HELPING STUDENTS CHART STEREOTYPES IN LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

The definition of literacy has expanded to include not only the ability to read and write, but also the ability to analyze what we read and write. The purpose of this paper is to suggest ideas we educationists can use to help our students to do a particular kind of analysis. This analysis involves recognizing the many stereotypes which exist in literature and developing ways to examine these stereotypes after they have been recognized.

The paper has two main parts. In the first part, some current thinking on the nature of the stereotypes and the role of schools in their propagation, as well as in their analysis, is reviewed. In the second part, suggestions are described and exemplified for some classroom techniques - to be used mainly with the reading of literature - which may help students to become more fully literate.

This second part of the paper is the key one, and I would like to ask those of you listening to the paper and those who read it later to please contact me to share your experiences in this matter. Such a sharing is necessary, I believe, because, while much has been written on the need to help students become analytical readers and much theoretical work has been done on the processes involved in critical reading, I have seen little in terms of actual classroom activities. This gaping wound between theory and practice needs to be closed.

PART I - THEORY

Definition of Stereotypes and How They Are Learned

One dictionary defines a stereotype as a "Fixed, formalized, or standardized (and therefore perhaps false) phrase, idea, [or] belief" (Hornby, 1974:847). Stereotypes can be seen as part of the taken-for-granted knowledge passed on to the young as part of the socialization process. Language plays the central role in passing on this information which children use to construct cognitive maps of their worlds, including their own self-images. Dorfman (1983) sees much literature as shaping children's perspectives for the worse by the images it projects on such themes as violence, love, success, power, and materialism.

In many cultures, written language, e.g., literature, is an especially potent tool of the socialization achieved through passing on stereotypes, because the written word is seen as having special power for representing objective reality (Bowers, 1987). People often lose sight of the fact that the

written word is no more than a reflection of those people who produced it (Halliday, 1982). Schools, places where the written word reigns, also have a special place in the socialization of the young because school is where students learn much of the symbolic knowledge used to conceptualize their experience in life. Additionally, schools present information to students about aspects of life with which they lack direct experience. Literature is one means by which schools provide this symbolic knowledge.

People, myself included, are often completely unaware of the stereotypes and other taken-for-granted knowledge we have received in schools and elsewhere; it just seems natural to us. As a Malay proverb says:

> Hidup dikandung adat;
> Mati dikandung tanah.
>
> (In life, by custom hedged around;
> In death, we lie wrapped in the ground.
> Men are helpless creatures pent in their own environment).
> (Hamilton, 1982:10-11)

As a result of this socialization to stereotypes, we often make what we think are rational, reasoned decisions based on what we believe are our own views, without realizing that "[We] are under the authority of the language systems . . . of the culture that makes thought and communication possible" (Bowers, 1987:5). It should be noted that this socialization process is, however, not without cracks. Given the nature of human thinking, we cannot be completely molded; we necessarily develop somewhat unique perspectives. This human trait is expressed in another Malay proverb:

> Kerbau sekawan dapat dikandang,
> Manusia seorang tiada terkawal.
>
> (A herd of water buffaloes can at least be penned;
> A single human being oft is more than we can tend).
> (Hamilton, 1982:52-53)

Many an exasperated parent or teacher will attest to the validity of this proverb.

Promoting Awareness and Analysis of Stereotypes

The socialization which the young undergo is not necessarily negative. In fact, the socialization process is essential because sharing knowledge with the young gives them the benefit of accumulated human experience (Bowers, 1987). The young need to use this experience and to build on it. Thus, socialization should not, indeed it cannot, be eliminated. Neither is it a matter of teachers substituting socialization of students to the dominant culture with socialization to teachers' views.

Instead, what is being advocated here is that students be helped to bring to consciousness taken-for-granted knowledge, including stereotypes, so that it can be examined and, on the basis of awareness, accepted, rejected, or placed in a file

marked "needs more thought" (Fetterley, 1978; Spolsky, 1989). In this way, students have opportunities to consciously draw their own cognitive maps, rather than having them superimposed from outside without their own understanding. Literature can play an important part in the consciousization, because literature has traditionally dealt with themes underlying human existence (Bowers, 1987). As part of this process, special attention, I believe, should be paid to inaccurate stereotypes which have promoted injustice and discrimination.

Bowers (1987; 1993) presents ideas for exploring whether formal education limits students to learning only this taken-for-granted knowledge, such as stereotypes, or whether education helps expand learners' horizons by enabling them to make informed choices about whether or not to accept the taken-for-granted views being passed on to them. He recommends three principles that educationists can consider in helping students bring to light taken-for-granted knowledge.

The first principle, according to Bowers, for helping students become aware of taken-for-granted knowledge is to include students' phenomenological culture by encouraging them to describe and think about their own thoughts and feelings and also to find out about the thoughts and feelings of people in their families and communities. Secondly, a historical perspective can help students realize that people's thoughts and beliefs are not necessarily fixed. Instead, these often change over time and will almost certainly continue to change in the future. Such a historical perspective can help students see when and how today's stereotypes originated. Thirdly, a cross-cultural perspective can teach students a similar lesson about the diversity of thoughts and beliefs and can help them see that the ways into which they have been socialized are not necessarily the only, or natural ways.

Something I overheard one day while walking up the stairs to my RELC office, may illustrate the point that exposure to different cultures makes possible, but does not guarantee an understanding that the way to which we have been socialized is not necessarily the natural, or the only natural, way to do something. I was walking up the left side of the stairs. Two girls who appeared to be about 14-years-old came running down the stairs and almost crashed into me. After they had swerved to avoid me, one of them said to the other, in an American accent, "Oh yeah, they even walk on the wrong side of the stairs here." (In America, people drive and, usually, walk on the right side.) Maybe that particular person needed a little more exposure to other perspectives before she understood.

Stereotypes and Reading

There are many types of stereotypes which appear in the literature young people read. These all merit consideration. Some researchers focus on stereotypes they believe are unjust and harmful. For example, Lai (1981) condemns racist stereotypes in fiction for young people about Southeast Asia. Rigg, Kazemek, and Hudelson (1993) report that in regard to the elderly, a key weakness of young people's literature is not that older people are portrayed unfairly, but that they seldom appear. Among the other subjects of negative stereotypes, according to some researchers, are females (Dorfman, 1983),

gays (Nelson, 1993), the environment (Bowers, 1993), poor people (Christensen, 1991), and the handicapped (Freudenstein, 1992).

Two mutually reinforcing and compatible approaches have been suggested for dealing with negative stereotypes in the materials students read. One approach is to replace materials which propagate such stereotypes with more positive materials. However, as Brown (1989) points out, stereotypes do exist in our cultures. To present students with a picture of a bias-free society is, first of all, probably impossible, and, secondly, would leave them unprepared to face the world as it is actually constructed. Thus, a second approach to stereotypes is also needed. Such an approach prepares students to recognize stereotypes, to understand why they exist, and to think about their validity. If a stereotype is found to be invalid, then students can think about ways to rectify the situation.

Helping students think about stereotypes in what they read means that we need to encourage students not just to perform the act of reading, i.e., going from the beginning of a text through to the end. Instead, they should be developing and exercising intellectual control as they read (Hirsch, 1989). Intellectual control involves considering how they, the authors, and others make meaning by examining the taken-for-granted knowledge or schema (Anderson & Pearson, 1988) of those involved in the creation and comprehension of written texts.

Can Students Recognize and Analyze Stereotypes?

But are students ready to do this complex thinking? Some educationists would argue that many students, even in secondary school, lack the ability to do this kind of reflective thinking. This may be part of the reason that many schools stress the reading and writing of narrative texts, which are seen as being more fun and less challenging. In the same way, when reading narrative prose, the emphasis is often only on understanding it well enough to enjoy the story or to pass an exam. While these may be important, some educationists shy away from engaging students, especially those at lower proficiency levels, in serious discussion of the themes involved in literature.

Martin (1989), however, argues that children, even in elementary school, are capable of analytical thinking and are able to perform the cognitive processes usually associated with understanding and creating expository prose. Denying them the opportunity to do this, Martin contends, is disempowering, leaving students unprepared for the types of reading, writing, and thinking which are valued in many societies. The point is not that reading and writing narrative texts involves less complex cognitive processes - the activities in Section Two are examples of complex thinking done with narrative - but that the types of school activities usually associated with narrative involve lower status types of thinking compared to the reading and writing activities which often accompany expository texts.

Further, Martin believes that students can and should learn about language's role as a mechanism of control over the self and others. Such knowledge provides students with greater control over their lives. Similarly, Freire (1968) sees

literacy as a tool for increasing one's knowledge of and control over one's world. In his literacy work with poor people in Brazil, Freire believes in their ability to use reading and writing as a path toward understanding society and changing it for the better, not as a way to pass a test or to further one's own career. In other words, to Freire, students are capable of reading and writing the world as they read and write the word.

Believing that students are incapable of the kind of higher order thinking needed to analyze what they read forgets the tremendous complexity of the reading act itself, even at low levels of proficiency (Hirsch, 1989). Cognitive psychologists have emphasized the complicated interactive nature of the reading process. Along these lines, Resnick (1987:8) argues that:

> The term "higher order" skills is probably itself fundamentally misleading, for it suggests that another set of skills, presumably called "lower order," needs to come first. This assumption--that there is a sequence from lower level activities that do not require much independent thinking or judgment to higher level ones that do--colors much educational theory and practice. Implicitly at least, it justifies long years of drill on the "basics" before thinking and problem solving are demanded. Cognitive research on the nature of basic skills such as reading ... provides a fundamental challenge to this assumption."

To summarize the ideas in Part I, stereotypes are part of the normal socialization process and, in that capacity, play a valuable role in educating the young. At the same time, to be fully literate, we need to recognize and analyze the stereotypes we have learned. Schools, are important places, both for the dissemination of stereotypes, as well as for their analysis. Reading instruction, in particular, and literacy instruction, generally, provide important avenues for this analysis. All students should be given opportunities to travel those avenues. Martin (1989), puts this well. In the epilogue to his book, he writes:

> Conscious knowledge of language and the way it functions in social contexts then enables us to make choices, to exercise control. As long as we are ignorant of language, it and ideological systems it embraces control us. Learning about language means learning to choose. . . . Knowledge is power. Meaning is choice. Please choose" (pp. 62-63).

PART II - PRACTICE

Creating Charts

Part II of this paper looks at specific techniques that educationists can use in facilitating the examination of stereotypes, with particular reference to stereotypes in literature. These techniques have their starting point with a specific type of graphic organizer, i.e., a chart

which students use to array information about the literature they read. McTighe (1992) recommends graphic organizers as devices which help thinking and provide opportunities for student-student collaboration.

The idea of the chart is adapted from Christensen (1991). She has two goals in helping students to chart stereotypes: "First, to critique portrayals of hierarchy and inequality; second, to enlist students in imagining a better world, characterized by respect and equality" (p. 54). Christensen begins her efforts by discussing with students the "secret education", i.e., the stereotypes, they receive from literature. Nursery stories and fairy tales can be used, even with secondary school students, because these were the stories with which they were raised. Dialogue journals and examples from the teacher can encourage students to reflect on the impact such literature has had on their ideas. Next, students are asked to chart stereotypes in literature they are reading or which they read or was read to them when they were younger. These charts can be constructed with three columns. Column One lists the characters in the story, Column Two designates categories into which these characters might be placed, e.g., based on sex, social class, and race, and Column Three describes the attributes of each character. The absence of characters of a particular category of interest can also be noted in the chart. Figure 1 illustrates this technique for the story Cinderella (Dolch, Dolch, & Jackson, 1950).

There are other possibilities for columns to be added to the charts. One additional column would ask students to cite the specific language in the text which led them to describe a character as having particular attributes (Steele, personal communication). Another column would ask students to identify whatever stereotypes they might find (Wilkinson, personal communication).

It should be stressed that there is no one correct chart for a story or one correct view of a particular stereotype. Text analysis is very complex. We know from research on reading comprehension by cognitive psychologists that meaning is a co-creation of the author, the text, and the reader (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). Thus, there will and should be disagreement about the charts and their interpretation. This disagreement, if handled constructively, can be advantageous, as students and teachers support their choices with evidence from the text, their own experiences, and their other reading.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes
Cinderella	Female Poor Person	Beautiful, Passive, Small Feet, Kind, Helpful, Hardworking, Interested in Clothes

The Stepmother and Stepsisters	Female	Ugly, Jealous, Mean, Lazy, Big Feet, Interested in Clothes
The Prince	Male Rich Person	Handsome, Active, Generous, Interested in Beauty, Source of Money
Fairy Godmother	Female Elder Person	Caring, Giving the Young Help and Advice
	People of Color	Absent from Story

Figure 1 - Chart Analyzing Cinderella

Charts on the Environment

Bower (1987; 1993) discusses stereotypes the lead to environmental destruction. Examples are the idea the more is good, less is bad; big is good, small is bad; modern is good, traditional is bad; and new is good, old is bad. The latter stereotype come out, I believe in a 16-page book written by well-known early literacy author Joy Cowley.

The story is about a boy who looks to be about 10 years old tries to patch a leaking boat, first with a banana skin, then with bubble gum, and finally with his brother's thumb. Not surprisingly, these measures fail to stop the leaking. Rather than consult someone for a better method of fixing the boat, the boy buys a new, bigger boat and happily sails off. A chart of the story might look as in Figure 2.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes
The boy	Male About 10-years-old Person of colour	Persistent Has very childish ideas about fixing boats Enjoys sailing
The old boat	Object Old	Small Has a hole in it Sinks all the time
The new boat	Object New	Big Does not sink

Figure 2 - Chart Analyzing My Boat

Applying Information from the Chart

After completing the chart for a piece of literature, students can convert it to prose form, for example, writing a review of the piece and giving it a grade. This is one way to encourage the kind of expository writing which Martin (1989) advocates. A group of Christensen's U.S. secondary school students gave the comic Popeye an F, commenting that, "[It] oozes with horrible messages from passive Olive Oyl to the hero `man' Popeye. This cartoon portrays ethnic groups as stupid. It is political also--teaching children that Americans are the best and conquer all others" (1991:55). A chart for this comic book might look like that shown below in Figure 3.

Character	Category	Attributes
Popeye	Male Working Class American	Strong, Brave, Not Too Bright, Good
Olive Oyl	Female Working Class	Weak, Easily Scared, Not Too Bright
Brutus	Male Working Class Foreign	Strong, Cunning, Bad

Figure 3 - Chart Analyzing Popeye

Christensen's students combined their reviews and grades of Popeye with those for other children's entertainment and passed these out as a pamphlet to meetings of parent-teacher associations. Of course, these reviews and grades can be positive as well as negative. This kind of process, in which students study for a purpose with a real-life, concrete goal in mind, helps avoid the overly abstract nature of too many school activities (Sobel, 1993).

Creating New Versions of Stories

There are many other possible follow-up activities based on the charts. For instance, students can produce, publish, and distribute new versions of the literature piece in which attributes are distributed differently; characters from absent categories appear, thereby increasing the amount of diversity within the piece of literature ("Zap," 1993); different perspectives are shown; or the plot twists in different directions. These new versions can also be acted out as role plays. Similarly, alternate endings can be created. For example, in the following story, shown below in abridged form (Bonnivier & Jacobs, in preparation), a human tricks two animals, proving once again, at least to the human,

that humans are smarter and deserve to dominate animals. A second ending follows in which the animals gain the upper hand.

SURVIVAL OF THE SMARTEST

Roger Anderson got out of bed, put on his suit, got in his car, and drove to work. On the way to work, his car had a flat tire near the forest. When he got out of his car to fix the tire, a tiger suddenly came out of the forest. The tiger was going to eat Mr. Anderson, but the human got down on his knees and begged, "Please tiger, don't eat me. I never did anything to hurt you."

"Maybe you never did anything to me," replied the tiger, "but other humans have done many bad things to me and the other tigers and animals. You cut down our forests, lock us up in zoos, and you hunt us for our skins. Yesterday, some men from the zoo locked me in a cage. This morning I escaped."

"No, we people are not so bad." argued Mr. Anderson. "Let's ask four other animals if they think it is fair for you to eat me." The tiger agreed.

The first animal to come along was a horse. "Friend horse," called the tiger, "people locked me in a cage. Now, do you think it is right for me to eat this human?"

"Yes, I do," said the horse. "These humans treat us horses very badly. They put fences around us so that we cannot go where we want, and they make us carry them and their things. But, do you ever see people carrying us?"

"Well," said the tiger, "that's one animal that thinks I should eat you."

The man shook his head. "We humans ride horses because we are smarter than them. Maybe the next animal will understand that."

[Two other animals are asked with similar results]

The tiger smiled and said, "If only one more animal says yes, I'm going to eat you."

Then, Mr. Anderson saw a snake. That gave him an idea. "Snakes can't hear well," he said to the tiger with a big smile on his face. "We'll have to go back to the cage and show him what happened."

"Okay," agreed the tiger, "but as soon as the snakes says yes, I'm going to eat you. I haven't had breakfast yet, so let's hurry."

The man used his hands to signal to the snake to follow them. When they got to the cage, the tiger tried to signal with its hands to explain what happened, but the snake did not understand. "Why don't you get in the cage," Mr. Anderson suggested. "Then the snake will understand." The tiger said that it hated cages but that it would do go inside just for ten seconds.

As soon as the tiger got in the cage, the human locked the door, and the tiger couldn't get out. "Ha, ha, ha," laughed Mr. Anderson, "I told you we humans are smarter." Then, he took his portable telephone and

called the people at the zoo. He told them that they should come take the tiger away before it got out of the cage again. "Goodbye," he said to the tiger as he walked back to his car. "I'm sure you'll have a comfortable life at the zoo."

One possibility for a chart for "Survival of the Smartest" with the first ending would be as in Figure 4.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes
Mr. Anderson	Male Human Animal	Feels Superior to Other Animals, Tricky, Winner
Tiger and Other Animals	Sex Unknown Other Types of Animals	Feel Antagonistic Toward Humans, Trusting, Losers

Figure 4 - Chart Analyzing First Version of "Survival of the Smartest"

Here is a possible alternate ending for the same story.

Mr. Anderson was so happy and proud of himself because he tricked the tiger that he forgot to watch out for the snake. When he accidentally stepped on the poisonous snake, it bit him. "Oww!" the human screamed. He ran to his car as fast as he could and drove to the hospital. Then, the snake went over to the cage and let the tiger out. When the people from the zoo came, they were both gone. "Ha, ha, ha," they laughed, "those humans sure are stupid."

A chart for the same story but with the second ending might be changed slightly in the attribute column with the human now being the loser and the other animals the winners, as in Figure 5.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes
Mr. Anderson	Male Human Animal	Feels Superior to Other Animals, Tricky, Loser (At least this time)
Tiger and Other Animals	Sex Unknown Other Types of Animals	Feel Antagonistic Toward Humans, Trusting, Winners (At least this time)

Figure 5 - Chart Analyzing the Second Version of "Survival of the Smartest"

Other Types of Writing Based on Charts

Another way to combine writing with the charts is that after charting several pieces of related literature, the charts can be compared. There are many interesting ways to conduct these comparisons, e.g., same story - different authors, same category(s) - different authors, same category(s) - different historical periods, same category(s) - different cultures and/or languages, and different categories - same culture. Fairy tales provide many opportunities for the first type of comparison, e.g., different versions of Jack and the Beanstalk show the characters in different lights. An example of the second type of comparison would be to consider the way older people are treated in literature by different authors. To do this analysis, students could read and chart four pieces of literature in which elder characters appear. The charts could then be compared to look for generalizations and trends, as well as differences.

As a way of encouraging same category(s) - different culture comparisons, students who are literate in more than one language may want to chart pieces of literature from their other language(s) and compare them with charts created based on literature written by native speakers of the language used as the medium of instruction in their class (Ramadass, personal communication). For instance, in a class in which English is the medium of instruction, students who are also literate in Malay might use charts to compare the attitudes toward nature in several pieces of literature written in Malay with attitudes toward nature in the English language literature they read.

Writing can also be generated from the charts by asking students to consider the stereotypes they find in the literature in light of their own experiences. Based on this appraisal, judgments could be made about the fairness of the characterizations and essays written. During or after the writing of these essays, students can consult with others. For example, if stereotypes about the elderly are being considered, elder people could be consulted. Another way of linking analysis of stereotypes to students' own experiences is to ask students for examples of when they have been the victim of unfair stereotyping or of when they have engaged in such thinking (Ramadass, personal communication).

Of course, the analysis suggested in this paper can be extended to other types of texts, in addition to literature. Today, advertisements seem to be a key communicator of stereotypes, with stereotypes of women often being used. Jokes are another area of culture that would be ripe for analysis. Texts such as advertisements and jokes make for good materials because they often have a large presence in students' lives, especially for those students who do little reading. Thus, they can serve as examples which help prepare students to analyze longer, more difficult texts.

Sharing Charts with Others

As educationists, we have found through our own experience that one of the best ways to learn is to teach others. We can take advantage of this learning-by-teaching principle by asking students to share the knowledge they gain from constructing and analyzing the charts with other students, including younger ones. For instance, paired reading across age groups can be expanded to include discussion of the stereotypes involved in the texts being read. The older student in the pair could have charted the story previously, in preparation for discussing it with their younger partner. The next time, they can do a chart together.

Charts can also be used to generate discussion in small groups. For example, each member of a group of four could take responsibility for completing the part of the chart which deals with one character, e.g., with Cinderella, one student could do Cinderella, one the stepsisters, one the Prince, and one the fairy godmother. These parts could be combined to construct a group chart of the story. Next, interviews could be conducted, with each student assuming the role of the character whose chart portion they had completed and the other group members asking the questions (Butterworth, personal communication). Questions could deal with, for instance, how the characters came to have the attributes they demonstrated in the story, how they felt at different points in the story, why they acted as they did, what happened to them in the sequel or prequel, whether they feel that members of their category are unfairly stereotyped, and ways they wish the story had been different. It might also be interesting, after completing charts, to stage hypothetical interviews with authors to ask them about why they created their characters as they did (Butterworth, personal communication).

Another way of utilizing the power of talk to aid learning about stereotypes is to encourage students to discuss what they have been discovering about stereotypes with their parents and other older family members. It may be interesting to find out how aware adults are about the stereotypes present in the stories they read and tell to children. Additionally, these adults could tell students about their own experiences with stereotypes as children, thus providing something of a historical perspective. Adults can also discuss with students their views on the validity of the stereotypes which students become aware of through making the charts.

Stereotypes appear not only in texts created for students but also in texts which the students write themselves. With the increasing use of whole language methods (Cutting, 1991; Goodman, 1986), students are writing more and more at earlier and earlier ages. These texts too should be analyzed by the authors themselves and by supportive adults and peers. Discussions flowing from such analysis can help authors clarify the meanings they are attempting to put on the page and give them insight into the meanings which their readers may derive from their texts. The point of these discussions, as with all the analysis suggested in this paper, is not to come up with one right way of characterizing a category of person or anything else. Rather, the key to the analysis is to bring issues to light and to encourage reflection.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a need to help students become more fully literate by helping them become analytical readers. An important area for analysis is the identification and examination of stereotypes in what we read. In this paper, the focus has been on harmful stereotypes which appear in literature. A number of techniques, many of which integrate writing and speaking, have been briefly described for helping students analyze stereotypes. Charts, a type of graphic organizer, have been suggested as a possible starting point for these techniques.

The techniques described in this paper are listed below. You, the readers of this paper, as well as your colleagues and your students and their parents, will, no doubt, think of more techniques and of variations.

1. Engaging in dialogue journals.
2. Writing reviews.
3. Giving grades.
4. Writing or role playing new versions with different attributes for existing characters, addition of characters from absent categories, different perspectives, or different plot twists and endings.
5. Comparing charts from related pieces of literature.
6. Considering stereotypes in light of students' own experiences, in terms of the accuracy of stereotypes, as well as experiences being stereotyped and doing stereotyping.
7. Asking others about stereotypes, e.g., parents, those negatively affected by stereotypes.
8. Discussing findings from the charts in cross-age reading pairs.
9. Participating in hypothetical interviews of characters and authors.
10. Doing charts of students' own writing.
11. Extending the same analytic techniques to non-literary texts.

Today, calls for preparing students to function as critical thinking adults are commonly heard. Certainly, there exists no shortage of modern-day tasks for which such analytical skills and attitudes are needed. In particular, unjust stereotypes cry out for attention because of the negative role they play in society. Unfortunately, too much of what happens in schools does not promote analytical thinking but, instead, continues well-worn patterns of rote learning. Thus, different educational practices need to be developed and implemented with the goal that if students learn to think, read, and write analytically while they are young, they will carry on such literate practices as adults. Or, as a Tamil proverb puts it:

Tottil palakam sudukaadu varaikum.

(What you learn as a young one,
helps you till your days are done)
(Ramadass, personal communication)

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HELPING STUDENTS CHART STEREOTYPES IN LITERATURE

Paper presented to the Fourth National Reading Conference Singapore, 4-5 September 1993. Presenter: George M. Jacobs, Language Specialist, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. Contact Data: RELC Building, Rm. 608, 30 Orange Grove Road, Singapore 1025, Tel: (65) 737-9044, ext. 608; Fax: (65) 734-2753.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes
Cinderella	Female Poor Person	Beautiful, Passive, Kind, Helpful, Hardworking, Interested in Clothes
The Stepmother and Stepsisters	Female	Ugly, Jealous, Mean, Lazy, Interested in Clothes
The Prince	Male Rich Person	Handsome, Active, Generous, Interested in Beauty, Source of Money
Fairy Godmother	Female Elder Person	Caring, Giving the Young Help and Advice
	People of Color	Absent from Story

Figure 1 - Chart Analyzing Cinderella

Character	Category(s)	Attributes and Actions

Chart Analyzing Jack and the Beanstalk

The techniques described in this paper are listed below. You, the readers of this paper, as well as your colleagues and your students and their parents, will, no doubt, think of more techniques and of variations.

1. Engaging in dialogue journals.
2. Writing reviews.
3. Giving grades.
4. Writing or role playing new versions with different attributes for existing characters, addition of characters from absent categories, different perspectives, or different plot twists and endings.
5. Comparing charts from related pieces of literature.
6. Considering stereotypes in light of students' own experiences, in terms of the accuracy of stereotypes, as well as experiences being stereotyped and doing stereotyping.
7. Asking others about stereotypes, e.g., parents, those negatively affected by stereotypes.
8. Discussing findings from the charts in cross-age reading pairs.
9. Participating in hypothetical interviews of characters and authors.
10. Doing charts of students' own writing.
11. Extending the same analytic techniques to non-literary texts.

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Fairy Godmother	Female Elder Person	Caring, Giving the Young Help and Advice
	People of Color	Absent from Story

Figure 1 - Chart Analyzing Cinderella

Character	Category	Attributes and Actions
Popeye	Male Working Class American	Strong, Brave, Not Too Bright, Good
Olive Oyl	Female Working Class	Weak, Easily Scared, Not Too Bright
Brutus	Male Working Class Foreign	Strong, Cunning, Bad

Figure 2 - Chart Analyzing Popeye

Character	Category(s)	Attributes and Actions
Mr. Anderson	Male Human Animal	Feels Superior to Other Animals, Tricky, Winner

Tiger and Other Animals	Sex Unknown Other Types of Animals	Feel Antagonistic Toward Humans, Trusting, Losers

Figure 3 - Chart Analyzing First Version of "Survival of the Smartest"

Character	Category(s)	Attributes and Actions
Mr. Anderson	Male Human Animal	Feels Superior to Other Animals, Tricky, Loser (At least this time)
Tiger and Other Animals	Sex Unknown Other Types of Animals	Feel Antagonistic Toward Humans, Trusting, Winners (At least this time)

Figure 4 - Chart Analyzing the Second Version of "Survival of the Smartest"

Character	Category(s)	Attributes and Actions
Jack	Male Young Poor, but born rich	Active, Curious, Brave, Takes care of his mother, Becomes rich again
Mother	Female Poor, but rich before	Uneffective, Cautious, Holds the hen while Jack cuts down the bean stalk, No name of her own
Old Man	Male Old	Wise, Eccentric, Magical, Helps the young
Cow	Animal	Sold to be slaughtered when no longer of use to humans
Bean Stalk	Plant	Chopped down when no longer of use to humans

Giant's Wife	Female	Kind, Submissive, Not interested in money, Emotional, Does housework, No name of her own
Giant	Male	Mean, Greedy, Eats a lot, Takes care of making money, Demanding
Hen	Animal	Valued for its gold eggs, Happy to be with kind masters

Chart Analyzing Jack and the Beanstalk

Hidup dikandung adat;
Mati dikandung tanah.

(In life, by custom hedged around;
In death, we lie wrapped in the ground.
Men are helpless creatures pent in their own environment).

Kerbau sekawan dapat dikandang,
Manusia seorang tiada terkawal.

(A herd of water buffaloes can at least be penned;
A single human being oft is more than we can tend). (Hamilton, 1982:52-53)

Tottil palakam sudukaadu varaikum.

(What you learn as a young one,
helps you till your days are done)

4 September

Professor Ron White
Centre for Applied Language Studies
University of Reading
Whiteknights PO Box 218
Reading RG6 2AA
ENGLAND
Fax: 734-756506

Dear Professor White:

Enclosed please find a submission for New ways in teaching writing. Hopefully, it is not too late. The authors are Maygala Devi Ramadass and myself, George M. Jacobs, in that order.

Thank you for considering our idea. We are open to any suggestions you might have. Please send any correspondence to me at RELC.

Sincerely,

George Jacobs

CHARTING STEREOTYPES IN LITERATURE AS A PREWRITING TECHNIQUE

Writing Skills: Putting information in table form as part of drafting.

Writing Purpose: To analyze a piece of literature and discuss the stereotypes found in it.

Text Type: A chart, leading to many other possibilities.

Level: Intermediate - Advanced

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: None

Background: The idea here is to encourage students to recognize stereotypes in literature and to evaluate those stereotypes in terms of their validity and fairness. The activity promotes critical thinking via reading, discussion, and writing. The charts students produce form the possible starting point for a variety of different types of writing.

Procedure:

1. Divide students into groups of four.
2. Invite each student in the group to write the title of a fairy tale or fable that s/he has read.
3. Ask each group to choose one of the titles and summarize the story orally to make sure they remember the story.
4. Each group makes a chart with three columns: Character, Category(s), and Characteristics. The story's main characters are listed in the chart's first column. The category(s) to which the character belongs, e.g., their sex, race, social class, are listed in the second column. The third column is for a description of the characteristics of the character.
5. To encourage everyone to actively participate, each group member can be assigned one or more characters for whom they complete columns two and three. Group discussion follows. The absence of certain categories of characters can also be noted.
6. Groups discuss whether the characteristics of the representatives of each category actually exist in real life. Are the characterizations stereotyped or fair?
7. The chart and the discussion can result in various activities including:

a. Writing reviews of the story in terms of its stereotypes and giving it a grade (A-F, the least stereotyped to the most stereotyped).
b. Writing argumentative essays based on whether students agree/disagree with the way the story presented the characters.
c. Rewriting the narrative to avoid unfair stereotypes, e.g., changing the characteristics of characters, changing the plot.
d. Writing recounts of students' own experiences with stereotypes.

Character	Category(s)	Characteristics
Cinderella	Female Poor Person, but Originally Rich	Beautiful, Passive, Kind, Helpful, Hardworking, Interested in Clothes
The Stepmother and Stepsisters	Female Rich People	Ugly, Jealous, Mean, Lazy, Interested in Clothes
The Prince	Male Rich Person	Handsome, Active, Generous, Interested in Beauty, Source of Money
Fairy Godmother	Female Elder Person	Caring, Giving the Young Help and Advice
	People of Color	Absent from Story

Chart Analyzing Cinderella

7 September

Dear Maygala,

Thanks for your letter and your kind words. As you know, we teachers need to feel that what we do is getting through, even if only to one or two people.

I made a few changes, inserted the chart, and sent the diskette off last Friday. Don't expect to hear anything until November. I also sent off to English Teaching Forum the article that Stephen Hall and I showed your class about cooperative learning. Prema, Payomrat, Poh Bee (the 3 Ps) and I had a meeting with an editor about our environment book. He's from England but is spending a year at NUS.

The conference presentation went well. It was only about 12 people, but they were quality people, including Audrey, the keynote speaker (Lynn Wilkinson, from Australia), and someone from Hong Kong. Three suggestions which are worth considering were made:
1) add a column where students put their evidence from the text which justifies saying that a character has certain characteristics, e.g., what words are used to describe Cinderella which make you say she is kind or hard working, or what does she say or do that makes you say that she is interested in clothes?
2) add a column in which students explicitly say what stereotypes are involved, e.g., women are passive, men are active.
3) compare different versions of the same story, e.g., in different versions of Jack and the Beanstalk, the mother and the little old man who sells Jack the beans have very different characteristics.

What do you think about 1 & 2? I think they would be useful in some situations.

Audrey said she worries that our efforts to encourage students to think about stereotypes will not always be appreciated by ministries of education, etc., because they are trying to socialize students to certain values. Asking students to consider if those values are correct may not be seen as aiding that process. I replied that I understood her point, but isn't it better if students accept values on the basis of really understanding them, rather than because they've been unconsciously socialized to accept them. Also, nowadays it's popular for governments to talk about developing citizens who can think creatively and analytically. Of course, the problem is that some may prefer people to only do such thinking about their jobs, not about other areas of their lives. So, in summary, I believe Audrey has raised a valid concern, one which should be addressed.

As to Tony, he said that he now only teaches adults and only ESP type courses where they wouldn't be reading literature. He says that's how it is with all his full-time colleagues. Only the part-time teachers, with whom I have little contact, teach literature. However, never fear, I'll find someone.

First, you need to try out the charts and see if you still feel they're a good idea. There's still time before November.

Below is a chart for Jack and the Beanstalk. I asked the participants at the conference to create their own.

Character	Category(s)	Attributes and Actions
Jack	Male Young Poor, but born rich	Active, Curious, Brave, Takes care of his mother, Becomes rich again
Mother	Female Poor, but rich before	Ineffective, Cautious, Holds the hen while Jack cuts down the bean stalk, No name of her own
Old Man	Male Old	Wise, Eccentric, Magical, Helps the young
Cow	Animal	Sold to be slaughtered when no longer of use to humans
Bean Stalk	Plant	Chopped down when no longer of use to humans
Giant's Wife	Female	Kind, Submissive, Not interested in money, Emotional, Does housework, No name of her own
Giant	Male	Mean, Greedy, Eats a lot, Takes care of making money, Demanding
Hen	Animal	Valued for its gold eggs, Happy to be with kind masters

Chart Analyzing Jack and the Beanstalk

I hope you feel refreshed after your two months at RELC and that everything is going well at school and in Penang.

Take care,

7 September 1993

Dear Shirley,

It was very nice meeting you last weekend at the conference. I hope that you found it valuable. I'm sorry that I didn't get a chance to talk with your supervisor. I thought I would see you two at 11:00am after your paper.

In case you want to subscribe to the journal I showed you, the address is Rethinking Schools, 1001 East Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212. They are part of a growing movement all over the U.S., not just in Milwaukee. The cost is $US12.50.

I've enclosed a brochure about the 1994 RELC Seminar. I should tell you that the majority of paper proposals are not accepted. But, there was a least one from Hong Kong last year.

I look forward to seeing the environmental education materials from Hong Kong. In fact, I'm hoping to do a study of environmental education in language teaching in Southeast Asia. So, you can provide me with some valuable comparison material. Thanks.

Please let me know what else you and your colleagues are up to.

All the best,

George Jacobs

George Jacobs
RELC Bldg., Rm. 608
30 Orange Grove Rd.
SINGAPORE 1025
Republic of Singapore

29 September 1993

Linda Christensen
2814 NE Mason
Portland, OR 97211 USA

Dear Linda,

Enclosed please find a paper inspired by your article in Rethinking Columbus. Thanks for the inspiration.

I've only recently moved to Singapore. Previously, I had the opportunity to do a little work with Deborah Menkart and her colleagues at NECA.

Best wishes,

George Jacobs

George Jacobs
RELC Bldg., Rm. 608
30 Orange Grove Rd.
SINGAPORE 1025
Republic of Singapore

29 September 1993

Professor Ron White
Centre for Applied Language Studies
University of Reading
Whiteknights PO Box 218
Reading RG6 2AA
ENGLAND

Dear Professor White:

Thank you for your recent letter accepting the submission to New Ways in Teaching Writing sent by Ms. Ramadass and myself.

In regard to request that we encourage colleagues and students to contribute, I would be happy to do so. In fact, RELC is going to do workshops for course participants and Singapore teachers encouraging them to write for professional publications.

The main purpose of this letter is to ask if you would be willing to send me a list of the activities already included in the book. I request this because, as this will be most of these people's first attempt at publication, I want to do everything possible to make it a successful one. It would be too bad if a good activity was rejected because a similar one had been previously accepted.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and for your other efforts in editing the book.

Sincerely,

George Jacobs

George Jacobs
RELC Bldg., Rm. 608
30 Orange Grove Rd.
SINGAPORE 1025
Republic of Singapore

29 October 1993

Professor C.A. Bowers
POB 751, School of Education,
Portland State University,
Portland, OR 97207-0751 USA

Dear Professor Bowers,

This is written to inform you of some work I've done which was inspired by your book The promise of theory: Education and the politics of cultural change. Just today, I received in the mail a copy of your 1993 book Education, cultural myths, and the ecological crisis. Your book Responsive teaching also seems particularly valuable. I will try to obtain that. It's not in any Singapore libraries.

Three papers are enclosed. You are cited extensively in the paper on charting stereotypes. The chart of the story My boat may be of particular interest. The second paper is a brief look at four commonalities between sound educational practice and sound environmental policy. Since writing the paper, I've thought of a fifth commonality, i.e., that just as many teachers today are trying not to separate themselves from their students (e.g., by reading and writing along with them, by sharing their own experiences and feelings, by sharing power with them), sound environmental policy tries not to separate people off from nature as something undesirable to be feared and isolated from. The third paper is from a conference I attended earlier this month on culture and the environment. The author has, I believe, a degree in philosophy from Yale and currently teaches medical ethics in Thailand.

Thanks again for your books. I hope you find something of value in the papers.

Best regards,

George Jacobs

6 November 1993

Editor-in-chief
Philippine Education Quarterly
Arellano University In Pasig
Pag-asa Street, Caniogan,
Pasig,
Metro Manilla
The Philippines

Dear Editor:

Enclosed please find a manuscript submitted for possible publication in your journal.

I am a Language Specialist at the SOUTHEAST ASIAN MINISTERS of EDUCATION ORGANIZATION Regional Language Centre. I have seen many interesting articles in your journal.

Please let me know if you are able to consider my manuscript.

Sincerely,

George M. Jacobs (Dr)

24 March 1994

Editor-in-chief
Philippine Education Quarterly
Arellano University In Pasig
Pag-asa Street, Caniogan,
Pasig,
Metro Manilla
The Philippines

Dear Editor:

In November of last year I sent you a manuscript entitled Helping Students Chart Stereotypes in Literature. I requested that you consider it for publication in your journal.

As I have yet to hear from you, I assume you never received the manuscript. Thus, **I hereby withdraw the manuscript from consideration for publication in your journal.**

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter. Perhaps I shall have better luck in the future.

Sincerely,

George M. Jacobs