

The University of Manitoba

A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Two Methods of Teaching the  
Novel in Fostering Understanding and Appreciation

by

© Francis J. Bird

A Thesis

submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education

Humanities and Social Sciences

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Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to find the relative effectiveness of two methods of teaching novels in fostering understanding and appreciation of the novels. The methods compared are the "Comparison Method" and the "Novel-in-Itself Method." The former refers to a teaching method for a novel in which other works of art--other novels, plays, short stories, poems, paintings, musical compositions--with comparable themes or ideas are introduced to contribute to students' understanding and appreciation of the novel. The Comparison Method in this study uses poetry. The Novel-in-Itself Method is a teaching method for a novel in which all that is studied is rooted in the relationship between the novel and the readers forming the class. Students, interacting with other students and with the teacher, focus upon an analysis of certain passages in a novel and an expression of their own related views and real-life experiences.

The research involved six classes of English 300 students at The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg, from 1986 to 1987. The background of the students was varied. Most came from other schools in the city, but many came from other countries. Some had been award winners in their previous schools, while others had a history of problems.

One term at The Collegiate Division, Group A, consisting of 74 students in three classes, received the Comparison Method for John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. This same term, Group B, consisting of 84 students in three other classes, received the

Novel-in-Itself Method for Steinbeck's novel. The following term, the groups reversed methods for their study of Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel.

An essay test was used to assess the students' understanding of each novel. Pre-study and post-study questionnaires were used to assess their appreciation.

An analysis of the results of the essay tests shows that there is not a significant difference between the effectiveness of the two methods in fostering understanding. However, an analysis of the questionnaire results shows that the Novel-in-Itself Method is significantly more effective in fostering appreciation.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

There are two major benefits to be derived from the reading of novels: the first is understanding, and the second is appreciation. A reader attains a form of understanding when he grasps a novel's central ideas about existence; he experiences a form of appreciation when he finds value or interest in a novel's expression of ideas.

In a successful reading, an individual begins his journey towards understanding and appreciation in his first encounter with a novel. However, because of the inexperience of some readers and the complexity of the novels they are reading, the acquisition of understanding and appreciation is a difficult task. It is consideration of this difficulty which helps define the role of the literature teacher: he must attempt to enhance his students' understanding and appreciation in order to make their experience as rewarding as possible.

In preparation for class study of a novel, a teacher can consult innumerable critical texts and educational periodicals for teaching strategies and tactics. However, he will find a lack of informative articles exploring the relative effectiveness of different methods in fostering understanding and appreciation. This research delves into this important, yet largely unexplored, area.



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research concentrates on two methods of teaching novels believed by their supporters to foster the benefits of understanding and appreciation. The first method is the "Comparison Method," based on the idea that a teacher can best foster these benefits in his students through having them study a novel in combination with other thematically-related works of art. In Principles of Literary Criticism, I. A. Richards emphasizes the value of such a study when he writes, "Comparison of the arts is . . . the best means by which an understanding of the methods and resources of any one of them can be attained" (148). The second method of teaching novels considered in this research is the "Novel-in-Itself Method." This method is based on the idea that a teacher can best foster understanding and appreciation in his students through having them analyze selected passages in a novel and having them share pertinent views and real-life experiences. This method puts into practice Don Gutteridge's idea in "The Major Novel in the Senior Grades" that a major literary work is valuable in and for itself (19). According to the perception inherent in this method, the introduction of another work of art serves only to dilute the quality of the students' experience with the novel being studied.

The intent of this research is to discover whether either of the two teaching methods better fosters understanding and appreciation of a novel.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The teacher of literature should use the method of teaching a novel which best fosters the benefits of understanding and appreciation. By doing so, he has the best chance of helping students realize that all the effort they devote to their encounter with the novel is worthwhile, and he also has the best chance of motivating students to read more novels in the future. This exploration of the relative effectiveness of two popular methods of teaching novels may shed some light on how a novel can be taught productively.

### DELIMITATIONS

While the Comparison Method for the teaching of novels can take many forms, the only one used in this study was the "Comparison Method Using Poems."

### LIMITATIONS

The first limitation had its origin in the impossibility of isolating the Comparison Method in one group of students and the Novel-in-Itself Method in the other. It was likely that some of the students studying a novel through the Comparison Method thought of some related real-life experiences (a type of activity involved in the Novel-in-Itself Method). Similarly, it was likely that some of the students studying a novel through the Novel-in-Itself Method compared some of the work's ideas with those in other works of art (a type of activity involved in the Comparison Method). Although the teacher in this study could not limit the students' response, he could limit his teaching methodology.

The second limitation was the impossibility of generalizing about the effectiveness of one form of a teaching method to the effectiveness of the entire method. For instance, in reference to the Comparison Method, the use of short prose instead of poetry to highlight ideas in a novel might have produced different results, and a combination of short prose and poetry might have produced still different results.

The third limitation stemmed from the difficulty of assessing appreciation. Appreciation had to be assessed, however, because the extent to which a teaching method for a novel fosters appreciation of that work must be one of the major criteria in judging the effectiveness of the method. The instrument used to assess appreciation was a simple questionnaire, the anonymous nature of which was intended to encourage honesty of response.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

##### (1) Comparison Method

This refers to a teaching method for a novel in which other works of art--other novels, plays, short stories, poems, paintings, musical compositions--with comparable themes or ideas are introduced and studied to contribute to students' understanding and appreciation of the novel. Students, interacting with other students and with the teacher, focus upon a comparison or contrast of these themes.

This method is based on the idea that one work of art can be used to help illuminate another.

## (2) Novel-in-Itself Method

This method is a teaching method for novels in which all that is studied is rooted in the relationship between a novel and the readers forming the class. Students, interacting with other students and with the teacher, focus upon an analysis of certain passages in a novel and an expression of their own related views and real-life experiences.

This method is based on the idea that intensive reading of a novel and personal reflection and response to ideas in a literary work can contribute to students' understanding and appreciation. The principle of this method receives commendation from Robert Scholes in Textual Power: "the reader is always writing" (8). In other words, the reader is always in the process of responding to what he reads, and his reaction is frequently personal.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter Two offers a theoretical base for the research as well as a review of the literature pertinent to the two teaching methods. Chapter Three presents an explanation of how the experiment was conducted. It includes a description of the human subjects, the questionnaires used to assess students' appreciation of the two novels involved, the lesson plans for the novels, and the questions for the essay tests used to assess students' understanding. Chapter Four offers a description and interpretation of the results of the tests and questionnaires. Chapter Five presents conclusions which can be derived from the interpretation. The Appendix contains (a) the letter seeking consent of the parents of students under eighteen years of age

for the use of the students' test scores and questionnaire results and (b) the consent form completed by the parents. (Students eighteen and over were asked for their consent in class).

## CHAPTER 2

## A THEORETICAL BASE AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter first looks at the major benefits which can be gained through reading and studying works of literature, particularly novels. It then examines the potential of the two teaching methods involved in this study to help attain these benefits.

No matter how diverse works of literature may be in their content and form, an individual can derive two main benefits from reading and studying them: one is understanding, and the other is appreciation. In reference to the first benefit, literature has an all-encompassing nature: it can offer understanding of any aspect of existence. Literature reaches out to envelop what Henry James calls "all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision" (Rosenblatt 6). Literature gives the reader understanding of facets of existence familiar to him, by providing "fresh insight" (Rosenblatt 104). In addition, it gives the reader understanding of facets of existence unfamiliar to him, by providing "a release from the provincialism of time and space" (Rosenblatt 195). Significantly, the understanding or "truth[s] of life" (Cross and Carney 497) may be applicable to anyone, at any time and in any place. The essence of this idea is captured by Ezra Pound in ABC of Reading: "Literature is news that STAYS news" (29).

Thus far, the focus has been on understanding, the first major benefit that one can derive from reading and studying literature. The second, appreciation, goes hand in hand with

understanding: as the reader acquires some understanding which he deems to be of interest or of value, he feels appreciation. Words from Paul Klee, "Art does not reproduce what we see; rather it makes us see" (Concise Dictionary of Quotations 188), help define the relationship between understanding and appreciation. A work of literature offers a reader sight or insight. Whether he considers the sight beautiful or ugly, he can find it interesting, and it is this interest which causes him to feel thankful or appreciative. This sense of appreciation is important, as this is what inspires an individual to continue reading literature.

Understanding and appreciation, the two main benefits of literature in general, are also the main benefits to be derived from reading and studying the novel. This literary genre has a special status. As E. A. Cross and Elizabeth Carney write in Teaching English in High School, a novel "can provide us with the fullest experience that language offers" (22). Therefore, unlike a short story or poem which tends to offer a single experience, a novel may provide a multitude of experiences which act as the foundation for the understanding and appreciation sought by the reader. A quotation from the novel Flowers For Algernon, by Daniel Keyes, helps convey metaphorically the nature of these benefits. In the novel, the protagonist refers to "a crystal universe spinning before me so I can see all the facets of it reflected in gorgeous bursts of light . . ." (165). Similarly, through an encounter with a novel, a reader can acquire understanding through an artist's consolidated vision of

existence, and he can feel appreciation for the clarity and brilliance of the vision.

The special status of the novel is also revealed through a contrast to the play. While a play is intended to be performed, so that the cast and crew help to communicate understanding and appreciation to the viewer, a novel is meant to be read, so that the reader has a direct relationship with the work. The reader "counts for at least as much as the book . . . itself" (Rosenblatt X), as he infuses "intellectual and emotional meanings . . . into the author's pattern of verbal symbols" (25).

Due to its special status, the novel should be taught in certain ways. First, the fact that a novel can contain several truths or insights implies that the teacher should concentrate on helping students to recognize and to interpret them. Secondly, since the novel-reader relationship is intended to be an intimate one, the teacher should avoid coming between the students and the novel. Instead, he should try to develop the relationship between them. In order to do so, he must give the students much opportunity to express themselves. Both teaching methods involved in this study provide for such instruction.

Both the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method have the potential of fostering understanding and appreciation. Above all, they concentrate on ideas in the novels: on recognizing them and on interpreting them. This quest for understanding progresses naturally from what may have been the students' major activity during their initial encounter with the novels. (It should be noted that before novel study began in



class, the students were to have finished reading the work). James R. Squire's research in The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories revealed that interpretational responses accounted for "[m]ore than 42 percent of all responses" (2) of ninth and tenth grade students (11) while they were reading short stories. Interpretational responses included "[r]eactions in which the reader generalizes and attempts to discover the meaning of the stories . . ." (17). James R. Wilson's research in Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels, involving responses before and after novel study (17), revealed that interpretational responses accounted for an even higher percentage than that reported by Squire (15).

Although both the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method emphasize a quest for understanding through their focus on the recognition and interpretation of important ideas in a novel, they use different approaches. Nevertheless, research indicates that these approaches both progress naturally from activities involved in the students' first encounter with the work. In The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories, Squire coded over 9 percent of the readers' responses as associational (20), "Responses in which the reader associated ideas, events, or places, and people with his own experience other than the association of a character with himself" (18). He also coded about 15 percent of the readers' responses as showing self-involvement (20), "Responses in which the reader associates himself with the behavior and/or emotions of characters" (18). Associational responses are characteristic of the type called for

in the Comparison Method (as one's experience can include encounters with other works of art). As well, self-involvement responses are encouraged during class discussion in the Novel-in-Itself Method.

Squire's research suggests that the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method both have the potential of fostering understanding and appreciation because they concentrate on important aspects of the student-novel relationship. His research also points out that students, on their own, become involved in activities associated with both methods used in this study. It is impossible for a teacher to stop students who are receiving the Comparison Method from considering their own experiences in life; similarly, it is impossible for him to stop those who are receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method from considering other works of art with comparable themes. All the teacher can do is direct students in one way or the other through specific activities.

Even though the activities involved in the two methods tend to produce, at least to an extent, similar responses, both the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method approach the study in distinctly different ways. The Comparison Method is based on the idea that one work of art can provide insight into another. As Robert Scholes writes in Textual Power, "every poem, play, and story is related to others . . ." (20), and if a teacher purposefully selects works whose ideas are closely connected to those of a novel, then the comparisons can lead to understanding and appreciation.

In contrast to the Comparison Method, the Novel-in-Itself Method is based on the idea that a novel is an artistic whole containing all the elements required for understanding and appreciation. Support for this idea is found in Geraldine Murphy's The Study of Literature in High School: "the novel gives, explicitly or implicitly, all the reader needs to know, and . . . it directs and limits the reader's suppositions, assumptions, and projections" (313). Advocates of this view believe that combining the study of a novel with that of another work of art is showing a lack of faithfulness to the novelist and his work.

Specific approaches in the Comparison Method and in the Novel-in-Itself Method have the potential of fostering understanding and appreciation. For example, in "An English Teacher's Fantasy," Robert LeBlanc, a supporter of the Comparison Method, recommends pairing young adult novels "with classic novels of similar themes to help ease the transition for the students from self-directed to teacher-assigned literature" (35). Furthermore, a quotation from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Table Talk helps establish why the Comparison Method Using Poems has potential: "I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose = words in their best order; - poetry = the best words in the best order" (84). If Coleridge's view is accurate, the study of a poem with a theme comparable to that presented in a novel should help students recognize and understand that idea. As J. C. Ball and the Literature Study Group express it, "recreation of the

imaginative experience contained in a short poem will obviously be more immediate, despite complexity of language and structure, than the living of the world created in a novel . . ."

(Experiments with Themes: Reports on the Thematic Approach to Teaching 1). Agreement is voiced by Jay Lalley, who suggests that discussing T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" at the conclusion of a study of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness can bring out "all the issues" ("Our Readers Write: What Is a Sure-Fire Work of Literature for Non-Sure-Fire Students?" 64). In the Novel-in-Itself Method, questions relating students' experiences and attitudes to those in a novel help make what Margaret Ryan calls "bridges from the student's world to that of the novel" (95), thereby contributing to understanding and appreciation. And, as John F. Lincks notes in "The Teaching of Hard Times," "the intensive reading of some selected passages" (214) is at "the real heart of any close reading of a novel" (214).

In spite of its potential, the Comparison Method can be responsible for problems. In The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories, Squire points out that confusion can result "from the association of elements in a story with memories of fiction, motion pictures, radio, and television" (46).

Squire notes that encouraging personal reactions--a procedure used in the Novel-in-Itself Method--can also create problems. When it is uncontrolled, "[a]ssociation of the elements in a story with the personal experiences of the reader is dangerous to interpretation . . ." (45). In this research,

the teacher asked students to make a limited number of relevant associations.

In conclusion, the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method both have the potential of fostering understanding and associated appreciation. The two methods help with the process of "literary re-creation" (Rosenblatt 282-83) or the reconstruction of the world created by the novelist. They differ only in their building blocks: the Comparison Method uses other works of art; the Novel-in-Itself Method uses students' views and real-life experiences as well as a closer look at selected passages in the novel. Through their examinations of important truths or insights pointing students in the direction of overall theme, the methods can help students acquire what Geraldine Murphy in The Study of Literature calls "a unified experience" (452). Determining which of the two methods better fosters understanding and appreciation was the objective of this research.

### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODOLOGY

The review of the methodology involved in the experiment includes a description of the subjects and setting, sample lesson plans using the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method, and a description of the methods used to assess the results.

The subjects of the experiment were the students of six classes or sections of Composition/Prose 300 during the 1986-87 regular, September-April session at The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg. This portion of English 300 concentrated on the study of four novels and some short prose selections. In addition, it included work in various types of writing and language development. Credit in Composition/Prose 300 in combination with credit in Drama/Poetry 300 merited a student a double credit in English 300.

The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg, is a private school which, during the 1986-87 regular session had an enrolment of more than six hundred students in Grades Eleven and Twelve. The student background was varied. Most came from other schools in Winnipeg, but others came from foreign countries. Some had been award winners in their previous schools; others had a history of problems. It has been estimated that more than ninety per cent of the graduates from The Collegiate Division later enrol in universities.

The 1986-1987 regular session was divided into four terms, each term lasting about six weeks excluding examination periods.

Each Composition/Prose section met three times weekly for fifty-minute lessons.

In Term Two, Sections 1, 5, and 6--together forming Group A for the experiment--studied John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath through the Comparison Method, while Sections 2, 3, and 4--together forming Group B for the experiment--studied the novel through the Novel-in-Itself Method.

In Term Three, Sections 1, 5, and 6--Group A--studied Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel through the Novel-in-Itself Method, while Sections 2, 3, and 4--Group B--studied the novel through the Comparison Method.

Approval for the experiment was given by the administration of The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg, as well as by the students involved. In addition, written consent to use the students' test scores and questionnaire results was received from the parents of students under eighteen years of age. The letter seeking consent and the consent form are found in the Appendix.

Even though the two groups for each novel used different approaches, the topics they examined, relating to plot, character, setting, and theme, were the same.

In the case of each novel, the reading assignment had been given to students a few weeks before class study commenced. Students were warned that a pre-test might be given on the first day of class on the novel. Instead of the pre-test, at the beginning of the first class the instructor administered a

questionnaire to assess the extent to which students appreciated the book. Following is the questionnaire:

Questionnaire re: The Grapes of Wrath

Please answer each of the following questions. In each case, 1 represents the lowest enthusiasm, 7 represents the highest enthusiasm, and 4 represents the mid-point. Circle the appropriate number.

1. How interesting do you find this novel?

\_\_\_\_\_

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

2. How interesting do you find the central characters?

\_\_\_\_\_

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

3. How interested are you in reading another novel by the same author?

\_\_\_\_\_

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

4. Overall, how do you rate this novel?

\_\_\_\_\_

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

A parallel questionnaire was administered for The Stone Angel. After the collection of the questionnaires, which remained anonymous, novel study commenced. The lesson plans for each novel follow:



LESSON PLANS for The Grapes of Wrath

## LESSON 1: Dreams

Much of the impact of The Grapes of Wrath derives from Steinbeck's use of antitheses. The first lesson focused on dreams and on realities frequently antithetical to them.

Students in Group A, the Comparison Method Group, compared Steinbeck's view of dreams with the view of dreams expressed in "Dreams" and "Puzzled," by Langston Hughes.

## Dreams

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow. (112)

## Puzzled

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode? (106)

Students in Group B, the Novel-in-Itself Method Group, found quotations from the novel illustrating the specific dreams of members of the Joad Family and of Casy, as well as other quotations illustrating the eventual realities. They discussed the view of dreams illustrated through their study of quotations.

LESSON 2: One "big soul" (24)

The preceding lesson dealt with dreams. At the centre of Casy's dream for the better future is the "big soul" concept, which Tom Joad eventually adopts. Lesson 2, extending over two classes, examined the idea of the "big soul."

Students in Group A wrote a theme statement for "On Another's Sorrow," by William Blake.

On Another's Sorrow

Can I see another's woe,  
And not be in sorrow too?  
Can I see another's grief,  
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,  
And not feel my sorrow's share?  
Can a father see his child  
Weep, not be with sorrow fill'd?

Can a mother sit and hear  
An infant groan, an infant fear?  
No, no! never can it be!  
Never, never can it be!

And can he who smiles on all  
Hear the wren with sorrows small,  
Hear the small bird's grief & care,  
Hear the woes that infants bear,

And not sit beside the nest,  
Pouring pity in their breast;  
And not sit the cradle near,  
Weeping tear on infant's tear;

And not sit both night & day,  
Wiping all our tears away?  
O, no! never can it be!  
Never, never can it be!

He doth give his joy to all;  
He becomes an infant small;  
He becomes a man of woe;  
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,  
And thy maker is not by;  
Think not thou canst weep an tear,  
And thy maker is not near.

O! he gives to us his joy  
That our grief he may destroy;  
Till our grief is fled & gone  
He doth sit by us and moan. (56)

Then students orally compared this idea with Casy's philosophy in the novel.

Students in Group B wrote a statement of an idea or philosophy important to them and by which they would like others to live. Then they orally compared their ideas with Casy's.

The remainder of Lesson 2 for both groups examined the significance of the "big soul" concept of the novel. The following manifestations of it were considered: (a) Ma Joad's emphasis on family unity and munificence; (b) the words "This is the beginning--from 'I' to 'we'" (165); (c) the attitude of Sairy Wilson (241); (d) the atmosphere of the government camp; (e) Ma's tribute to Tom, "'Ever'thing you do is more'n you'" (384); (f) Casy's willingness to die to help others (421); (g) Tom's words addressed to Ma Joad in their farewell scene, "I'll be ever'where--wherever you look" (463), and (h) Rose of Sharon's unselfish act at the novel's close (500-02).

### LESSON 3: Nature

Lesson 3 looked at nature, which merited attention because by the conclusion of the novel it becomes clear that elements of nature are a part of the "big soul" (464). This lesson for Groups A and B began with a consideration of this idea.

Then, students in Group A wrote a theme statement for "The World is Too Much With Us," by William Wordsworth.

The World is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.--Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. (191)

Students compared Steinbeck's view of the relationship between human beings and nature with Wordsworth's. Students in Group B wrote a portrait of nature and compared Steinbeck's view of the relationship between human beings and nature with their own view.

LESSON 4: Human Beings

Much of Steinbeck's commentary on human beings is presented in the inter-chapters of the novel. Lesson 4 began in Groups A and B with a reading of the opening paragraph of Chapter Fourteen, including the words, "man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work,

walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments" (164).

Students in Group A, divided into small groups, wrote a comparison of Steinbeck's view of human beings in this passage and the view expressed in "Man-Made Satellite," by Louis Ginsberg.

#### Man-Made Satellite

Closer to neighbor wheeling constellations,  
At last the man-made satellite is hurled,  
Adventuring amid uncharted spaces,  
Yet tethered to the rolling of the world.

Now infinite man with all his infinite dreaming  
At last has launched undaunted symbol of  
The grandeur of his visionary power  
Toward archipelagoes of suns above.

This voyager in interstellar vastness,  
What questions does this man-made moon now ferry?  
What signals does it semaphor and beacon?  
What riddle does this satellite now query?

And even as this little orb in splendor,  
When will the glory of man's mind, elate,  
Also launch up his heart above the murky,  
The thick and earthly atmosphere of hate? (146)

Students in Group B, divided into small groups, wrote a prose analysis of the passage from the novel to discuss how unity, coherence, and emphasis are achieved in the passage (Ford, Meeson 22-23).

Following their respective assignments, students in both groups discussed whether the view of human beings presented in the passage from the novel is in harmony with views presented elsewhere in the novel, including views implied through the symbol of the turtle.

#### LESSON 5: Wrath

One of the dominant feelings in The Grapes of Wrath is wrath, and it provided a focus for Lesson 5.

Students in Group A compared John Steinbeck's view of wrath with the view presented in "The Anger That Breaks a Man Down into Boys," written by Cesar Vallejo and translated by Robert Bly.

#### The Anger That Breaks a Man Down into Boys

The anger that breaks a man down into boys,  
that breaks the boy down into equal birds,  
and the bird, then, into tiny eggs;  
the anger of the poor  
owns one smooth oil against two vinegars.



The anger that breaks the tree down into leaves,  
 and the leaf down into different-sized buds,  
 and the buds into infinitely fine grooves;  
 the anger of the poor  
 owns two rivers against a number of seas.

The anger that breaks the good down into doubts,  
 and doubt down into three matching arcs,  
 and the arc, then, into unimaginable tombs;  
 the anger of the poor  
 owns one piece of steel against two daggers.

The anger that breaks the soul down into bodies,  
 the body down into different organs,  
 and the organ into reverberating octaves of thought;  
 the anger of the poor  
 owns one deep fire against two craters. (236-37)

Students in Group B wrote a brief, vivid description or narration on the topic of wrath and then compared John Steinbeck's view of wrath with the view presented in their writing.

Lesson 5 concluded in both groups with a consideration of (a) the Biblical allusions in the title of the novel, including the reference to Revelation 14:17, and (b) the use of the expression, "the grapes of wrath" in "Battle Hymn of the Republic," by Julia Ward Howe.

## LESSON 6: Machines

This lesson considered Steinbeck's commentary on the relationship between human beings and machines.

Groups A and B began Lesson 6 with a reading of the opening paragraph of Chapter 11 focusing on "the machine man" (126).

Then, students in Group A compared Steinbeck's view of the relationship between humans and machines in the passage with the view presented in "Portrait of a Machine," by Louis Untermeyer.

## Portrait of a Machine

What nudity as beautiful as this  
Obedient monster purring at its toil;  
Those naked iron muscles dripping oil,  
And the sure-fingered rods that never miss?  
This long and thinking flank of metal is  
Magic that greasy labour cannot spoil;  
While this vast engine that could rend the soil  
Conceals its fury with a gentle hiss.

It does not vent its loathing, it does not turn  
Upon its makers with destroying hate.  
It bears a deeper malice; lives to earn  
Its master's bread and laughs to see this great  
Lord of the earth, who rules but cannot learn,  
Become the slave of what his slaves create. (24)

Students in Group B studied the parallels and contrasts in the passage from the novel.

Following their respective activities, students in both groups discussed whether Steinbeck's view in the passage is in harmony with his views elsewhere in the novel.

#### LESSON 7: Morality

What determines whether an action is right or wrong? Is there a standard of right and wrong that applies to all people? These questions, and other related ones, are posed by The Grapes of Wrath, and they provided the seventh lesson with a focus.

Students in Groups A and B began the lesson with a reading of Casy's words:

There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue.  
 There's just stuff people do. It's all part of  
 the same thing. And some of the things folks do  
 is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far  
 as any man got a right to say. (24)

Students in Group A compared Casy's view in the passage with the view presented in "The Laws of God, the Laws of Man," by A. E. Housman.

The Laws of God, the Laws of Man

The laws of God, the laws of man,  
 He may keep that will and can;  
 Not I: let God and man decree  
 Laws for themselves and not for me;

And if my ways are not as theirs  
Let them mind their own affairs.  
Their deeds I judge and much condemn,  
Yet when did I make laws for them?  
Please yourselves, say I, and they  
Need only look the other way.  
But no, they will not; they must still  
Wrest their neighbour to their will,  
And make me dance as they desire  
With jail and gallows and hell-fire.  
And how am I to face the odds  
Of man's bedevilment and God's?  
I, a stranger and afraid  
In a world I never made.  
They will be master, right or wrong;  
Though both are foolish, both are strong.  
And since, my soul, we cannot fly  
To Saturn nor to Mercury,  
Keep we must, if keep we can,  
These foreign laws of God and man. (28-29)

Students in Group B explained orally how Casy's view was emphasized in the novel.

The lesson concluded with students in both groups offering their own opinions of Casy's view.

## LESSON 8: Themes

This concluding lesson involved a look at themes.

Students in Groups A and B had been given their assignments for this class a few days earlier. All of Lesson 8 consisted of responses and discussions.

Students in both groups wrote a statement of a theme or "human truth" (an idea about human beings presented as true in a literary work)--a topic which had not been specifically dealt with in class study--and stated how this idea was exemplified in the novel. Students in Group A found a brief poem or the lyrics of a song which supported or refuted the theme and read the work in class. Students in Group B told of a real-life experience to support or refute the idea.

Lesson 8 concluded in both groups with a consideration of the overall theme of The Grapes of Wrath.

LESSON PLANS for The Stone Angel

## LESSON 1: Hagar

As protagonist-narrator, Hagar dominates The Stone Angel. The first lesson introduced her.

Students in Group A, the Novel-in-Itself Method Group, wrote a character sketch of Hagar at ninety from the point of view of Marvin with commentary regarding their own agreement or disagreement. Then they presented their ideas orally. Students in Group B, the Comparison Method Group, wrote a comparison of

Hagar at ninety with the central characters of D. H. Lawrence's "Old People." Then they presented their ideas orally.

### Old People

Nowadays everybody wants to be young  
so much so, that even the young are old with the effort of  
being young.

As for those over fifty, either they rush forward in self-  
assertion fearful to behold,  
or they bear everybody a grim and grisly grudge  
because of their own fifty or sixty or seventy or eighty  
summers.

As if it's my fault that the old girl is seventy-seven! (66)

#### LESSON 2: Hagar and her "lost men" (4)

The preceding class dealt with Hagar at ninety. The second lesson, extending over two classes, radiated out from her to explore her relationships with her "lost men." This group includes Jason, Matt, Dan, Bram, John, and Marvin ("lost" in the emotional sense).

Students in Group A reviewed the relationship between Hagar and each of her "lost men" and discussed whether the relationships had common elements. Students in Group B read "The Clod and the Pebble," by William Blake, and discussed whether Hagar was more a "clod" or a "pebble" in her relationship with each of her "lost men."

The Clod and the Pebble

"Love seeketh not Itself to please,  
 Nor for itself hath any care,  
 But for another gives its ease,  
 And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."  
 So sung a little Clod of Clay,  
 Trodden with the cattle's feet,  
 But a Pebble of the brook  
 Warbled out these metres meet:

"Love seeketh only Self to please,  
 To bind another to Its delight,  
 Joy in another's loss of ease,  
 And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite." (60)

LESSON 3: Hagar and John: An Examination of a Central Passage  
 and of Associated Ideas

The preceding lesson looked at Hagar's relationship with each of her "lost men," including her son John. However, because so much of what is important in the novel centres on the Hagar-John relationship, more attention was given to it in Lesson 3, extending over two classes.

Students in Groups A and B began Lesson 3 with a reading of the crucial cemetery scene involving Hagar and John (157-60). Students in Group A, divided into small groups, wrote a prose analysis of the passage to discuss how unity, coherence, and

emphasis are achieved (Ford and Meeson 22-23). Students in Group B, divided into small groups, compared Hagar's reaction to the truth about her son revealed in the passage to the father's reaction to the truth about his son in "The Man Who Finds His Son Has Become a Thief," by Raymond Souster.

The Man Who Finds His Son Has Become a Thief

Coming into the store at first angry  
at the accusation, believing  
the word of his boy who has told him,  
I didn't steal anything, honest . . . .  
Then becoming calmer, seeing that anger  
won't help in the business, listening patiently  
as the other's evidence unfolds, so painfully slow.

Then seeing gradually that evidence  
almost as if slowly tightening around the neck  
of his son, at first circumstantial, then gathering damage,  
until there's present guilt's sure odour seeping  
into the mind, laying its poison.

Suddenly feeling



sick and alone and afraid, as if  
an unseen hand had slapped him in the face  
for no reason whatsoever; wanting to get out  
into the street, the night, the darkness, anywhere to hide  
the pain that must show to these strangers, the fear.  
It must be like this.  
It could not be otherwise. (141)

In Lesson 3, students in Groups A and B discussed another important quotation relating to the Hagar-John relationship: "The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all" (216). Students related it to (a) the central image of the stone angel in the cemetery, (b) Hagar's "betraying tears" (249) before Marvin, (c) Hagar's realization about Marvin, "Now it seems to me he is truly Jacob . . ." (271), which closely relates to an idea in the passage studied earlier this lesson, and (d) the sentence which is perhaps the most revealing one in the entire novel, "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear" (261).

Lesson 3 concluded in both groups with an explanation and discussion of some basic Biblical allusions used in the novel.

LESSON 4: "Pride was my wilderness . . ." (261)

Near the conclusion of Lesson 3, students looked at the quotation, "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear." (261) Lesson 4, near its conclusion, was to return to these words.

Students in Group A began Lesson 4 by independently writing a few adjectives which they believed described Hagar's relationship with each of the following: Doris, Lottie Drieser, Mr. Troy, Elva Jardine, Murray Ferney Lees, Steven, and Sandra Wong. They also drew a simple diagram which they believed visually captured each relationship. Following the preparation, some students wrote the groups of adjectives and drew the corresponding diagrams on the board, while the others attempted to identify the relationship represented in each instance. Students in Group B began Lesson 4 by writing a comparison of each relationship mentioned in the assignment for Group A with the typical human relationship as it is perceived to be in "For Everywhere on Earth," by Gertrud Von Le Fort.

#### For Everywhere on Earth

For everywhere on earth blows the wind of  
 forsakenness, hark, how it moans over  
 the spaces of the world!

Everywhere there is one and never two.  
 Everywhere is a cry in a prison and a hand  
 behind locked doors;

Everywhere there is one buried alive.  
 Our mothers weep and our beloved are  
 speechless; for none can help the other:  
 each and all are alone.

They call to one another from silence to  
 silence, they kiss one another from

solitude to solitude. They love one another  
a thousand griefs away from their souls.  
For the nearness of men is like flowers  
withering on graves, and all comfort is  
like a voice from without--

But you are a voice in the inmost soul. (87)

Following their respective assignments, students in Groups A and B discussed whether the quotation "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear" applied to Hagar in the relationships dealt with earlier in this lesson.

LESSON 5: "Things never look the same from the outside as they do from the inside" (222).

One of Hagar's major realizations occurs as a result of her relationship with Murray Ferney Lees. In her words, "Things never look the same from the outside as they do from the inside" (222).

At the beginning of Lesson 5, students in Group A explained the meaning of the quotation and reported on a real-life incident to support or to refute the idea. Students in Group B explained the meaning of the quotation and compared it with the theme of "A Man Saw A Ball of Gold in the Sky," by Stephen Crane.

A Man Saw A Ball of Gold in the Sky

A man saw a ball of gold in the sky;  
 He climbed for it,  
 And eventually he achieved it--  
 It was clay.

Now this is the strange part:  
 When the man went to the earth  
 And looked again,  
 Lo, there was a ball of gold.  
 Now this is the strange part:  
 It was a ball of gold.

Ay, by the heavens, it was a ball of gold. (145)

Following their respective assignments, students in Groups A and B discussed the relationship between the idea in the quotation and the idea in Hagar's words about Steven, her grandson, near the end of the novel: "It's his life, not mine . . . I would have liked to tell him he is dear to me, and would be so, no matter what he's like or what he does with his life" (265).

LESSON 6: Who or what is ultimately in control?

Lesson 6 centered on a major question relating to the world of the novel: Who or what is ultimately in control of an individual's destiny? Hagar's view appears to oscillate. The quotation "Pride was my wilderness" suggests that "character is

destiny"; "thank goodness fate deals a few decent cards sometimes" (53) implies that fate is the prime controller; "The jokes of God" (52) suggests that a supernatural being is in control.

In this lesson, students in Group A began by citing an event in their lives and by attempting to explain who or what was responsible for its occurrence. Then they explained whether a comparable belief was revealed in The Stone Angel. Students in Group B began by reading "Hap," by Thomas Hardy.

#### Hap

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"  
Then would I bear it, clench myself, and  
die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.  
  
But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever  
sown?

--Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a  
moan . . . .

These purblind Doomsters had as readily  
strown

Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. (677)

Then they discussed whether a comparable idea was revealed in The Stone Angel.

In the latter part of the lesson, students in Groups A and B looked at Laurence's use of irony, a topic which closely related to the question dealt with in the first part of the lesson.

#### LESSON 7: Themes

This lesson followed the same procedure as Lesson 8 on The Grapes of Wrath.

Students in Group A and Group B had been given their assignments for this class a few days earlier. All of Lesson 7 consisted of responses and discussions.

Students in both groups wrote a statement of a theme or "human truth" (an idea about human beings presented as true in a literary work) in The Stone Angel which had not been dealt with in class study and an explanation of how it was revealed. Students in Group A told of a real-life experience to support or to refute the idea. Students in Group B found a brief poem or the lyrics of a song which supported or refuted the idea and read the work in class.

Lesson 7 concluded in both groups with a consideration of the overall theme of The Stone Angel.

After the concluding lesson on each novel, the instructor again administered the questionnaire to assess students' appreciation of the novel.

In the following class, the instructor gave the question for an essay test used to assess students' understanding of the novel. The test was to be written a few days later. This evaluation method, rather than the assignment of a formal essay, was used to provide sufficient time for marking before the end of the term. The question was given a few days in advance to be fair to all the students; if such a procedure had not been followed, students in sections writing earlier in the testing schedule could have revealed the question to those in sections writing later, thereby giving the latter students an unfair advantage. Incidentally, students in all sections had received essay writing instruction in Term One and had some essay writing experience during that time period.

Following are the questions for the essay tests, designed so that students could draw ideas from all the lessons to use in their responses:

Question on The Grapes of Wrath: In your view, is John Steinbeck's vision in The Grapes of Wrath mainly one of optimism or one of pessimism? Explain.

Question on The Stone Angel: In "Margaret Laurence," from Profiles in Canadian Literature 2, Frederick Sweet comments on Laurence's writing: "there is running through her work a

deep concern with what invests human life with meaning" (50). Explain whether Sweet's idea applies to The Stone Angel.

Students were informed that they could prepare as thoroughly as they wanted (even to the point of writing an essay and memorizing it) but that during the test they were not permitted to use the novel or their notes. They were also told that each test would have a value of six per cent of their final standing in Composition/Prose 300.

The students had fifty minutes to write the essay test on The Grapes of Wrath in Term Two and fifty minutes to write the essay test on The Stone Angel in Term Three. After each test, papers from students receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method were sorted randomly with papers from students receiving the Comparison Method. The papers were then delivered to an objective marker for evaluation. The marker, paid for her work, had tutored in English at The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg, one summer session, and had marked essays for instructors of English there for a few years. The marker was presented with outlines of the ideas considered in the lessons but was not informed of the fact that the different teaching methods had been used. In her evaluation of the essays, she was instructed to consider the extent to which they revealed what Geraldine Murphy terms "vertical-horizontal perception" (452). This term means the understanding of how an incident functions in its particular place in a literary work as well as how it functions in relation to the literary work as a whole (452). The



marker was asked to continue her usual marking approach of writing specific comments throughout each essay as well as providing an overall commentary.

In evaluating the essay tests, the marker received help from one other individual, a teacher with considerable background in English. He reviewed each essay and the mark assigned.

The marker followed the instructions, and after about two weeks with The Grapes of Wrath tests in Term Two and two weeks with The Stone Angel tests in Term Three, she returned them to the researcher. Once The Stone Angel test scores were determined, the raw data in the experiment were complete. These data consisted of the scores of students in Group A and Group B on the two essay tests as well as the results on the pre-study and post-study appreciation questionnaires. The essay test scores were used to find whether either of the two teaching methods involved in the research more effectively led students to an understanding of a novel; the appreciation questionnaire results were used to find whether either of the two teaching approaches more effectively increased students' appreciation of a novel they had read.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

This chapter offers an analysis of the results of the essay tests used to assess understanding as well as an analysis of the results of the questionnaires used to assess appreciation.

Tests on both novels were written by 158 students--74 in Group A and 84 in Group B--and were marked out of ten. Following is a summary of the results.

Group A			
Test	Method	Mean	Standard Deviation
<u>The Grapes of Wrath</u>	Comparison	5.546	1.484
<u>The Stone Angel</u>	Novel-in-Itself	4.932	1.372

Critical ratio: 2.613

Group B			
Test	Method	Mean	Standard Deviation
<u>The Grapes of Wrath</u>	Novel-in-Itself	5.967	1.294
<u>The Stone Angel</u>	Comparison	5.192	1.375

Critical ratio: 3.762

Both groups did better on The Grapes of Wrath test. In fact, the differences between their means on this test and their means on The Stone Angel test were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. These differences were probably not a reflection

of the teaching methods used. Instead, they were likely a reflection of students' better understanding of The Grapes of Wrath than of The Stone Angel or a reflection of a better grasp of the essay question on the former novel than the one on the latter. Comparisons of novels and assignments support both assumptions. In consideration of the first, it may be argued that The Stone Angel is more difficult to understand than The Grapes of Wrath. Laurence, in The Stone Angel, reveals the novel's central philosophies in a subtle manner, in part through allusions and symbols. In addition, her flashback technique may confuse some readers. By contrast, Steinbeck, in The Grapes of Wrath, presents the novel's central philosophies directly through the words of the former preacher, Jim Casy, and through the introduction of inter-chapters. Evidence that, although the students had difficulty with both essay test questions, they had more with the one on The Stone Angel came from the marker. She explained that many students had mistaken notions of optimism and pessimism, concepts central to the question on The Grapes of Wrath. They thought of optimism as the experience of happy events and of pessimism as the experience of unhappy events, and neglected to deal with feeling or outlook. For instance, many students termed the death of Rose of Sharon's baby pessimistic without considering the optimism involved in her breast-feeding the starving man at the novel's end. As serious as this problem was, the marker explained that the central problem many students had with the question on The Stone Angel was even more severe. They had little idea of what can "invest human life with

meaning." Some students who thought of love as a possibility constructed their entire essay around this one idea.

A second way of analyzing the test results is through a comparison of the two groups' scores on each test. Following is a summary of these results.

The Grapes of Wrath Test

Group	Method	Mean	Standard Deviation
A	Comparison	5.546	1.484
B	Novel-in-Itself	5.967	1.294

Critical ratio: 1.886

The Stone Angel Test

Group	Method	Mean	Standard Deviation
A	Novel-in-Itself	4.932	1.372
B	Comparison	5.192	1.375

Critical ratio: 0.519

On The Grapes of Wrath test, Group B's mean score was higher than Group A's; on The Stone Angel test, Group B's score was again higher than Group A's. However, the difference in means was not statistically significant in either case. Neither the Comparison Method nor the Novel-in-Itself Method fostered notably more understanding of The Grapes of Wrath or of The Stone Angel.

A third, comprehensive way of analyzing the test results is through a comparison of the scores of all tests written by students receiving the Comparison Method with the scores of all tests written by students receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method. The former group included Group A's results on The Grapes of

Wrath test in combination with Group B's results on The Stone Angel test; the latter group included Group B's results on The Grapes of Wrath test in combination with Group A's results on The Stone Angel. Following is a summary of the results.

Method	Mean	Standard Deviation
Comparison	5.358	1.438
Novel-in-Itself	5.482	1.43

Critical ratio: 0.769

In these statistics, the closeness between the two means, the closeness between the two standard deviations, and the critical ratio level indicate that the two methods were similarly effective in fostering understanding.

The results of the questionnaires used to assess appreciation can also be analyzed in different ways. The various ways considered in this chapter are all based on differences between the ratings on the pre-study and those on the post-study questionnaires. One way centres on a comparison of the two groups' responses to each question about a particular work. A summary of the results for The Grapes of Wrath and for The Stone Angel follows.

TABLE 1  
 Summary Table:  
 Group Responses to Each Question  
 on The Grapes of Wrath Questionnaires

Question	Group	Questionnaire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
Question 1	A	Pre-Study		70	3.857	1.65
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.307	1.576
		Critical ratio: 1.677				
	B	Pre-Study		71	3.901	1.436
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	72	4.569	1.373
		Critical ratio: 2.843				
Question 2	A	Pre-Study		70	4.3	1.633
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.347	1.471
		Critical ratio: 0.073				
	B	Pre-Study		71	4.085	1.361
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	74	4.5	1.3
		Critical Ratio: 1.876				
Question 3	A	Pre-Study		70	3.8	2.047
		Post-Study	Comparison	74	4.014	1.878
		Critical ratio: 0.653				
	B	Pre-Study		70	3.714	1.806
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	74	3.959	1.639
		Critical Ratio: 0.851				
Question 4	A	Pre-Study		70	4.357	1.531
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.613	1.557
		Critical ratio: 0.999				
	B	Pre-Study		71	4.014	1.369
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	74	4.662	1.244
		Critical ratio: 2.979				

TABLE 2

Summary Table:  
 Group Responses to Each Question  
 on The Stone Angel Questionnaires

	Group	Question-naire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
Question 1	A	Pre-Study		74	4.291	1.443
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	60	4.783	1.45
			Critical ratio:	1.957		
	B	Pre-Study		78	4.628	1.333
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.507	1.279
			Critical Ratio:	0.573		
Question 2	A	Pre-Study		74	4.345	1.407
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	60	4.75	1.471
			Critical ratio:	1.616		
	B	Pre-Study		79	4.759	1.314
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.64	1.303
			Critical ratio:	0.564		
Question 3	A	Pre-Study		74	3.541	1.696
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	59	3.941	1.814
			Critical ratio:	1.3		
	B	Pre-Study		79	3.949	1.653
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	3.733	1.594
			Critical ratio:	0.826		
Question 4	A	Pre-Study		71	4.24	1.429
		Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	60	4.817	1.452
			Critical ratio:	2.283		
	B	Pre-Study		78	4.756	1.27
		Post-Study	Comparison	75	4.293	1.341
			Critical ratio:	2.191		

Table 1 shows higher post-study means than pre-study means for questions 1 (How interesting do you find this novel?), 2 (How interesting do you find the central characters?), 3 (How interested are you in reading another novel by the same author?), and 4 (Overall, how do you rate this novel?) in both groups. However, the differences between the pre-study means and the post-study means were statistically significant only for questions 1 and 4 in Group B. Here the differences were at the 0.01 level of significance, showing that the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation of The Grapes of Wrath than did the Comparison Method.

Table 2 shows higher post-study means than pre-study means for all questions in Group A, taught by the Novel-in-Itself Method. The difference in question 4 was at the 0.05 level of significance. By contrast, the table shows lower post-study means than pre-study means for all questions in Group B, which received the Comparison Method. The difference in question 4 was significant at the 0.05 level, showing that the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation of The Stone Angel than did the Comparison Method.

The fact that the post-study mean for question 4 was significantly higher than the pre-study mean for both novels on the questionnaires of students taught by the Novel-in-Itself Method deserves more attention. It shows that this method, by keeping the novel at the centre of students' concentration, more effectively fostered appreciation of the novels than did the Comparison Method.



A second way of analyzing the questionnaire results is through an extension of the question-by-question analysis of the first method. In this extension, the responses of Group A (Comparison Method) on The Grapes of Wrath questionnaires are looked at in combination with the responses of Group B (Comparison Method) on The Stone Angel questionnaires, while the responses of Group B (Novel-in-Itself Method) on The Grapes of Wrath questionnaires are looked at in combination with the responses of Group A (Novel-in-Itself Method) on The Stone Angel questionnaires. A summary of the results follows.

TABLE 3

## SUMMARY TABLE

Combined Group Responses to Each Question  
on The Grapes of Wrath and The Stone Angel Questionnaires

	Questionnaire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
Question 1	Pre-Study		145	4.066	1.448
	Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	132	4.667	1.396
			Critical ratio:	3.516	
	Pre-Study		148	4.27	1.528
	Post-Study	Comparison	150	4.407	1.452
			Critical ratio:	0.793	
Question 2	Pre-Study		145	4.217	1.244
	Post-Study	Novel-In-Itself	134	4.624	1.827
			Critical ratio:	2.253	
	Pre-Study		149	4.544	1.342
	Post-Study	Comparison	150	4.533	1.394
			Critical ratio:	0.07	

Question	Pre-Study	Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	Comparison	Critical ratio		
3			144			3.625	1.752
			133			3.951	1.719
					1.562		
			149			3.879	1.85
			149			3.872	1.773
					0.033		
Question 4			142			4.127	1.404
			134			4.731	1.343
					3.653		
			148			4.568	1.414
			150			4.483	1.459
					0.511		

The table shows that among the students taught by the Comparison Method, the post-study mean was higher than the pre-study mean for question 1, but post-study means were lower than pre-study ones for questions 2, 3, and 4. The differences were not significant. By contrast, among the students taught by the Novel-in-Itself Method, post-study means were higher than pre-study means for all four questions. The differences were statistically significant at the 0.01 level for questions 1 (How interesting do you find this novel?) and 4 (Overall, how do you rate this novel?), and at the 0.05 level for question 2 (How interesting do you find the central characters?) Thus, according to this way of analyzing the questionnaire results, the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation of the novels than did the Comparison Method.

The one area in which responses to the questionnaires did not show a significant difference was that questioning students' interest in reading another novel by the same author. This

exception can be explained in different ways. Perhaps a gain in appreciation of a novel was not enough to encourage further reading among recalcitrant readers, or perhaps students did not expect another novel by the same author to be comparable in quality.

A third way of analyzing the questionnaire results is through a comparison of each group's combined responses to questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 on each novel. Following is a summary of the results for The Grapes of Wrath:

Group	Questionnaire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
A	Pre-Study		280	4.079	1.745
A	Post-Study	Comparison	299	4.341	1.647
		Critical ratio:	1.855		
B	Pre-Study		283	3.929	1.509
B	Post-Study	Novel-in- Itself	294	4.422	1.426
		Critical ratio:	4.03		

This table of questionnaire results for The Grapes of Wrath shows higher post-study means than pre-study means for Groups A and B. However, the difference was statistically significant, at the 0.01 level, only for Group B. Therefore, the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation of Steinbeck's novel than did the Comparison Method.

Following is a summary of the results for The Stone Angel:

Group	Questionnaire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
A	Pre-Study		293	4.085	1.517
A	Post-Study	Novel-in- Itself	239	4.601	1.567
		Critical ratio:	3.832		
B	Pre-Study		314	4.525	1.435
B	Post-Study	Comparison	300	4.308	1.158
		Critical ratio:	2.066		

This table shows a higher post-study mean than pre-study mean for Group A, a difference significant at the 0.01 level. The table shows a lower post-study mean than pre-study mean for Group B, but a difference which is still significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the Novel-in-Itself Method was much more successful than the Comparison Method in fostering appreciation of Laurence's novel. In fact, the Comparison Method contributed towards a decrease in appreciation. Laurence's complex protagonist, challenging flashback technique, and subtle ways of exemplifying the theme required the direct means of nurturing the reader-novel relationship used by the Novel-in-Itself Method. The indirect means used by the Comparison Method distanced students from the novel, thereby causing the reader-novel relationship to deteriorate.

A fourth, comprehensive way of analyzing the questionnaire results is through an extension of the combined response method. Here, responses to novels taught by the Comparison Method (Group A--The Grapes of Wrath and Group B--The Stone Angel) are compared

to responses to novels taught by the Novel-in-Itself Method (Group B--The Grapes of Wrath and Group A--The Stone Angel).

Following is a summary of the results:

Questionnaire	Method	Number of Responses	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-Study		594	4.315	1.604
Post-Study	Comparison	599	4.325	1.541
		Critical ratio: 0.11		
Pre-Study		576	4.009	1.523
Post-Study	Novel-in-Itself	533	4.502	1.493
		Critical ratio: 5.439		

This comprehensive way of analyzing the questionnaire results shows that overall the Comparison Method had no significant effect on students' appreciation of the two novels. This conclusion was the consequence of the method's insignificant positive effect on students' appreciation of The Grapes of Wrath in combination with its significant negative effect on their appreciation of The Stone Angel. In striking contrast, the Novel-in-Itself Method had a significant positive effect. The difference between the pre-study mean and the post-study mean among students taught by this method was significant at the 0.01 level. This conclusion was the consequence of the method's significant positive effect on students' appreciation of each of the novels.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that the Comparison Method and the Novel-in-Itself Method were similarly effective in

fostering understanding of the novels. In contrast, it has shown that the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation than did the Comparison Method.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This chapter briefly reviews the findings in Chapter 4 and speculates on them. In addition, it offers implications for teachers of literature and ideas for further research.

This study looked at the relative effectiveness of two methods of teaching a novel in fostering understanding and appreciation of that novel. The results of the essay tests showed that there was no significant difference between the effectiveness of the Novel-in-Itself Method and that of the Comparison Method in fostering understanding. The focus of the former upon an analysis of certain passages in the novel and upon a sharing among students of related views and real-life experiences was balanced by the focus of the latter upon the use of poetry to help illuminate the novel.

A recommended replication study could offer two refinements in order to find with greater accuracy the relative effectiveness of the two methods in fostering understanding. The first would be the addition of a pre-study assessment of understanding, even if it takes the same form as that of the post-study assessment. The second would be the use of more direct questions than the ones used in this study. One such question could be, "State the theme of the novel, and explain how it is exemplified."

Although there was no significant difference between the effectiveness of the two methods in fostering understanding, there was a significant difference between their effectiveness in fostering appreciation. Among students taught by the Novel-in-

Itself Method, the differences between the pre-study and post-study means were significant at the 0.01 level for questions 1 (How interesting do you find this novel?) and 4 (Overall, how do you rate this novel?) on The Grapes of Wrath and at the 0.05 level for question 4 on The Stone Angel. In all these instances, the Novel-in-Itself Method was responsible for significantly increasing the students' appreciation.

By contrast, among students taught by the Comparison Method, the difference between the pre-study and post-study means was significant, at the 0.05 level, only for question 4 (Overall, how do you rate this novel?) on The Stone Angel. In this instance, the Comparison Method was responsible for significantly decreasing the students' appreciation.

Why the two methods were similarly effective in fostering understanding but not appreciation requires some speculation. A look at the lesson plans can provide some ideas. Consider, for example, lesson 2 on The Grapes of Wrath. The topic was the "big soul" concept for students receiving both methods. However, the approaches were different. Students receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method wrote a statement of an idea or philosophy important to them and by which they would like others to live. Then they orally compared their ideas with Casy's philosophy. Students receiving the Comparison Method wrote a theme statement for "On Another's Sorrow," by William Blake. Then they orally compared this idea with Casy's philosophy. Both methods had techniques to help students understand the "big soul" concept, perhaps the most important idea in Steinbeck's novel. However,



only the Novel-in-Itself Method directly promoted the students' personal involvement in the novel. This method called upon students to construct a "bridge" (Ryan 95) between their world and the world of the novelist, and questions about their attitudes and feelings added an emotional dimension to the class study. By contrast, the Comparison Method called upon students to construct a bridge between the world of the novelist and that of the poet. Questions about comparisons encouraged intellectual activity but did not promote an emotional dimension. Thus, the personal involvement characteristic of the Novel-in-Itself Method fostered appreciation.

A recommended further study could alter the Comparison Method in an attempt to make it more involving. For example, students could be given a greater opportunity to choose the works to be compared with the novel. (In this study, students had this chance only for the final lesson).

The other ways of analyzing the pre-study and post-study questionnaire means all showed that the Novel-in-Itself Method more effectively fostered appreciation than did the Comparison Method. In the extension of the question-by-question analysis in which the two novels were considered together, the differences between the pre-study and post-study means among students receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method were significant at the 0.01 level for question 1 (How interesting do you find this novel?), at the 0.05 level for question 2 (How interesting do you find the central characters?), and at the 0.01 level for question 4 (Overall, how do you rate this novel?). Among students receiving

the Comparison Method, the differences were insignificant for all four questions. This second way of analyzing the questionnaire means produced one result not shown by the first: the Novel-in-Itself Method fostered appreciation of the central characters significantly more than did the Comparison Method. Again, a look at the lesson plans can help one speculate on why this was so. Consider, for example, Lesson 1 on The Stone Angel. Students receiving the Novel-in-Itself Method wrote a character sketch of Hagar at ninety from the point of view of Marvin with commentary regarding their own agreement or disagreement. The Novel-in-Itself Method required students to become personally involved with Marvin by putting themselves in his place, and with Hagar by expressing their own views about her. By contrast, the Comparison Method allowed students to keep their distance from these central characters in the novel. Again, the personal involvement called for by the Novel-in-Itself Method fostered appreciation.

A recommended further study could include a third group of students: one which receives a combination of the Novel-in-Itself Method and the Comparison Method. Such a study would help determine the effect that personal involvement has on appreciation.

In the two methods of analysis referred to thus far, only question 3 (How interested are you in reading another novel by the same author)? has not been discussed. Differences between pre-study and post-study means were insignificant among students receiving each of the methods. Perhaps students did not expect

to appreciate a novel simply because they had appreciated another novel by the same author. A revision of question 3 for another study--How interested would you be in reading this novel at some point in the future?--could assess more accurately students' appreciation of the book.

A study of the cumulative means for the questionnaires showed that when the Novel-in-Itself Method was used for teaching each novel, there was an increase in students' appreciation, significant at the 0.01 level. Study of the cumulative means showed no significant increase in appreciation when the Comparison Method was used in teaching The Grapes of Wrath and a decrease in appreciation, significant at the 0.05 level, when this method was used in teaching The Stone Angel.

The third way of analyzing the questionnaire results showed that the Comparison Method was better suited to The Grapes of Wrath than to The Stone Angel. One can speculate that the students viewed the study of poetry in association with The Grapes of Wrath as a complex means of highlighting ideas which Steinbeck had directly stated. However, they viewed the study of poetry in association with The Stone Angel as a complex means of highlighting ideas which Laurence had subtly presented. One can see how the latter situation could frustrate students and lead to a loss of appreciation of the novel. A replication study could be done to see whether this finding would be corroborated. Novels of similar styles could replace the ones used in this study. Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles could replace Steinbeck's novel, and Margaret Laurence's A Jest of God could

replace The Stone Angel. Tess of the d'Urbervilles, like The Grapes of Wrath, is episodic and expresses directly the philosophies of its author. A Jest of God, like The Stone Angel, uses a flashback technique and expresses indirectly the philosophies of its author. Such a study would help determine whether there is a relationship between the effectiveness of a teaching method and the style of the novel being taught.

Finally, a study of the combined cumulative means for the questionnaires showed that when the Novel-in-Itself Method was used for teaching, there was an increase in students' appreciation, significant at the 0.01 level. By contrast, when the Comparison Method was used, there was no significant change in their appreciation.

The results of this study have some important implications for teachers of literature. In light of the evidence that the method a teacher uses in novel study can significantly affect the appreciation students have of the work, the teacher should be careful to select a satisfactory method. The results of this research offer some guidelines about what constitutes such a method. The first requirement is keeping the novel at the centre of the study, a practice of the Novel-in-Itself Method. This idea is supported by Geraldine Murphy in The Study of Literature in High School: "the novel gives . . . all the reader needs to know" (313). The second requirement is promoting personal involvement, by giving students considerable opportunity to share personal experiences and ideas which relate to the novel. Such promotion, practiced in the Novel-in-Itself Method, provides

a logical extension of the students' original reading experiences, in which many of their responses show self-involvement (Squire 18).

Significantly better results for the Novel-in-Itself Method than for the Comparison Method in fostering appreciation do not imply that teachers should totally abandon the latter. Even in this study, the Comparison Method did not have a significant negative effect on any of the aspects of the students' appreciation assessed by the questionnaire on The Grapes of Wrath. Various studies, in addition to those already mentioned, are required before definitive statements can be made about the effectiveness of the Comparison Method. In this study, some students probably viewed the poems as obstacles to appreciation of the novel instead of as the facilitators they were intended to be. Therefore, further research could change the nature of the materials used for the comparisons. One study could use short prose selections, typically easier for students to understand and appreciate, in place of the poems. Another could use representatives of a variety of literary forms--short prose selections, scenes from plays, paintings, musical compositions, as well as poetry--in an attempt to alleviate the monotony some students likely felt when poetry alone was used.

Another study could involve a change in timing. Instead of looking at the related works during the study of the novel, the class could look at them only as an introduction and as a conclusion. This change would allow for continuity in the study of the novel.

Still another study could involve a change in the nature of the groups. It could have students grouped according to their level of proficiency in literature to find whether there is a relationship between the effectiveness of a teaching method and the academic level of the students receiving it. Such a study could be particularly appropriate for a teacher whose students are streamed into classes according to their perceived ability.

There is a need for studies which assess understanding and appreciation differently from the methods used in this study, wherein they were assessed only within the context of the novel being studied. These results tell nothing about long-term understanding and appreciation of literature. A study could ask for responses at the end of the term, or after a lapse of six months or a year. Another study could investigate the relative effectiveness of various methods in fostering understanding and appreciation of novels and other works of literature encountered by the students in their future.

In all the suggestions for further research thus far, understanding and appreciation would be assessed within the context of literature. However, studies are needed to assess the understanding and appreciation individuals derive from reading and studying a novel which extend into other important areas, including the individual's relationships with others and with nature. Such studies would require help from psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers. The complexities of these studies could render them unfeasible, yet they are necessary to deal with understanding and appreciation in their totality.

Further research into the relative effectiveness of teaching methods for the novel could show that there are too many factors involved in the student-novel-teacher relationship for one to ever generalize about the relative effectiveness of various teaching methods. On the other hand, further research could show that some methods are generally more effective than others in bringing students into contact with the "crystal universe" (Keyes 165) a novel can offer, thereby paving the way for maximum understanding and appreciation. Either finding would be preferable to the lack of clarity in the present.

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APPENDIX

Letter Seeking Consent and Consent Form

2W02  
The Collegiate Division  
The University of Winnipeg  
515 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3B 2E9

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Dear Mr. and Mrs. -----:

Last year in your son's/daughter's Composition/Prose 300 class at The Collegiate Division, The University of Winnipeg, I used, as a part of regular course work, different teaching techniques for two novels. In one, all that was studied was rooted in the relationship between the novel and the readers forming the class. In the other, selected poems were introduced and studied at appropriate times. For each novel, the students responded anonymously to a pre-study and post-study questionnaire which assessed their appreciation of the novel. In addition, following class study of each novel, the students wrote an essay test which assessed their understanding of the novel.

I am asking your permission to use your son's/daughter's questionnaire results and essay test results in a study I am proposing to The University of Manitoba. Your son's/daughter's name will not be mentioned in the study. Please complete the consent form, which you will find with this letter. On the form, please place a check in the square beside your response, and write the date and your names. Please return the form to me as soon as possible in the accompanying stamped, addressed envelope.

Sincerely yours,

Francis J. Bird  
(Instructor of English,  
The Collegiate Division)

## Consent Form

Mr. Bird:

We give permission for you to use our son's/daughter's questionnaire results and test results in your study.

We do not give permission for you to use our son's/daughter's questionnaire results and test results in your study.

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(Date)

---

(Names)