DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 545 CS 217 555

AUTHOR Prather, Kathryn
TITLE Literature-Based Exploration: Efferent and Aesthetic.
PUB DATE 2001-05-00
NOTE 66p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Grade 6; Intermediate Grades; Language Arts; Literature Appreciation; *Reader Response; *Reader Text Relationship; *Reading Processes
IDENTIFIERS *Aesthetic Reading; *Efferent Reading; Response to Literature

ABSTRACT

Efferent teaching asks the student to read for a predetermined answer, focusing on another person's ideas of the text's meaning. Aesthetic teaching allows for literature to be read and experienced as art through the reader's personal transaction with the text which focuses on one's own interest to create and understand the meaning. This paper examines sixth graders' responses to literature as they undergo reader response theory in the language arts classroom using "The Giver" by Lois Lowry. The case study takes place over a 3-week period in which the teacher recorded student discussions and kept a journal. Findings indicated that the reading experience must always include an aesthetic reading. However, the complete and thorough study of literature requires a balance between both aesthetic and efferent--a balance that begins with the aesthetic and slowly moves, when the students are ready, to the efferent. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/RS)

Literature-Based Exploration:
Efferent and Aesthetic

Kathryn Prather

May 2001

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many people who helped me to make this study possible. Those with whom I have studied at Dominican have inspired me through their insights and academic successes to further my studies and reach my goals. My professors have encouraged and guided me toward new levels of knowledge and growth. In particular I wish to thank Madalienne Peters whose guidance has helped me to not only to complete this study, but also to recognize my own acceptance of ambiguity. I have begun my own process of learning to trust my knowledge and experience just as I hope students will do.

I would like to thank my students for their willingness to learn. They are a wonderful group who are always seeking out new information. I thank them for their responses during the study and their suggestions for future lessons. I would also like to thank my colleagues for providing supportive, positive feedback, especially Joyce Barthman, my mentor, a remarkable teacher.

And finally, I would like to thank my family; my mother and her husband for supporting and encouraging me in all that I do, and listening to my stress and calls of frustration to keep me grounded and moving forward; my father and his wife who I know support and are proud of my achievements; my new mother and father in-law for their wonderful support in all of my endeavors; all of my new in-laws, who haven't really seen me since the wedding. See you soon. And thanks to my husband, Thomas, who encouraged my continued studies even during our first year of marriage. Without him I might not have made it and surely would have starved. He lovingly put up with me everyday. Thank you to all who have helped to make this thesis possible.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Efferent teaching asks the student to read for a predetermined answer, focusing on another person's ideas of the text's meaning. Aesthetic teaching allows for literature to be read and experienced as art through the reader's personal transaction with the text which focuses on one's own interest to create and understand the meaning. This paper examines sixth graders' responses to literature as they undergo reader response theory in the language arts classroom using *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. The case study takes place over a three week period in which the teacher recorded student discussions and kept a journal. Findings indicated that the reading experience must always include an aesthetic reading. However, the complete and thorough study of literature requires a balance between both aesthetic an efferent — a balance that begins with the aesthetic and slowly moves, when the students are ready, to the efferent.

Introduction

Often we teach literature through a prescription of parts as directed by textbooks. We read one story to study character, another story to discuss setting, yet another to learn plot, mood, and so on. Students learn to think of literature as a tool for learning its mechanical parts in English classes. Novels, short stories, poems and plays become textbooks for the English classroom, rather than something they choose to enjoy on their free time.

Common discussions among teachers, administrators and parents include the need for an improvement in students' reading skills. Reading comprehension test scores must increase. "We must get these kids reading," is the hot topic at many staff meetings. If children do not show an interest in reading, they are encouraged to read a magazine. "Anything to get them reading." But what about the fact that many students think negatively about the core literature taught in the classroom. Surely, there are many novels of profound literary quality that students can discover they want to read and enjoy.

Statement of the Problem

The following literature review and case study examine the effects of reader response theory on the study of literature in the classroom. What is the effect on students' motivation and their understandings of the literature when teachers implement reader response strategies — specifically aesthetic and efferent teaching?

Rationale

Reader response theory has been studied and applied to the classroom quite often throughout the last century. Many students are being encouraged to personally respond, reflect, discuss and elaborate upon their reading. They are asked to keep reading journals in which they write their responses to the text – "what they are thinking of, if they have had a similar experience, what they are picturing in their heads, what feelings they have about the characters, and what questions they have about the story" (Johns & Davis, 1990, pg. 2). The purpose of reader response is to increase the student's enjoyment of reading. Students' interest increases when they are allowed to respond to the text personally. Journal response questions are meant to allow students to explore their thoughts. Open-ended question prompts are carefully selected to allow students a safe place to further develop their ideas while reading. Student directed discussions allow for students to feel in control of their readings, so they do not feel that they are suppose to seek out a particular answer already defined by the teacher.

Through reader response, students learn to appreciate literature as an art form. They become readers who choose to read. The reader response classroom becomes a place of safety for students' personal readings of the texts. Students are encouraged to discuss the readings both verbally and in writing, from their own perspectives, through student directed questions and conclusions. The goal of reader response theory is to further enhance student interest in reading so they become fascinated and intrigued by many different parts of the book. The goal is to create life long readers. "Children's choice is honored; children spend a great deal of time reading, and less time learning

about reading; and their reading is authentic, because it is done for their own purposes, not the teachers" (Speigel, 1998, pg. 41).

Background and Need

Rosenblatt (1965) studied the importance of the personal connections and responses of students to the study of literature. In her work she addresses the "unabridged gulf between anything the student might actually feel about the book and what the teacher, from the point of view of accepted critical attitudes and his adult sense of life, thinks the pupil should notice" (Rosenblatt, p. 59). Rosenblatt states that the teacher should allow the student to explore the literature value that might exist for him or her personally. Students should be allowed to use literature to "explore ourselves and the world around us" (Rosenblatt, p. 37).

Rosenblatt adopted the concept that reading is a "transaction between the reader and the text" from her 1938 declaration that "there are no generic readers or generic interpretations but only innumerable relationships between readers and texts" (Rosenblatt, p. 291). The meaning of a text is created when it is read. For the meaning to exist, it needs a reader to create it. As the reader connects and experiences the text, he or she creates a meaning personal to them. This meaning is often guided by their personal stage of development as well as what is presently occurring in their lives. It is in this transaction that literature can be appreciated, enjoyed and studied; and through this transaction, the reader is born.

Rosenblatt's terms "efferent" and "aesthetic" readings clearly define two different reading transactions. Most literary education is based upon the efferent. However, many

studies have shown that both the efferent and the aesthetic are required to achieve a well-rounded, thorough literature education. The reader is created through a combination of the two. Rosenblatt names the efferent reading experience from the Latin word *effere* which means, "to carry away" (Rosenblatt, p. 32). The efferent reading occurs for some "practical purpose" where the student reads for the particular purpose of extracting particular information they deem necessary for a test or their teacher's lesson requirements. On the other hand, the aesthetic reading enjoys the "work of art." The aesthetic experience focuses on literature as an art form and "provides a more complete fulfillment of human impulses and needs" (Rosenblatt, p. 33). The aesthetic reading allows the student to experience the text, connect the text to his or her personal life and experiences and explore the self through the text. However, all reading falls on a "continuum from predominantly efferent to predominately aesthetic" (Rosenblatt, p. 33). What the teacher needs to do is create a balance between the two, thus creating a "balanced literary experience."

It is important that the timing of the lesson be correct. Often curriculum plans to teach the classics when the instructors and/or administers deem it time for the students to learn. However, if the student is not ready for the literature materials, the results can be very detrimental to the student's thoughts and feelings toward classic cannon literature.

> Those who cram the classics down students' throats long before they are ready are careless of the fate of the great works of the past....People who read for themselves will come to the classics at the point when particular works have particular significance for them. To force such works on the young prematurely defeats the long-term goal of educating people to a personal love of literature sufficiently deep to cause them to seek it out for themselves at the appropriate time.
>
> Rosenblatt 207

Therefore, it is important that education recognize the significance of the transaction, the balance of the aesthetic and the efferent, and the preparedness/readiness of the students for the chosen materials. Through this, students will enjoy reading and studying literature.

Review of the Literature

The Validity of Reader Response Theory

Is reader response theory beneficial to the reading process? First, one needs to look at the purpose of reader response. Probst (1981) states that the reader response classroom must begin by inviting the students to respond to the literature. This invitation must welcome the reader's primary personal response rather than requiring that the response be intellectual and fully developed. Through the discussion of the student's initial response, a developed and possible revamped interpretation of the text will be created.

How does reader response theory meet the needs and goals of the literature and writing program? First, we need to look at what these goals are. Probst (1994) defines the goals of the literature and writing program. In the literature and writing classroom students learn about themselves and others. The more students are allowed to use reading to discover who they are, the more they will see the value and significance in reading and the more likely they read on their own. Students may also need to define themselves through their observations of the similarities and differences of others. Through reading and writing about others, students often become more sympathetic and understanding of each other. Literature and writing programs help students to learn about cultures and

societies. Students discover the various themes of significant human issues and experiences such as the good life, love and hate, justice and revenge. Students begin and continue upon their journey through the lifelong growth experience of understanding the self through the larger society we live within as the members of the society accept or reject the societal values, imposed limitations, and visions. In literature and writing programs students should learn how the texts they read operate. They should understand how texts might shape their thoughts, manipulate their emotions, and encourage the reader to see in certain ways. The literature and writing program should teach students how context shapes meaning. Meaning is created through the reading process and is revealed through readers' discussions and writings about their reading experience. And finally, the literature and writing program should guide students through the processes from which they create and express their discoveries of the literary text's meaning. Students should not search through the reading to find the "right answers." They should understand that their reading experience is important and should not be overlooked. They should be guided toward an understanding that the meaning they find can help them to learn who they are and who those around them are, which will in turn help to enrich their lives. (Probst, 1994)

Are these goals then met through reader response theory? Research has shown a tremendous growth of the student as a reader and an individual when they read through and are encouraged to participate in a response based method and classroom. As Speigel (1998) has found when students participated in reader response, their growth as individuals was extensive. When students are successful readers and are comfortable with the response method, they will actually bypass the teacher and discuss the books

directly with one another. Students engaged in reader response often increase their higher order thinking skills and become more critical and reflective readers. Through this increase of critical and analytical skills, students develop a greater depth of understanding of themselves and the world around them. Students are more willing to accept ambiguity as they begin to use it to discover new ideas and interpretations that are different from their own, rather than insisting that their first response and interpretation of meaning is the only one they can have.

Through response-based activities, more students begin to see themselves as successful readers. They begin to see that they do make the meaning and that the answers are not just held by the teacher and the text. Students begin to find their own voices and opinions as they contribute to the literary discussion. They begin to take risks with their own thoughts rather than to try to find the thoughts of others. Students begin to take ownership in their own meaning making experience, increasing their ability to respond to the literature. They can appreciate and value interpretations that differ from their own because they have gained confidence in themselves as readers. (Speigel, 1998)

Students' developmental growth is also improved through reader response methods. As the students focus more on possibilities and perspectives rather than rote recitation and memorization, their higher order thinking and analyzing skills are increased. This helps them to increase their ability to think more abstractly and to study symbolic reasoning in literature. (Donley, 1991)

Reader response theory also helps students to develop and discover themselves. One natural step throughout the growing up process is for the individual to explore, discover, and question oneself. Through reading and responding to literature, students

analyze their values, beliefs and self-definitions as they compare themselves to what the author has created for them on the page. During and after the reading, either the reader maintains their initial thoughts, re-evaluates and modifies, or changes their values, beliefs and definitions altogether. Reader response allows for the student to have full authority over their own morals and philosophies while also viewing possible consequences to their attitudes and beliefs. This transaction between the reader and the text can also affect the reader's self-esteem. Students who have confidence in their opinions and understand the value of hearing the differing opinions of others rather than simply following those defined by the teacher reveal higher self-efficacy and higher performance on tasks. (Donley, 1991)

Through reader response theory, students are always investigating the possibilities. If the discussion is allowed to begin with the reader's initial impressions and end with his or her analyzed and supported interpretations, then they are constantly allowed to explore the possibilities of themselves and the world around them. Their thoughts and opinions on the text's meaning are forever changing. They are constantly exploring their feelings, intentions, and actions as well as creating richer interpretations. (Langer, 1991)

Traditional teaching methods of reading have kept content isolated from students' individual thoughts and comprehension. Teachers have maintained the control of the text's meaning, as well as kept the pace of the classroom discussions and meetings, causing students to only see literature as a way to study the history of genre or the interpretations of experts. Students find it difficult to become engaged in classical literature since they play only a small part in the interpretation and do not see a

relationship between the classic literature and their lives. Literature has been taught as the key for entry into the elite world of knowledge and good taste rather than providing the path to the development of the critical and analytical mind, encouraging thinking and discussion within an open classroom community. Reader response allows for students the opportunity to connect with literature in a way that enhances appreciation and comprehension at a critical time when students develop their attitudes toward reading. (Donley, 1991; Langer, 1991)

If young readers are permitted and encouraged to make and voice their initial impressions of the text's meaning, then they will be more motivated to return to the literature text and reread, discuss and deepen their experience as readers. Self-awareness and self-criticism is enhanced throughout the response process and the reader and successful student and citizen is created. (Rosenblatt, 1993)

Efferent versus Aesthetic

"Structural analysis provides the terms and concepts that help readers interpret and discuss literature, while reader response emphasizes the integrated experience an individual has with a text, with the reader's personal response having primacy over formal knowledge of textual characteristics." (Pugh, 1988, pg. 1) In this statement Pugh sums up the difference between efferent and aesthetic readings. The former provides terms and concepts of the structure of literature -- the efferent reading. The latter requires the experience of the reader and the personal response -- the aesthetic reading. Efferent is scientific, whereas aesthetic is artistic. (Menexas, 1997) The following shall describe each in further detail.

What is efferent reading? The efferent reader analyzes ideas and information for the specific purpose of abstracting specific predetermined information. For instance, a student reading an account of a particular historical event for specific information that is to be used to answer questions in a test will ignore information that does not meet his or her needs because it will not be on the test. In an efferent reading of literature, students are tested on particular events to check to see if they are reading. The teacher chooses what the reader should be getting out of the reading and the students must determine what the teacher is looking for while they are reading. They read for what they think the teacher is looking for. In an efferent reading, the reader studies the text rather than experiencing the written word and the meaning.

Literary analysis is efferent. The approach to reading is structural where the reader previews the text; does a literal recall of particular information; studies the basic literary elements and devices such as plot, setting, character, figure of speech; focuses on specific implied meaning and logic; looks formally at artistic features and genre; compares stories to find relationships; and undergoes subjective responses such as speculation and evaluation. The reader is a spectator rather than a participant in the reading experience. (McGee, 1992; Menexas, 1997; Pugh, 1988; Spiegel, 1998; Zarillo, 1991)

What is aesthetic reading? The aesthetic reader focuses on the immediate reading experience. The reader acknowledges what is being felt while reading the text. An aesthetic reading is unique to each reader, differing with each encounter to the text. The reading is ever changing.

In an aesthetic reading the reader focuses on the reading experience itself, drawing on memories and past experiences, senses, relationships with other things, connecting what they are reading to their personal lives. The reading focuses on personal thoughts, images, feelings, and associations evoked during the reading. The reader relishes the text that the author has created as a piece of art and savors the sensations and feelings they encounter during the reading. Aesthetic reading often utilizes literature logs, reading logs, or dialogue journals, providing a safe place for the reader to explore and evaluate their responses to the text. This exploration is expanded through a social discussion in which students see other perceptions of the world around them, perceptions that might be the same or different from their own. Students share and evaluate their own responses to the reading while also hearing the differing perspectives of others.

In an aesthetic reading the reader connects to the text through personal response, reflection, discussion and elaboration. The reader and the text mutually affect each other. While reading, the reader searches for glimpses of the self and the world around him. The reader is a participant in the reading experience. (Langer, 1991; McGee, 1992; Menexas, 1997; Pugh, 1988; Zarillo, 1991)

The Role of the Teacher in Aesthetic Readings

The role of the teacher is extremely important if an aesthetic reading, which allows students to naturally develop into life-long readers, is to be achieved in the classroom. The teacher needs to encourage children to want to choose to take an aesthetic stance in their reading. (Zarillo, 1991) This is done first and foremost through the changing role of the teacher.

To achieve an aesthetic reading, the teacher needs to be willing to act differently in the classroom, to change the power relationships in the learning process in order to create an atmosphere of learning where students are willing and encouraged to talk democratically. (Wilson, 1981) Rather than always being the leader of the lesson and discussion, rather than being the sole answer holder, the teacher needs to be willing to also step into the role of learner with the students. In a group discussion, the teacher's role should be that as a learner within the group, constructing new meanings with the students through statements such as, "I hadn't thought of that until [the student] mentioned it." (Whitin, 1994, pg. 106)

The teacher needs to model reading and the process of interpretation through showing that he or she is also a learner capable of making mistakes. Perhaps the teacher might not prepare for a literature lesson, thus allowing for the students to better see and understand the reading process and develop more their own readings and responses to the text. (Donley, 1991)

The teacher needs to make time for self-reflective conversation about how everyone is participating in the conversation and why. (Wilson, 1981) As Pradl (1996) stated in his research, "If I am not modeling the honest disclosure of my preferences and prejudices for my students as we read together, then I'm not helping them find ways of being open about their own reading responses (pg. 20)."

Through changing the power relationship in the classroom, the teacher is more able to guide the students toward realizing that the teacher does not hold the absolute answers to the literature they read. Students will willingly partake in the aesthetic

reading when they are assured that they will find the answers to their questions and the text through themselves and their own readings of the text.

Literature programs in elementary and secondary schools should be designed to help students to develop into readers rather than literary scholars. Students, as they become readers, should find reading literature an enjoyable activity that they are excited to participate in as it effects and enriches their emotional and intellectual lives. The teacher needs to take care not to interfere in the student's reading of literature. The student needs to experience literature as a work of art, rather than have the teacher reduce the art to an exercise or drill. (Probst, 1994) This student connection to literature can be achieved through the students' awareness that they hold the answer to the meaning of the text rather than their teacher.

The students need to understand that the meaning of the text lies within the experience between the reader and the text as the reading occurs. They need to know with confidence that there is no one right answer that the teacher expects them to seek out while they are reading. The teacher needs to guide the students into discovering their reading and their meaning. (Probst, 1994) The reading and discussion is exploration rather than recitation, a process in which the students are guided by the teacher to find the teacher's interpretations of the text, seeking out the teacher's "right answer." In discussion as recitation the students are the guessers and the teacher is the expert and the evaluator. The students "fill in" the information the teacher wants. Their responses are molded by the teacher to match her own interpretation.

However, in exploration the students might keep literary journals and jot down questions so they might engage in the literary discussion that follows their reading.

Lesson time is spent discussing student questions and thoughts with students working together to address the issues they themselves raised while they explore the possibilities they discover within the text. The teacher needs to help the students to link their discussions to what they have discussed earlier as well as bring all students into the discussion. The teacher may close the lesson by asking students to make a prediction for their future reading, reminding them to jot down thoughts and questions as they read. (Langer, 1991) But again, the teacher must take care to always clarify to the students that they are seeking their own answers — that there is no one correct reading. Though there may be more valid or less valid interpretations of the text, and though there may be the author's meaning when the text was written, the students need to be taught that there are more possible readings too. (Wilson, 1981)

Although it is possible for a reader to misread the text, the teacher needs to inform students that the text may mean something entirely different to the reader than it did to the writer as long as students can support their interpretation through the text. (Probst, 1994) However, when an interpretation is not supportable by the text, the teacher might ask for clues from the story. If no student can come up with a clue from the text, the teacher can simply say, "I don't know about that one." (Langer, 1991)

Once the students understand that they hold the meaning to the text, they will more likely be willing to explore the text through their own experiences. However, in addition to guiding the students toward an understanding that there is no one right answer, no one meaning held by the teacher for the students to seek out, the students still need to feel that the classroom is a "safe" place to continue the exploration that they began through their individual readings. The students need to know that the teacher has

created an environment where they can continue with their reading process as they determine the meaning of the text and discover more about themselves and the world around them, using literature as the tool for exploration and discovery. (Carico, 1996) For this to happen the teacher must create a safe environment for literature discussion — an environment where the students feel confident in themselves and the conclusions they make of the text. (Wilson, 1981)

The classroom environment needs to be one which encourages students to read for artistic value, for amusement, for joy, for sorrow, for fright, for thrill and for inspiration. (Zarillo, 1991) To create this environment, the teacher needs to give the students time to read, choice of reading material, trust that their ideas will be respected, and the freedom to discover their interpretation and response to the literature. Students need to feel that it is safe for them to share the emotions, thoughts and feelings that they encounter while they are reading. An environment must be created for the students where they really feel free to pay attention to what they are living through while they read and shape the story, characters and events, as they draw on their past experiences and organize and develop a new experience. (Wilson, 1981)

The first step in creating a safe classroom environment is to create a response centered classroom, allowing students to respond to their readings through multiple modalities of discussion, writing and art. (Zarillo, 1991) The students need to feel comfortable enough in the reading experience to be willing to express their thoughts and feeling and to change their minds. (Donley, 1991) The behavior of the students will tell if the students are reading aesthetically, such as how they are sitting when they read, how

much they want to share their responses, how much their thinking is on an abstract level. (Zarillo, 1991)

In a response centered classroom the teacher prepares the class by initially teaching the students to be patient, to shape discussions, to assert themselves appropriately and to cooperate and work well together. (Whitin, 1994) Next, the teacher invites responses to the text. The students must be given the opportunity to rigorously examine the text and their responses to the text, to search for their assumptions. The teacher must give the students ample time to shape their own confidence in their responses before they hear the responses of others. When enough time is given for the students to have determined their own responses to the reading, they then need to consider the viewpoints of their peers and the teacher. (Donley, 1991)

The teacher needs to invite alternative meanings into the discussion. The teacher needs to guide students toward an understanding that any sketch or piece of writing is never really finished and can always be added to as interpretations and meaning continue to change and grow. The teacher needs to build an environment in which multiple interpretations are valued, and everyone reflects on "how learners come to know." A community needs to be created where the process of inquiry is more important than the outcome of certainty. (Whitin, 1994)

During the discussion time, the teacher must learn to follow leads, but sense the restlessness of those with other ideas, while also finding links among students' responses to guide students toward connecting and comparing their thoughts so there will be some unity to the discussion rather than being disconnected, leaping from one topic to another. The teacher needs to help students to look back to other texts they have read, other

discussions they have had, other experiences they have encountered, while also looking forward toward what they might read next and what they might write in the future. These connections will help to create a continuity in the students' learning that in turn helps their confidence in reading and responding to literature to continue to grow.

Student to student communication must be encouraged by the teacher, as well as possible differing and opposing viewpoints which are demonstrated and welcomed into the classroom discussion through teacher modeling. The teacher needs to let the discussion build and grow naturally, making an environment safe for students to change their minds, to explore, and to follow the discussion wherever it may take them. The teacher must try not to draw any conclusions to end the discussion, but accept a closing sense of ambiguity if that is where the discussion ends for the day.

In addition to ample classroom discussion time, the teacher must also provide frequent writing time for students to express their views about the self, text, others, and the culture of society. Students need a variety of different ways to show their knowledge and responses. (Probst, 1994)

If the teacher creates a classroom environment that validates responses, students are more likely to feel comfortable to use the discussion and the literature to seek out who they are, thus allowing literature to guide them toward a better understanding of their selves and others in the world around them. If a true safe environment is created in the classroom discussion, all students will feel comfortable enough to drop their guards and to talk freely about their thoughts, feelings and emotions. Reading should be a lived through experience that is both a social encounter as well as a literary experience.

However, a safe environment may be difficult to maintain when comments sometimes have the potential to hurt others. When that occurs, the teacher must carefully guide the discussion away from possible harm toward positive learning without inadvertently stifling the student discussion, making them feel that they would rather not participate because what they say would not be welcomed. This needs to be set up in the beginning within the classroom atmosphere, where students are taught what is positive and what is damaging in a discussion forum. (Carico, 1996)

And finally, the teacher must provide suitable literature that interests the students, but does not necessarily need to be relevant to their lives. It is important that the materials chosen are not too easy or too difficult. (Donley, 1991)

All teachers need to develop their own routines for discussions and ways to help students to move beyond their initial impressions of the reading. Teachers need to support students' growing abilities to think more deeply about the readings. They need to call for and expect active and thoughtful participation of all students. (Langer, 1991)

The goal foremost for the literature teacher is to help guide students as they develop into readers and writers who grow and become "independent and self-reliant thinkers who employ language and literature to enrich their lives." (Probst, 1994, pg. 44) Through aesthetic teaching comes the rise of the role of the reader as well as the celebration of reading and the realization of the full potential effect of literature on the lives of the students. (Zarillo, 1991)

The Exploration Process in the Aesthetic Classroom

To achieve a successful literary discussion in the classroom where students truly experience an aesthetic reading as they explore the text, the discussion process must be

carefully orchestrated. The teacher needs to help the students to sustain a literature discussion so they are able to move beyond their initial concerns to more complex discussions. The students need to converse with each other, connect their ideas, agree, disagree, and extend their ideas. The teacher might signal this in the discussion conversation by asking or stating the following: "You wanted to say something on that topic?" "One at a time." "Is that connected to what (a student) said?" Such questions and statements made by the teacher during the discussion will help the students to learn the conventions of a particular academic discourse.

In addition, the teacher needs to help scaffold the ways in which the students think during the literary discussion. The teacher needs to help focus the discussion, making the students' ideas clearer to themselves and better understood by others. When a student or group of students are having a difficult time making their point, the teacher needs to help shape the discussion into a tighter argument or presentation. The students also need guidance from the teacher as they learn to connect their ideas to other portions of the text, to the group or class discussion, to other class work and other readings. The students need help learning to elaborate on their ideas or gain a new insight to their initial thoughts and interpretations. And, the teacher needs to up the ante by providing new and often less obvious ways for students to think about their ideas or concerns when they no longer know how to carry them any further. When a student becomes stuck in a thought, the teacher might intercede and present a new vantage point from which the student may consider. By interactively collaborating with the students, the teacher can eventually help the students to internalize ways of talking and thinking about literature through modeling the role of the reader and the learner.

Because all students need to participate in the literary discussion, the teacher needs to help the students learn to take turns in the literary discussion. Not only do they need to learn how to actively speak up and join the discussion, but they also need to make sure that other students have an equal opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in the discussion. To help make sure that all students have the opportunity to speak up and participate in the discussion, the teacher might ask the following when necessary: "Does anyone want to respond to that particular comment?" "(A particular student), do you want to consider that?"

During the literary discussion there might be times when clarification of the students' thoughts, interpretations and opinions are required. When needed, the teacher might ask for clarification of a question or restatement of a thought. The teacher might also check to see if the students' concerns are understood by the class.

To help encourage the discussion, the teacher might try tapping into the understandings of the students by indicating that their understandings are important topics of concern and are central for a successful discussion. The following questions will help make this happen: "How did (the story) make you feel?" "What ideas do you have?" "Does it remind you of anything you've experienced or read?"

Finally, to further encourage all students to participate in the discussion, teachers should use small group discussions. Small group discussions provide a place for students to try out the strategies that have been modeled for them by the teacher. The teacher can further help these discussion along by visiting the groups, taking a role within the group as a participant observer, asking pertinent questions, and providing models of how to structure thought in ways students are not yet doing. In this way, students are not only

encourage to think and communicate their ideas to others, but they are also taught to do so. After they have been introduced and have a chance to practice small group discussion, students can eventually lead and participate in literary discussions without the teacher. Such a method allows the control to transfer from the teacher to the student, thus provided the environment required to achieve an aesthetic reading as mentioned above. (Golden & Handloff, 1993)

Writing will also help to develop and encourage the aesthetic reading and classroom discussion. Through writing, students are able to reflect, state, defend, and rethink their ideas, further helping them to form their own interpretations of the text. Students should be encouraged to write thoughtful questions as they read. They should be asked to make predictions on paper such as in a journal that they can check at a later time to see if their predictions were correct. If students keep reading journals, they can also refer to them after they read to help refresh their memories and prepare for other activities such as group work. Another great writing tool that encourages discussion and idea sharing is to have students write back and forth to each other. (Langer, 1991) Student-to-student writing provides a safe place for students to write more affective descriptions and to ask other students for recommendations for more books to read. (Golden & Handloff, 1993)

Journals in themselves are excellent for the aesthetic reading process. Journals help to intensify the personal experience of the reading process. They also provide insights for the teacher into what the student thinks is interesting and significant about the work. Although students voiced that they preferred writing fictional journal entries, they did feel that response journals helped them to better understand the reading.

A study by Oberlin and Shugarman (1989) showed that students' reading interest and attitudes were increased through the use of reading journals. Prior to the study, students read one book per year, but the average increased to twenty during the eighteen weeks of the study. During the study, the teacher stressed that she could easily find out what happened in the story by reading it herself, so she needed students to do more than simply to retell the story in their journals. The students needed to record their unique reactions to the book, express their feelings and opinions, look for ties to their own lives, and think about the author's style and how it affected their responses to the book. Students were encouraged to use examples from the literature to illustrate a point or to support their opinion. To provide an example, the teacher shared an entry she had written and pointed out the various aspects that met the tasks' requirements.

Thus, journaling is a valuable means of engaging children in literary response. It provides a forum for students to share their opinions and explore their feelings as they respond to literature. It offers a means of articulating, exploring and extending students' responses to literature through a more private nature that is not normally possible in the classroom. (Golden & Handloff, 1993).

Types of Questions to Ask which Allow Students the Aesthetic Reading

To have a truly successful aesthetic reading response discussion, the teacher must carefully choose and present questions which will help the students to develop their thoughts and express them to others. Caution needs to be taken that the questions do not stifle the students' opinions or have the ulterior motive of leading the students in the direction of the teacher's thoughts, thus creating an efferent rather than aesthetic reading experience. The teacher wants to use the questions to enhance the students' personal

transaction with the text, not set an agenda for the teacher's interpretation where the students must seek out particular answers that already exist in the teacher's mind. (Zarillo, 1991) For example, questions such as "What is the structure?" or "What is the climax?" destroy the personal experience and lead to an efferent reading. Whereas questions such as, "What seems most important to you?" "What did you dislike?" "What shocked you?" "What annoyed you?" or "What did you make of it?" help to lead the student to rethink and pinpoint what was personally important to them, thus providing an aesthetic reading experience. (Wilson, 1981) For this reason, the questions must be formulated and presented with care.

Zarillo (1991) developed a three-leveled question format that helps to ensure an aesthetic reading experience. Zarillo determined that teachers need to use open-ended prompts and questions when engaging students in an aesthetic literary discussion. Level one questions are free response prompts. Level two questions encourage the students to relive the reading experience. Level three questions ask for interpretation through personal association and speculation. He further determined that during a classroom response session, one question from each level should be included to help students begin to formulate their thoughts and increase the level of participation and idea development that the students will experience during the discussion process.

Probst (1994) developed a five level process of reader response questioning that helps to enhance the aesthetic reading experience. First, the questions presented to the students need to focus on what was taking place in their minds as they read. Posing such questions to the students helps to invite them to observe themselves reading, to respect their thoughts and feelings, examining them for their significance. Second, the questions

need to ask the students to concentrate on what was going on in the text, asking them to undergo a retelling process. Third, the questions begin to ask the students to enter the discussion arena as they compare their readings with those of other students. Fourth, the questions next ask the students to reflect on the context of the reading, the classroom setting and any related works that come to mind, thus helping the students to link their reading and responses to other events in both the classroom and their lives. And finally, the fifth level asks the students to examine how the meaning they discovered has evolved and is continuing to change and take shape.

In addition to different levels of questioning that help students to experience an aesthetic reading, there are also particular types of questions that can heighten the student's transaction with the text. To begin with, particular questions can help students to both discover and share the initial impressions they have with the text. "What caught your interest most?" "What pleased, frightened, surprised? What troubled? What seemed wrong?" "What things in your own life paralleled those in the poem or story?" (Rosenblatt, 1980) "Have you ever felt like the main character?" "Would you have done what the main character did?" (Spiegel, 1998) "What did you think about when you finished reading the story?" "What does it mean to you?" "What do you make of it?" "Why?" "What is the significance?" "Why is it important to (character name)?" Such questions help to give the students permission to feel safe enough to voice their initial responses, to hear other responses that might be the same or different from their own, and to extend and develop their overall understanding of their interpretations and the meaning of the text.

Particular questions can also help students to further develop their interpretations of the text and its meaning. Such questions use the students' initial responses as the basis to continue the discussion. "Does anyone want to respond to that particular comment?" "(A student), do you want to consider that?" "Does anyone have any other thoughts about that?" In addition, the teacher might use the student's question to encourage others to respond and elaborate on their own interpretations. "I know (student) isn't the only one that has that question, that many of you have the same question." Here the teacher might also utilize the questions of the students to further inquire into a particular concern that has been raised, or to help elaborate and explain the students' experiences with the story.

Certain questions can also help students to discuss content. However, again caution needs to be taken when formulating content questions to ensure that the questions are still of an aesthetic nature rather than seeking more efferent instruction methods. Because of this, the teacher's questions about content must build upon the content concerns already raised by the students. The teacher may tap into the content that the students have responded with and prompt them to consider their understandings more fully. "Would anybody else like to add to that?" "Does anybody have anything they want to add to it?" (Langer, 1991)

And finally, questions that occur in an aesthetic reading classroom must take place over time, following the different levels of the discussion. They might begin with having the reader look over the cover of their novel and read the introduction. Next asking, "What questions do you have?" The teacher might then ask the students to come in with a question for discussion after they read the next chapter. On that day the teacher might ask, "Is there anything you'd like to know more about?" "Does anything bother

you?" Mostly, it is important that the teacher encourages the students to come to class prepared with questions so they are ready to discuss their reading experience. The teacher should also always remind the students that the questioning process should always be a positive one where students recognize uncertainties and ambiguities and explore possibilities while they as readers construct the meaning that they discover. "Remember, they're just possibilities we can think about." (Langer, 1991)

Questions are extremely important to the process of reader response as they can help enable the reader to select and focus upon the concrete parts of the text that affected them the most. Through open-ended questions, the teacher's goal is to help students develop and express their responses so that they truly experience the text and that their experience is a qualitative one. "Did anything especially interest? annoy? puzzle? frighten? please? seem familiar? seem weird?" (Rosenblatt, 1993).

Motivation: A Glance at Student Reactions to Aesthetic Forms of Reading

Langer's 1991 study shows that through traditional efferent forms of reading instruction, students lack the motivation necessary to enter enthusiastically into the world of the text and to explore the characters' experiences, emotions, or actions. On the other hand, when students are allowed to explore the text through an aesthetic class discussion, students come to know the characters and their behaviors such as their feelings, intentions and actions from an exploration of these character traits through multiple differing perspectives. From this self-directed exploration of the text comes the motivation for students to want to read.

According to Langer's findings, an increase in students' motivation occurs through aesthetic response-based discussions in which students take a much more active role. In

response-based discussion the students are driving the discussion 86% of the time while teacher is driving the discussion only 14% of the time. In text-based discussions, where the students must seek out the teacher's predetermined "one best interpretation," Langer found that the teacher initiated 69% of the topics and ended 77% of them. Only 28% of the words were spoken by the student where in the response-based discussion 58% of the words were spoken by the students. In the text-based discussion the focus was on the teacher with very little student participation. The students' responses were limited to only one to three word answers. The students did not seem as interested and connected to the text. Because the teacher held all the answers, the students learning decreased. They would leave the lessons with less knowledge than the students in the response-based readings where the teacher's view, although valid, is not the interpretation that the students must walk away from the text with.

Langer's study found that text-based lessons were disconnected, fragmented, and less exciting for the students. On the other hand, response-based lessons increased the excitement level of the students as they were allowed to bring up their own concerns and initial impressions and were encouraged to change and grow as the discussion progressed. Because their ideas were the central focus of the discussion, they claimed ownership of the topics, thus in turn creating an increased motivation to want to participate in the discussion. This motivation caused the students to come to class prepared with questions from the readings that they wanted to discuss. The students were placed in control of the pace and flow of the discussion as they moved onto a new topic when they were ready to move on. Through this student directed format, students gained confidence in developing and supporting their own interpretations. Through an increase

in participation, more students learned to use their comments to enrich and elaborate their points of view, thus creating richer class literature discussions that explored a variety of possibilities. Through aesthetic response-discussions, the students became critical readers.

In addition to Langer's study, Whitin (1994) found added benefits to aesthetic readings. Whitin found that when students did not know each other well before a group aesthetic reading, they learned about each other and got to know each other better. The students became closer which helped to build a supportive classroom community where the students are more willing to take risks and solve problems. Through collaboratively working in groups or partners, students are able to go beyond what they can do themselves. The students are more able to revise their original ideas and receive support for their understanding. They learn to construct meaning through listening and viewing the similar or different ideas of others. Although they might not be author of a particular visual or idea, they can still contribute new insights into the interpretation. Thus, their knowledge continues to increase and grow.

Probst (1981) found that though some students will not be drawn into the text and may become bored and while others may not be as interested or connected to the text, they are more likely to become interested as they witness the experiences of others and learn to appreciate other readings of the text. Through aesthetic readings, students are more likely to reflect on their own experiences and share them with others who are connecting their experiences to the text. Often students find that the reading sheds light on thoughts or experiences they have had, either in the text or in their personal lives, that were difficult for them to understand.

In conclusion, through aesthetic reading, students will revisit the text not to search for something directed by the teacher, but rather to answer their own questions and reconcile their own differences. Motivation comes not from students analyzing the text in search of answers to the teacher's questions, but rather from the students' desire to search for their own answers to their own questions and to support their own opinions.

When to Teach the Elements of Literature, While Still Keeping the Enthusiasm Alive?

Since readers move along a continuum from an aesthetic to an efferent experience, teaching the elements of literature such as character, setting, plot should come after the literature is enjoyed as art. (McGee, 1992 and Zarillo, 1991) For this reason, students should first and foremost encounter the text from their own experiences with the text. Only after students have concluded upon and had a thorough opportunity to express their own views, should they be introduced to the responses of literary critics, authors, educators and even their peers since such other viewpoints may cause the student to revise their own interpretations. To help prevent students from feeling that their original point-of-view and opinion of the text was "incorrect," the teacher must encourage that the student have, through the aesthetic reading, a sense of ownership of the text. (Menexas, 1997)

The teacher must also always be aware and ready for when it is time to seize a teachable moment to increase students' knowledge about literature without inhibiting the aesthetic reading. The teacher does not want to miss when a student raises a thought-provoking interpretive question simply because they want to teach an element of literature at a particular time. Such an act would decrease the students desire to interact

with the text and cause the student to think that the teacher has a particular answer they are to find and conclude upon. (McGee, 1992)

An efferent teachable moment should arise when the students come to it on their own, revealing they are ready, willing and interested because it fits their own purposes of understanding the text. For example, the concept of the metaphor is more likely to be understood by students if they come to the definition through their own concrete experiences within the reading rather than if they are instructed first to learn the definition and then told to search and find examples within the text. In other words, if the teacher wishes to instruct the student on the term metaphor and the metaphors the reader might encounter while reading a particular poem, then the teacher may help the student discover the concept, definition, meaning and significant use by looking at the metaphor through the reader's own perception about the poem. (Probst, 1994)

A study done by Eeds and Wells (1989) defined a literary teachable moment as a point in a discussion in which a student's comment could lead to the identification and discussion of literary elements such as symbol, mood, or characterization. Because reading explorations should be like dinner conversations, such conversations should be used to share personal stories to demonstrate active reading strategies such as predicting, hypothesizing, and confirming; and to value and evaluate literature. (McGee, 1992) Thus, again the teacher is basing the timing of when to teach efferent elements of literature upon when the students are ready and wanting the knowledge because it will help them to express and understand their thoughts, interpretations and opinions more clearly.

Many problems can arise when a teacher decides to teach from an efferent stance before the students are ready. When a teacher's sole purpose is to teach the literary elements, the literature is reduced to just "another teaching tool, with no more dignity than an overhead projector" (Zarillo, 1991, pg. 232). In fact, Zarillo suggests that, to ensure a clear aesthetic reading so that students feel that literature is art rather than just another textbook, separate materials should be used for the teaching of skills; however, he does not provide any suggestions as to what those materials might be.

Another problem that arises when efferent instruction takes precedent over aesthetic is student's resistance to the materials. Too often literature instruction in the secondary schools focuses upon "classics of the cannon" that are cherished and worshipped by adults. Teachers often force the children to worship these works as well, even if the students are not mentally and emotionally ready. Such timing and methods of teaching literature causes students to believe they don't like a particular text, author or reading altogether when they might otherwise have found reading fun and valuable to their lives. (Donley, 1991)

Additional problems with aesthetic and efferent teaching occur when teachers feel they must test for knowledge of the text. Teachers often do need to check to make sure their students are reading an assigned text, sometimes on a given time schedule. However, in testing for knowledge the teacher needs to refrain from asking students to retell the story through character or details. Teachers can test by asking students to reveal what they have experienced while reading. Such a method of testing helps to reinforce that the student's reading experience means something and is valuable. In addition, to eliminate base answers such as "I disliked it," or "I don't think that's the way things would

really happen in life," the teacher should present questions that cause the student to think back over the reading of the work and select something that was personal, vivid or meaningful, thus further encouraging an aesthetic reading. (Wilson, 1981)

Further, even though a teacher might choose a truly aesthetic reading method without explicitly teaching the elements of literature, studies have shown that these students still develop a good understanding of the elements of literature (Berger, 1996; Borders & Naylor 1993; Gilles, 1990; Kletzien & Husion, 1992; Short 1993). In fact, because students' motivation is increased through aesthetic teaching methods, students' reading quality and quantity increases. It has been reported that middle school students improved in speed and fluency when they read aesthetically (Stewart et al., 1996). Also, students' scores improve on standardized reading comprehension tests. (Speigel, 1998; Taylor, Frye & Maruyama, 1990)

From aesthetic response-based discussions that center on the student's own reactions to the literary work, lessons on the elements of literature and the goals of the teacher — "the ability to analyze, categorize, and evaluate, the literary background and critical ability" — will inevitably emerge. (Wilson, 1981, pg. 9)

Methodology

Subjects

The study included 6th grade middle school students in three similar language arts classes. The students range from limited English proficient English language learners to average to gifted students. Most students tested at or above the 50th percentile in the 1999-2000 California state standardized assessment test. There are no resource students

in the study. Student ethnic backgrounds consists of approximately 62% Caucasian, 14% Latino, 12% Filipino, 7% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Pacific Islander, and 1% Native American. All students are fluent English speakers. Student socio-economic levels are lower middle class to middle class. The area is suburban.

Materials

The pilot study utilizes the short story "To Serve Man" by Damon Knight. In the case study the students read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.

Procedure

The students are first introduced to the literature discussion process through short stories. After each short story is read, the students are instructed to discuss as a whole class their feelings, opinions, ideas about the story. This process helps to prepare the students to read and discuss the novel.

During the reading, the students experience first and foremost an aesthetic reading process. The students guide themselves through their own reactions and interests in the readings. Extremely little, if any, teacher influence occurs other than to instruct students on how to conduct literature discussions and how to search for the meaning within themselves. Students are clearly told not to seek answers from the teacher, but rather from their own reading and experiences with the text. Zarillo's (1991) three level questions are used to get the students started in the discussion process as well as Probst's (1994) five level question and discussion process.

During the students' reading process, they keep a reader's journal where they write the questions they have about the story, any thoughts or opinions they feel while they read, and their answers to teacher prompted questions based upon the research of Zarillo

and Probst. The purpose for the journal is to help the students focus on what they think about while they read. Through journaling, the students formulate their own conclusions about the meaning of the text to help them to come class prepared to discuss their ideas, opinions and interpretations as well as to raise any questions or moments of confusion that they encounter while reading the text.

After the students have written and reviewed their journal writing, they are ready to participate in the discussion process. Small student discussion groups occur daily throughout the novel reading process. The formation of these study groups varies daily. For one-third of the discussion days, students are allowed to choose their own groups. For one-third of the discussion days, student groups are based upon where and with whom they are regularly seated near in the classroom. And for the remaining days, students are grouped with whom they have not had a chance to discuss the text with before. By the end of the discussion process the students have had the opportunity to talk about the novel in small groups with every student in the class. For half of the discussion days, after the small group discussions have occurred, the students will meet and discuss their personal reactions to the text — their thoughts, feelings, opinions and interpretations — as a whole class. Students are encouraged to state whether or not they agree or disagree with each other. Constructive debating of ideas and opinions is highly encouraged.

At the conclusion of the discussion process, students are asked to reflect upon the evolution of the meaning of the text. How has the discussion affected the ideas and opinions they came to class with? Do they feel more strongly about their ideas, or has their opinions been altered after hearing the different ideas of their peers? This reflection occurs either verbally or in writing in their reader's journals.

Once the novel is completed and the students' personal reactions are thoroughly stated, discussed and evolved through change or stronger conviction, the students are asked to begin to venture into the efferent reading process. The students create a "Reader Response Book." In this book students complete assignments which focus on conventional literary elements such as character, conflict, and setting. Eleven assignments are created from which six are required to be completed. Three assignments are specifically assigned for each student to complete, while the other required three are chosen from the remaining eight assignments based upon student interest. Although some of the assignments ask students to focus on traditional literary elements, others still request that the student continue to develop and build their interpretation of the text's meaning — their aesthetic experience.

For the final assignment, the students complete the transition from the aesthetic to the efferent experience. The students are asked to present in a final product their personal conclusions about the meaning of the text. They are taught to organize their opinions and to support them through textual references. Though the final product is not an essay, the students learn, develop, organize and present their meaning of the text in a final assignment that contains the basic elements of a response to literature paper, one of the 7^{th} grade writing standards required by the district. The students create a "Literature Interpretation Pie" in which they present their meaning, at least three supporting textual references, and a brief conclusion. The evaluation of the assignment is based upon the following in order from most important: development of a clear interpretation of meaning statement, clear textual support of that statement, writing mechanics, and artistic detail.

A final evaluation of the entire process is created utilizing teacher prompted questions, individual reader's journals and whole class discussion. Students are asked to respond to what they enjoyed most about the different learning techniques they underwent while they read the novel as well as an evaluation of the assignments, which occurred after the novel was completed. What would they like to repeat and what would they prefer not to have to do again? What did they enjoy the most and the least? What letter grade would they give the literature process and why? How has this literature experience been similar to or different from their past school reading experiences? How do they now feel about their experiences as a reader?

Pilot: "To Serve Man" by Damon Knight

Preparation for the study on reader response theory and the efferent and aesthetic reading experience began a couple months ahead of the actual reading of the novel, *The Giver*. The students read six short stories taking turns reading aloud in class. The stories were each discussed as a class. Students were clearly instructed to seek out their own interpretations of the meaning of the stories. They were never to seek any one particular answer from their teacher, for there is no one correct "right answer" of any text. They were told not to try to determine what the author might have meant while writing the story, but rather to find what the story now means to them. The teacher presented the idea that the meaning lies within the reader rather than the writer, that they were to make the meaning of the text.

As a result, the students were in charge of the discussion. They were to conduct the progression of the discussion at a pace they determined necessary. The teacher only asked that the class let all students have a voice in the discussion. Although they might disagree with another student's opinion, they were to do so respectfully. At no time were the students allowed to criticize disrespectfully any other individual or group of people. In addition, the teacher might interject with comments asking students to respond to a question that has been asked before they move on to another question or response. Or, the teacher might ask the students to continue to discuss a particular topic because there are still some students showing an interest in the topic, rather than immediately moving on to another point of interest before everyone is ready. The teacher might also help the students to focus back to a topic if it was not given ample time in the discussion while remembering a new topic that was raised so that it is not forgotten or ignored, a new topic which would be returned to when all students are ready to move on.

During the discussions, the students determined that an open discussion format was not restrictive enough. Students who wanted to speak but were not assertive enough to jump into the discussion felt that they were unable to participate. At the suggestion of their teacher, they decided to use a stuffed toy bear to symbolize permission to speak. The students would raise their hands if they wanted to speak. The bear would be passed from student to student. Only if they held the bear were they allowed to speak. The teacher asked that all students be aware to pass the bear evenly around to those with their hands raised so that everyone would have an equal opportunity to share their ideas and opinions.

One particular short story was focused upon for this pilot study — "To Serve Man" by Damon Knight. After the reading, students became extremely involved in the discussion. They focused on the intentions of the Kanamit aliens. They discussed why Grigori wanted to translate the Kanamit language. They wanted to understand why Grigori didn't trust the Kanamit. They discussed why the Kanamit brought the people of Earth peace, unlimited power and an end to hunger when they were just going to eat the humans. They wanted to know when [in the story] did Grigori know that the Kanamit were going to eat the humans. The students' enthusiasm in the discussion showed that they were extremely interested in the story and enjoyed the reading process. They felt comfortable in the discussion, feeling free to express their thoughts and to disagree with each other. They turned to the text to seek and show proof for their ideas to their peers. The aesthetic reading approach proved to be successful. The students looked forward to reading new stories and discussing their thoughts on the meaning.

However, when the efferent assignment was introduced — students were to write a summary of the story from beginning, to middle, to end using only four sentences or less — their enthusiasm decreased. Even though they still remembered that they liked the story and many students still rated the story with four stars (the highest rating meaning excellent), they did not reveal the same enthusiasm to continue reading more stories because they knew that meant writing more summaries. Although summarizing is an important step in reading comprehension and it does help to solidify the student's ability to retell the story, actually doing the writing of the summary proves to decrease the student's enthusiasm to read, diminishing the possibility of making a life-long reader.

Even though an aesthetic reading approach was used in the beginning of the process, the move to the efferent, although necessary, lessened the students' desires to read.

Case Study: The Giver by Lois Lowry

Over a three-week time period, the students in my 6th grade Language Arts class took part in a reading unit focusing on the novel, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. We began the unit with a discussion of "The Reading Experience." The purpose was clearly stated to the students in both verbal and written form. The unit focuses the students' reading experiences on their responses to literature. They will read the novel with the purpose of truly understanding literature as an art form. They are the meaning makers. Not the author, not their teacher, but they, the readers, will find and determine the meaning of the book.

The students were then introduced to the response-based discussion process and its benefits. They would first, while reading, come to their own personal conclusions of what was interesting, meaningful, and important in the story. Next, they would bring their conclusions to class ready to discuss their ideas with their classmates. During the discussion, they would share their ideas, questions, and conclusions as well as listen to the opinions and interpretations of others. After listening to the voices of other students, they would confirm, change, or add to their own original opinions and interpretations. Finally, they would decide upon the meaning of the book — their own interpretation of the purpose and importance of the book.

The students were next introduced to the assignments that they would need to complete throughout the unit. First, they would read the novel individually to

themselves. Some class time would be given to read, but most of the reading would need to be done at home. During the reading process, the students would keep a journal of their reading called a "Reader Response Journal." In this journal they would document their reading process. For example, they would write their thoughts and feelings about the reading. What did they like? What surprised or shocked them? What did they not like? If they find that at times they are confused by the story, they might then include questions they have about the reading in their journals. At times, as they continue to read further along in the story, they will discover that they will be able to answer some of their own questions. In their journals they are to write down these answers to their questions. This self-questioning and self-answering is part of the reading process. As they read, they will also determine their own ideas about the meaning of the book or perhaps a particular passage or chapter in the book. This is their interpretation of the reading and needs to be included in their journals. In addition, the students were encouraged to write predictions about the story for they might find it fun to check their predictions after they have read on to see whether or not they were correct.

At different times during class, I would ask them to answer prompted questions in their journals about their reading, questions which are designed to help them further think about the meaning of the book and to be better prepared to participate in class discussions. These questions are pulled from a combination of Zarillo's (1991) three leveled questions and Probst's (1994) five-leveled question and discussion process previously mentioned in the above literature review. Some of the questions that were asked throughout the unit are: What caught your interest most? What pleased, frightened or surprised you? What troubled you? Did anything seem annoying, familiar, or weird?

What was important to you? What did you feel while you were reading? What things in your own life paralleled those in the story? What memory does the work call to mind - of people, places, events, or perhaps even, feelings or attitudes? What movies or previous books that you have read can you compare this story to?

In addition to helping the students come to class prepared and ready to discuss the book, the purpose of the reading journal was also to help them come to their conclusion about the meaning of the book. In order to accomplish this, they would also be asked to journal at the end of each class discussion. They would write what they felt about the discussion and how it affected the opinions which they had brought with them to class at the discussion's beginning. Did they change their minds after hearing the new ideas presented by other students or the debates that arose from student disagreements, or did they come out of the discussion feeling more strongly about their original ideas?

Next, the students were given a brief introduction to the second assignment, the "Reader Response Book." They were told that this assignment would help to develop and document their individual reading process and experience. Eleven individual assignments would be available. They were to complete six of the eleven — three required and three of their choice. The three required assignments were entitled, "Your Opinion," "Predictions," and "Quotable Quotations." Other possible assignments were "Cornering the Conflict," "Problems and Solutions," "Fitting the Character to a T," "Compare-Contrast Map," "Open Mind," "Posting Postcards," "Points of Decision," and "It's in the Mail: Letters That Tell All." The three required assignments would be given during the reading of the novel. The three student chosen assignments were to be completed after the students complete the novel.

The grading of both assignments, the "Reader Response Journal" and the "Reader Response Book," were also explained to the students. I informed them again that there are no correct answers and that they were not to try to figure out what I believe to be the meaning of the book. My ideas are only a few of the many different possibilities. For this reason, their thoughts and ideas expressed in both assignments cannot be wrong as long as they can provide support for their ideas. In other words, they can't say a story takes place on Mars if the story specifically states it takes place on Venus. Since they cannot be wrong, since there is not one correct answer, their response journals and response books would not be graded on right or wrong, but rather they would be graded on completeness and effort. Their effort equals their grade. Finally, the students were told that the final assignment, which would tie all that they learn together, would be introduced after they finish reading and discussing the book.

Before beginning the book, the students were asked to make their first entry into their reader response journals. A series of questions about reading in general were placed on the overhead. These questions included: Do you like to read? What do you like to read? Do the people you live with like to read? What do they read? Who is a good reader you know? What makes that person a good reader? What would you like to do better as a reader? Do you think you are a good reader? When you read a book, what is going on in your head? The purpose of this questioning was to focus the students on their past experiences as readers. Would how they view themselves as readers change from the reader response experience we would undertake as a class with our novel?

After the students completed their journal entry on reading, they received their copies of *The Giver*. Before beginning to read, they were asked to, without opening the

book, read the back of the book, look at the cover, and make their first prediction. What do you think the book is going to be about? What do you think is going to happen in the book? After writing their predictions in their journals, the students shared their predictions in small groups and then with the whole class. This format was the model for the remainder of the discussion process. After the students shared their predictions, they began reading the book.

The class discussions of the novel began on day two and ended on day nine. Prior to the day's discussion, students answered prompted questions as mentioned above in their journals. The students were also to review what they wrote in their journals from their reading homework. The new journal entry together with the reading review was to help them prepare for the discussion.

The first discussion was held in small groups with their regular table groups. The group membership included from four to six students. Students came prepared with questions which members of their groups immediately tried to answer. Sometimes students referred back to the text to support their answers or to prove their answers to their peers. One student began right away with his interpretation of the book as he compared it to government control. Other students mentioned how they found certain aspects of the book to be "weird." Weird was a termed used often by the students throughout the entire unit in reference to the book. One student linked his interpretation, that someone else was living Jonas' life, to a dream he had of someone else who looked like him and went to school in his place. Other students compared *The Giver* to movies they had seen such as, *The Truman Show, The Matrix* and *Pleasantville*. Because the characters have "no choice in marriage," a few students compared the novel to *Mulan* and

the matchmaker in *Fiddler on the Roof.* In the movie comparisons, some students mentioned that they "had not read enough yet to see if there is more of a connection." Such a statement suggests that these students will continue thinking of movie connections while they read. Allowing students the freedom to focus their reading on their interests helps to increase their desires to continue reading.

I was quite surprised at the level of high order thinking skills being used by the students on just the first day of discussion. One student compared the perfect world in *The Giver* to the perfect world of Barbies (the toy dolls). She continued to repeat her theory throughout the discussion. Throughout her reading of the novel, she continued to build upon her theory which she presented and supported in her final product.

Other days of class discussion began with a couple of minutes of journal review or a combination of both teacher prompted discussion questions and journal review. Student groups varied from regular assigned seats to student chosen discussion groups. After most small group discussions, the class would meet together and hold a whole class discussion, sharing what was brought up in their groups. At the students' requests, they took turns speaking with "the passing of the bear." The students could only speak if they held a stuffed toy bear. They would raise their hands if they had something to say. The teacher passes the bear out the first time and reminds the students to be considerate, allowing everyone equal opportunity to speak. The students pass the bear to each other for the remainder of the discussion time. The process of passing the bear is explained in more detail in the "Procedures" section above. The teacher does not participate in the whole class discussion except to request that the bear be passed to a student who has raised his or her hand but has not yet had the opportunity to speak, or to ask students to

focus on a student's question allowing enough time to address the idea or formulate a possible answer before moving onto a new idea or a new question.

Throughout the discussion process, the students continued to pose questions for each other which were enthusiastically answered by their peers.

Student #1: "What do you think releasing is?"

Student #2: "There is a door. They go out it and out of the community."

In another small group:

Student #1: "Is it the rules they have to share feelings or is it just the family?"

Student #2: "They share to help keep them perfect, so they don't go to bed mad."

Student #3: "What is released?"

Student #2: "I think released means they kill them."

Student #2 looks to the text to support her ideas of released equaling killing by finding a passage that explains they release the old. A few other students in her group also pick up their books so they can look along with her and see the passages that support her theory with their own eyes.

In another class on another day, students asked fewer questions focusing instead on sharing their ideas. Little disagreement occurred. Most of the discussion simply continued to build upon itself.

Student #1: "They take a pill for what they are feeling."

Student #2: "They are never going to know how they feel for anyone. It is like *The Truman Show*."

Student #3: "Men are given wives."

Student #4: "They are like dogs...treated like animals."

Student #3: "Do they take pills when they have stirrings even when they are nine?"

(Together the students clarify that they take the pills whenever they get the stirrings.)

Student #5: "It's like a cult. The government is doing something fishy."

Student #6: "I would never give up my child."

Student #4: "You may hate who they give you."

Student #2: "But that's why they give the pills. It kills the emotions."

Student #5: "They're emotion killers. Emotion killer pills."

Student #4: "Who wants to share their feelings with their parents."

Student #1: "They don't have friends come over. They can't feel, hate, like."

Student #5: "Jonas doesn't want to take pills. He wants to feel emotions."

Student #2: "That's why he is going to be the Giver."

Student #4: "The whole community is like one huge family."

Student #5: "Pills are ruining everything!"

Throughout this discussion, the students revealed their enthusiasm and interest in the story line. They brought their opinions to the discussion and began to formulate their interpretations of the book. I, as their teacher, did not participate in the discussion at all, but rather sat on the side and listened. The students ignored me and focused on the novel, sharing their ideas and listening to the ideas of their peers.

After the small group discussions, when the whole class joined back together to discuss the novel, the students continued focusing on the issues and pieces of the story

that interested them such as: feelings, sharing, lying, color, sameness, love, rules. They tied the rules to a past social studies lesson on Legalism, an ancient Chinese philosophy filled with strict rules that were applied by force. As a class, they continued to ask each other questions about the memories and the rules. As their reading of the story progressed, their discussions focused more on characters such as Jonas' best friend Asher and the prior Receiver, Rosemary. The class discussed whether or not Asher was a good friend. They also wanted to talk about Rosemary, questioning if she killed herself. The release of Rosemary brought a solemn feel to the discussion as students expressed their emotions of sadness and upset feelings. They also began to feel sorry for the Giver.

Beginning on day six, I began to ask the students what they believed to be the meaning of the book. I again stressed how they could decide upon any meaning as long as they could support it. The ideas raised varied.

Student #1: "The world is too 'squeaky' clean."

Student #2: "The people are all machines."

Student #3: "They are 'color blind'."

Student #4: "Non-learning of the true nature of the earth/world."

Student #5: "One person has the honor to receive the burden of tragedy because no one else could stand it."

Student #6: "No point in living because it is all black and white with too many laws."

Student #7: "It is our world in the future because of crime and pollution."

Student #8: "It is *The Third Rock from the Sun.*"

Student #9: "Be more appreciative of what you have, color, choices."

The discussion process continued until day nine much as it had been. The students discuss the ideas that interest them, agree or disagree with each other, and raise questions pertaining to the parts of the book they find confusing. Throughout the discussions held as a whole class, I would periodically ask students to think about what the book means to them. On the final day, the students have finished reading the book. The discussion is based upon what they thought about the ending while they also really began to focus on their interpretations of the meaning of the book. They are asked to answer the following questions honestly and with detail in their journals.

1. What is the significance? What is important about the story to you?
2. What did you think about when you finished reading the story?
3. What does the story mean to you? What is your theme? Your interpretation?

After reviewing the students' journals, I recognized a common connection. What was important to the students was similar to their interpretation of the meaning of the book. Through the journaling and discussion process, the students became able to express their thoughts and feelings about the book as a whole. They were not limiting themselves to focus on one scene or incident that they felt connected to or interested in while they were reading. They were able to connect all of their interests from the past few days, all of their ideas, and formulate an overarching idea for the book's meaning. Their interpretations developed out of what was important to them, and the message and purpose of the book stemmed from what they felt. Since many different ideas and opinions were raised, it became clear that throughout the process, they began to feel comfortable making up their own minds about the meaning. They began to determine what was significant for themselves as the readers. Although some students did choose

to agree with the ideas of other students rather than to search within themselves to determine their own feelings, the majority of the students had original thoughts about the book that differed from their friends and peers. Their journals also revealed many different viewpoints about the book.

Student #1: "Jonas, the Giver and Gabrielle wanted to be free."

Student #2: "Jonas finally got out of the 'perfect' world. He was placed into a world that he did not fit into."

Student #3: Connecting to this student's thoughts about the ending of the book, "I feel that every person in that community has just been born."

Student #4: "I think it was cool how sameness wasn't everywhere. I think Jonas died at the top of the hill. It kind of says to me that home is what you make it."

Student #5: "What is my interpretation of this book? I thought it was for you to be happy with what you have."

Student #6: "I liked [the book] but if I was in this book I would not be able to stand all of this because if they chose me to be a Birthmother I wouldn't want to be that."

Student #7: "The most important part was when he knew about war and pain, love and happiness. I thought this story tells you how you have to live with feelings."

Student #8: "I think this story tells me not to be confined and if you really want to be free, do what you need to."

Student #9: "I think the story means that there isn't always a perfect world to live in because later on you'll find the true meaning of the world."

Student #10: "My theme is that these people are programmed by their community by shots and medication."

After the students wrote about their ideas in their journals, they had to officially formulate their opinions about the meaning of the book into writing. In an attempt to stay away from the confines of traditional essays, the students created a "Literature Interpretation Pie." In the top crust of their pie, they wrote their interpretation of the meaning of the book. In the filling of the pie they drew three different fruits. Within each fruit they had to have text support for their interpretation. To do this they needed to choose three different pieces or moments of the story that supported their meaning. One of these had to be a quote from the book with a page number reference. Stemming from each of the three different textual supporting fruit, the students were to have three supporting details that would explain how those elements of the text support their interpretation of the book's meaning. In the bottom crust the students were to place any final thoughts about the book. In other words, although the students did not write an actual essay, they created an outline of one in which they organized and presented their thoughts in complete sentences. Added to the written portion is the artistic. The students must draw the pie, its fruit filling, add color and cut out the pie shape to complete the pie product. In celebration of the students' hard work, a pie party was held. The students ate real pie as a reward for their effort and achievements throughout the entire process of the unit, "The Reading Experience."

The unit ended with the final journal entry in which the students, themselves, evaluated the reading process. After they had a chance to think about each of the following questions and respond on their own, we had one final whole class discussion where the students could hear the opinions of their peers.

1. Rate *The Giver*: 4 = Excellent, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor
2. Explain your rating.
3. Evaluate the discussion process. Give it a letter grade. Explain your evaluation. Give me feedback.
4. Which was your favorite assignment?
5. Which assignment did you like the least?

The students appeared to be honest with their answers. The ratings of the book varied from 1 to 4. From the in class comments and the reader response journals, most students seem to have enjoyed reading the book. Many students mentioned that they liked the book once they read past the beginning. Most students expressed that they did not like the ending because it was too vague for them. They wanted to know what happened to Jonas and Gabriel. Some students believe that the ending is a set-up for a sequel.

The evaluation of the discussion process was a positive one. The majority of the students gave the process a letter grade of "A". They mentioned that it helped them to remember the book better. They enjoyed being able to share their ideas. Some students mentioned that they preferred sharing opinions rather than memorizing facts, because when they memorize facts they don't enjoy the book. When they read and have to figure out what the book is about [on their own] they enjoy [the book] more. Their answers

"stuck" in their heads. When they had to remember specific teacher answers, they would forget them.

The assignments they enjoyed and those they disliked varied tremendously. No one assignment was disliked by all students and no assignment was enjoyed by all. There appeared to have been enough variety so that every student found at least one way that they could enjoy presenting their ideas about the book.

It is important to mention my role as the teacher during the discussion process. During the first and second day of the discussions, I sat with one or two small groups and would at times act as a participant in the discussions. What I found, however, was that my participation interfered with the flow of the discussions and stifled student participation. They were more inclined to talk and seek approval from me. When a student mentioned something that happened incorrectly in the book, I would ask the students to review the text and seek the correct answer. The discussion would quiet down and fewer words, thoughts, and student opinions were expressed. I found that the student discussions flourished best when I did not participate as a group member. At times I would still ask questions along with the students pertaining to what they brought to the discussion already. I sometimes checked with groups to see if they were having fun and enjoying the discussion. I would encourage a quiet student to enter the discussion rather than remain silent so that his or her opinions would also be heard. I also would state that I enjoyed seeing their enthusiasm to debate issues when their opinions differed, and I encouraged their interaction with the text as they would look to the book to prove support for their ideas. When my verbal interaction was limited, the small group discussions were much more productive and enjoyed by the students.

In whole class discussions, when the students decided that they wanted to continue with "the passing of the bear" to talk, I, too, followed this rule. Throughout the discussions, I limited my contributions to comments such as, "What an interesting idea. Let's focus on that for a while. Who else would like to add to [student's] interpretation?" Or, if a question was asked and not answered, "Let's go back to [student's] question." I limited my role in the whole class discussion to that of the facilitator, making sure the remarks were never hurtful toward another student or group of people and making sure every student who wanted to speak had the opportunity to speak.

Throughout the discussion process, most students appeared to enjoy participating and being able to share their thoughts. However, I found that since I, as their teacher, also never confirmed whether or not any of their thoughts were right or wrong, this sense of ambiguity caused some students to feel as though the book was confusing. In many of their journals, the students wrote that they were confused by the book, confused by the ending. Some said they didn't like the book because they were confused. Yet, when I reviewed the comments that took place during the discussions and their written work, I did not find confusion. The students mentioned every important aspect of the book that I could have possibly wanted them to find and others that I had never thought of. The students truly seemed to have analyzed and interpreted a meaning of the book from the contents and events that took place inside the story. They moved beyond a simple retelling of what took place and could clearly express what they believed to be the message of the book, providing equally clear support of their ideas. They evaluated and responded to the literature at an extremely high level of thinking, which I believe to be advanced for their sixth grade level. However, clearly they were not comfortable with

the sense of ambiguity created through the process of reader response theory, where there is no "one" answer. Perhaps the next step would be to help the students to become more comfortable with ambiguity. Perhaps I needed to express to the students that their answers were right because they clearly presented them and supported them. Perhaps I was so concerned about stifling their thoughts that I did not give them enough positive feedback to give them individual confidence in knowing that their ideas and interpretations were valid and important.

Although the students stated that they were confused, they clearly enjoyed the reading process. They enjoyed participating in the discussions. They felt confident in their interpretations of the book and were able to present them clearly.

Discoveries

As the unit and discussions progressed, the students became more comfortable with the process and easily bypassed the need to direct their comments to their teacher. They stopped looking at me during the discussions and spoke directly to their classmates. The more they became engaged in the discussion process, the more they increased their high order thinking skills and began to discuss issues rather than to retell events in the story. They began to discuss issues within the book that were important to them and compared these issues to their lives and the world around them. They began to think more abstractly, focusing in on symbols which would provide reason for their thoughts and opinions. They would seek proof from the text as they agreed or disagreed with each other. The critical thinking levels of the discussion moved beyond what I had hoped for. The students discussed issues I had not thought of and came to profound conclusions I had not seen. The unit moved beyond my expectations, developing into an analysis of

the literature at a level that surprised and excited me as a teacher. Literature interpretation can be successfully taught to sixth graders. Important life issues can be found and discussed by the students in the sixth grade middle school classroom.

In my classroom, possibly because they wanted to participate in the discussion, almost all of my students kept up with the reading assignment and completed the book on time. The students were enthused and excited to participate in the literature discussions, which increased their desires to read. A few students, who had fallen behind on their reading, were visually upset with themselves and worked extra hard to catch up with the class.

Another positive result of the reader response unit is the overall improvement of reading speed and fluency. In fact, one parent mentioned to me that her son's reading ability has greatly improved. Prior to this year, he would struggle to complete a book over a twelve-week period. Now he reads a book a month.

"The Reader Response Book" was less successful. Perhaps I did not give enough time to the assignment. If I had provided more guidance on how to complete each assignment and given more time for the students to work on the assignments, the student results might have been more successful. The results I found were poor effort and low quality of work. However, ironically, in their journals it was often the assignment that many students mentioned they had enjoyed the most.

After completion of this study, an increased enthusiasm to learn has spread throughout my entire curriculum. Students have become more confident in their opinions and have learned to value, even though they might disagree, with the opinions of others. Although they still felt some levels of uncertainty since they did not receive teacher

confirmation of their ideas, they have reached a higher level of self-efficacy proven by their continued higher performance on tasks. The final assignment of the unit, the pie, was more difficult. Many students stressed how they struggled with the assignment; however, they all completed and turned in the assignment. The quality of work was profound. This high performance on tasks has also spread throughout all class assignments. Students are more interested in participating in other assignments as well as reading. Homework submission has increased to almost 100 percent. Student effort and success in assignments has increased as well as student grades. The atmosphere is more positive and student confidence has risen.

Reader response theory makes reading real and exciting for students. They become personally involved in the reading process. This enthusiasm leads them to become successful readers who enjoy reading as well as successful, confidant learners in other areas of study. My students are excited to continue learning.

Conclusions

If literature books are used solely to teach the elements of literature, they become textbooks rather than art. If a teacher wishes for a literature book to remain viewed by the students as art, then a combination of aesthetic and efferent teaching must occur. There needs to be a movement from the aesthetic to the efferent. Each needs to be taught in connection with the other, taking into consideration the important needs of each other.

Students should explore literature from their personal experience, learning about themselves and those around them as they discover and develop their interpretation about the meaning of the text. Only after they have had the opportunity to make the meaning of

the text their own, can they begin to move from the aesthetic experience to the efferent. Students will be able to take what they have learned aesthetically about the characters and translate their knowledge into a lesson on the protagonist and antagonist characters. They can take their understanding of the story's setting and begin to examine how it affects the story's plot and their interpretation of the meaning. They can take their interpretation of the book and write a response to literature paper. From the reader response method they can still value and enjoy the reading experience and process while also meeting learning standards and more traditional educational requirements. The literature canon does not need to be an efferent textbook. It, too, can be art if it is first presented as art.

Never should a reading experience be entirely efferent. Reading is personal. The transaction of the reader and the text must always occur. If the reader is not allowed to see the meaning through their experiences and is limited to the thoughts and insights of others, then they are just reading a textbook rather than a novel. They are reading a textbook in search of another person's experiences that are wrongly assumed to be the "correct answer." The students are forced to undergo a predetermined process of dissecting a story for elements separate from meaning. The purpose and intention of the novel is ruined, and the experience is lessened to the memorization of facts rather than the discovery of meaning.

This is not to say, however, that it is not important to separate some reading experiences as entirely aesthetic. To guide students toward the goal of becoming life-long readers who thoroughly enjoy the reading experience, some literature needs to be experienced solely as art in which the reader is allowed to read purely for enjoyment. The experience needs to remain personal, never taking part in efferent reading lessons.

Throughout their lives, students should be allowed to choose books that they find interesting and read these books solely for themselves without having to focus on character, plot, setting or a writing assignment. Students should be allowed to enjoy their reading, discuss what interests them, determine their interpretation of meaning — of what made the book wonderful to them, and be allowed to move onto the next book that interests them. This is the "free reading" process which will truly create excitement for reading, helping to develop life-long readers who enjoy and "love" to read.

Implications

It is the teacher's responsibility to find the spark of interest within the students. The teacher must create a literature curriculum that focuses and builds upon the interests of the students. This can be accomplished through the use of reader response theory.

A literature program must always include the aesthetic reading experience. When the time to teach the elements of literature occurs, the lessons must begin with the aesthetic and move to the efferent when the students are ready. This will keep the literature as an art form which students may enjoy. As the students mature, through their desire to discuss how the literary work connects and is important to them, they will see the need to discuss the character, setting, and plot, so they might better articulate their personal connection and interest to their peers as well as the teacher.

Reader response theory has been in practice for years. Many teachers have been using the aesthetic reading experience to teach students to enjoy and become life-long readers. However, even though teachers discover this vitally important method in

teaching reading, they are still faced with requests to teach programs that are purely efferent. This has happened to me this year, right after I completed my study. My school purchased a reading program with the intention of improving students' reading comprehension skills, to make them more successful readers. The students read a book and answer questions on a computer to show their comprehension of the book. The questions are predetermined by the software manufacturer. They are not based upon student interest, but on the assumed "right" answers for the text. This will again train students to read for answers requested by others. The program then places the student on a graph to record their reading successes and failures.

Next year, I will try to incorporate this reading program within my classroom while still beginning with an aesthetic reading experience. Perhaps through this combination and fluid learning movement, my students will still find an enthusiasm and desire to read. However, I hope to also be able to continue guiding them toward an understanding that their insights into the text are just as valuable and correct as those predetermined by other "specialists." I must somehow still guide my students toward an understanding that ambiguity is helpful for the reading process because the reader is the meaning maker. As they grow up and develop through new life experiences, they will discover new meanings and their interpretations in the literature they read will continually change and reform. As they, grow so will the meaning.

References

Carico, Kathleen M. Responses of Four Adolescent Females to Adolescent Fiction with Strong Female Characters. Eric. 1996.

Golden, Joanne M. & Handloff, Elaine. (1993). Responding to literature through journal writing. Journeying: Children Responding to Literature. Holland, Kathleen E., Ed. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Johns, Jerry L. & Davis, Susan J. Integrating Literature into the Middle School Reading Classrooms. Eric Digest. 1990.

Langer, Judith A. Discussion as Exploration: Literature and the Horizon of Possibilities. Eric. 1991.

Langer, Judith A. Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction. Eric. 1991.

McGee, Lea M. Focus on research: exploring the literature-based reading revolution. Language Arts, 69. November 1992.

Menexas, Vicky. Efferent and aesthetic stance: understanding the definition of Lois Lowry's *The Giver* as metaphor. Journal of Children's Literature, 23. No. 2. Fall 1997.

Pradl, Gordon M. Reading and democracy: the enduring influence of Louise Rosenblatt. New Advocate, 9. No. 1. Winter 1996.

Probst, Robert E. Response-based teaching of literature. English Journal, 70. No. 7. November 1981.

Probst, Robert E. Reader-response theory and the English curriculum. English Journal, 83. No. 3. March 1994.

Pugh, Sharon L. Teaching Children to Appreciate Literature. Eric Digest, Number 1. 1988.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. (1965). Literature as Exploration. New York: The Modern Language Association.

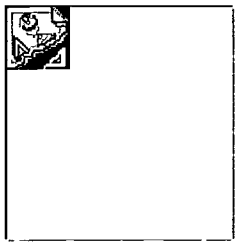
Rosenblatt, Loise M. (1993) The literary transaction: evocation and response. Journeying: Children Responding to Literature. Holland, Kathleen E., Ed. New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Spiegel, Dixie Lee. Reader response approaches and the growth of readers. Language Arts, 76. No 1. September 1998.

Whitin, Phyllis. Opening potential: visual response to literature. Language Arts, 71. No. 2. February 1994.

Wilson, Lionel. The reader's contribution in the literary experience: interview with Louise Rosenblatt. English Quarterly, 14. No. 1. Spring 1981.

Zarrillo, James. Theory becomes practice: aesthetic teaching with literature. New Advocate, 4. No.4. Fall 1991.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

CS 217 555

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Literature-Based Exploration: Efferent and Aesthetic	
Author(s): Kathryn Prather	
Corporate Source: Dominican University of California	Publication Date: May 2001

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to al Level 2B documents
Level 1	**Level 2A**	**Level 2B**
☑	☐	☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: Kathryn Prather	Printed Name/Position/Title: Kathryn Prather, Teacher, 6th grade, Language Arts, American Canyon Middle School	
Organization/Address: 1144 Baywood Drive, #86 Petaluma, CA 94954	Telephone: (707) 782-9330	Fax:
	E-mail Address: Kprather2000@earthlink.net	Date: 5/11/01

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706
Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)