e.g., starting with reading moving to writing, next discussing the story and doing art). They were able to state the themes or messages of the story which their projects seemed to help them understand. The students were able to make intertextual connections by comparing other books they've read. They compared the book to their lives by stating, "If you help people, they will help you." They also talked about the environment, animals, and conservation. These examples illustrate intertextual connections, transmediation, and an aesthetic stance towards reading. (Field notes 9/25/95)

Once again, following the teacher's reading aloud of a picture book and the students reading from the basal, they choose one of two trade books to study, Double Life of Pocahontas (Fritz, 1983) or Sign of The Beaver (Sprear, 1983). They were put into one of four literature study groups based on their novel choice. Brenda and I sat with each group daily, observed, made suggestions, facilitated, or acted as a group member to discuss the story. My observations of one group discussing chapters 13 and 14 from Sign of The Beaver were:

The students are reading from their journals. Their responses predicted and summarized story elements. They responded aesthetically to the chapters by writing: "I think...., I would have..., I didn't like....," "I would have been worried if I was him." They made intertextual connections: "It was cruel to trap the animal." "They would let it go by using a stick like when you catch a rattlesnake." The students discussed the Indian's bow and arrow.

The students wrote discussion questions in their journals and asked the group, "How did the Indians know about the great flood?" and "What would you do to teach someone to read?" Erin responded with, "I would have taught the Indian how to read common words."

For their homework they decided to read chapters 15 and 16 and discuss them on the following day. They decided it was optional to write in their journals, "But you can it you want to." (Field notes 10/3/95)

Several weeks later the students were nearing the end of their literature study of Native Americans and pioneers. They began to think about a final project for the novel they read. We showed them a videotape of last year's students presenting their projects to the class. The video provided these students with diverse examples of activities (e.g., charts, models, drama and art) and presentation styles. They were reminded that they needed a rationale for selecting their project. The project needed to communicate the theme of the book and they needed to explain that theme to the class.

Although the students were in one of four groups to read the Native American and pioneer novels, we had them choose a partner or group of three students to work with on their final projects. These small groups provided each student with a greater chance of being more actively involved in the project.

The students grouped themselves into nine small groups to design, create, and present a project for the novel they read. The final projects were: 1.) making cornbread and serving it with molasses, 2.) a flannel board story with dialogue, 3.) a chart displaying characteristics of Pocahontas, when she was an Indian and after she got married and lived with white people, 4.) a mural of a ship, 5.) a news reporter show dramatizing events from the story, 6.) a circular drawing of important events from the book, 7.) a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Pocahontas's village and Jamestown, 8.) a drawing of Jamestown and Pocahontas being kidnapped with a paragraph about the picture and its

importance to the story, and 9.) a dramatization of the friendship of Matt and Attean.

My field notes described my enthusiasm for the students' projects:

The kids wanted to stay in at lunch recess to work on their projects. One group stayed in to practice their news reporter show. The excitement and energy displayed by the students is encouraging. They are creating meaning through multiple sign systems. Showing the video of last year's class seemed to help with the diversity of their projects. (Field notes 10/19/95)

Since the group chose a dramatization to respond to the novel, they willingly extended their working time by giving up their recess. This display of sacrifice and motivation encouraged me that students can get excited about literature study when given many response options.

We began a third novel study on November 1, 1995, with the fifth graders. The topic for these three trade books was homelessness. The student choose to read and respond to one of the following titles: The Great Gilly Hopkins (Paterson, 1978), The Pinballs (Byar, 1977), or Maniac Magee (Spinelli, 1992). Brenda followed my suggestion, to coordinate the topic of homelessness, by reading daily from Monkey Island (Fox, 1991).

For the third time this school year, Brenda began this literature study by reading aloud a picture book, Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991). Her purpose for reading this book was to provide the students with one viewpoint of what it is like to be a homeless family living in an airport. She reminded the students, "To empathize with the characters." "Put yourselves in their shoes." "Picture in your head what you see from the story." "What are the themes, moods, and colors?"

Following her reading, the students discussed homelessness, people living in cars, on the street, and the difficulties that they must face. Some students talked about their church helping homeless people by offering meals and shelter.

Brenda asked the children what kind of class service project could help with the problems of homelessness. After some discussion, they decided to organize a food drive and gift collection for the holidays. During this novel and the next literature study, the students donated and collected food, clothing, and holiday gifts that were delivered to three local homeless shelters.

For the homeless novel study, the students were placed into one of four groups to read and respond to their chosen book. Each day the teacher and I rotated from group to group. We demonstrated our efferent, aesthetic, or intertextual responses to each story. This was accomplished by talking about the storyline, expressing opinions about the characters' situations, and comparing the story to experiences from our lives. We also encouraged, suggested, or questioned their group processes and their construction of meaning.

One type of demonstration lesson for this unit was letter writing. Brenda and the students composed a letter on the overhead projector to the other grade levels, in the school, requesting donations for the homeless. The students contributed their ideas as she wrote on the overhead.

"...how fortunate we are and people are going without at this time of year."
"Please contribute for those in need." "The toy should come from the student's money or a replacement for one of the student's gifts." "We would like you to think about what it would be like to be in a shelter at this time of year, and to realize how truly lucky we are." "Thank you for your time and consideration."
(Field notes 12/13/95)

The teacher asked how the letter should be signed. The students wanted to sign each of their names to it. Several students volunteered to type the letter on the computer. One student from each novel group volunteered to deliver the letter to each classroom in the school.

The fourth novel study leading up to the case-study data collection occurred during December 1995 and January 1996. The entire class of students read The

Riddle of Penncroft Farm (Jensen, 1989), a historical fiction novel about the Revolutionary War. This book coordinated with their study of this topic in afternoon social studies classes. The classroom teacher coordinated her daily read aloud book by selecting The Fighting Ground (Avi, 1984).

Brenda Manzke began The Riddle of Penncroft Farm by having the students make predictions based on the cover illustration and title. The students predicted that it was about the Revolutionary War and spoke about George Washington. Brenda told the students this novel takes place in Pennsylvania and connected to the Revolutionary time period they were studying in social studies.

The children remained in their table groups of four for this literature study. The groups determined how they read and responded to the book. They completed journal entries, wrote discussion questions to share with their group, or selected several literature circle jobs (i.e., Daniels, 1994).

For this novel, I demonstrated a five step vocabulary process strategy for learning new words (e.g., using context, categorizing words, drawing a picture, demonstrating you know, ...). Several times during their novel study the teacher gave them several vocabulary words and each group selected words to learn. The classroom teacher chose specific historical words that students would more easily learn in the context of a historical fiction novel.

Drawing was one type of sign system used to facilitate the students comprehension of the Revolutionary battles. Brenda drew a map on the chalk board to correspond to the illustration found in chapter 7 of The Riddle of Penncroft Farm. She showed the students where the British and American troops were located and spoke about the actual battles compared to those described in the story.

The teacher assigned two final projects upon the completion of this novel.

She felt that many students struggled with the vocabulary and story content. Brenda had each table group of students draw a story board of the six most crucial events and construct a chart, comparing and contrasting the two main characters in the story.

For four months (September 1995 - January 1996) we demonstrated, facilitated, and provided scaffolding to these fifth graders for literature discussions and response activities. They studied the fantasy stories of Allsburg, Native Americans and pioneers, homelessness, and the Revolutionary War. We were feeling excited and anxious as February approached. Our goal remained that we would take a step back from the students to observe what they would do independently in their literature groups.

Teacher Facilitation of The Case-Study Literature Group Process

February 2, 1996 began the fifth novel study cycle of the school year. This section describes how I selected one group of five students to audio and video tape their nineteen, fifty-minute novel study sessions.

Brenda introduced the book choices to the class by giving a synopsis of each story. The students selected from The Year of The Boar and Jackie Robinson (Lord, 1984); Felita (Mohr, 1979); or The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973). She told the students that these books were stories about the struggles of the Chinese, Hispanic, or African people. In the stories they would encounter themes of multiculturalism, social injustice, prejudice, and immigration.

The children were placed into one of five groups based on their novel selection. There were two groups of five which read The Slave Dancer, two groups of five that studied The Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson and a group of five which read Felita. The students planned how they read and responded to their book.

For a variety of reasons I selected one particular Slave Dancer group to conduct the case-study research. Based on my teaching experiences and classroom observations, this group of three boys and two girls had a range of personalities, discussion abilities, and interacted well with one another. They represented a typical group of fifth grade students. Their academic and reading abilities ranged from identified learning disabilities, average, and above average abilities as determined from their previous academic work. I also wanted to be a part of this novel because of my appreciation for the strong themes and subject matter contained in the book.

This chapter described teacher demonstrations and student invitations to discuss and participate in response activities with literature. These lessons and books, with powerful social themes, seemed to influence students to have more meaningful discussions and constructing projects that communicated authors' messages.

The demonstrations followed a predictable instructional pattern. Brenda began by reading a picture book with a particular topic (e.g., fantasy, Native Americans) or theme (e.g., social injustice). While reading aloud, she shared her thoughts, reactions, and wonderings with the students and invited them to share in the same manner. A daily read-aloud novel was used to provide background knowledge and as a vehicle for ongoing class discussions about the theme or topic. These whole group lessons were followed by the students reading a story from their literature anthology to practice their discussion skills in small groups. Lastly, students chose between two or three tradebooks for an extended novel study.

CHAPTER V

TRANSMEDIATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

Many times when students bring their backgrounds to a literature discussion you can hear them talk about a prejudice, a misconception, or something heard at home. I think if you didn't have these types of discussions going on, you couldn't really take the opportunity to discuss prejudice, social injustice, or emotional issues. If they filled out worksheets, "Who's the main character?" "What happened in chapter 2?," those real life issues would never come up. It's scary to think about kids going through their school lives without ever discussing things. They would not have opportunities to say how they felt or to relay what they have learned at home. I don't think teachers can preach their values or morals to kids, but you hope something comes up which is totally radical, to get them to think and talk about it. (Teacher interview 3/18/96, following case study data collection)

These comments reveal Brenda's and my philosophy of literature discussions. During our two-year collaboration, we witnessed the powerful impact that literature, with social themes, had on students' discussions and response activities. We believe by framing literature study in this manner valuable discussions about life and long lasting literacy lessons occurred.

The fifth graders read novels and talked about the homeless in their community and collected food and gifts for the holidays. They read historical fiction about past wars and compared them to the current political upheaval around the world. The students discovered the atrocities of slavery which reminded them of the Holocaust and the Ku Klux Klan. These discoveries about

the world may have been a result of using literature that documents our past and pushes students' thinking forward to consider the future of our society.

Through our demonstrations and the use of literature with social themes, the students in this study were able to facilitate their group process and construct meaningful understandings of The Slave Dancer (Fox, 1973).

The two charts (Figure 5) that follow contain the categories, themes, and codes that emerged as the multiple data sources (Chapter 3, data analysis section) were analyzed.

These children selected three dominant contexts to construct meaning and engage in meaningful literature activities. These areas were drama, response journals, and discussions about the social injustice of slavery.

In this chapter, critical transcript segments are used to illustrate how the students and I facilitated their literature group process and construction of meaning for The Slave Dancer. The selected transcripts involve talk embedded in group process, drama projects, response journals, and discussions about slavery.

Students' Response and Interaction

Literature Group Process				
Decision making about the groups' literature study process	Organizing the session for literature study	Collaborative talk to maintain the flow of the session and accomplish group tasks		
Transmediating The Construction of Meaning				
Generating questions to explore story meaning	Collaborative talk to explore story meaning	Responding to the story with an efferent stance	Responding to the story with an aesthetic stance	Responding to the story with an intertextual connection

Chart 1

Teacher Response and Interaction

Facilitating the Literature Group Process		
Supporting the students in their literature study process	Asking the students questions about their literature study process	Requesting or suggesting students to engage in a particular group process
Facilitating the Construction of Meaning		
Sharing insight, opinions, and responses to the story	Asking questions about the story	Shaping, guiding, and supporting students' responses toward the story

Chart 2

Figure 5. Data analysis charts

Group Process: The Foundation for Successful Literature Study

Literature study is the process students use to construct meaning from the books they read. There is a deliberate process that students and teachers can engage in to facilitate successful and meaningful literature study. As students discuss and complete response activities, the teacher supports, asks questions, and requests or suggests the group participate in a particular process. Students also independently make decisions, organize their time, and collaboratively accomplish literature study tasks.

During the 19 days the students read and responded to The Slave Dancer, various group processes were performed that contributed to their successful discussions and response activities. Several transcript examples are provided, in this section, to illustrate the six categories of analysis for, "Facilitating Student and Teacher Literature Group Processes" (figure 5, chart 1 & 2).

The role of the teacher in facilitating the students' group process is a crucial component of literature discussion. Analysis of the data revealed three dominant

categories in which I supported the students, asked them questions about their study process, and requested or suggested they engage in a particular group process.

In this first transcript, I asked the students questions about the work they were assigning themselves (line 1). These questions assisted them in organizing their study process, plan their session, determine homework assignments, and helped me find out about their response activities.

(Transcript, day 9, pages 33-39)

1. JS: So what's. Come over here guys. What's the plan for the weekend? What are you doing over the weekend?
2. /?/ & ALICE: Study for quiz
3. JS: Study for quiz and what else?
4. ROB: And investigator
5. JS: What does that mean? What are you doing?
6. ROB: Look up /?/, whatever you can find.
7. JS: Are you going to make a list or write it out? What are you going to do?
8. /?/: I'm just gonna /?/
9. JOE: Computer /?/ all of those
10. JS: So you're going to make a list of facts ROB: Yeah JS: About slavery?
11. ALICE: /?/
12. JS: Yeah I copied it. Kim has it. So you're going to make a list of facts about slavery.
13. ROB: Yeah
14. JS: And also think about the quiz
15. JOE: Ok
16. ALEX: You're doing the facts about slavery?
17. KIM: Yeah

In this segment I asked them about their weekend homework (line 1). They decided to study for their mid-book quiz and make a list of facts about slavery (line 10 & 14). The quiz was a list of open-ended essay questions which they had written about the book. Their self-assigned inquiry project was to find particular facts about slavery from computer printouts from the Encarta '95 CD Rom encyclopedia and photocopied pages from encyclopedias in their classroom.

This is an example of one type of response activity the students chose to

complete with The Slave Dancer. Since all five students could not huddle around one computer screen they decided to have part of the group look up slavery in the classroom encyclopedias.

This type of inquiry connected historical facts about slavery to the historical fiction they were reading. This transmediation or movement from reading, to discussion, then research, assisted students in revisiting their thoughts about the book and promoted multiple layers and levels of constructing meaning about slavery as demonstrated in the content of their constructing meaning talk, journal entries, and drama projects.

My role was to support or “scaffold” them in their inquiry by asking them what they were discovering, helping them with the computer, and photocopying any information for them to take home.

The next segment illustrates the students organization of their session by determining how and what to read in the book. One important group process category that emerged from my analysis of the data, revealed a process in which the students independently organized their session for literature study.

(Transcript, day 12, pages 12-13)

1. ALEX: Ok, 101.
2. ALICE: We're on page 101.
3. KIM: I though we were suppose to read to page 100, not page 102.
4. ALEX: I read 102.
5. JOE: I read to there.
6. ALICE: Ok guys, what page?
7. ROB: 100
8. ALEX: I'll start
9. KIM: Let's silent read. I hate reading outloud.
10. ALEX: Yeah, let's silent read. That will work.
11. ALICE: No, that's boring.
12. JOE: Yeah I know it boring. Like one of us could be like finished.
13. ALEX: Ok, let's read to page 100.
14. ROB: Like, I'm a slow reader.
15. ALEX: Let's read to page 103 silently. Finish 103, then we'll start reading outloud.
16. ALL: /?/

17. ALICE: We're going to read silently to 101, then we're going to read aloud.
18. ALEX: We're just going to read 100 silently.
19. ALL: Go!

Decision making was a daily occurrence for their literature study process. Before the students began the novel, they were given a calendar for February to plan their month long study of the book. This plan was meant to be a daily guide as they read, discussed, and responded to the story. Their plan was renegotiated and changed several times throughout the month.

Their dialogue typifies the students being given the responsibility and teacher trust to direct their reading of the novel. More traditional views of instruction may involve more control by the teacher of their learning. Allowing them to make decisions increased their motivation to engage in literature study. Yet, I was in close proximity to ask questions, make suggestions, or support them in any way.

Brenda Manzke and I demonstrated multiple ways of responding to literature. Activities included reader's theater, writing, discussion, drawing, dramatization, and other language arts projects. This group chose the sign system they wanted to use to respond to the book. Among these response choices were a list of literature circle jobs (Daniels, 1994), although I had witnessed the abuse of these "jobs" by over relying on their worksheet nature and promoting minimal discussion. Brenda demonstrated the structure of several jobs for the students (i.e., vocabulary finder, summarizer, connector, illustrator). However, we changed the author's intent of having each student in the group complete separate tasks by having them participate in only one chosen job at a time. The "job" categories were responded to in their journals and not on the worksheets designed by Daniels (1994). In this transcript the students plan the type of response activity they will engage in after reading.

(Transcript, day 13, pages 6-14)

1. ALEX: I don't want to do vocab.
2. JOE: I don't want to do a vocabulary either.
3. KIM: Then we can draw a picture.
4. ALEX: Yeah, I want to do something like that.
5. ALICE: I want to do an illustrator.
6. JOE: (Humming)
7. ALEX: Well, we already did one. JOE: (Humming) I'll look at the box to see what we got. JOE: (Humming). ALEX: We've got illustrator, connector,
8. JOE: I wasn't finish reading mine, but that's ok.
9. ALEX: Hey guys, I'd rather do a summarizer.
10. JOE: A summarizer? What is a summarizer suppose to do?
11. ALEX: Summarize what's happen in the story so far. That'd be easy.
12. ROB: Yeah let's do a summarizer.
13. ALEX: You guys want to do the summarizer. Just summarize what's happened in the story so far.
14. KIM: No
15. ALICE: No
16. ROB: Yeah
17. KIM: I want to do an illustrator. I didn't get to do an illustrator yet ALEX.
18. ALICE: We can change to an illustrator.
19. ROB: We don't want illustrator.
20. ALEX: Yeah, we already did illustrator.
21. KIM: I didn't!
22. ALEX: Let's do summarizer

Although Brenda and I did not encourage "jobs" as response activities, these students discussed the roles of vocabulary, summarizer, and illustrator. Brenda kept a supply of the job descriptions in file folders accessible to the students at any time during their literature study. We did not insist that the students follow the directions on the sheets, but encouraged them to adapt Daniel's (1994) descriptions to meet their needs.

This transcript describes the groups' need for the concrete directions that the job sheets could provide. However, there were many instances in which the students negotiated their response activities without considering these worksheets.

Some educators that I have worked with need the structure and written product that the literature circle jobs can provide. They feel the students benefit

from the jobs because they produce a gradeable worksheet.

Brenda and I were confident that the students were studying the novel in more authentic ways by journaling, discussions, student written assessments, and dramatizations, without all the paperwork of the “jobs”. We chose these sign systems for responding to literature because of their ability to elicit original thinking, oral and written language, and creative responses from the students. The act of filling-in information on literature-circle job sheets seemed to stifle their thinking about the story and limit their social interactions.

Our first and foremost goal was for the group to engage in meaningful literature discussions. The response activities were secondary and viewed as student selected options to be used as starting points for discussions. If they choose to only read and discuss the novel, we were satisfied with their decision. The group was not obligated to complete an activity each time they read from the book. When they adapted the guidelines of literature circle jobs we did not discourage them, but celebrated their exploration of the story world through this one method.

In the next segment, the students continued to negotiate how they would respond to chapter 7 by talking about drawing an illustration from the book (lines 13-27).

Brenda and I valued the students' independence in making decisions and being in charge of their learning. I supported them by suggesting that they just read the chapter and write a response in their journals (line 8).

(Transcript, day 13, pages 6-14)

1. JS: Well then maybe don't do any job?
2. JOE: Yeah, that's a good idea.
3. ALICE: No job?
4. ROB: Let's read chapter 8
5. JS: Just read and respond yourselves.
6. ALEX: Then two questions and a response tonight, if we don't do the vocabulary.

7. JOE: That's fine with me.
8. JS: I'd say you don't want to do all of chapter 7. It's kinda long. You might want to break that up. Read and respond and come up with a couple of questions.
9. ALEX: Yeah and we finish it tonight.
10. ALICE: What are we doing?
11. ALEX: Then you'd probably add more to your response.
12. JOE: Are you talking about doing this in class?
13. KIM: Let's do illustrator
14. JOE: Yeah illustrator
15. ALEX: Who can draw the best picture in the land.
16. ALICE: Let's draw what we picture Purves
17. KIM: Draw what we think will happen in the future
18. JOE: Purves
19. KIM: Draw the ship.
20. JOE: Let's draw something. Anything we want.
21. KIM: Yeah the flying fish.
22. JOE: Do another illustrator.
23. ALEX: That's our second one.
24. KIM: Thank you ALEX.
25. JOE: What are we going to draw? How about anything that has to do with the book?
26. ALEX: Yeah
27. ROB: I'm going to do the flying fish.

Eventually, they decided that their homework would be to read chapter 7, write a response, and two discussion questions in their journals.

Homework for fifth graders was a traditional school policy that continued in their literature study. These students choose what the homework would be each night for the duration of the novel. Most of the time, they assigned themselves reading from the novel and writing a response in their journals.

This private time for reading, writing, and reflecting was the first step in constructing meaning for each student. Their meaning making continued and was deepened when they came together at school to share their thinking and writing.

Some critics may argue that I am telling them what to do, but I label my language as "suggestions." My role was to facilitate their literature discussions and one way of accomplishing this was to suggest or express my ideas for the group to consider (e.g., Bruner, 1989). Ultimately the children had the freedom

to choose how to respond to the novel.

The dialogue continued in the next transcript. Once again, I supported their decision making and asked them questions about their study process (lines 1 & 7). My role as facilitator was to pose questions and rephrase their statements to clarify the directions for the group and me (lines 5,11,13, & 30).

(Transcript, day 13, pages 6-14)

1. JS: So what is your plan?
2. ALICE: Illustrator
3. ALEX: Something about the book.
4. JOE: Something about the book.
5. JS: Ok. So you guys are going to do illustrator?
6. ALICE: Yeah
7. JS: What about chapter 7?
8. JOE: Chapter 7
9. ROB: Tonight
10. JOE: Let's decide on the pages. How long is it?
11. JS: So you're going to start 7.
12. JOE: Yeah. Let's see how long it is.
13. JS: And respond and question
14. JOE: From 132 to. I say maybe we should read to like 124.
15. JS: You guys are going to be surprised at the last two chapters.
16. JOE: We are?
17. KIM: Do they get shipwrecked?
18. ALEX: It says they do.
19. ALICE: They get shipwrecked?
20. JS: I can't give it away.
21. ALL: Stout maybe he /?/
22. JS: Ok, how much are you going to read? 113 to
23. JOE: 124.
24. JS: Ok.
25. JOE: 123. I don't know.
26. ALICE: 120.
27. JOE: 120?
28. ALEX: Let's read
29. JOE: "Ben Stout's Mistake"
30. JS: 113 to 120. And respond and write questions.
31. ROB: How many questions?
32. ALEX: Two
33. ALICE: Two
34. JOE: I hope Stout messes up and /?/ in the end
35. KIM: So right now we're doing illustrator and tonight we're reading chapter 7.

This transcript is representative of my instructional protocol for literature study.

I asked them questions about their study plans because I was curious to find out

about their decisions and plans for the book.

My role as a teacher of literature was not to transmit learning, direct their study, or assess answers to comprehensions questions. Instead, I asked them to make plans for how they wanted to study the novel. I enjoyed the book along with them and shared my enthusiasm for the upcoming story events (line 15). I thought they would be intrigued and motivated to keep reading by sharing what happens next in the story.

In the next segment, the classroom teacher and I described for the entire class the purpose for their final response projects. Our talk represents common instructional lessons and the purpose for having students participate in literature study.

(Transcript, day 13, pages 37-39)

1. TEACHER: A lot of groups are starting to talk about their final projects right now. And I know tomorrow you will be given time to write your questions and think about your project. One thing that I noticed, a lot of groups are worrying too much about /?/. What kind of poster should we make? What scenes should we act out? What kind of props should we use? What music should we have?, What puppets should we have? What I want you to think about is not the method you're going to use, but /?/. The method is not as nearly as important as, what the message is that you're trying to get across. You need to think about what is this author trying to get across through the book? So your message should be more than slavery is bad. How many people in here think slavery was bad? Ok, we all know that. Hopefully, there's something a little bit deeper that you got out of that book. That you learned from reading it. That you experienced from the book, other than slavery is bad. /?/ is bad? How many people knew that? Hopefully, you got something a little bit deeper. How many people knew /?/ is hard? Ok, ok. I want you to think a little bit deeper. Before you start, figure it out, before you act out a scene, what you're going to wear, what props are you going to make, that is NOT important right now. The important thing is to know what you're talking about. Know what the author is trying to say. What is the purpose of it? What is the author trying to get across? /?/.
2. JS: There's some type of message that the author is trying to express, on how people interact with each other, what their behavior is like. They're (author) actually trying to tell you what life is like for those particular people in the story. What was life like? What was their behavior like? What were their relationships and their interactions? There are many messages that the author has incorporated into that story about the people. What are those messages that you would want to get across to an audience who has not read the book?

This transcript illustrates the major focus of literature study in Brenda's classroom. Our goal for literature instruction was for the students to participate in

meaningful and purposeful response activities following their discussion of the story. We insisted that the students' projects communicate and interpret the author's themes or messages and that they verbalize those ideas to their classmates (e.g., transcript above).

Our ongoing instructional process was to "push" the children forward in their thinking about the novels. We wanted them to consider the story world as an examination of life and the human interactions in our world. By engaging in meaningful response activities this analysis of behavior was more likely to occur.

The final segment in this section, is another example of the students negotiating decisions for their literature study. Once again, I asked them about their reading and response activities (lines 13,15,17,19, & 21). My questions assisted and supported them in organizing and clarifying their plans and helped me to find out about their decisions.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 27-30)

1. ALEX: So tonight we read "The Old Man." What chapter is that?
8?
2. JS: Yeah
3. JOE: Yeah. And then
4. JS: Actually there are 9 chapters. "Home and After."
5. ALEX: And on Monday, we'll have a response to what the last chapter might bring, after we share, that we should read the chapter. The last chapter in class.
6. ALICE: Ok, so read the last chapter.
7. ALEX: No, read chapter 8 over the weekend
8. KIM: "Old Man."
9. ALICE: And response to what we think the end is going to be like?
10. ALEX: Yeah. And then on Monday, we'll read chapter 9. Then, we'll share response from the weekend. The last chapter.
11. JS: Ok, let me write this down.
12. ALEX: I wrote it.
13. JS: So what are doing, you're reading chapter 8?
14. ALEX: Yeah
15. JS: And what are you doing with it? Anything?
16. ALICE: Yeah. ALEX: A response ALICE: A response on what we think the last chapter is going to be like.
17. JS: And then read chapter 9 on Monday?
18. ALEX: Yeah. And we'll share our responses.
19. JS: Then you'll have one, two, three days to work on a project .

20. ALEX: Yeah

21. JS: Ok. Sounds good.

This dialogue was “exploratory talk” between the students and me, to negotiate how the novel would be read and responded to. They did not look to me for the traditional teacher directions for their reading. My role was to “scaffold” their decision making and not explicitly tell them what to do.

There were other occasions when they independently made decisions about their literature study process as exemplified in the dramatization section in this chapter. The students were able to accomplish these tasks due to their previous opportunities to collaboratively discuss and negotiate decisions for their group.

The transcripts in this section provide examples of the six categories of literature group process and teacher facilitation of that process for the student. These segments provide crucial dialogue of the importance of examining the group dynamics that contribute to successful literature study.

Life-long competencies may have been learned by these students as they engaged in group process talk. These skills were decision making, organization, and collaboration. Traditional schooling often neglects these abilities that seem necessary for most occupations. My interactions demonstrated and facilitated these processes that the students eventually internalized and used.

In the next three sections there are multiple transcripts of the students constructing meaning during drama, response journals, and discussions of social injustice.

Dramatizations: Creative Responses to Literature

Dramatic reenactments in response to literature have the potential to sweep more children into literacy’s embrace. The continual cognitive activity involved in drama--the engagement, the personal and negotiated interpretations of story, the

shifts in perspective, problem solving, and the use of multiple sign systems can assist children whose learning styles, cultural backgrounds, or English as a second language may impede traditional responses to literature (Wolf, 1993). However, Wolf and Enciso (1994) report that children are rarely given opportunities to try the multiple perspectives available in dramatic interpretation. Drama (as many of the arts) is seen as an extracurricular rather than a central activity (Gardner, 1989).

The students, in this study, selected two drama projects during their study of The Slave Dancer. Throughout the school year, these students participated in other literature study groups who frequently chose dramatic reenactment of scenes from the novels they read. This group created and performed news program plays for the first and then the second half of the book.

Their news plays were structured similarly to local television news programs, but focused on The Slave Dancer. Each play began with a student in the role of news anchor, who announced themselves, the name of the program, and gave the audience a phone number to call-in their questions.

The other students played the roles of reporters who interviewed various students acting as people aboard the slave ship, the Moonlight. During these interviews the actors revealed to the audience their emotional anguish and the cruel acts performed on crew members and slaves.

Each play was interspersed with commentary by the anchor person. They shared information about crew members who perished in the wreck of the ship, introduced reporters with interviews, and reminded the audience to call-in with their questions. The programs had a weather person report the temperature, winds, ocean temperature, and ended with advice about appropriate attire to wear for the weather conditions. Each show also ended with an opportunity for

audience members, alias classmates, to ask questions about the characters and events of the book.

The students responded with an efferent stance to the literal story events. They reacted in personal or aesthetic ways, and intertextually connected the fictionalized world to their real world experiences. In creating and performing these plays, group process and construction of meaning categories emerged during the analysis of the data.

The group wrote their news plays and decided the characters and content of the dramas. Each child acted as a news broadcast person, with some students portraying various characters from the story. They presented story facts, created dialogue, and made connections to real news shows.

During their discussions, writing, rehearsing, and performance of their plays, they interacted and responded to the story world in many ways. These multiple sign systems for interacting with the novel transmediated their story understanding by revisiting the story and building levels and layers of story interpretation.

The plot of The Slave Dancer is about a thirteen-year-old, Jessie Bollier, who is kidnapped from the piers of New Orleans and taken aboard a slave ship, the Moonlight. There he must play his life so that captured slaves will “dance,” and keep their muscles strong and their bodies profitable.

Jessie is repulsed by the ghastly practices of the slave industry. The story ends years later with Jessie’s imprisonment in a Civil War prison. His life remains haunted by the shattering experiences he has lived through.

The four transcript excerpts that follow occurred during their first performance of a news play for their fifth grade class. The analysis of their performance revealed three of the five categories for transmediating the construction of

meaning (chart 1). Those categories are: 1) Responding with an efferent stance, 2) aesthetic stance, and 3) intertextual connections.

At the beginning of their play, Alex introduced the name of their show and announced the kidnapping of the main character, Jessie Bollier (line 1). Alice played an interviewer talking with Rob acting as Jessie. His character shared his experiences aboard the slave vessel.

(Transcript, day 7, pages 14-19)

1. ALEX: (News anchor voice) (Clears throat) Hi, I'm Alex and welcome to Moonlight. First a young boy is missing. He was captured and taken aboard a ship in New Orleans. His name is Jessie Bollier. More on that update later. Now let's go to Alice on the Moonlight ship.
2. ALICE: (News anchor voice) Hi Alex. I'm here with Jessie Bollier. A thirteen year old. On the Moonlight. Jessie how do you feel about being captured by these men?
3. ROB: (Voice of Jessie Bollier) Well, I don't like it. Because they only captured me because I play the flute.
4. ALICE: (Anchor voice) How do you feel about playing the flute even knowing what is going to happen to the slaves?
5. ROB: (Voice of Jessie) Well at first I didn't want to play, but I don't want to get bit again.
6. ALICE: (Anchor voice) What do you mean bit?
7. ROB: (Voice of Jessie) Well, when I first talked to the captain I got bit in the ear because I answered too quickly.
8. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Do you enjoy playing your flute?
9. ROB: (Voice of Jessie) Yeah when I'm bored and have nothing else to do, I play it.
10. ALICE: (News anchor voice) What types of mistreatment have you seen done to the slaves?
11. ROB: (Voice of Jessie) Well I've seen them shoving, roughing them up. And I really don't want to go into the details.
12. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Have you seen any deaths?
13. ROB: (Voice of Jessie) Yes !?! .
14. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Ok. Thank you. Back to Alex at the studio.

In this scene Alex creatively projected himself into the role of a news journalist to share basic information, with the audience, about the main character .

Although it was a literal or efferent reporting of information, it represented the gist of the story and clarified the purpose of their play for the audience (line 1). Alex promised to share more details of the kidnapping later in the broadcast. He

continued in his anchor role by introducing Alice's interview of Jessie.

Clearly, Alex has watched news programs as demonstrated by his reporter language and the format of the play mirrors typical news shows. He connected his television experiences to create his role to share The Slave Dancer with classmates.

Alice displayed the sophistication of a real television interviewer. Her questions were appropriate and assisted Rob in sharing literal story content with the audience. This indicates her prior experiences with television shows with an interviewer format.

Rob drew on his emotions and story knowledge to portray Jessie. Playing a character required Rob to think like Jessie, interpret the story events, and project those thoughts to the class. The cognitive activity of going back and forth between interpreting story content and projecting emotions of a character developed deeper and richer understanding of the main character for Rob.

Their dramatization promoted richer thinking and interpretation of the book. These students went beyond reporting mere story facts. They delved deeper into the story by portraying journalists and the main character to recreate the novel for the audience.

The play continued with Alex injecting a bit of humor and he introduced an interview aboard the Moonlight. Joe took on the role of interviewer. This time Rob switched from the role of an abused Jessie to play the part of Clay Purves, a crew member who justified his employment on a slave boat.

(Transcript, day 7, pages 14-19)

1. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Oh! Sorry about that, good book. Ok, umm thanks Alice for that report. Now lets go to Joe with an interview on the Moonlight. Joe.
2. JOE: (Anchor voice) Hi, I'm Joe . Here live on the Moonlight with Clay Purves. I'm going to be asking him some questions. Purves, how do you feel about kidnapping this young boy Jessie?

3. ROB: (Voice of Clay Purves) Well, I don't, well, I guess I have to do to get money.
4. JOE: (Anchor voice) Ok. How do you feel about being punished even though you didn't steal the Captain's egg?
5. ROB: (Voice of Purves) Well I thought it was cruel because they didn't /?/. They could have asked everybody in the crew .
6. JOE: (Anchor voice) Why are you sailing on this illegal slave boat?
7. ROB: (Voice of Purves) Well, I couldn't find any other jobs. So I guess this is the job I have to do.
8. JOE: (Anchor voice) Do you like the captain and the mate?
9. ROB: (Voice of Purves) No
10. JOE: (Anchor voice) Why?
11. ROB: (Voice of Purves) Because he's mean and it's not worth it /?/
12. JOE: (Anchor voice) Ok. Thanks Purves. Now back to you Alex. Alex!

In this instance their construction of meaning went beyond the literal story elements to take an aesthetic or personal stance towards the story events. They responded in this manner to an egg stealing incident, Jessie's kidnapping, and the cruelty in the novel.

Once again Alex began the scene, but interjected a bit of situational comedy humor. He pretended to be a "Ted Baxter" type character by not realizing that the camera had returned to him in the studio (line 1). He acted surprised when the audience caught him reading a copy of The Slave Dancer. Alex used this humorous bit to entertain and generate laughter from the audience. His character immediately became serious as an anchor person to introduce Joe with an interview aboard the Moonlight.

Joe mirrored real television interviewers when he asked pertinent questions dealing with the events from the book. His questions displayed a literal understanding of the story elements and facilitated Rob's character to share novel content from Clay Purves's perspective.

Rob switched characters in this scene to display the attitude and feelings of a crew member. These interpretations were created by Rob and not described by

the author. He went beyond an efferent stance or literal level to an aesthetic stance, when he interpreted the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of Clay Purves (lines 3,5,7, & 11). His combination of character perspective switching and interpreting the story beyond the text is an example of meaningful responses to literature.

In the following short dialogue, Alex compared their play to a real television show. He announced a commercial encouraging the audience to purchase the book. Alex also gave the audience an acronym for reporting information about the kidnapped character.

(Transcript, day 7, pages 14-19)

1. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Oh! Sorry about that. Remember this book sells at Borders. Ok! Thanks Joe. Now this is America's Most Wanted. Special presentation. A 13 year old boy, Jessie Bollier is missing. We believe he has been captured and taken aboard on an illegal slave voyage, called the Moonlight. If you see him or have any information, call 555-I'm a tattle tale.
2. JOE: (Anchor voice) Remember folks, that's 555-I am a tattle tale. Or 555-42628288538253.

In this segment, they made three connections to their experiences outside of the novel. Alex mentioned Borders Bookstore, as the location to purchase the book. He refers to America's Most Wanted, a weekly television show which features wanted criminals. Alex and Joe also offered the audience a phone number to call with information about the missing boy. This reference is similar to other popular call-in television programs.

These are types of intertextual connections in which students bring together their television literacies to literature study and validate their life experiences.

This next example is also an intertextual connection. In the story, the Moonlight is on a slave voyage to pick up slaves in Africa and return to America. Kim acted as meteorologist to report the weather conditions.

(Transcript, day 7, pages 14-19)

1. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok. Now let's go to Kim with the

weather. Kim.

2. KIM: (Anchor voice) Thank you ALEX. Hello I'm Kim with the latest weather report. First on the list: strong winds blowing around 65 mph, with some showers later on around the African area. The Atlantic water temperature is around 70 degrees Fahrenheit with a strong current. We hope to see some sun later on. So if you're sailing the Atlantic be sure to have your poncho. Back to ALEX.

The author briefly mentions the weather several times throughout the book. However, Kim took the weather topic further by interpreting how the winds, and water might have been near Africa. Her experiences with news programs might include weather reports and the influence they have on our lives. She reported geographical information by mentioning the Atlantic Ocean and announced probable wind speeds and water temperatures off the western coast of Africa. Kim has made connections between her life and the text which contributed to her understanding and interest for the setting of the story.

In their final scene, Joe interviewed Kim, a slave aboard the ship. Kim and Joe constructed meaning in an aesthetic stance by imagining what a slave might have experienced and felt on the Moonlight ship. The author graphically describes the horrors performed on the slaves, but does not write about their personal backgrounds.

(Transcript, day 7, pages 14-19)

1. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Oh, ok thanks Kim. Now let's go to another interview with Joe .
2. JOE: (Anchor voice) Hello it's me again on the other side of the Moonlight. Here I am with a slave that has been taken from their home in Africa /?!/ slavery. I will ask her some questions. You have family at your home in Africa?
3. KIM: (Voice of slave) Yes, I have a family /?!/
4. JOE: (Anchor voice) Do you miss your family?
5. KIM: (Voice of slave) I miss my family very much
6. JS: Louder
7. KIM: (Voice of slave) I had /?!/
8. JOE: (Anchor voice) Were any other of your relatives taken away as slaves?
9. KIM: (Voice of slave) Yes, they were, but none of them are on this ship.
10. JOE: (Anchor voice) What is your real name? What do they

- call you on the ship?
11. KIM: (Slave voice) My real name is Sarah, but on the ship they call me Star.
 12. JOE: (Anchor voice) All right. How do the sailors treat you on the ship?
 13. KIM: (Voice of slave) They make us dance so we stay strong. They pack us in little rooms and /?/
 14. JOE: (Anchor voice) Thank you. Now back to you Alex.

Alex began by thanking Kim for her weather report and introduced Joe with an interview. On this occasion he played his part without humor and fulfilled his perfunctory role as anchor person.

Joe went beyond literal comprehension to create more meaningful and deeper understanding of the text. He played the role of interviewer, asking questions about the slave's life not described in the text. He empathized with the slave woman in leaving her relatives and being treated inhumanely (line 4).

Subsequently following Kim's role as weather person, she played a slave woman. These opposite perspectives may have contributed to Kim's deeper understanding and multiple interpretations of the story. As a meteorologist she was outside of the lives of the characters to report the weather. In her role of a slave woman, she was a victim of heinous acts.

This segment represents the student's ability to enter deeply into the story world and illustrates their understanding of the grisly conditions that the slaves faced. During the process of creating their parts they made emotional connections that went beyond literal comprehension. This is the type of meaning we want students to construct, taking on multiple perspectives and interpretations of characters' lives and events.

Unfortunately, in this instance, I interrupted their scene (line 6) by requesting them to speak louder for the audience. This may have hindered their continuity and concentration for acting out the scene. This was an occasion in which my role was a detriment to their literature study.

The next seven transcript segments are from their 19th and final literature study session. This dialogue is from their second play performance for their classmates. It contained information from the second half of the novel. Similar to their first play, they constructed meaning efferently, aesthetically, and made intertextual connections.

In the second half of the novel, the Moonlight is 100 miles from the United States when it encounters another American ship. The crew throws all the slaves overboard to escape criminal prosecution from the government.

Simultaneously a storm begins and sinks the boat. All of the crew and slaves are killed. Jessie, the main character, and a slave boy, Ras manage to escape to a nearby island. An inhabitant named Daniel helps the boys. Eventually Ras leaves the island with the underground slave railroad. Jessie is given directions to walk home to New Orleans. The boys never see each other again.

The novel ends describing Jessie's life as a grown man. He fought with the Union Army in the Civil War and spent three months in Andersonville prison. Jessie's life was haunted by his experiences aboard the slave voyage.

Twelve sessions after their first dramatization, Alex, Joe, and Alice began the second episode of their news program.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. ALEX: Part two, the second episode. So we hope you enjoy it.
(Clears throat)
2. ...
3. JOE: (Anchor voice) 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and Action!
4. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Hi. I'm Alex .
5. ALICE: (Anchor voice) And I'm Alice .
6. ALEX: & ALICE: (Anchor voice) And welcome to Moonlight News.
7. ALICE: (Anchor voice) The second episode. Later today we will be taking calls from the viewers.
8. ALEX: (Anchor voice) You may want to write this number down. It's 555-Call Now! That's 555-Call Now! Now, let's go to Kim with the weather. Kim!

Alex began by briefly introducing their play to the class. For this

dramatization, they added Joe in the role of stage manager. He counted down for the actors before the camera began filming (line 3). He had probably seen movie makers conduct a similar process during production.

For this episode they had two anchor people, Alex and Alice, to moderate the program. They introduced themselves and announced the name of the program like typical news broadcasters.

Intertextual connections were made in offering the audience a call-in number similar to popular television programs like America's Most Wanted or The Larry King Show. Alex ended this segment like real news programs, by introducing Kim with a weather report.

In this second episode, Kim reported the weather conditions and the wreck of the Moonlight ship as described by the author, Paula Fox.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. KIM: (Anchor voice) Hello all of you out there. I hope you're all dry because that was a horrible storm last night.
2. ROB: (Anchor voice) News flash!
3. KIM: (Anchor voice) Yesterday during the storm, there was a ship wreck in the Gulf of Mexico. I hear there were two survivors aboard the Moonlight ship which have been found. First, the sky turned a charcoal gray, the temperature dropped. It thundered and lightninged and the tiny ship was lost. /?/ The Bay of Benin will be /?/. They picked up 98 slaves and traveled back across the Atlantic. Two survivors, Jessie and Ras, made it back to Mississippi. Back to Alex and Alice with more on the Moonlight.

Kim played the role of television weather reporter. Rob interrupted her broadcast with a news flash. This is similar to real television programs in which special reports or announcements are made. She described the story facts of the weather conditions that caused the wreck of the ship and the survival of the main character, Jessie and the slave boy, Ras.

In these two scenes, the students used their knowledge of present day television shows and broadcasters to make connections to the pages of the novel. These connections brought the story world alive for them and their

classmates. Their process of dramatization aided them to see life through the eyes of the characters and promoted richer and deeper ways of interacting with the story.

As the play continued, Alex interjected humor by offering to order a pizza for Alice (lines 1 & 3). He continued the scene by reading the names of the crew members of the Moonlight who were lost in the shipwreck.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Alice what do you want on your pizza?
2. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Alex!
3. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Cheese, ok, delivered. Ok, about that news flash Kim just got. We've got some more information. The ship's name was the Moonlight. Officers: Captain Cathorne-the Master,
4. ALICE: (Whispers) Cawthorne
5. ALEX: (Anchor voice) I'M SORRY! CAWTHORNE-the Master and Nicholas Spark-the Mate. Crew: Jessie Bollier, John Cooley, Adolph Curry, Louis Gardere, Ned Grime, Isaac Porter, Clay Purvis, Claudius Sharkey, Seth Smith, Benjamin Stout, and Sam Wick. Cargo: 98 slaves whose true names were remembered only by their families except by the young boy Ras. They were ship wrecked in the Gulf of New Mexico. Huh?
6. ALICE: (Anchor voice) (Whispers) Let's take a minute... Ok.
7. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Oh, ok. Let's take a minute. Minute's over. They were shipwrecked in the Gulf of New Mexico, June 3, 1840. Survivors-two.

Alex's humor in offering to order a pizza is a comedic bit that he probably saw on a television sitcom or comedy show like Saturday Night Live. Alice yelled his name pretending to be upset with Alex's mischievousness. She wanted him to get back to the facts of reporting the deaths on the Moonlight. Their dialogue continued with her interruption of Alex a second time (line 4) to correct his pronunciation of the captain's name. Alice is playing the role of the "straight" person and Alex was in the role of comedian. That is, she pretended to be shocked by Alex's antics which added humor to the scene.

Alex continued the scene by reading the names of the dead from the prologue of the book. They also offered a moment of silence for the victims of the wreck

(lines 6 & 7). These connections are similar to real news broadcasts in which announcers report tragic events, read the names of the dead, and use the custom of silence to respect the dead.

These ways of interacting with text through drama are representative of students entering into the story world in deeper ways. This was accomplished when they brought in their experiences with television, comedy, reporting tragedies, and respecting the dead with silence.

The next segment Rob played an interviewer and Joe acted as the main character, Jessie Bollier. Their scene brought to life the words of the text.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Now let's go to Rob with an interview with Jessie Bollier.
2. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Rob.
3. ROB: (Anchor voice) Thank you Alex. Hi! I'm Rob . I'm here with Jessie Bollier. I will be asking him some questions today. Ok. What was it like when the ship sunk?
4. JOE: (Jessie's voice) It got really dark and then it started to pour. I got really scared and went down in the holds.
5. ROB: (Anchor voice) Did you think you were going to die?
6. JOE: (Jessie's voice) I did because the men had closed the hold after I got in. There wasn't that much food. I only had the biscuits that the Captain gave me. There wasn't a lot of water.
7. ROB: (Anchor voice) Who did you think was the meanest person on the ship and why?
8. JOE: (Jessie's voice) The Captain. He likes to treat the slaves poorly. When I refused to play my fife to make them dance, he had Stout whip me five times.
9. ROB: (Anchor voice) Ok. Now, were you happy or sad when Ras left?
10. JOE: (Jessie's voice) I was pretty sad because he was sort of a friend to me, you know.
11. ROB: (Anchor voice) A friend like? You had gone through a lot of stuff together?
12. JOE: (Jessie's voice) Yea, yea.
13. ROB: (Anchor voice) Would you ever go out and buy another fife? Do you like to go out and listen to music?
14. JOE: (Jessie's voice) No, I can't stand music. Because in the back of my mind, certain sounds, /?/? shackles /?/?.
15. ROB: (Anchor voice) OK back to Alex and Alice.

This transcript portrays a combination of describing story events, but adds rich emotional connections that went beyond the text.

Rob and Joe constructed dialogue concerning how a person might feel living through these barbaric experiences which the author does not describe (lines 3,5,7,9,& 10-14). This talk represents a deeper understanding of the story and characters beyond the literal level. The students related their emotional states to how Jessie feared dying, starving in the hold, reactions to the captain's cruelty, and his inability to enjoy music any longer. They also made judgments about Jessie taking comfort in having Ras, a slave boy, as a companion through the ship sinking ordeal.

Interspersed in their dialogue were factual story events. They used the author's descriptions of the weather, hiding in the hold, a lack of food, and Jessie playing his fife (lines 4,6,8). These literal elements are important to basic story comprehension, but they also interpreted the character's emotional trauma.

The final three sections of transcripts involved the fifth grade class who asked questions about the story as if it were a real situation. They were in role as audience members to explore extended understandings and interpretations of the characters and situations beyond the pages of the text. Alex and Alice continued to play anchor people and answered the questions from the viewers.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Thank you Rob for that awesome interview. Now we will be taking calls from the viewers. Remember that number is 555
2. ALEX: & ALICE: (Anchor voice) 555-Call Now.
3. ALEX: That was my line.
4. ALICE: (Anchor voice) 555-Call Now.
5. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok.
6. /?/: RINNNGGGGGG
7. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Is any one out there? I'll get that one.
HELLO?
8. /?/: (Viewer with Southern Accent) Hi! I'm Betty /?!/ from Chicago. I'd like to know what ever happened to Jessie and Ras?
9. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok, we've got a caller. She wants. You're a she? Ok (Class laughs). She want to know whatever happened to Betty and Ras. You want to answer her?
10. ALICE: (Anchor voice) No, you can.
11. /?/: /?!/.

12. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Yea. Hold on. Ok. What happened to Ras, well, he was a slave and once the ship was shipwrecked, he and Jessie kinda swam to a little island which wasn't an island. It was actually Mississippi and met this guy called DAN. Daniel actually. Two slave men or free slaves took Ras and took him on the underground railroad. What happened to Jessie was he fought in the Civil War on the Union side. He was captured because he was on the Union side. He was put in prison in Andersonville for three months and he got a lot of torture. You still there?
13. /?/: Yea, hold on. No, that's it thank you.
14. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok.

Alice thanked Rob for his interview with Jessie following the format of television news shows like 20/20 and Primetime Live.

Alex reminded Alice that she was saying his line (line 3), but accepts her interruption because he had a chance to chime the phone number with her (line 2). At this point in their play, an unidentified classmate enters into their imaginary broadcast (line 6). It is unclear whether the student was prompted to speak with a southern accent or if she randomly chose to do so (line 8). Alex played off of the humor by asking if she was female, which caused the class to laugh.

The female caller asked what happened to Ras, a slave boy, who escaped the ship wreck with Jessie (line 8). Alex interpreted her question as an inquiry about Ras and Betty (line 9). Betty was the sister of Jessie who is briefly described at the beginning of the book. He proceeded to answer her question by describing the details of the end of the novel (line 12).

It was obvious that these students had comprehended the novel and shared that understanding with classmates. However, they went beyond literal comprehension and brought the novel alive through their dramatization of the characters and events

Alex and Alice continued in role as anchor people to answer questions from the audience about Jessie.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. Dan: What was Andersonville?
2. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok. Let me stop you. Ok. Well, Andersonville was a prison.
3. ALEX: Wasn't it a prison?
4. ALICE: Uh huh.
5. ALEX: (Anchor voice) It was prison. Jessie was captured, put in the prison, and tortured. Got it? Is that it?
6. Dan: Yea.
7. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok, bye

Their answer about Andersonville prison is brief, but an intertextual connection between a historical location and the novel (line 2). In the last few paragraphs of the novel, Paula Fox reveals that Jessie spent three months in Andersonville, but fails to describe what it was. The students obtained information that it was a Civil War prison from their classroom teacher. Coincidentally there was a cable television movie about Andersonville prison during their study of The Slave Dancer. Several students in the class had watched the movie and talked about it.

It was interesting how the students filled in their knowledge gaps about Andersonville. By asking their teacher, viewing a movie, or conversations, they became informed about a detail from the novel. This illustrates that students construct meaning in multiple ways beyond the words of the text.

In the final moments of their play they continued to talk about the main character, Jessie, and what happened to him. The class pushed Alex and Alice to give details of Jessie's imprisonment which Paula Fox does not describe.

(Transcript, day 19, pages 1-14)

1. /?/: Ring, ring
2. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Oh, hello.
3. /?/: How did they torture Jessie?
4. ALEX: (Anchor voice) We have not a clue. That's top secret information. They whipped him. They didn't beat him. Is that torture enough?
5. /?/: Not really.
6. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Well, we do not know how he was tortured, but we know he was tortured.
7. ALICE: (Anchor voice) Thanks for calling.

8. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Thanks for calling.
9. MARCUS: I wanted to know if Jessie is still alive, right now?
10. ALICE: Yea.
11. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Well, it's been like, what, a 100 years since the Civil War.
12. MARCUS: Oh.
13. ALEX: (Anchor voice) We have background information if you would like to know some things about him.
14. MARCUS: What I really want to know is, what he's like actually after he was in Andersonville?
15. ALEX: (Anchor voice) He was alive. He got out of prison after the war. He was in there for three months being torture.
16. MARCUS: Why was he being tortured?
17. ALICE: Because
18. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Because he was on the Union side.
19. MARCUS: Who fought again?
20. ALICE: & ALEX: The Confederates. ALEX: Yea, thanks.
21. MARCUS: That's nice
22. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok, wait, wanta know anything else?
23. MARCUS: No, I don't.
24. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Ok.
25. MARCUS: Bye.
26. ALEX: (Anchor voice) Bye.

At this point in their conversation, the play ended with the class's applause. Some of the information Alex and Alice shared with the class can be found in the prologue of the book (lines 6, 15, & 18), but they created part of their answers (lines 4, 11, & 20) from information not given by the author.

It is interesting how Kim, Joe, and Rob do not contribute information to answer the classmates' questions. They may have let Alex and Alice perform this duty as part of their roles as anchor people.

Marcus, an audience member, asked Alex if Jessie, the main character, was still alive (line 9). This question forced Alex to think about the historical time frame that the novel is set and answer appropriately (line 11). The fifth grader was either unaware of the book's historical setting or he lacked the background knowledge for the Civil War. Marcus recovered his dignity by asking Alex a follow-up question about Andersonville prison (line 14). Alex connected his background knowledge about the Civil War to answer his question. He knew the

war was over 100 years ago and there were the Confederate and Union armies (lines 11, 18 & 20).

The transcripts in this section demonstrate examples of the five categories (chart 1) for transmediating the construction of meaning for these students. The children pretended to be news anchor people as they reported efferently and aesthetically the historical fiction of the slave voyage for the audience. The students intertextually connected real television programs to their dramatization and spoke about the characters as if they were real people.

Using drama, they took on the roles of characters which added multi-dimensional thinking, understanding, and a method of responding to the story world. These students were using their imaginations to enter deeply into the text and create their dramatic interpretations of human experiences, emotions, and reactions to the savagery of the voyage.

Immediately following the completion of this novel, the class participated in a unit of study about the Civil War. They had constructed an understanding of the lives and events surrounding the slave industry in historical fiction and drew on that information to enhance their comprehension of historical events contained in expository text.

In the next section there are transcripts excerpts of the students constructing meaning using response journals. This is followed by a final section describing their meaning making discussions focusing on the social injustice of slavery.

Journals: Tools for Generating Thinking and Discussions

The students chose to write in response journals for many of the 19 sessions. The transferring of their thoughts into written communication, offered students an additional form of response, and enhanced their thinking and understanding about the story. They wrote summaries, opinions, connections, or

discussion questions. These journals entries were shared with the group and often provided a starting point for their daily discussions.

In this first transcript, Alex shared a discussion question from his journal with the group. He asked the students to judge the merit of the captain throwing a crew member overboard.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 44-46)

1. ALEX: Yeah. Ok. Do you think the Captain had a right to throw Spark overboard?
2. JOE: Yeah, I do. I think
3. ALEX: Yeah Spark deserved it.
4. ALICE: But see just because
5. JOE: He killed the poor slave
6. ROB: Yeah, but that was, just
7. KIM: They should only throw the people that are dead overboard.
8. ALL: Yeah! I know. Not !?!
9. KIM: If someone's sick, they should have a certain room.
10. ROB: Like if they're really, really sick, like they can't save much, they're gonna DIE, then I think they should
11. ALICE: They should !?!

This short segment contains powerful examples of the benefits of literature discussion. The students examined the story world as is they were talking about the behavior of people in real life. Their differing perspectives contributed to the multiple layers of understanding and interpretations of the story.

The group talked about the injustice of the captain throwing Spark, a crew member, overboard as punishment for a loss of revenue by killing a slave. Their discussion was an aesthetic stance as they shared their personal reactions, feelings, and justification for who should have been thrown into the water (lines 2-11). They made moral judgments about the captain's behavior and eventually agreed with his murderous actions (lines 2-6).

Joe empathized with the slave by labeling him as "poor." His use of this adjective indicated his personal identification with the plight of the slaves (line 5). Kim generated an alternative plan for the ill slaves (lines 7 & 9) which the group

agreed with. Her method of interpreting the behavior of the characters was to change their actions in a positive manner. Rob and Alice tentatively agreed with throwing slaves overboard with the stipulation that they were going to die anyway (lines 10 & 11). This was their manner of approaching the text. They interpreted the characters' behaviors and recommended a fairer criteria for who should be thrown overboard.

The group examined the deeds of the characters, judged the moral value of those behaviors, and offered alternatives to unacceptable actions. This is the manner in which we want students to construct meanings for literature. These types of interpretations go beyond the typical quantifiable task of answering ten comprehension questions.

Alex continued sharing his discussion questions from his journal. His next question requested the group to make personal connections to the deaths in the book and their own mortality.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 44-46)

1. ALEX: If someone is going to die, would you rather die of sickness or would you rather die of being drowned?
2. JOE: Sickness
3. ALEX: Yeah
4. ALICE: I wouldn't want to be
5. ALEX: When I die, I want to die in my sleep. I don't want to be shot or anything
6. ALICE: I know, shot
7. ROB: You would drowned in the fire
8. ALICE: Drowned !?!
9. ALEX: You know that feeling when you hold your breath too long?
10. ROB: & KIM: Yeah
11. ROB: When I was younger, a kid threw me in our pool, I was three or four, and I almost drowned. But the lifeguard saved me. Then I was scared of the water until I was like 7. And so I didn't want to do anything. ALICE: On my
12. ALICE: Birthday at my old house, we always had a pool party. Because I had a pool. And my friend, Laura, she couldn't swim. She was in second grade. She had floatees. And then I was swimming underneath the water and she stepped on my head. I couldn't get up. ROB: Oh
13. KIM: We were swimming at the YMCA pool and I was in the

- deep end and my brother jumped right on top of me and held me under. ALEX: That happened to me KIM: The lifeguard
ALEX: He got really mad KIM: Didn't know because my brother was just hanging on to the edge.
14. ALICE: When I at the YMCA, with Kim, Shelly jumped on top of her.
 15. KIM: /?/ under
 16. ROB: That's what /?/ did to me
 17. ALEX: We're getting off-track
 18. JOE: Someone jumped

When reading this transcript, I was made startlingly aware of the emotional impact this novel had on the students. They had internalized the sickness, drownings, beatings, and shooting of the slaves, and considered their own deaths. They began talking about how they would want to die. Then shared their near drowning experiences (lines 11-14).

Alex told the group they were "getting off track" in their discussion (line 17). Some critics may argue that their discussion was morbid or off-task. However, the purposes of literature study are enjoyment of the story, discovering messages or themes, and relating those ideas to one's life. Although talking about their own deaths was gruesome, the conversation displayed a level of sophistication and maturity. They understood and interpreted the murder and mayhem of the characters and connected those situations to consider their own mortality.

The previous two transcripts illustrate multiple ways of making personal connections. These linkages contributed to the students' richer and more satisfying understanding and interpretations of the literature that go beyond the identification of basic story elements. The students looked through the eyes of the characters, lived their lives, and compared them to their own.

The next four transcript segments are from session 12. In these excerpts the group explored the incident of Jessie's wife being thrown into the slave hold and being forced to retrieve it.

The students shared journal responses to the reading completed the previous evening. While reading their responses, collaborative talk ensued that supported mutual understandings and meanings that were efferent, aesthetic, and intertextual stances toward the story.

In this first segment, Alex shared his opinion of Jessie retrieving his fife from the hold which the character Stout threw down there. In this instance, I shared my imagery of the appearance of the slaves' hold.

(Transcript, day 12, pages 5-11)

1. ALEX: Can I go?
2. ALICE: Yeah
3. ALEX: I think Jessie shouldn't have gone down into the hold. I liked how Purves offered to go down into the hold instead of Jessie, but I thought that Nick Spark dies. That Purves has higher authority than Stout. He's the Captain's mate.
4. ALICE: Yeah ROB: Yeah
5. JS: You know what it reminded me of? This is gross. But you know what it reminded me of? Him having to go down into the hold. Like falling ROB: Yeah JS: Outhouse hole.
6. ROB: Me too.
7. ALL: Oooooooooo!
8. JS: (Laughter) I know, but that's how I picture how gross it was down there. ROB: Falling into a pit of snakes.
9. JS: That's how I picture how gross it was down there.
10. KIM: Yuck

Alex began this dialogue by asking the groups' permission to share his journal response (line 1). His request to read represents an example of the group's turning taking etiquette. It was an important function of their group process which they internalized as the procedure for sharing journals.

The responses of Alex are a combination of efferent and aesthetic stances toward this story event. He expressed a positive opinion towards Purves's offer to retrieve Jessie's fife. Alex shared a prediction that Nick Spark, a crew member, dies, which had little connection to the fife incident. He also added that Purves's rank was higher than Stout. These opinions represent exploratory ideas that he was wondering about, although they were not relevant to the event

being discussed.

Rob and Alice agreed with Alex's opinions, but no discussion ensued. There could have been a lack of interest for the topic or because I interjected my thoughts into the conversation which took it in another direction. In either case, I shared my imagery of the horrible conditions that must have existed in the hold. The sharing of my authentic responses was one way I facilitated their construction of meaning, demonstrated thinking aloud, and supported their discussion.

The group concurred, with disgust, with my description of the hold. Rob added his own mental picture of the hold. As the students continued to read and discuss the novel these imageries provided a powerful context for ongoing interpretations and understanding.

The students continued their discussion of Jessie going into the hold. In this segment, I asked them a question to clarify their understanding and mine about the fife event (line 3).

(Transcript, day 12, pages 5-11)

1. ALEX: I thought it was weird because how Ben Stout ordered Jessie to go down
2. ALICE: Yeah
3. JS: Didn't he throw it down there on purpose? Or did it fall?
4. ALEX: I think Stout did ALICE: I think Stout
5. ALICE: I think Stout threw it (fife) down there. KIM: Threw it down
6. JS: To make him go down there
7. KIM: Because Jessie /?/
8. ALICE: I thought Purves
9. JS: Because Jesse what?
10. ALICE: & KIM: He was on his hammock
11. JS: Oh, on his hammock.
12. ALEX: I thought that Purves had higher authority than Stout because he's the Captain's mate.
13. JS: I don't know
14. ALEX: Nick Spark always had higher authority
15. JOE: Nick Spark
16. ALICE: /?/
17. KIM: /?/
18. ALL: /?/

Alex continued to display his interest in the rank of crew members by asking how Stout had the authority to issue commands (lines 1,12, &14). The rest of the group focused on discussing how the fife ended up in the hold.

In this instance my role in the group can be interpreted in two ways. My question was meant to clarify their understanding and mine for this story event. Alex was interested in rank and authority, but I influenced the groups' discussion of the hold incidence. It is interesting to wonder about what they may have discussed without my presence.

In this next transcript, Alex has dropped his interest in the rank of crew members. Rob took his turn to share his journal response to the fife story event. Rob's comments (line 10) elicited them to talk about some powerful images they had for the deplorable conditions of the slaves' hold and their reactions to Jessie in their living space.

(Transcript, day 12, pages 5-11)

1. ROB: Ok, ok. I think it was mean that the Captain made Jessie go find it even though he didn't throw, hide it. So I think he should, the Captain should have went and found it. Down in the hold.
2. ALEX: The Captain didn't tell him to find it. It was Stout.
3. JOE: It was Stout
4. ROB: I know but
5. KIM: The Captain said
6. ROB: The Captain said, "Go find it right now!"
7. KIM: Yeah he said that
8. ROB: Yeah. So I think it was one of the people besides Jessie should have gone down there
9. ALICE: I thought Stout should have
10. ROB: At first when he went down, I thought maybe the slaves would grab him and throw him against the wall
11. ALEX: You can step on people
12. ROB: I know. I thought maybe they'd grab him and go, "Hey little boy." I was like
13. ALICE: I don't think they could talk that much
14. JOE: I think that Stout probably took it.
15. ROB: I think they could probably go, Uh! (sound effect).
16. KIM: I don't think they would be too bad. They'd be too hungry and too tired.
17. ALEX: They don't speak no English
18. ALICE: Oh yeah. To talk actually.

19. KIM: I don't imagine them /?/
20. ALEX: Yeah me too.
21. ROB: I think. I picture damp. It's damp down there.
22. ALL: It would be, yeah
23. ROB: It's dirty and moldy. That awful smell
24. ALL: /?/ smell ALEX: Flies around
25. ALEX: There was someone dead that they didn't find. Bugs all over him. Crawling up his nose.
26. ALL: That's what I picture. Oooo Wet
27. JOE: I have an example of how I thought it was.
28. ALL: /?/
29. JOE: It would be wet.
30. KIM: Stepping on them.
31. ALEX: Disgusting. Joe, is disgusting.
32. ...

This conversation represents the construction of meaning beyond the author's text description and is evident of their extended understanding of the story. Rob disclosed his reading strategy of prediction when he described the slaves' reactions to Jessie in their quarters (line 10,12,15). The rest of the group revealed their notions about the slaves and seemed surprised that Jessie was unharmed (lines 11,13,16,17,18). However, Kim sensed that the slaves would not hurt him because of their hunger and exhaustion (line 16). She interpreted the slaves' behavior as an awareness that Jessie was a prisoner, like them, and forced to comply with the crews' orders.

The students also judged the unfairness of Jessie having to recover his life and suggested that the guilty culprit should have retrieved it.

Their dialogue and visualizations indicated that the group lived the experience of Jessie going into the hold. They clearly described their imagery which promoted comprehension and facilitated deeper understanding and interpretation of the horrific slave quarters.

In the final segment of their discussion of the life event, they used voices to recreate the incident (lines 2,4,6, & 8-10). Their dialogue brought the characters' language to life.

(Transcript, day 12, pages 5-11)

1. ALICE: Did anyone else have anything to say about slavery?
2. JOE: I think Stout took the fife and threw it in the hold. Because he was like, they were looking for it. Stout said something like, "It must be down in the hold." (Character's voice)
3. ALL: Yeah! He put it there.
4. ROB: "It must be down in the hold." "Where else could it be?" (Character's voice)
5. ALL: Yeah (Laughter)
6. ALICE: "I don't know. I didn't put it down there." "But I'm just assuming it's down there." (Character's voice).
7. ALEX: "Down in the hold." (Character's voice).
8. ROB: Why can't he just say "Oh not the latrine, but the hold." (Character's voice)
9. KIM: "It's in the hold." "I know it's in the hold." But I didn't put it there." (Character's voice).
10. ALL: "I didn't put it there." (Laughter) I didn't put it there." (Character's voice).
11. ALEX: Alright guys let's start to read.

Alice kept their conversation going by asking a general question about slavery (line 1). The group made sense of what happened in the story through a dramatic technique called "in role" (e.g., Booth, 1998). They imitated characters' voices and pretended to be innocent perpetrators. The students were acting "in role" by experiencing, thinking, feeling, and expressing emotions of the characters.

They continued to revisit the causes and circumstances surrounding Jessie's fife in the hold. The story is unclear in stating exactly who and how the fife ended up in the hold.

This revisiting and recreating of the text represents another example of the students interacting to construct meaning beyond the literal events. Their interpretations represented their ability to transform the text to form judgments about the characters' language and actions.

Alex ended their dialogue by suggesting they begin to read from the novel. He may have felt their banter was off-track or he was leading the group in another direction. In either case, his suggestions facilitated their group process

to begin another task. This is an example of the natural manner in which the students independently directed their literature study.

The previous two segments are particularly interesting because my voice did not enter into their conversations. They constructed meaning and facilitated their group without my input. This is significant because educators often think that students are incapable of meaningful literature discussions. For these students journals provided one means for productive discussions.

This final section for response journals contains transcript segments from session 14. I have divided these excerpts into six episodes to facilitate interpretation of the dialogue.

The conversations that follow provide examples of the categories of analysis for transmediating the construction for meaning (chart 1). During this session they generated questions, talked collaboratively to explore story meaning, responded with an aesthetic and efferent stance, and made intertextual connections to the world.

In this first segment, Alex read his response from his journal concerning the captain's continued humiliation of the slaves by forcing them to dress in fancy clothing for the crew's entertainment.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 2-11)

1. ALEX: (Reading from journal) I think it was to give the Captain. Ok, I think it was nice of the Captain to give the slaves clothes, but it was mean of him because he knew the slaves would never wear such fancy clothes. Oh, never wear such fine clothes again. I know they will never reach Cuba, but if they did, the slaves would probably never wear clothes again, because of the mean Cubans.
2. KIM: Or the masters /?/
3. ALEX: Yeah Cubans
4. KIM: Probably give them like old, dirty clothes.
5. ALEX: Yeah just like a rag
6. ROB: Yeah rags.

This segment was included because of Alex's dual perspective and his

intertextual connection to this story event. He placed himself in the slaves' situation of having something nice to wear. He also took the opposite viewpoint of the captain finding another sadistic way to amuse the crew.

Alex's idea of the ship reaching Cuba and the Cuban's involvement with the slaves is an intertextual connection from outside of the story. This notion may have been generated during an inquiry project about slavery practices around the world. Cuba was mentioned as having been involved with slave trading in the Caribbean. The group concurred with his judgments that the Cubans would be mean to them and give them only rags to wear.

This transcript represents Alex's complex manner in which he was capable of interacting with the story. He interpreted the event in a more meaningful manner than described by the author. He also contributed his interpretations to the groups' construction of meaning.

The next segment contains an example of collaborative talk to maintain the flow of the session and accomplish the group task of sharing their journals (line 1-6). Then Joe asked his two discussion questions to facilitate a discussion for the group (line 7). His questions generated the group's predictions of the fate of the Moonlight if it encountered another ship.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 2-11)

1. JOE: Ok, can I go now?
2. ALEX: Oh. Be quiet. What was that?
3. JOE: Ok. Should I ask my questions first?
4. ALEX: If your questions have to do with your response
5. ROB: No, I want to do my questions
6. ALEX: Well, do what you want to read
7. JOE: What do you think will happen to the slaves if another ship approaches?
8. ALEX: They will be shot. Unless they raise up the Spaniard flag.
9. JOE: They had the Spanish flag up.
10. ROB: Yeah. That's right
11. ALEX: They took it down
12. ROB & JOE: Yeah
13. ALEX: No, I think the British will board them. ROB: (Softly) The

- British are coming. The British are coming. ALEX: Anyway, they just board them anyway.
14. JOE: And then what will happen to the slaves? That's what I asked.
 15. ALEX: Oh. They will be taken back to England ROB: Africa ALEX: And treated fairly. They wouldn't bring them back.
 16. ROB: They can have the same cargo
 17. ALEX: But maybe they would bring them back
 18. ROB: They'd be nicer
 19. ALEX: Yeah they'd probably bring them back.
 20. KIM: Uh huh

At the beginning of this transcript, Joe and Alex negotiated Joe's course of action (lines 1-6). Their dialogue demonstrated their internalized structure for turn-taking, which the group used to share journal entries. This group process provided a vital role in maintaining the flow of their literature study session and accomplished group tasks.

Joe decided to read his question first, instead of his response (line 7 & 14). He asked the group to predict the fate of the slaves if they encountered another ship. These questions were related to a story incident in which the crew hoists the wrong flag and drew unwanted attention from a British ship.

Alex predicted that the crew would be shot unless the Moonlight raised the Spanish flag (line 8). The group added that the Moonlight had the flag raised, but quickly took it down.

These four lines of dialogue (line 8-12) illustrate their collaborative efforts to construct meaning. They drew on their knowledge of text facts to clarify story content for the group.

Then, Alex responded with a prediction that the British will board the Moonlight ship. Rob overlapped his comments with Paul Revere's famous cry. His comments connected a historical event to the novel, which provided a context for understanding what it would mean if the Moonlight were attacked by the British (line 13).

Next, Joe reiterated his question concerning the fate of the slaves if another ship is encountered (line 14). A collaborative discussion ensued in which they predicted more humane treatment of the slaves if rescued by the British (lines 14-20).

This segment of talk demonstrates the complex nature of their literature discussions. In the course of their conversation they independently decided how a group member would proceed and clarified a story fact. The students' also went beyond the text to predict a more hopeful future for the slaves. It is a significant example because there was no need for a teacher to control their learning. Brenda Manzke and I had prepared them through our demonstrations and "scaffolding" of responses to independently conduct their literature group. We saw this as one purpose of our instruction, to create independent thinkers and learners who could collaboratively construct meaning in multiple ways for a piece of literature.

Alice was next to share her journal. She wrote a question asking the group to predict how the Moonlight will wreck (line 1). They talked about possible causes for the ship's demise.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 2-11)

1. ALICE: Ok, mine. I also have, how do you think they will get shipwrecked? And why?
2. ROB: Maybe they'll be like !?!
3. ALICE: Then they dodge over and hit something
4. ROB: Maybe they hit a rock because Ben Stout !?!
5. ALEX: !?!
6. ROB: I know. !?!
7. ALICE: Or maybe. I was thinking of this. Maybe he did something to the slaves or he threw all of them overboard? And then the Captain got really mad at him and did something really crazy.
8. ROB: !?!
9. ALEX: No, no. I got it. I got it. I got it. Then Stout's big mistake. He drinks a lot of liquor and when the Captain is out of his quarters. (Imitative voice) "I'm the Captain. I'm the Captain." He walks in and starts steering the boat.
10. JOE: Yeah and he
11. ALEX: He rams right into another ship

12. JOE: Another ship
13. ALEX: During a storm and he turns it and a big tide wave. You know.
14. JOE: And they
15. ALEX: Crash. Yeah (Sound effects of it crashing)
16. ROB: Do you know Kim?
17. KIM: Yeah
18. ROB: Oh dam.
19. ...

Alice began this segment by asking her question and reminded the students to explain their answers. She had internalized from our literature discussion demonstrations to justify their answers by explaining “why.”

We frequently used the adverb “why” to push students to examine their thinking and to communicate those thoughts to their peers. By engaging students in that type of thinking process, we assisted them to go beyond literal story elements and examine the underlying rationale behind the characters’ actions and events.

Rob was first to talk about his predictions which were inaudible. Alice added that the ship would “dodge over and hit something.” Next, Rob remembered that the title of the next chapter was “Ben Stout’s Mistake.” He predicted that the ship would hit a rock because of this character’s error.

At this point in their discussion (line 7), four of the five students collaborated in their predictions of how the ship would wreck. Their predictions focused on Ben Stout ramming into another ship during a storm. Kim remained silent during their conversation. Rob knew she had read ahead in the book, but she did not tell the group the outcome of the ship (lines 16-18).

The structure of being in a literature group played an important role in the meaning making for these students. Their collaborative discussion promoted their thinking about the story event, anticipation for upcoming occurrences, and motivation to read to find out what happens. All of these elements were crucial to

each student's understanding and interpretations of the novel.

During the next transcript excerpt, Alice reiterated her prediction, from the previous segment, that Ben Stout throws the slaves overboard and the captain goes crazy. She also read her second discussion question which asked the group to place themselves in Jessie's situation during a particular story episode.

In this story event the captain asked Jessie to pick up a chest of unknown contents. Eventually Jessie discovered that the trunk contained clothing that the slaves are forced to wear and dance around the deck.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 2-11)

1. ALICE: My prediction for what happens when they get shipwrecked is, that they. I think Stout throws a lot of slaves overboard and the Captain gets mad and out of control. Then my other questions is, how do you think they get shipwrecked? My other questions is, would you pick up the chest?
2. ALEX: Yeah
3. ALICE: Yeah that
4. ROB: At first I would be kinda scared. Maybe they have a couple dead slaves in it?
5. KIM: Uh huh
6. ROB: That's what I was thinking. I was like.
7. ALICE: Yeah (Captain) Cawthome was being like something in the cargo. /?/. There might be something bad.
8. KIM: Like a bomb.

This literature study session continued to be characterized by predictions and taking on a character's perspective. Alice asked the students to live the experience of Jessie. Rob spoke as if he were Jessie by expressing his fear that the chest might contain bodies. Kim and Alice agreed and added that it could be "something bad like a bomb" (lines 4-8).

In this manner they identified with Jessie's emotions and decision to open a chest of unknown contents. This perspective taking lends itself to deeper interpretations and understanding of the story world.

The dialogue continued as Rob asked the group to predict the size of the crew's living quarters and to place themselves in the slaves situation.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 2-11)

1. ROB: Whose quarters were bigger the Captain's or the crew's?
2. ALICE: The Captains.
3. ROB: Yeah and how
4. ALEX: His quarters were as big as the whole crews.
5. ROB: Yeah but. But how much bigger do you think it was?
6. ALEX: It was the same size.
7. ROB: Ok. If you were a slave would you dress up?
8. JOE: Yeah, I would ALEX: Yes
9. ALEX: It would be cool
10. ALICE: Yeah, you might not get the chance.
11. ROB: I would
12. ALEX: You wouldn't know what it is though
13. ROB: I would
14. ALEX: Dah put it over here. (Sound effects/singing) La la la la la
la
15. ROB: I would
16. ALICE: A chance to do something fun
17. ROB: Yeah do something fun.
18. ALICE: so do it.

Rob's first question asked the group to take an efferent stance by describing the physical size of the living quarters (line 1). The author provides a limited description of the crew quarters, but describes the deplorable conditions of the slaves hold. This was something Rob was wondering about and he may have been comparing the two spaces. His visualization assisted him in picturing the stark contrast of the living quarters.

Alice and Alex predicted that the captain's cabin was larger. As in previous transcripts, Rob insisted that they explain their thinking (line 5). He had also internalized the process of explaining one's rationale for their ideas.

His second question required them to take an aesthetic stance toward the slaves' dressing up (line 7). Rob asked the group to place themselves in the characters' predicament. Through this perspective taking, they thought it would have been fun to dress up (lines 9-18) compared to the horrors of the hold, the beatings, and drownings.

Previously they discussed whether it was "nice" or "mean" of the captain to force clothing on the slaves. During that discussion the group decided it was

nice for the slaves to have clothing, but the captain's manner of putting them on was cruel and strictly for the crews amusement.

This transcript illustrates the students ability to do more than just read and comprehend story elements. Through their literature group, they developed understandings and empathy for the characters and their lives.

The transcript segments in this section contain multiple examples of students' transmediation and teacher facilitation of the construction of meaning. This process first began with their daily silent reading of the novel. Next they moved to writing a response or questions for discussion. Then students shared their reactions or wonderings which generated further discourse of the ideas. By changing sign systems four times their interpretations and thinking are transformed and revisited in various ways. This movement from one media to another facilitates deeper and rich layers of story world understanding.

Educators need to consider the powerful tool that response journals can provide in facilitating literature discussions. For these students the process of writing responses and generating questions provided a foundation for their discussions.

In the next section the students constructed meaning by focusing on discussions of the social injustice of slavery.

Critical Literacy: Exploring The Social Injustice of Slavery

How are we to situate ourselves in relation to the struggles of others? How are do we approach our own opposing positions as oppressors and oppressed? Where are we to look for liberation when our collective "reading of the world" reveals contradictory and conflicting experiences and struggles? (Weiler, 1991)

This quote reminds me of my personal struggles to understanding the mistreatment and marginalizing of various groups of people in the world. I believe that literature can be a tool for children to explore and empathize with the

fears, joys and struggles faced by the characters contained in a story. The types of novels that contain social issues can help us to make sense of the human condition, challenge our thinking, and support us in knowing ourselves and others with greater compassion. I have observed students interacting with books in a critical manner. Their discussions of social justice and injustice have made me realize how these issues cannot be neglected aspects of literacy learning.

The teaching of literature cannot be seen as a series of subskills to master, but rather as critical examinations of our human experiences. We need to provide children with literature in which they can explore issues of social injustice through inquiry, discussion, and response activities. In this way they will come to understand the mistreatment toward diverse people in our society.

This critical look at social issues can also be a starting point toward understanding and overcoming the violence and prejudice towards many people. The students can become advocates for equity and social justice in the world.

The five literature study students discussed, wrote about, and dramatized the mistreatment of slaves and crew members on a slave voyage. They collaborated, struggled and successfully comprehended the story elements as demonstrated by their efferent or literal stances. Each group member formed opinions, reacted emotionally or in an aesthetic manner to the suffering, cruelty, and deaths that occurred throughout the novel. The students also made intertextual connections by comparing the characters to their lives, the victims of the Holocaust, and the racial hatred group, Ku Klux Klan.

This section contains six transcripts of the students exploring the social injustice in The Slave Dancer. The categories for group process and construction of meaning emerged as a result of the analysis of these particular segments.

The first transcript from session 8 is an example of how Brenda and I interacted with literature groups throughout the school year. In this segment, I was truly effected by the story contents and wanted to engage the students in a discussion about it. The dialogue began with me asking an open-ended, interpretative question and sharing a line from the text. A conversation ensued which illustrates a rich discussion and feelings of empathy for the slaves.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 20-28)

1. JS: I wanted to ask you guys some questions. I just reread this. I wondered if this came up in your discussion. The first thing I was wondering about is, what did you think about the description of the slaves down in the hold? ROB: Oh JS: (Reading from book) "Twisted and tuming on the water casts. And struggle to an edge in which to rest their shackled ankles." ROB: Ooo
2. KIM: I didn't get that part JS: I didn't hear you
3. ALICE: I didn't get that part ROB: Me either
4. KIM: She sometimes explains it in a confusing way
5. JOE: ALICE: & ROB: Yeah
6. JOE: I didn't get it. What was he trying to say?
7. ROB: Yeah
8. JS: It's she. JOE: Oh she JS: The boat, I assume, was rocking back and forth and they'll all chained together by their ankles
9. KIM: She says JS: So they are like falling all over the place ALICE: Oooooo
10. JS: And where they are locked up, there are great big wooden casks or barrels that have the fresh water in them. Back then they had to carry all the fresh drinking water. And so those are rolling around and they're falling all over each other. And they're screaming and yelling
11. ALICE: Oooo that would be sick
12. ROB: I don't even want to picture them
13. JOE: Why do they have them shackled together?
14. ROB: & ALICE: I know
15. KIM: All the captain talks about is getting his money's worth.
16. ALICE: Yeah
17. ROB: Like all of us sitting in one little seat
18. JOE: Yeah
19. ALICE: Chained together. Falling all over and screaming
20. ROB: Yeah
21. KIM: What if you have to go to the bathroom? (Laugh)
22. JOE: Yeah it talks about that, how they have to move through the crowd, you know,
23. JS: What was their toilet?
24. ROB: How big are the chains?
25. JOE: ROB & ALICE: Oh yeah
26. JS: Buckets

27. JOE: Buckets

28. ALICE: That's disgusting. Oh that would have to smell.

The conversation began with me asking what they thought about a particular sentence from the text (line 1). My questioning demonstrated a process for interrogating the text and our thinking about the story. The students internalized this process of explaining their reflections, as displayed in the last section when they shared questions from their journals.

My probing also helped me to discover their confusion with the text (lines 2-7). Their group was struggling to understand what was occurring in the text. They realized their lack of comprehension and sought my assistance to rectify the problem. Their awareness of a lack of understanding is characteristic of competent readers.

In a natural conversational manner, I guided and supported their critical and aesthetic visualization of the slave hold. I shared my insights and response to the author's description (line 2-12) which satisfied my need to discuss the novel and clarified their misperceptions.

They continued their conversation sharing their imagery of what the slave hold might have looked like. These responses were a combination of efferent and aesthetic stances, both text descriptions and personal responses. Alice was sickened by the explanation of the hold (lines 9 & 11). Rob was repulsed to visualize the conditions, and Joe asked why they were chained together. Kim was disgusted by the captain's greediness to make money by packing the slave together.

Alice, Rob, and Joe compared the slaves to themselves sitting on one seat and falling all over the place. Next, Kim broke the tension of our imageries with laughter about how they went to the bathroom. The group remembered that buckets were used for toilets which brought them back to their visualizations of

the harsh conditions for the slaves.

This transcript provides a framework for the teacher's role in collaborating with students to construct meaning. The sharing of my insights and explanation of the text, engaged the students in a discussion and realization of the horrific and injustice conditions that existed for the slaves.

The next segment contains all the categories of analysis for the students' construction and teacher facilitation of meaning (chart 1 & 2). I asked another question to explore their thinking and reactions to a portion of the text. The story describes African chiefs selling their own children into slavery. This question resulted in a discussion of throwing the slaves into the ocean and revealed the groups' concerns for social injustice.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 20-28)

1. JS: What did you think about the chiefs kidnapping the children?
"The slavers give good trade goods for them because they fetch a high price."
2. JOE: That's so dumb. Why do the chiefs want to give away their people?
3. JS: For a trade goods. Trade goods are like cloth, pots and pans.
4. ALL: Yeah
5. KIM: /?/. They get treated even worse than the slaves.
6. JS: The children?
7. KIM: I'd be better off lost in the woods.
8. ALICE: I know. We were saying, like when they threw them over, Why couldn't they swim?
9. ROB: Yeah KIM: /?/ JOE: /?/
10. ALICE: Or float on their back?
11. JS: Where are they going to go to? ALL: /?/ Yeah, well, no where?
12. ALICE: Maybe they could find something to hold on to?
13. KIM: She made it sound like when they hit the water ROB: Maybe they had like /?/. JS: Drowned KIM: and just died and drown ALICE: Floated down and died ROB: Like /?/
14. ALICE: Like that one girl who got thrown over and there was no splash
15. JOE: Yeah that was odd KIM: Alive
16. ALICE: There's no splash
17. ROB: Was she, like sometimes I've jumped into the pool, and like I've like not made no splash and just jumped in ALICE: Yeah I know like ROB: she just went like her feet ALICE: Down, really straight ROB: Her feet first

18. KIM: If they like threw her in, I don't know you'd think there would be a splash ALICE: Yeah! ROB: I know!
19. ROB: I would think that she would move in the air. Go sideways or something like that.
20. JOE: But if she went straight down like this. She could go straight into the water. Not much of a splash. Maybe she
21. ROB: Maybe she hung onto the sides of the boat?
22. ALICE: Yeah
23. KIM: If she's alive
24. ROB: What would there be to eat?
25. JOE: She'd crawl around the side, you know, like a sponge or something. Like go around the boat and then maybe climb up the back or something. I don't know.
26. KIM: It's not very likely.
27. JS: & ALL: (Laugh)
28. JS: You're right. I think the sharks ROB: She did like gymnastics and did a flip JS: Would get her first.
29. ALICE: That would be scary being attacked by sharks

This dialogue began with me asking a question to facilitate their meaning making about the African chiefs selling their people into slavery. I also read a quote from the novel to draw their attention to that particular text detail (line 1).

Joe shared his negative opinion of the situation. He questioned the social injustice of the chiefs and failed to understand their rationale for selling their own people (line 2). His response to this event was an aesthetic stance. Joe placed himself into the story world to judge and question the moral actions of a character's behavior.

I shared my insights by using information from the text to explain why a chief gave away his people (line 3). The group agreed with my comments (line 4).

Kim realized how the children were treated worse than the adults (line 5). She placed herself in their situation and would rather be lost in the woods than be a slave. Kim's comments indicated her understanding of the lack of regard the chiefs had for his people or their greed to get objects they wanted.

Alice agreed with Kim's connections. Then she prompted the group to revisit their discussion of throwing the slaves overboard. The students speculated how the people might have survived a drowning. These lines of dialogue (lines 8-13)

imply the students' feelings of social injustice for throwing the slaves in the ocean. They placed their lives into the story world and wanted to change the outcome in order for the slaves to live.

Next they began describing the throwing over of a slave girl who made no splash (lines 14-16). They offered plausible reasons for the lack of noise. Rob used his experiences to compare himself to the girl and a time when he made no splash (line 17).

At this point in their conversation, they again attempted to change a negative story event. The students discussed how the girl may have survived by climbing back on the ship (lines 21-25). Kim brought the group back to the reality of the unlikelihood of this occurring (line 26).

The tension was broken with our laughter about the situation (line 22). We were not laughing out of humor, but out of our uncomfortableness with the harsh realities of the situation. I concluded the discussion by sharing my opinion that sharks probably ate the girl. Alice concurred and expressed how frightening it would be to be attacked by sharks.

This transcript is a rich example of the construction of meaning between students and teacher. I acted as a group member by asking questions and sharing my responses. My natural manner of interacting with the students was to interpret, wonder, and construct parallel meaning (e.g., Britton, 1968). This type of teacher facilitation is in opposition to traditional literature study in which the teacher explicitly directs and interrogates the group for story comprehension.

Their dialogue represents a deeper way of interpreting, discussing and understanding a piece of literature. The students shared their values and beliefs which demonstrated their ability to go beyond the text and enter into the story world (e.g., Britton, 1982). They accomplished this by forming judgments about

character's behavior, personally connected to story situations, and suggested text changes to result in more positive outcomes for the slaves.

In the previous transcript, the students focused on the predicament of the slaves being thrown overboard. This next segment begins with my question for the group to examine how the captain and a crew member might be feeling about their treatment of the slaves.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 20-28)

1. JS: Did you notice in here, Ben Stout and the captain appeared "Untouched by the suffering of our cargo?" JOE: Yeah I know JS: Which means they didn't even show any emotions. KIM: They didn't care JS: "Where the rest of the crew took pity on the miserable creatures in the dark places."
2. KIM: Was it like Purves who was praying them like?
3. ALICE: Yeah who was
4. JOE: Someone, Ned I think, may be?
5. ALICE: Yeah
6. JOE: Someone. I don't know.
7. JS: What?
8. KIM: He said he really didn't want to do this on the inside, but he had to.
9. JS: Forgive me for my actions
10. ALICE: Yeah

The transcript began with my asking if they noticed the ideas contained in two particular sentences in the text. During previous discussions these students demonstrated an uncanny ability to place themselves into the characters lives and critically judge their actions. I wanted them to use their reflectiveness to consider if the captain and crew felt some remorse toward the slaves. I was wondering how a human being could treat another so injustice without showing regret. Joe and Kim overlapped my question to signify their recognition of the characters' lack of empathy. Kim asked the group if Purves was praying for the slaves, but Joe questioned which character showed sympathy for them (lines 2-6). Kim identified crew members as victims because they were forced to do the Captain's and Stout's bidding.

In the next segment, through "exploratory" talk, they expanded their social

injustice conversation by intertextually connecting slavery to Schindler's List, Nazism, and the Ku Klux Klan.

This transcript was one of the most poignant during this literature study. I began to interpret, for the group, a portion of the text that described the shackling of men and unchaining of women and children (line 6). My comments reminded Alice of the movie, Schindler's List (line 7). Instead of refocusing her on my discussion agenda, I listened to their connections of slavery to their experiences of social injustice in the world.

(Transcript, day 8, pages 20-28)

1. JS: Did you get the part here where the captain says, Bollweevil go get your pipe?
2. JOE: Yeah
3. KIM: Yeah
4. JS: Did you guys discuss that. I didn't hear it.
5. ALICE: No, I don't think so.
6. JS: It said only the women and the youngest children were unshackled. Which means that they kept the men chained up and they hoisted them one by one up on to the deck.
7. ALICE: That's kinda like Schindler's List. What they did to them. They separated them. Women and little girls and boys. They (whisper) chained the prisoners up.
8. JS: What was this?
9. KIM: What?
10. ALICE: Schindler's List
11. JS: Oh
12. ALICE: Kinda like what they did.
13. JOE: Whose !?!
14. ALICE: Separated everybody
15. KIM: The Nazis
16. ALICE: Jews
17. ROB: Yeah
18. ALICE: That was sad
19. ALICE: Ok
20. JS: No, that was good. That's connected to human mistreatment and ROB: Yeah Nazis JS: Slavery. Like the Nazis KIM: & ALICE: Yeah
21. ALICE: There was one little girl (Referring to Schindler's List) that was like the main story, kinda like Jessie, and the whole movie was black-and-white, except for this one little girl had a red coat. And then you saw them when they burned them and you saw the red coat being over, so that they wouldn't get out. You saw just the red coat and all the bones ROB: I know ALICE: Being buried. JOE: They were tortured KIM: Just like !?!

22. ROB: They hated them. Just because they were different color maybe not being /?/. There are nicer people or there's different cultures or anything. I was watching a show on, I forgot, like a Saturday. They had about, like, the people were KKK and I just shut it off. I didn't want to watch anymore because what they were talking about. And they brought you into, they video taped a ceremony. I thought it was real mean. So I flip the channel.
23. ALICE: My dad, he works for people that get water damage, fires, or something and he was dealing with these people. They were KKK. Everywhere in their house. It was horrible. My dad told us about it.
24. ...

This segment began with my curiosity about their discussion of Jessie going down into the slave hold (lines 2 & 6). I had missed their previous conversation about this incident. My question was insignificant to the dialogue that followed.

Alice whispered as she compared the shackled slaves to the treatment of prisoners during the Holocaust. The group joined her remarks with comments of how the Jews were separated and poorly treated by the Nazis (lines 7-19). Next Alice attempted to end their conversation because she felt it was off-task (line 19). I encouraged them to continue to explore their ideas of human mistreatment and the comparisons to slavery (line 20).

The conversation continued with Alice telling a story from Schindler's List of a little girl, her red coat, burning bodies, and piles of bones (line 21). The others agreed with her story and Joe mentioned torture of the people. They also compared the little girl in the movie to the main character, Jessie, in the novel. Rob shared his displeasure of watching a television show about people who hate others because of skin color or cultural differences (line 22). Their discussion concluded as Alice mentioned her father's experience of visiting a home for his work and seeing Ku Klux Klan symbols.

As I transcribed and read this transcript over and over, I was impressed by their thinking, understanding, and discussion of oppression in our world. Many

educators would argue that students are incapable of discussing such matters. These children dispelled those doubts. They displayed a mature ability to feel compassion for victims of the Holocaust and the slaves because of the gruesome acts committed on them.

At their young age, they have knowledge of acts of discrimination, hatred and murder that occurs toward people of color, culture, and religion in our society. They have witnessed through a movie, television, and family members the antagonism of supremacy groups and connected those experiences to the treatment of slaves. A teacher explicitly attempting to connect these concepts to slavery would not have been as effective as this groups' exploration of these ideas based on their life experiences.

The groups' critical discovery of these themes may be attributed to the multiple teacher demonstrations and facilitation that interrogated our thinking, made life connections and collaboratively discussed a variety of topics. Through literature discussions, similar to these, we can begin to move students' thinking forward and make them advocates to overcome the discrimination that permeates our world.

This next transcript is from an inquiry project that the students conducted about slavery. We were sitting around a computer in their classroom printing out information from an encyclopedia program. Our dialogue was constructed as we read excerpts from the printouts.

(Transcript, day 9, pages 33-39)

1. JS: Here's slavery in the U.S. . It's printing out right now. Listen to this guys. "In 1800, the populations of the United States included 893,602" so almost 1 million slaves.
2. JOE: That's like more than JOE: & ALEX: People.
3. KIM: Mr. Siddall? It says
4. JS: Oh wow! I'm sorry
5. ALEX: More than there were other people
6. JS: "In 1860 there were almost 4 million slaves in the United States."

7. JOE: That means like how many
8. KIM: "From the 1500's slaves /?/. The Europeans shipped about 12 million black slaves from Africa"
9. JS: Wow!
10. KIM: "To the western hemisphere." "Nearly two million of these slaves died on the way." " About 60% of the slave were brought to Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica, Saint Damankin."
11. JS: I think that's Saint Domingo.
12. KIM: "Which is now Haiti." "And other sugar colonies. Brazil alone received about 38%. North America got about 6%."
13. JS: Wow. The smallest.
14. KIM: And then
15. JS: So how many? 12 million slaves from Africa. Wow.
16. KIM: Two million died on the way.
17. JS: Two million... died!
18. ALICE: Two million?
19. JS: Out of 12
20. ALICE: (Sound effect whistle) Whoa!
21. JS: That's a lot.
22. ROB: Yeah, but they got 10 million
23. JOE: So 12 people, 2 died, right?
24. KIM: (Reading) "/?/ Black, African Black had begin to replace /?/ on each island /?/"
25. ALICE: Two million died!
26. ALL: /?/ JOE: Yeah I know KIM: (reading)
27. ALEX: Out of 12, two died. Almost every group two died.

Our conversation started with me reading the number of slaves in the United States in the 1800s (line 1 & 6). Kim started to share her print out (line 3), but I interrupted her to continue sharing the facts. Alex interjected his estimate that there were more slaves than other groups of people in our country at that time. I was shocked at the high number of slaves in our country less than 200 years ago.

My role in this excerpt was twofold. I supported their inquiry by assisting them with the computer and shared information with them. Next, Kim began to share the Europeans' role in shipping 12 million slaves from Africa throughout the world (lines 8,10,12, & 16). The group was dumbfounded to learn that two million of the 12 million slaves died on their voyages (lines 16-27). These facts made the injustice of slavery, in which many countries participated, a devastating reality.

This mini-inquiry project was selected by the students. Their search for facts

about slavery facilitated high interest and motivation for conducting the research. Many times students read novels and study history in an isolated fashion. In a natural manner this group connected fictionalized characters, actions, and feelings to the actual historical events. These intertextual connections promoted their deeper understanding and interpretation of both phenomenon.

The final transcript is from a session near the end of their literature study. In the final chapters of the book, the Moonlight ship mistakenly hoists the wrong flag, which draws the unwanted attention of a nearby ship. The crew throws all of the slaves overboard to escape criminal prosecution.

The segment began with my group process suggestion. I asked the students to stop reading and discuss what was happening in the story (line 1). I wanted them to respond to the murder of the slaves, Jessie's escape, and his reactions to the incident.

Their discussion started with a back and forth conversation about the ship, slaves, and what was happening to Jessie. This excerpt ends with an intertextual connection to their fifth grade teachers.

(Transcript, day 14, pages 18-20)

1. JS: Why don't you stop here and discuss what's going on. Then I'll read for you.
2. JOE: They just killed all the slaves.
3. KIM: They put up the wrong flag.
4. ALEX: That was horrible. That's like a waste of food.
5. ALICE: They put up
6. KIM: They put up an American flag and then the American ship came and America !?/.
7. ALEX: American ship !?/
8. ALICE: And then they threw all the slaves overboard KIM: Threw all the slaves overboard
9. ALICE: And Jessie is about take the little boy and take him down in the deck.
10. JS: You gonna what? I can't even hear you.
11. KIM: Jessie is going to take the slave he found and bring him into this dark room.
12. ALEX: He stuck his foot in a coil
13. ALICE: To pretend he was trapped
14. JS: Why did he pretend to be trapped?
15. ALEX: So. Throw

16. ALICE: Throw the slaves overboard. JS: Throw slave overboard.
17. JS: What was his reaction Rob?
18. ROB: His reaction was like, he was shocked.
19. ALEX: Shocked
20. ROB: Yeah
21. JOE: Sad
22. ALICE: Mad.
23. ROB: Mad
24. JOE: Yeah, he was probably mad.
25. ALEX: They just like throwing everyone in the world in the ocean
26. KIM: !?!
27. ALEX: I mean, like say, Mrs. Manzke has a boat and Mrs. French's boat and the Captain
28. KIM: She !?!
29. ALEX: Yeah. Throw all the kids off the ship
30. ALICE: I know
31. ALEX: They shouldn't be on here. (Sound effect) Suu, suu, suu
32. ALICE: And we all get thrown into the ocean like nothing happened. Like we don't mean anything.
33. ALEX: It's like a waste of food
34. ALICE: Yeah like a little piece of food and little crumb
35. ALEX: Like a cigarette. You don't dispose of them usefully.

Kim shared how they put up the wrong flag which drew attention from another ship and forced them to throw the slaves overboard (lines 3 & 6). Alex and Alice compared the loss of slaves to wasting food and throwing away a cigarette (lines 4, 33-35). Their comparison indicated their understanding of what little regard the crew had for the slaves' lives.

Next Alice brought up the location of Jessie. The group discussed his escape into the hold with a slave boy (line 9-13). I asked them why Jessie pretended to be trapped and to consider his emotional reactions to these events (lines 14-17). They collaborated with a list of adjectives to describe how he may have felt (lines 18-25).

Their discussion continued with intertextual connections to the injustice of disposing of human lives. They compared the Moonlight crew's disregard for life to their teachers throwing students overboard (line 27-32). Although their teacher connection was not plausible, it performed an important function in

making meaning for these students. By verbalizing this comparison it assisted them in grounding the story to a hypothetical circumstance in their world.

It is evident in their discussion that they explored the theme of social injustice. They judged the actions of the main character, Jessie, in a positive manner. He pretended to be trapped by a rope and saved a slave boy from death by hiding him in the hold. The students compared the immoral actions of the crew and their disregard for life and connected it to their fifth grade teachers throwing students overboard.

Conversations similar to these can lead students to discussions of inequalities in their school or community. This dialogue can result in problem solving to overcome these conflicts. Even if few solutions are offered, getting students to think and talk about bigoted language and behavior towards minorities can lead to a socially kinder society.

The six transcript segments in this section contain examples of the students constructing meaning through collaborative discussions that emphasized the social injustice of slavery. Their responses were made efferently, aesthetically, and intertextually. They conducted an inquiry to learn the facts about the atrocities of slavery around the world. During their conversation they also explored the hatred of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

The transcripts in this chapter represent patterns of analysis found in the data and characterize the students' response and my facilitation of their literature study. The segments provide crucial dialogue of the importance of examining the process the teacher and students go through in having successful literature study.

My analysis of these transcripts represents a literature study for these students that was a purposeful and meaningful process of constructing meaning.

My role as facilitator was to demonstrate my thinking, ask questions, and share my responses to the novel. I also interacted and supported the students in their decision making process, or suggested particular group processes.

CHAPTER VI

ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL LITERATURE STUDY

This final chapter synthesizes this case-study and summarizes important findings and implications for literature study. It is divided into five sections: 1.) A retrospective look at the research literature, 2.) a model for understanding this study, 3.) findings and classroom implications of this research, 4.) implications for future research, and 5.) concluding remarks of what matters for literature study.

A Retrospective Look at The Research Literature

Over three years ago I wrote a dissertation proposal to seek approval to conduct my study. Now the existing research studies that I explored do not fully explain the complex phenomena of literature study. There have been many recent studies in this area. I also did not realize that drama would be so important in my study. Nor did I realize how important the issues of social justice would become.

During the past few years while I transcribed, analyzed, and wrote this dissertation, I engaged in conversations with committee members and colleagues, continued my professional readings, and analyzed my data. I discovered interesting and enlightening theories and research about drama and the exploration of social justice in literacy education. Several of these studies are

summarized here because of their explicit relationship to my study.

Dramatizations For Learning

In this section, I summarize the work of several noteworthy researchers who examined the role of drama in the classroom. I include these studies because they support the benefits of educational drama. These studies are in addition to those in Chapter Two.

Recently Dyson (1998) described a research study conducted in an urban third grade classroom that examined the combination of the diverse symbolic methods of talking, writing, and performing for negotiating their textual and social worlds.

The students in her study and the fifth graders in my study are powerful examples of how dramatization brought their words alive for themselves and classmates. The students, in my study, were able to act out their writing and portray the intense situations faced by the characters on a slave voyage. Dramatization was also a tool for promoting complex social interactions and a source for individual and collective growth (Dyson, 1998).

In addition, Edmiston and Wilhelm (1998) used drama as a response activity with thirty, seventh-grade students. The children conducted inquiry projects in their social studies class which centered around the theme of "social change and civil rights."

The students wrote questions, conducted inquiry research, and explored through dramatizations the "lives" of people during the Vietnam War, Jews in the Holocaust, those in the Mafia, slaves escaping on the "Underground Railroad," Hank Aaron, and out-of-work individuals during the Depression.

As the children researched and dramatized their characters, they imagined the world from different people's point of view. They engaged physically,

mentally, and emotionally as they interacted and dialogued with each other. The seventh graders viewed their topics from multiple positions, conducted further research, reviewed their original positions, changed their understandings of their topics and their relationships to it (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1998).

The researchers described their underlying goal for the students:

“We were much less interested in students’ knowledge of factual information than in their analysis of the social, historical, political, and cultural contexts in which meanings are located, generated and used. Imagining the world through others’ eyes is essential if we are to understand some of the complexities of other people, times, and places. Drama was integral to that critique.”

The educators also recognized drama as a powerful way for students to create contexts for discussion after the drama took place. They engaged in conversations about the characters and their situations, and made connections to their lives.

Both of these studies drew students cooperatively together to share ideas, listen to each other, focus on a task, and become a collaborative community of learners.

These two studies represent positive outcomes parallel to the fifth grade students in my case-study (Chapter 5). The children drew from their awareness of the Civil War to conducted inquiry research to find out more information about slavery. They used this new knowledge and the novel, to collaboratively discuss, write, rehearse, and perform two dramatized news program. These projects demonstrated a deeper understanding of the book and the social injustice of slavery.

Teaching for Critical-Social Justice

Our century has witnessed the killing of more than one hundred million human beings, and now we have the technology to dwarf even that number (Zins, 1992).

Racism, sexism, homelessness, homophobia, and domestic abuse are among a list of social issues that demand the attention, energies and resources of all in the twentieth century. We live in a time when the number and magnitude of social issues troubling our world could easily overwhelm and silence anyone calling for change. Now more than ever, we need to work towards alleviating the social, economic, and political oppressions that marginalize and disenfranchise people (Hurlbert & Totten, 1992).

In the name of curriculum reform, we are creating classroom programs that are further removed from the lives and needs of our students. The neo-conservatives' emphasis on training students for work makes it difficult for progressive educators to educate students for democracy. We owe it to our students to work toward a more just and equitable society (Allen, 1997).

Educators have, perhaps, no more important task than to help their students to understand the various ways human beings dehumanize and demonize each other and to explore with them how we might be able to end this practice (Zins, 1992).

Our classrooms need to be more than a place where students compete individually and in isolation to finish assigned and easily consumable, easily categorized, easily gradeable readings, and writings. "Our classrooms are good places to begin reading, writing, talking and listening together for a more democratic and ethical society and for a safer and healthier world" (Hurlbert & Totten, 1992; see Henkin, 1998). The objective is to help students develop greater understanding of themselves, others, community, and the world.

Quality pieces of literature that deal with social issues in an age appropriate fashion can be a starting point for developing this understanding and social consciousness in ourselves and our students. There is hope that through literacy

education, our future generations can promote a more compassionate and humane society for all people.

Robertson (1997) researched the importance of using historical fiction to give dimension to students' historical backgrounds or to fill-in gaps of knowledge for past events. These pieces of fiction revealed human conditions and how savagery operates socially in explicitly gendered and racialized ways. The texts made childrens' historical learning possible and promoted applying these meanings to the present day.

Allen (1997) worked with his second grade students to explore poverty, gender, racism, and other forms of bias present in children's literature and other learning materials in their classroom. The goal for the students was to question the authority behind learning materials in order not to internalize negative bias which can become the framework for understanding their world (Taxel, 1993). Traditionally the lack of discussion about the social meanings contained in classroom learning materials may perpetuate passive, unquestioning, conforming citizens (Allen, 1996).

Teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents need to realize that students are not going to become socially responsible citizens through osmosis. Our schools have a vitally significant role to play in actively and courageously making it a reality (Totten, 1992).

Totten (1992) promotes a long list of rationale which advocate the study and teaching of social issues to develop social consciousness and responsibility in our students. Several of these rationale are:

1. To raise students' awareness of issues in their society.
2. To provide students with a means to analyze and evaluate problems in the world, their lives and communities, so they may consider solutions and options for the conflicts.
3. To provide the means and abilities for students to examine their lives, to

- assist them in assessing why they believe what they do, and to act on their new-found knowledge and awareness of social issues.
4. To assist students in coming to understand and appreciate their connections to the world around them.
 5. To enable students to appreciate and understand that individuals, communities, and governments continually confront choices that impact on social concerns.
 6. To provide students with a means to take an active and responsible role as citizens in what should be a participatory democracy.

Yenika-Agbaw (1997), Zipes (1993), and Taxel (1994), each describe the need for children to critically interpret literature. These interpretations examine the underlying sociopolitical messages which reflect the beliefs of our society and the author's attitudes used in writing the text.

Yenika-Agbaw (1997) recommends alternatives to Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic stances (1978, 1982). She suggests that children read literature with a postcolonial and critical multicultural lense to discover connections between their life and print.

The postcolonial-frame involves "challenging the past--what is considered the history of colonized groups, and the rejection of Western imperialism in all forms of human experience". Postcolonialism theory seeks to give voice to people at the margin of society and from diverse cultures. It challenges social injustices incurred during the evolution of our society (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997). For example, students would explore, discuss and respond to the use of slaves in developing our country. Students would also make connections to other oppressed groups of people throughout history and examine how it continues today. Armed with this knowledge, students leave the postcolonial reading experience ready to challenge injustices (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997).

Like postcolonial reading, critical multicultural reading involves reading against and around the text in order to uncover ideas of domination and

resistance embedded within texts. This is done by creating alternative images of what can be or is possible in a multicultural and equitable society (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997). For example, children could read, write, dramatize, and conduct inquiry projects to examine the sociopolitical events that led to slavery and the eventual Civil War. These historical conditions of the past can be connected to present day political unrest. Students can suggest ways to assist in alleviating these conflicts and racial tensions around the world.

Teaching is about change, helping learners consider alternatives for themselves and others. Literature can be used to help students explore alternative ways of thinking and reading. In a society that sanctions inequality, it is the educators' responsibility to show children how reading the word can affect how students read the world (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997). Children should know that unless readers are able to read for social change and justice, they will themselves confirm existing meanings determined by others' philosophies (Zipes, 1993).

In classrooms that encourage multiple interpretations of literature and invite readers to explore issues of diversity, social injustice can be uncovered. In the quest to uncover signs of domination, conformity, and resistance, readers examine their perspectives, and sociocultural practices (Zipes, 1993). The teacher's role is to facilitate inclusive discussions that treat each child with respect and dignity. Through this forum children learn to recognize different ways to shape meanings in text and participate in our society (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997).

Zipes (1993) interpreted the underlying sociopolitical messages contained in a seemingly innocent fairy tale. He explored questions of Western culture, sexism, and politics through 35 versions and illustrations of Little Red Riding Hood. Zipes

writes,

“All the issues raised in this tale are crucial for establishing principals of social justice and gender equity that has not been satisfactorily practiced in Western societies and thus continually readdressed in different versions of the tale (p. 343).”

Zipes (1993) and Yenika-Agbaw (1997), promote students reading texts from varying perspectives and interpreting the underlying societal meanings that are contained in the text and illustrations. These perspectives can be cultural bias, racism, or gender discrimination.

As I reflect on the discussions and dramatizations of the students in my study, they exhibited signs of interpreting the text from a sociopolitical viewpoint. For example, the author of The Slave Dancer describes the repulsive conditions and repressive treatment of the slaves and crew members. They were able to react to this social injustice and connect it to other forms of oppression in our society by such groups as the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. These students also relied on their moral judgments to interpret the inappropriate behavior of the characters and suggest changes in the story events to result in more equitable consequences for the characters.

Taxel (1994) also expressed concerns about underlying sociopolitical beliefs that effect the reading and writing of children’s literature. Like other cultural artifacts, it is impossible to understand children’s literature without situating the books of a given era in the sociocultural and political milieu of that period. They are a product of convention that is determined by the dominant beliefs and ideologies of the times in which they are created. Authors are revealing as much about their social values and attitudes toward the event as the event itself.

Thus, it can be concluded that pieces of text represent the dominant cultural beliefs and practices of our society. The teacher’s role is to facilitate the students

to uncover these meanings, challenge their thinking, and propose a plan to overcome discrimination.

Instructionally, Taxel suggests comparative readings of several books on a particular sociohistorical topic or theme. These readings lead to discussions of similarities and differences between the books, as well as important literary and political issues.

It is important that children experience our multiracial, multicultural nation and treat these diverse cultures with respect, dignity, and sensitivity. It is essential to read and discuss these texts that challenge our expectations, that force us to confront new ideas, and to grapple with long held beliefs. "Young children are strong, resilient, and with a caring and skillful teachers are capable of handling complex and controversial issues when presented in a developmentally appropriate manner" (Taxel, 1994).

As teachers prepare to enter the twenty-first century, we are discovering that our classrooms are at the forefront of the changes beginning to sweep the world. We see student populations coming from varied cultures and ethnic groups. The lives of our children increasingly test the assumptions about race, class, gender, and sexuality that have over the years informed our traditional school curriculum. We need to realize that literacy instruction cannot be separated from the lives of these students (Zebroski & Mack, 1992).

In the next section is a model that I created to connect theoretical and practical literacy terms to my research study. This three dimensional model assists in visually conceptualizing the complexity and myriad components that comprised the students' literature study.

Literature Study

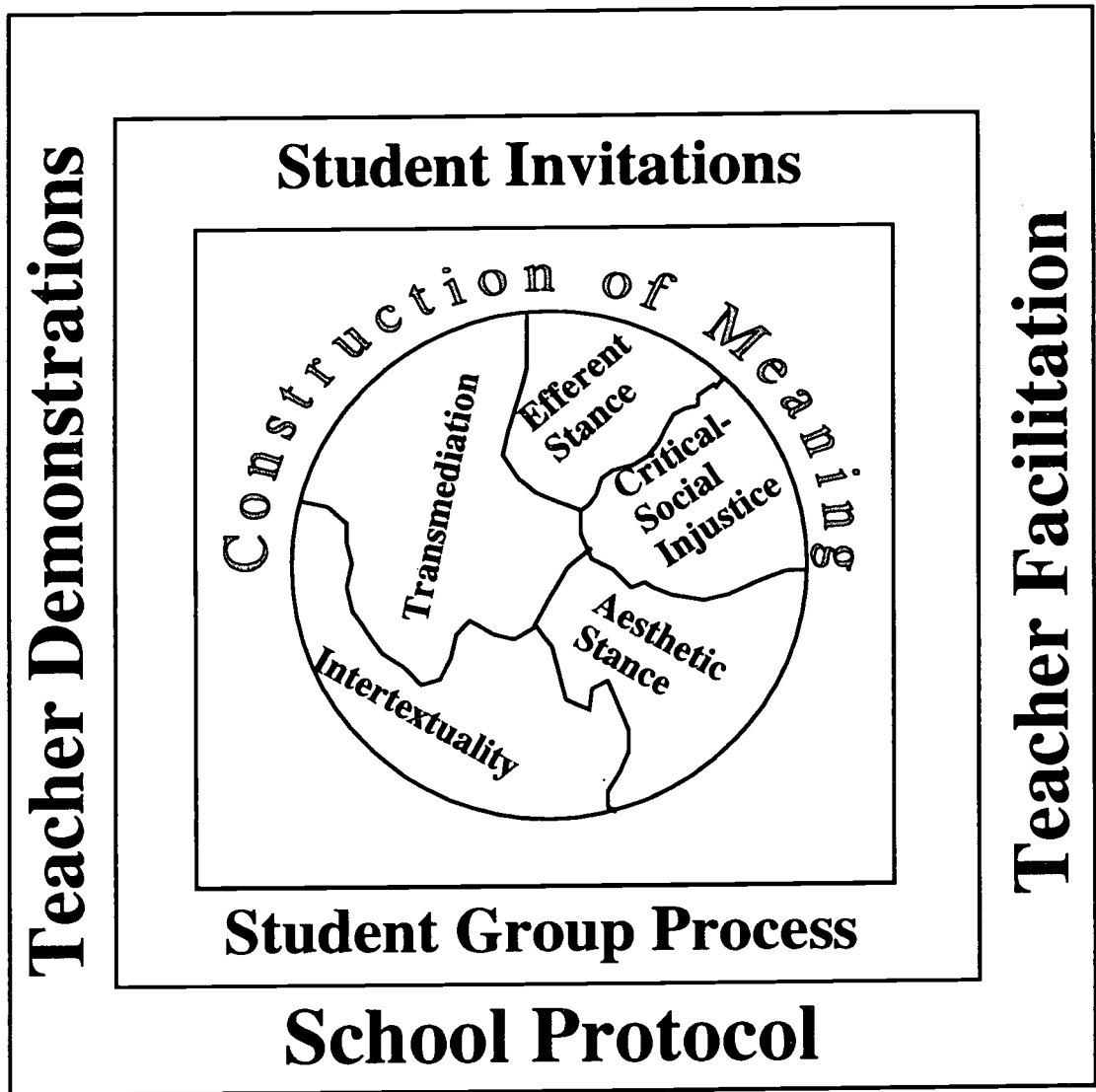


Figure 6. Model for understanding literature study

This model is my contribution to literacy education and research in literature study. It represents crucial elements of literature study that were important for the students, Brenda, and me.

The shape is a pyramid or obelisk with a wide base, tapering to a sphere on top. Key terms provide the hierarchical representation of my discoveries (Figure 4). All elements of the model actively promote deeper understanding and interpretations of text.

Around the base of the obelisk are **teacher demonstrations**, **teacher facilitation**, and **school protocol**. Teacher demonstrations provide the instruction for the students in how to respond and interact with the story world and each other to study literature. The goal is to go beyond the literal story elements and engage in meaningful responses to the book. The teacher facilitates the students' process by asking questions, scaffolding their group, making suggestions, or requesting students to engage in a particular process.

The term school protocol represents the preexisting expectations of the school and classroom teacher that are typically imposed on students. Some examples include: school climate, homework assignments, assessments, grades for the report card, teacher philosophy of learning and teaching, etc.... However, some of the school expectations can be circumvented by allowing the students to determine their homework assignments, and to design and complete mid-term and final essay questions for assessment purposes.

The next higher level on the obelisk are **student invitations** and **student group process**. The students are organized into small groups based on their story choices. The teacher invites them to choose response activities to study the book. Their group engages in particular processes by making decisions, organizing the reading of the book, and maintaining the flow of their literature study. The teacher continues to facilitate the group as needed by listening or joining the conversations or asking questions about their study decisions.

The sphere on top represents the students' construction of meaning, the most

important element of literature study. The dominant terms used to represent this meaning are labeled as **efferent** and **aesthetic stances**, **intertextuality**, **transmediation**, and **critical-social injustice**. There are many example that illustrate these terms in Chapter 5.

Efferent and aesthetic stances were always present in their responses. Efferent responses refer to the literal facts while aesthetic stances are personal or emotional reactions to the text.

The category of intertextuality represented the connections students made to previous texts, literacy events, life experiences, or historical information.

The transmediation category includes the switching of sign systems in response to text. For example, after silent or oral reading, students wrote a response. Then these written reflections were shared and discussed with peers. Next, these responses were communicated through dramatizations or other language arts projects. This movement of responses from one form of communication to another, built multiple layers and levels of thinking, and multiple interpretations, and interactions with peers and the story world.

Critical-social injustice responses were focused on the themes of inequity and immorality in a story. These student responses were displayed when group members critically examined and formed moral judgments about character's behavior, personally connected to story situations, or suggested text changes that resulted in more humane outcomes for the characters. These students compared themes of social injustice in the book to acts of discrimination, hatred and murder that occurred in the world toward people of color, culture, and religion.

FINDINGS AND CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The major findings of this study are summarized below. These ideas are

worthy of consideration by literacy practitioners who undertake literature study with their students.

1. Literature study includes themes of critical-social justice. Literature can be a tool for children to identify their own fears, joys, and hopes through the character's eyes. These stories can help us make sense of the human condition, challenge our thinking, and help us know ourselves more completely and with greater compassion.

Social action can be an outcome of combining literature describing facts and fiction in the classroom. For example, this particular class organized and implemented a food and gift drive for their community after reading literature about homelessness. This type of literature study may also contribute to changing negative notions about marginalized people in our society.

Practitioners need to also consider the powerful influence literature study can play in exploring themes of social injustice. During their conversations about the mistreatment of slaves, the Holocaust, the Ku Klux Klan, students' thoughts and behaviors may have been challenged or changed toward overcoming the violence and prejudice toward many people in our world.

2. The teachers' instructional roles included demonstration, facilitation of group process, and construction of meaning. The classroom needs to be non-threatening and foster risk taking, choices in learning, and encourage exploratory talk to construct meaning.

The teacher demonstrates multiple ways of interacting and responding to literature. Students' responses move beyond following "correct" procedures and responses. They are invited to go beyond the literal comprehension of literature by constructing interpretations together and making connections to their lives.

The teacher needs to consider how to facilitate the students' group dynamics

because of its contribution to the construction of meaning. This can be accomplished by asking questions about the groups' decisions, making suggestions, or supporting the students with their study process. The teacher also facilitates the students' construction of meaning by sharing insights, asking questions and guiding students' responses to the story.

Educators may need to assist students in exploring additional informational sources for literature study in order to understand the social, cultural, political beliefs, and peoples' behavior that surround historical fiction events. These sources can include student inquiry projects, multiple genres of literature, expository books, and videos depicting historical events.

3. Student choice of books, ways of making meaning, and group decision making are motivating and crucial to successful literature study. The fifth grade students were given ownership and control of their learning. They made decisions, organized their sessions, and collaboratively maintained the flow of their sessions to accomplish group tasks. Some of their choices were also facilitated by teacher support or based on teacher demonstrations.

4. Transmediation of students' responses include discussion, journals, and drama. The changing of sign systems assisted them to revisit the text in multiple ways. This process built layers and levels of thinking, understanding, and interpretations of the novel and its themes.

Their conversations generated responses to the story that were efferent and aesthetic stances, and intertextual connections. They also generated questions and used collaborative talk to explore the story meaning.

Response journals provided a valuable tool to facilitate students in transferring their thoughts about literature into written form. They wrote summaries, opinions, connections, or discussion questions. These journal

entries were shared with the group and provide a starting point for many discussions.

Drama was a media for making meaning with the text. The students wrote and performed two sociodramas in which they entertained their classmates, presented story facts of historical significance, and enacted the experiences of the characters in the book.

Teachers of any grade level need to consider drama as a response media for constructing meaning in many curricular areas. This group took on the roles of the characters which added multi-dimensional thinking, understanding, and a method of responding to the story. They used their imaginations to create their dramatic interpretations of the human experiences contained in the novel.

5. The students developed a beginning understanding of historical events through the novel and their examination of other non-fiction sources of information.

Historical fiction like The Slave Dancer can be used with students to demonstrate what they know about historical events and the underlying political beliefs of our society. This type of literature can also be used to build a narrative background in which they can better understand the expository texts in the social studies classroom.

Teachers should consider using expository texts, integrated units, inquiry projects, and text sets of multiple genres to assist students in constructing both a narrative and sociohistorical understanding of people, past events, and to make connections to the present.

6. A struggling reader was capable of successfully engaging in literature study. Although I observed and transcribed (not included in this document) his difficulty with reading the book, he exhibited thoughtful responses during

discussions and participated successfully in this literature study. This student reminds educators that reading is more than calling the words on the page.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Now that this document is ending, I feel the need to respect the “reflective practitioner” research paradigm by sharing some of my cognitive dissonance that occurred during my data collection, analysis and writing of this dissertation. The following limitations, tensions, and questions remain vivid in my memory:

1. I realize the limitation of this study because it involved only one classroom and five students during a small fraction of the day. It is difficult to generalize the impact that literature study might have had on other aspects of their literacy growth throughout the school day and their lives.

2. The students helped me discover how important themes of social justice and equity were in their talk and responses. Our awareness of the many injustices in the world was heightened. What are the lasting affects of this kind of talk? How can we go from raising awareness of social injustice to making real changes in our thinking and behavior?

3. School protocol has always been a source of tension for me throughout my career. Brenda was bound by evaluation and grading requirements that I could ignore because of my non-classroom position. Only once did we discuss the grades she was giving students on their report cards. We had students create and respond to their own reflective essay questions which made assigning a grade more palatable for me. Other source of school protocol that bother me are: a transmission model of instruction and learning, an overemphasis on testing, and criticism of literature-based reading.

4. There were times throughout the two years in Brenda’s room that I was disappointed with the use of time in various literature study groups. Some

groups seemed to have too much time to study their book. They seemed to need to be finished with the book and move forward to other texts without waiting for the rest of the class to finish their novels.

5. The literature discussion “jobs” or “roles” created tension in my thinking about students interacting with books. I preferred that the worksheets were not present in the classroom. Although the teacher and students were comfortable with adapting the format of these jobs, I would have liked the students to create their own response modes rather than occasionally relying on a commercial product.

6. The data analysis process was a mind numbing experience. It was a cyclical process of revisiting, rethinking, manipulating and discussing what the data might mean and how it fit together. I continue to have many questions about the students’ and teachers’ process of studying literature. I look forward to reexamining particular aspects of this study and continuing to engage in literature response with other teachers and groups of students.

7. The most overwhelming tension for me is figuring out how to support other teachers and students to have enriching literature study. Our educational system is being bombarded by political, parental, and educational groups to raise test scores and to measure learning by individual subskills. How do we combat this transmission model of teaching and learning?

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The field of literacy has many excellent examples of “best practice” to offer language arts teachers. Practitioners are engaging students in reading and writing workshop, connecting reading and writing process, using thematic and integrated instruction, using multiple genres of text, and conducting inquiry projects.

My study contributes to the existing body of literature response research and theory. It also provides examples of two teachers' journey to explore an instructional process for literature study and a small group's construction of meaning for The Slave Dancer. The uniqueness of the study is the manner in which the students used drama and talk to respond to the story, particularly the social injustice of the novel.

Elementary literacy research and practice could benefit from more examples of students exploring social issues through trade books. There is also a need to explore the relationship between students' study of expository and fiction genres to build their backgrounds for particular topics.

This study has resulted in more questions that I urge literacy educators to attempt to answer:

Do students who study social issues through literature in school have a greater interest in such issues outside of school?

What are the kinds of changes in students' attitudes and beliefs when they are exposed to social issues in literature study?

How can educators become more comfortable with studying social issues in the school curricula?

What happens in classrooms, at different age levels, in which teaching about social issues is occurring?

What kinds of positive solutions do students offer to overcome social injustice in their school and community?

How can specific drama techniques promote literacy learning in classrooms?

How can the successful practices used in this classroom be replicated in other settings?

Our pedagogy for literature instruction was a journey. Brenda Manzke built a community of learners in which student choice, talk, inquiry, and multiple responses to texts were valued and promoted. We invited students to move

beyond literal, lower-level thinking activities and allowed them the freedom to respond in multiple ways, make intertextual connections, and interpret literature through discussions, writing, and drama. These elements contributed to their successful study of literature.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

September 5, 1995

Dear Parents,

My name is Jeffery Siddall and I am the reading specialist at XXXXX School. I am writing to ask your permission to have your child participate in a research project that I will be doing this year in Mrs. Manzke's classroom. This project will study how students respond to novels in their classroom.

I have been working on my doctorate in reading and language arts at National-Louis University. The project that I will be doing is my dissertation research for that degree.

We feel this project will benefit and enhance your child's reading and writing ability because of the extra attention he/she will receive and our increased understanding of how students respond to novels. I will be available to listen to children read, share and discuss books with them and to assist Mrs. Manzke in discussing and planning instruction for your child. Results from this project may help other teachers to teach novels in better ways.

This research is not disruptive to the classroom. Students will simply be observed as they take part in novel groups. Students will NOT be tested. A student's participation is voluntary; however, we encourage you to allow your child to participate in this study. From time to time, I will be audio and video taping children as they respond to a novel. To ensure confidentiality, students will be identified by first name only, both on tape and in any publication that may result from the project.

After reading the attached consent form, please sign it and return it to Mrs. Manzke by Friday, September 15, 1995.

Thank you for considering this request. Please feel free to contact me about any questions you have about the project XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Jeffery Siddall

Consent Form

1. I hereby consent to allow my child _____ to take part in the research project by Jeffery Siddall as a part of the dissertation requirements of National-Louis University.
2. I understand that:
 - a) This project is to study the ways in which students respond to literature.
 - b) My child's part in the project will be: to take part in normal classroom activities associated with literature study groups. From time to time, my child may be audio and video taped as he/she responds to a novel.
 - c) Participation in the project is voluntary. My child is free to stop participating at any time.
 - d) The results from this research may help teachers understand the kinds of student responses to literature that are possible.
 - e) Only first names will be used to protect the confidentiality of my child's identity and the information that he or she has contributed.
3. My questions about this research have been answered. If I have any further questions, I will contact Mr. Siddall or Mrs. Manzke at XXX-XXXX.
4. I agree to allow Mr. Siddall to perform the procedures referred to above.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B
TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Interview Questions

Name _____

Date _____

Researcher introduction

I've spent some time watching what happens in the literature groups in your classroom. You have been journaling your reactions to literature groups throughout the year and we've had a chance to co-teach, dialogue, and plan for the students. Now that the school year is almost over, I would like to have a more formal discussion with you concerning the instruction the students received and the interactions of the students in literature groups.

1. At the beginning of the year, what were your feelings and beliefs concerning how students could be instructed in responding to literature?
2. How do you feel now about the students interactions with each other and their responses to literature?
3. How important do you think it is for students to have choice in the books they read and the response activities they participate in?
4. What is the role of the teacher in literature response groups?
5. What role do you think students' social, cultural, and literacy experiences play in their responses to literature?
6. What do you think the role of multiple response activities play in students' understanding of a book?
7. What are your concerns and questions about literature response groups?

APPENDIX C
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Interview Questions

Name _____

Date _____

Researcher introduction:

I've spent some time watching what happens in your literature group. I've seen many things that go on, but I want to be able to understand the group from your point of view. I'd like to ask your opinion of literature study in your classroom.

1. What do you think about the ways your teacher has taught reading to the class this year?
2. How is reading class different this year from previous school years?
3. What were your favorite response activities? Your least favorite? and why?
4. Now, let's talk about your group. When did you feel your group did the best? When didn't they do so well?
5. What are your feelings about being able to choose how to read and respond to the novels?
6. What is your opinion about having so many different response activities to choose from?
7. What types of connections or comparisons was your group able to make to the books you read? For example, making comparisons from the story to your own life or to other books you have read. What are some examples of these comparisons that your literature group discussed?
8. What other questions do you think I should ask students about literature groups?
9. What questions would you like to ask me?

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

Literature sessions and interviews were transcribed as recorded on audio tapes. Student names used within this document are pseudonyms. The transcripts are labeled day 1 through day 19 to indicate which session the dialogue occurred. Some of the data sources are identified by the date which the event happened. Page numbers indicate the location of the dialogue within the session. Each line of dialogue is labeled with the student's name, teacher (Brenda Manzke), or my initials (JS). The lines are numbered to display turn-taking and to facilitate reference to particular segments of conversation. Parentheses are used next to the children's names when character voices are used for dramatic purposes.

The following transcript conventions are used:

CAPS	indicate emphatic stress in their voice
<i>/?/</i>	indicate inaudible or uncertain utterance
...	indicate pauses of several seconds or more in the conversation
Horizontal text	indicate overlaps in talk and simultaneous dialogue

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