A Comparison of the Effects of Transmission, Transactional and
Social Constructivist Approaches to Instruction on Secondary
English Students' Comprehension and Response to Literature

By
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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

© July, 2001

0-612-62832-9

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A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF TRANSMISSION, TRANSACTIONAL AND SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES TO INSTRUCTION ON SECONDARY ENGLISH
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ABSTRACT

Reading instruction in secondary English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms takes many forms, with a common approach, the teacher-centered classroom where a traditional transmission pedagogy typically prescribes the single correct reading of any piece of literature through a series of individual, guided activities. A more interactive classroom where the students gain some control over their reading, exchange their reading journals with one another for critiquing purposes, and learn that their own knowledge and experience counts when they read, is referred to as a transactional classroom. A third approach to reading instruction is the social constructivist classroom, where students create the meaning of a text in a social situation where they work collectively and collaboratively through both writing and talking together. The purpose of this study was to pit these three teaching approaches against each other in a grade twelve ELA classroom in order to test their effectiveness in improving the maturity/depth of students' reading comprehension and response to literature.

Two rural grade twelve ELA classes of just under twenty and just under 15 students participated in this three month long study. The research design was based on three questions: 1) Is writing alone or writing paired with talking superior to traditional teacher-led instruction in improving reading comprehension and response as measured by a three-part test which combined a multiple-choice item section, a short answer section, and a written response? 2) Does the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affect student performance in reading comprehension and response? 3) Which instructional approach (presentation) do students most enjoy; and which of the instructional approaches do students feel most benefit their reading comprehension and response to literature? The design was 3 X 2 X 2 (three treatments which were transmission instruction, transactional instruction and social constructivist instruction; two different instructional approaches at a time in two separate classrooms). Three identical units of study, each covering a period of one month, were taught to the two classes. Each class received instruction in a different instructional approach than the other class, and rotated through the three approaches during the study phase. At the end of each unit of instruction, both classes were given the identical reading comprehension test (20 multiple-choice, 10 short answer, one response to reading essay).

The study revealed clearly that a social constructivist approach to ELA instruction resulted in student responses to their reading that were significantly better ($F_{(2,56)} = 3.107, p = 000$) than those produced in either of the other two instructional approaches/interventions One of the two classes performed at the 78th percentile while the other achieved a 91st percentile performance in the social constructivist classroom. The least effective instructional approach, statistically, was the traditional transmission model of instruction and the second most effective approach was the transactional approach.

The study concludes that there is a time and place for all models of instruction. For example, in a transmission, content-based classroom multiple-choice questions might possibly the best method of testing. But when students are expected to become competent, independent readers and thinkers, an instructional approach that is rooted in collaboration, in much talking and writing, produces by far the most capable/mature

readers. That approach is the social constructivist model of instruction. Classrooms where students participate actively in creating meaning through a variety of writing activities which are always accompanied by student-talk and class discussion, where lecturing takes a back seat, and where students are encouraged in testing to respond in writing rather than to choose one correct reading (as in a multiple-choice question), will build skills and competencies that will produce results of a superior quality compared to traditional classrooms. The bonus for both teachers and students is that not only do students perform so much better, but students also most enjoy learning in a social constructivist classroom.

DEDICATION

Because every author dedicates the effort of a publication to the people who helped, coerced, encouraged, harangued, tolerated and persevered, and because that dedication usually takes up the space of a page at the beginning of the manuscript, I will do the same . . .

. . . for Naomi. Ezra. Augusta. Anastasia and Miriam. And for my mom, Margaret and my dad. Bernhard D.

. . and to Mark. you were there throughout.

Thank you also to my committee. especially Stan.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Context of the Study

Theoretical

Change in long-established professions like teaching is usually slow. Concern with knowledge, or product, as it was for the ancients, has remained at the center of educational theory for centuries without appreciable change. Teachers and reading researchers struggle to pursue newer or better approaches to instruction, moving in slowly in the direction of process, away from product, despite a recent trend in society calling for a reaffirmation that "old is best." The "transmission" approach used in literature (reading) instruction assumed, from early times, that the purpose of reading was to communicate a message directly from the author's pen. There was one single correct reading of an infallible text where only the author's message mattered (Straw, 1990). Good readers were aware of historical and biographical, moral and philosophical information regarding the author, which led them to the correct reading - *product*. Imparting knowledge (or information) was the purpose of literature instruction, not entertainment or enjoyment.

With lifestyle changes following the Industrial Revolution, the inevitable result of a gigantic economic shift, leisure time evolved for the wealthy and the middle class. A greater opportunity for employment led to a need for reading skills for work and even for pleasure. The industrial era gave birth to theories that would eventually produce a performance-based model of reading instruction after World

War I, referred to as the "translation" model. This period, often referred to as "New Criticism," refers to a preoccupation with specific skills like decoding, reading for the main idea and critical analysis. Following this period, with the work of psychology and linguistics, combined with a heightened sense of and fascination for the individual, quicker shifts in theory followed (Straw, 1990).

The 1960s and 70s gave rise to an interactive model of teaching reading, which encouraged students to employ their background experience and background knowledge in order to make sense of the text in order to understand it. Transactionalists such as Rosenblatt (1978) would suggest that students, "through their 'transactions' with the poem, were constructing their own meaning within the range of possibilities provided by the text of the poem itself" (Straw, 1990, pg. 131). This "transactional" model of reading was based largely on the writings of Louise Rosenblatt, in which she "characterizes this transaction as a conversation between reader and text – a negotiation between what the reader knows and what the text presents" (Straw, 1990, pg. 131). While the word of the author again gained eminence, the voice of the reader gained the most prominence. What the reader knew when coming to a text assumed dominance (Rosenblatt, 1980).

During the most recent twenty years, reading theory has grown out of research in epistemology and psychology, to a place where the reader has become yet more important. A recognition that reading is a generative act, that meaning is not a representation of the intent of the author, that meaning is not present in the text; rather, that meaning is constructed by the reader during the act of reading, characterizes the transactional model of reading. The reader, within this paradigm, draws on a number of knowledge sources to construct knowledge. It is accepted that the text, a reader's background knowledge, experience, world knowledge - that all of these contribute to the meaning created outside the text in what Rosenblatt refers to as a "poem" - the new text created through negotiation by the reader with the text

(Rosenblatt, 1978). Given this theory, it is possible that no two readers of the same passage will generate identical meanings, or that a single reader will not generate the same meaning on two separate readings of the same text.

Each instructional paradigm developed its own approach to the text and its author, as well as emphasizing certain skills that a reader must accomplish in order to accurately read the text. (See Figure 1 below, for a summary of the reading paradigm time-line.) And while the transactional theory remains central to much that happens in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, this study is most interested in the implications of the most recent paradigm, that of the social constructivists.

Figure 1: Reading Paradigm Time-line

Model Name	Historical Context	Paradigm
TRANSMISSION	19th Century	"author is god"; meaning resides in text; knowledge of author is most important
TRANSLATION	Post WWI	"text becomes 'reified'"; specific skills are important; 'lit-crit' develops
INTERACTION	1950s to 1960s	author gains prominence, but reader gains MORE; what the reader knows is most important
TRANSACTIONAL	1980s to 1990s	reader gains yet more importance; meaning is made during the act of reading; "negotiated meaning"; a new poem is written/constructed
CONSTRUCTIONIST	late 1990s to now	meaning resides almost exclusively with reader; social groups influence generation of meaning; reading is a 'social' act

While maintaining Rosenblatt's notion that reading is a generative act, a more recent theory of meaning making, the "social constructivist" view, adds that meaning is only constructed in the context of social negotiation (Fish, 1980). Creating or

generating meaning when in the act of reading is understood to be a social phenomena, where students come to know the meaning of a text before, during and after reading by negotiating their ideas between not only text and reader, but by also by negotiating their interpretations among other reading communities. Ultimately, this interaction within and between groups of readers results in the construction of a new meaning, or the meaning of a text for the time and for the group (Watson, Baardman, Straw, & Sadowy, 1992; Straw, & Baardman, 1994). The implications of this view of reading suggest that not only could a reader come away from the same text at various times with a different reading, but that the same person could walk from one discourse community into another and within minutes of reading a text in one way, generate an entirely new meaning from the same text, when sitting with a new group of readers who read from a different stance.

Fostering a mature reading of text is what we as teachers seek to do ultimately, and the traditional approach for teaching literature seems to be in conflict with this goal. The social construction of meaning derived at through reading, talk, and writing within a social context, on the other hand, does foster a mature reading of text and is therefore compatible with a mature reading (Straw, 1990).

So we see that reading has become the act of actualization where meaning grows out of encounters between the reader, the text, and as is recognized by social constructivists, between and within discourse communities. A high regard for process, as observed in research that attempts to capture uninterrupted (natural) social phenomena, without observer interference, speaks to this tendency (Borg, 1981). A reorientation of the ELA curriculum (and instruction which places an emphasis on the process of students' literary creativity, and not on the product alone) further characterizes present thinking (Harms, 1988; Fillion, 1984; Courtland, Welsh & Kennedy, 1987).

ELA teachers are concerned with reading and writing skills and instruction. Instructionally, we want to teach students to become "active negotiators in the act of creating meaning during and after reading – to help students become part of the conversation that is reading" (Straw, 1990, pg. 133). There exists within this domain a dilemma for many traditional educators, as reading has come to be understood as "meaning making," instead of "meaning getting" for many. "Meaning making" involves an independent reader who is actively engaged in the construction of text, engaged in negotiations of meaning - through writing, through talking with us as teachers, with other students, and with those outside of school settings. Unfortunately, many instructional approaches do not reflect or support this construct. Teachers are accustomed to having the answers and telling students what a particular text means. In the transmission model of teaching, teachers present the meaning of a text and then show students how that meaning is found there. Through this approach, literature is "used as an example of a particular meaning, rather than as a stimulus for thinking and the construction of meaning" (Straw, 1990, pg. 132). Yet, it is my belief that ELA teachers want to teach in such a manner that their students' skills in understanding text will improve. It is with this dilemma, that this study is concerned: a search for a teaching approach that will best teach students to comprehend and respond to what they read, in light of transactional and social constructivist instructional models of reading compared to a transmission approach to instruction.

The curriculum identifies reading and writing as two of the most important of the six major target areas for instruction (the others are listening, speaking, viewing, and representing). These skills are arguably the most important as they spill into *all* areas of learning, both in schools and outside of schools. Any form of communication involves comprehending the message, whether written or spoken, and it is my goal to focus on reading comprehension and response. Reading comprehension is often taken for granted as teachers and parents merely expect their

charges to "try harder" or "read it again and then you'll see" when problems arise in the process of making meaning from a text. Reading comprehension theory suggests that there are numerous components that make up the act of reading comprehension, and that each component adds complexity to the process. A talented teacher will know how, where, and when to draw on appropriate methods to train students to read with greater comprehension. Reading and response theory influences teaching methodology for this purpose. Theoretically, then, it is the aim of this study to pursue research in reading and response that will strengthen a transactional/constructivist approach to making meaning. This goal will be accomplished by studying how three teaching approaches directly influence students' success in comprehending better what they read.

Personal

I am a high school ELA teacher with fifteen years experience teaching English Literature, among a myriad of subjects. Having studied under the transmission approach to instruction through my secondary and university years and having noticed the prevalence of this same approach in high school classes today in a time when other approaches surface here and there, I find myself curious about what works best for students of reading. I have also found myself somewhat schizophrenic as I have struggled to move through the transition from traditional student to "modern and innovative" teacher. I have certainly always been curious about the mysteries of reading comprehension and response as it was demonstrated both successfully and unsuccessfully through the responses of my students. Why did some succeed so readily in making "accurate" meaning and others struggle in futility? What is an "accurate" reading of a text, and how do I know which reading is more valid, the students' or mine? Why did students in my classes seem to rise to the occasion and often score above the provincial average on Provincial reading comprehension

exams? Why did some of my students still read so eloquently, seeming to understand effortlessly, while others did not? Obviously, there are so many possibilities. Comprehension and response are a complex issue.

Graduate school has provided for me just what I had hoped – to this study. Literature reviews have exposed to me a variety of research from which to pull possible answers to questions that have cropped up through my years in the classroom. Seminar classes have provided an opportunity to sit next to other teachers who ask pertinent questions and share experiences that shed light on many of my own questions. Leadership through example provided by instructors, who share a passion for research and good teaching, has drawn me to this point, completing my own study and adding a small voice to the field of research that already exists to say that we, as reading teachers, can and do make a positive difference in the levels of comprehension and response acquired by our students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare the effect of three separate teaching approaches on reading comprehension and response by measuring student responses to multiple-choice items, short answer responses and an essay response after being exposed to each of the instructional approaches. Specific teaching elements like time on task, interactive and transactional approaches such as collaborative and cooperative learning groups, and instructional techniques such as the use of study-guides or assignments that encourage a wide range of responses (from musical interpretations, graphic artistic representations, verbal-visual essays and plenty of talk) will be part of the three instructional techniques to be used in this study. Specifically, it is the purpose of this study to concentrate on three general approaches to instruction. They are categorized as (1) transmission (traditional teacher-centered instruction), (2) transactional (somewhat student-centered instruction with writing as

a focus), or (3) social constructivist (highly student-centered instruction with an emphasis on much talk, followed by a wide variety of writing). This research will attempt to shed light on the complexities of these three teaching approaches by specifying which approach leads to greater success in reading comprehension and response and why this is so.

It is also the purpose of this research to extend previous research conducted in elementary grades to secondary students and to address shortcomings in research in the area of reading comprehension and response among secondary students in order to add weight to the idea that students successfully make meaning of texts when they work collaboratively, especially when they are critically involved in the process of deciding on meaning (Straw, & Baardman, 1994;). Straw, Craven, Sadowy, and Baardman (1993), for example, compared a traditional approach to poetry instruction with a student-centered, collaborative approach, but in a third grade classroom. Dias (1990) points to the tendency of current reading research to concentrate solely on beginning readers. Although rich with current thinking and terminology surrounding the topic of reading, Hiebert and Raphael's (1998) recent publication dealing with early literacy is a current example of the tendency toward yet another study on the topic of beginning readers. Despite this tendency, it would be foolish to ignore valuable information relevant to all levels of reading, from beginners to experienced readers, found in secondary classrooms. Dias (1990) claims that current reading theory promotes practices that are at odds with practices that promote literary reading, a warning with which others (Hu-pei Au & Kawakami, 1984; Pearson, 1984) would agree. This study will use literary texts and will emphasize three instructional approaches of reading the text.

Three additional "problems" with reading research which this study seeks to overcome are identified by Dias (1990). Dias suggests that: (1) most reading research occurs in contrived situations; (2) findings are generalized from nonliterary reading

situations to literary reading; and (3) reading theory and instructional applications are at odds. By this Dias means that when teachers guide reading they are taking the role of meaning making away from students, thereby subverting a student's interest, skills and abilities. Secondly, teacher-centered guides, whether spoken or printed on a sheet of questions to be handed out and completed by students, lead students toward becoming teacher-dependent readers and not independent.

By addressing these variables in this study and by focusing on twelfth grade students, the present study seeks to extend previous research and deal with the concerns listed above in an effort to provide a clearer glimpse into the mysteries of meaning making. The current study, for example, is carried out not in a 'contrived situation", but in a real classroom where stakes involve passing a grade in order to graduate. Materials studied are literary, so generalizations made will be from literary-to-literary situations. Third, the aim of this study is to address Dias's final concern, and that is to show that when instructional application is consistent with reading and response theory, students will outperform students who are immersed in situations where theory and practice are at odds. Texts used for this research, it should be mentioned, are considered text for "reading" and "meaning making" regardless of the form in which they are presented. For example, each unit of instruction employs forms of literature through mediums of printed text, film, spoken text, and student-generated text.

Statement of Research Questions

1. Is writing alone or writing paired with talking superior to traditional teacher-led instruction in improving reading comprehension and response as measured by a three-part test which combined a multiple-choice item section, a short answer section, and a written response?

2. Does the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affect student performance in reading comprehension and response?

3. Which instructional approach (presentation) do students most enjoy; and which of the instructional approaches do students feel most benefit their reading comprehension and response to literature?

Based on the results of other studies in response to teaching approaches at the high school level, I hypothesize that student-centered talk and writing (social construction) will result in a significantly superior level of reading comprehension, as measured by multiple choice, short answer and written literature response scores. It is further hypothesized that student-centered talk and writing will out-perform writing alone (transactional) by improving results in reading comprehension scores on follow-up tests. Finally, it is hypothesized that both writing (transactional) and talking and writing (social construction) will outperform the traditional (transmission) approach to reading instruction.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical

This study is built out of a research base in the area of language and literacy. Particularly, the present study is interested in both adding to the volume of research that deals with general and specific approaches to reading comprehension instruction in collaborative-style classrooms (Rivard & Straw, 2000; Straw & Baardman, 1994; Straw, Craven, Sadowy & Baardman, 1993; Watson, Baardman, Straw & Sadowy, 1992; Zapp, Straw, Baardman & Sadowy, 1992), as well as building on the definitions of Rosenblatt's reading of a text through a negotiated process and Ruddell and Unrau's (1994) definition of meaning making which falls under the umbrella of social constructionist theory – that meaning is dependent not only on the transaction

of reader and text, but is especially influenced by the particular social discourse community in which the reading of text takes place. In other words, this study seeks to corroborate research already conducted in the area of secondary reading comprehension.

Practical

Rosenshine and Stevens (1984) recommend experimental studies that will translate instructional procedures into actual classroom-based inquiry where, under the guidance of trained instructors, the comprehension performance of both control and treatment subjects will show that appropriate instructional approaches do have a significant effect on comprehension. In addition to addressing this recommendation in a practical sense, the present study is similar to Straw, Craven, Sadoway, and Baardman's (1993) and Rivard and Straw's (2000) study of third grade and eighth grade students, respectively, where a collaborative learning (social constructionist) approach to both poetry and science instruction was compared to traditional instruction, with the exception that in this study the subjects are older. The practical implications of this study will affect the students and classroom instructional practices of ELA teachers. Middle school through secondary teachers will find the results of this research worthwhile because it is envisioned that positive effects will be found for reading comprehension.

A practical consideration, possibly even a challenge, is found in attempting to outwit common sense. Hoping to find that approaches have a significant effect on reading comprehension may just be "pie in the sky", when common sense says that children learn when they are taught and when they practice. And yet, if a variable that affects reading comprehension is found in a methodology study like this, then this investigator believes it to be advantageous to forge straight on ahead, teach in a systematic manner using the best practice and make certain students have a chance to

practice what they learn, just as pioneers in reading likely did in the past (Herber, 1994).

Rosenshine and Stevens (1984) recommend that researchers need to design and carry out experimental research translated from results found in instructional or methodological studies, as the majority of work in this area has been "correlational" (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson. p. 791) in nature. In other words, a study like the present one answers the need for experimental studies because it investigates the effectiveness of both general and specific teaching methodologies while gathering data where a control group (transmission or traditional instruction) and two treatment groups (transactional - writing and social constructivist - talk and writing) of students are used.

Scope of This Study

Several limitations to the study bear mentioning. While the specifics of reading comprehension and response are highly complex and cannot be ignored, this study is concerned with instructional approaches, and not the sort of detailed surgery Rummelhart (1994) performs when developing a model of transactional reading comprehension. The three instructional approaches used in this study and the limited size of the sample - thirty student participants, 18 males and 12 females, in two classes in a rural school - may not allow findings to speak to every possible setting found in a senior ELA class.

Reading is a complex activity or event and exists as a highly individual activity within a single reader. At the same time reading is also a social activity influenced by the reader's personal experience, the values that exist in the reader's community and the social setting created in classrooms by group discussion, which all affect the interpretation of text. Despite the limited number of subjects in the

study, a group of thirty students should allow generalizable findings on two levels, simply because it is a group similar to other groups found in high school classes throughout the nation and because it is a group made up of individuals who come to the reading with their own experiences. To put it another way, while individual students will have their reading comprehension and response scores analyzed, a situation that does not readily allow generalizing to groups of students, the fact that this is a group of thirty (two classes of students) will satisfy requirements for a more generalizable evaluation to class-size groups.

An additional limitation of the study is that conclusions about cognitive processing as readers interpret text are not based on the direct study of those processes, but on inferences made from manifestations (written, verbal, and behavioral) of those processes. But the use of such manifestations (multiple choice test results, short answer test results, interview discussions, and essay writing) as a valid "window" into the generative processes activated during reading appears to be justifiable.

The duration of instruction must also be addressed as a possible limitation. While students have spent twelve years in classrooms up to this point and have lived in homes for seventeen or eighteen years where attitudes toward reading have been etched into their thinking, having been trained within instructional procedures or methodologies that may be by now fully entrenched in the minds, it is conceivable that three units of teaching, encompassing a time of nine weeks of instruction, may not do too much to change old habits, thereby limiting the significance of results. On the other hand, three weeks of instruction on three different themes may be precisely the level playing field that is needed to show clearly which instructional approach does indeed have the greatest influence on student achievement, as students may be mature enough to comprehend lessons that invite the development of metacognitive

knowledge, when they may have been too young or immature to care in previous grades.

Another limitation of this study is the relevance of gender in the research process, an issue that has gained increased attention in research-related literature in recent years (Eichler & Lapointe, 1985). It is not known what effect the presence of the researcher, as participant observer and instructor, might have on students' meaning making processes -- in the testing sessions or classes leading up to testing, particularly in cases when the sex of the researcher differs from that of the student subjects. However, given that the instructor is also the regular classroom teacher, it is presumable that both male and female students are accustomed to the gender question and gender will not constitute a confounding threat.

The results of this research with regard to teaching approaches will be applicable and generalizable to middle school through secondary ELA classrooms. In terms of actual lesson plan materials and structure, all levels of ELA teachers can benefit from the unit materials published in this study. If the methods studied in this research are indeed significant, then any ELA teacher will find both the theory, process, and the materials from this study useful, as they impact the success of reading comprehension and response.

Definitions

Blind marker – Three provincially trained ELA teachers who have marked provincial ELA exams. They do not know the identity of any of the students in the study due to the use of 'ID' numbers instead of names and because the schools in which they teach are in other communities. The markers are not aware of what strategy or instructional approach is being tested. In fact, the markers are quite unaware of the entire process, but are highly familiar with

and proficient at using the rubrics and evaluating test answers. Two of the three markers are designated as regular markers. They will mark each of the three units of instruction. Each marker will score a photocopy of the test without knowledge of the other marker's score. The third marker will only become involved in the process should a need arise to make a final decision when there is a large discrepancy (more than 1 level in the written response to literature and short answer; multiple choice is not included) in the grades awarded by the first two regular markers.

Content/Rubric – Refers to the reading response measure found in essay writing by way of scoring understanding of material using a content rubric, which was adapted from Straw's (1993) reading comprehension evaluation rubric. It consists of a 0 – 3 point system to identify the level of response a student completes with the terms "nonsense" (0), "retelling" (1), "inferential" (2), and "interpretive" (3).

Expository essay – A formal piece of writing that attempts to explain any idea in an essay format. It was/is a common part of literary criticism.

Heuristic – A plan designed to help students in carrying out their writing tasks; it gives clear, step by step instructions for every element/component that is to be present in a given piece of text.

Interpretive communities – Are made up those who share interpretive strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties. These strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read (Fish, 1980).

Journal and Journaling – A personal text that records the thoughts, ideas and reactions of a student to circumstances ongoing around them. In this study it will be the act of recording and the record of students responses to the literary texts to which they will be exposed.

Meaning making – Another term for comprehension (see reading comprehension), but a term that tends to be associated with the social constructionist view of creating meaning from negotiation with a text, the teacher, the reader, and together with other readers. In other words, the eventual meaning that a reader constructs from a text is negotiated with the community of readers (discourse community) where a particular text is being read.

Methods: social constructionist– or *talking and writing* used interchangeably - developed from an inquiry model of learning/instruction in which students engage in dialogue around ideas they identify from the texts to which they are exposed. They also work together to produce written responses to those ideas by using brainstorming, collaborative writing, peer editing and co-operative text production. A more elaborate description of this instructional approach follows at the end of the chapter.

Methods: transmission – or *traditional* or *teacher-centered* used interchangeably - using teacher-directed instruction focusing on vocabulary development, emphasis on mechanics and formal writing. Individual work on word lists, questions, definitions and worksheets will be the dominant method of instruction. As indicated above, a more elaborate description of this instructional approach will follow at the end of the chapter.

Methods: transactional – or *writing* used interchangeably - Based on Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) concept of the transaction between a reader and his/her experience, knowledge, etc and the text, with a negotiated process of meaning making that results in the construction of a new text. For the purpose of this study, I emphasize writing as the vehicle for engagement, which leads to comprehension. As a result, the ideas developed out of the texts for this section will all be dealt with individually in a variety of written forms. Heuristics will be provided to help students direct their written responses. A

more elaborate description of this instructional approach follows at the end of this chapter.

Peer editing – Students exchange their initial drafts of written text with each other and examine them before giving feedback about content, organizational, stylistic and mechanical elements of their writing.

Reader Stance – The attitude and expectation with which a reader comes to the text. This stance is the result of both the reader's context, as well as the context of the text, instruction surrounding the text, clues or hints as to what the text will offer, as well as the reader's life experiences.

Reading comprehension – A process in which the reader constructs meaning, during or after interacting with text, through a combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, the stance he or she takes in relationship to the text, and immediate, remembered, or anticipated social interactions and communication [see meaning making above] (Ruddell, M., 1993). In other words, reading and comprehension is not simply knowing sounds, words, sentences, and abstract parts of language that can be studied by linguists, but consists of processing language and constructing meaning within a social context (Goodman & Goodman, 1994).

Schema – Organized knowledge of the world (obviously, can be very specific) that is brought to bear when interacting with a text in order to make meaning of that text (Anderson, 1994; Bransford, 1994).

Social Construction – A theory of meaning making in which knowledge is socially patterned and conditioned. Coming to know is a result of the social experiences and interactions students have had. All knowledge and knowledge construction are essentially social acts (Bogdan & Straw, 1990; Fish, 1980). For the purpose of this study, the social constructivist

instructional approach is highly student-centered and emphasizes talking and writing.

Textually Explicit – Direct knowledge (facts, statements, words, definitions, etc) that can be lifted off of a page from a piece of writing; simplest level of reading comprehension.

Textually Implicit – Inferred meaning from a text; requires a sophisticated synthesis of information gathered from information throughout the reading, prior knowledge, and negotiation between text, peers and self to predict, or infer meaning.

Transactional – For the purpose of this study, this instructional approach combines student and teacher input, with a strong focus on writing. Theoretically, experts from the transactional school suggests that meaning is what is negotiated between the reader and the text; each response to the text is a process in which reading and text condition each other (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Transmission – An instructional approach where the purpose of literature instruction is to transmit to students an accumulated body of knowledge that will enable them to become full participants in a literate culture. This means that students will read certain established, canonical texts and that they will read them in certain ways; that is, they will learn to locate in those texts the kinds of meanings that other educated people have found in them (Beach & Marshall, 1991). For the purpose of this study, the transmission instructional approach, or traditional approach, will be teacher-centered, and will emphasize imposed meanings on text through vocabulary lists, definitions, directed reading and question-answer sheets.

Instructional Approaches

<u>Transmission</u>

The first instructional approach is entitled "transmission" or "traditional". In this method, the teacher directs the learning activities by providing specific questions and terms for the students to learn. The teacher acts as the provider of the knowledge and leads the students to that knowledge by employing the following assignments.

1. Definition lists generated by the instructor. Students will complete these on their own before the instructor leads the corrections.

2. Worksheets with questions regarding the readings. The questions are instructor-generated and students are led through corrections after completing the assignment.

3. Paragraph writing on instructor-identified topics related to the text. The instructor will do all the evaluating; there will be no peer editing or collaborative writing.

4. Preparation for an expository essay to be written on the theme of one of the pieces read.

<u>Transactional</u>

The second instructional approach is entitled "transactional" or "process writing". In this second method, the students have much more control over the ideas with which they will be working. They are given time to write about their own ideas during a daily journaling time and will be highly interactive in activities such as

participating in writing conferences, in which they engage in peer editing and feedback sessions. The students will engage in the following types of assignments:

1. Journaling on a daily basis. This is the free-writing part of which we spoke earlier. The students have 10 minutes per class (at the start) to write anything in response to the texts that they are studying or about what is happening in the class. This writing can serve as the jumping-off point for other writing assignments and as a study guide for tests.

2. Student response to other students' writing. All students write a particular piece. It is given to another student and they write back. This exchange can be in the form of letters or articles with letters of response or through writing critiques of each others' work.

3. Completing question sheets with heuristics which are a series of questions and suggestions that guide a student in writing a complete piece. When these are completed they will be used to direct the newspaper style writing of articles and editorials.

4. More lengthy writing will be conducted in the format of letters in varying forms (personal, to an editor, formal) and from various perspectives (first person, observer, characters from the story).

Social Constructivist

The third instructional approach is entitled "social constructivist (constructionist)" or "talking and writing". This third method places almost full control into the hands and minds of the students. They will determine the scope and range of topics for discussion and lead small-group and whole-class discussions on

ideas and issues that they choose. A term that best describes the type of work students will be engaged in is collaborative or cooperative learning activities (see Straw, 1993 for a more detailed discussion of the two processes). The teacher will act as facilitator, support person and initiator by providing the assignment around which the following activities will revolve:

1. Think/Talk-a-louds, think-pair-share, jigsaws, group brainstorming...are all collaborative methods led by student ideas, responding to texts. This conversation/dialogue happens before any journaling is done.

2. Class discussions on ideas relating to any written assignments completed before the writing begins.

3. Peer editing for all the written work. Use a variety of formats for editing from chosen classmates, randomly selected classmates, and parents or siblings.

4. Student-teacher conferencing before, during and after writing.

5. Writing assignments can be newspaper style articles and editorials, paragraphs, literary critique style essays or any other form of written work carried out in traditional or non-traditional areas.

The general organizing structure or approach to completing the work for this unit will be handled as a *newsroom*. The final work piece will be a series of newspapers created by the students in the following manner: There will be a revolving series of editors-in-chief (there will be between three or four per day or as many as there are groups) so that each student will be in that position at least once. The editors-in-chief will meet with the instructor in the morning or just before class and will plan the topics, issues and questions for discussion for that day's work. The

various texts for the unit will serve as the basis from which issues and topics of discussion and writing will spring, with each student in each group responsible for reading and writing something for each text. Students will deal with each of the texts using each of the ideas identified in numbers one through five above. The students will lead the discussions with their classmates who will then all function as the newsroom staff working on articles, editorials, letters, essays, pictures, advertisements, stories, interviews and anything else that they can plan and create for inclusion into their final newspaper product. There will be ongoing engagement in discussion, writing, peer editing, conferencing, more talking, dialoguing and re-writing before the final product is put together.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

"Writing can only occur because it bears within itself the possibility of
reading, and vice-versa." (Ray, 1984)

Eagleton (1983) argues that reading is dialogic, that "there is no such thing as
a literary work . . . which is valuable in itself" (p. 11). For example, society, if its
values have shifted over time, may have very little to discover worthwhile in
Shakespeare. Or we may, with further enlightenment from new findings in
archeology or through uncovering new historic works, discover that the way we had
read a certain ancient author was entirely incorrect, and that to read this author in
light of new findings so completely changes the meaning of the once-enjoyed text
that it now becomes irrelevant to us (Eagleton, 1983). In other words, the literary
work is not valuable in and of itself. Rather, it is society as reflected in an individual
or in a group of individuals who are reading a text, who are valuable, and determine
the value of a text each time it is read by determining what is meant by the text. Each
of us, when we read, according to Rosenblatt (1978), interpret what we read in light
of our own experiences, our biases, our education, and with varied expectations. In
fact, there is no literary work – it does not exist – until it is read, because it is the
reader who "makes" (Fish, 1989) literature "as a member of a community whose
assumptions about literature determine the kind of attention he pays and thus the kind
of literature 'he makes' (sic)" (p.11). "All literary works . . . are 'rewritten', if only
unconsciously, by the societies which read them" (Eagleton, p. 12). Therefore, no

literary work, no piece of writing, is valuable (means something) until it is read and interpreted.

Sholes (1982) asserts that through interpretation we "possess only what we create" (p. 4). This notion leads to a dilemna: does value exist only in the new text, the text created by the reader when interpreting an old text? Does the original creation, possibly an inspiration by the muse, or God him/herself have no intrinsic meaning or value, because it does not exist until it is read? And will the reading be comprehended in any fashion close to whatever the author intended (supposing the author indeed intended anything) if it is read in a time, place, and situation entirely unlike that of the original creation of the text? Does the author literally not have any control over what his/her creation means to another reader at some distant future or further location? If what the author has to say is prophetic in nature, but s/he cannot control the eventual meaning in any way, how is the author's message to be transmitted to the reader? Does current reading theory satisfy these questions by offering students of reading hope that what they interpret from literature is accurate or true? Or is truth truly relative? And for those of us who teach reading, what are we to do to improve the ability of our students to find meaning accurately in a given text, or more importantly, how are we to teach so that we develop mature readers who are able to read independent of our imposing expectations? It is with these tensions - with these questions - that the current study is interested.

Toward a Definition of Reading Comprehension
and Response

This study is concerned with students' reading comprehension and response. But more specifically, it is concerned with how a teacher's instructional approach directly affects the success of his/her students in one type of learning environment, as opposed to another, different in terms of instructional focus on comprehension and

response to literature. It is apparent when perusing literature that deals with reading comprehension and response as well as when listening to classroom teachers who teach reading, that reading comprehension is defined in as many ways as there are approaches to teaching reading or literature. With this in mind, a working definition of reading comprehension and response is established for the purposes of this study, so that a point of reference or grounding can be maintained throughout. First, based on research in reading comprehension, a definition of reading comprehension will be outlined and then a definition of response will be added.

Martha Ruddell (1994) defines comprehension by drawing on theoretical perspectives that include schema, transactional, and socio-cultural theories, which well suite the purpose of this study. She defines comprehension as "a process in which the reader constructs meaning while, or after, interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, the stance he or she takes in relationship to the text, and immediate, remembered, or anticipated social interactions and communication" (p. 415). In other words, reading is seen as recursive, with meaning being generated through a process of negotiation with the text, with the reader's experience and knowledge, and with the reading community. Obviously, comprehending or interpreting a text is a highly complex dance which involves employing reactions, descriptions, conceptions, and connections in order to derive meaning or construct a theme.

Because this study is not concerned with a clinical definition of reading comprehension and response, such as a reading clinician might be interested in, Tierney and Pearson's (1994) scenario that deals with the task of how comprehension actually occurs, is added to Martha Ruddell's definition. Using the example of the following sentence to build the progression of comprehension – "He plunked down $5.00 at the window. She tried to give him $2.50, but he refused to take it. So when they got inside, she bought him a large bag of popcorn." (Tierney & Pearson, 1994,

pg. 498) – it is shown that reading comprehension is "akin to the progressive refinement of a scenario or model that a reader develops for a text. That is, reading comprehension proceeds and inferencing occurs via the refinement of the reader's model" (p. 500). Sadoski and Paivio (1994) further suggest a sort of schema theory as part of a comprehension definition. They introduce the element of imagery by focusing especially on the natural mental images that a text stimulates, in addition to the language schema, which contribute to the creation of meaning as the story unfolds in the text and in the mind of the reader.

Combining Martha Ruddell's (1994) definition with Tierney and Pearson's (1994) example of how comprehension functions, together with the notion of schema theory works well because, while it does not encompass all positions on the continuum of theoretical views regarding reading comprehension, it does contain elements that provide a framework for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of instruction on reading comprehension. Four of these elements are "prior knowledge and previous experience, information available in text, stance in relationship to text, and social interactions and communications" (p. 416 of Ruddell, 1994) among students and teachers who have read the text together. This definition works well to a point. The idea that meaning making involves past and anticipated social interactions fits nicely into the social constructivist theory with which this study is concerned, but does not mention response to reading.

It might be assumed that meaning does not exist until some sort of response has been elicited from the reader, or at least that it is very difficult to obtain an accurate idea of a student's comprehension without a response. Squire (1964) argues specifically that attention to the text (as in comprehension of text) is not enough in research, but that attention to response would aid teachers in understanding how to become better teachers of literature. He warns that mature readers, who interpret independently, perform poorly when reading ability is measured on typical

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standardized tests. Squire (1964) defines response as "whatever a student said while he [she] was reading a short story" (pg. 138) and suggests that interpretation is naturally motivated and of a different mental operation compared to reading skills or test results. Bleich (1980) adds that, "response is a peremptory perceptual act that translates a sensory experience into consciousness" (pg. 134), and that this process is arrived at through classroom discussion of responses to literature. Straw (1990, 2000) and others (Wilson, 1972; Squire, 1964; Bleich, 1980; Purves, 1972) have shown that the level of comprehension not only can, but is clearly visible when students respond through talking and writing about what they have read. It seems that an important element of comprehension is the student's response to reading. It provides a kind of measure or expression of the meaning that has been generated following the study of a piece of literature. In response to Squire's (1964) warning that more is needed to measure accurately a student's understanding of a piece of literature, adding a response component to a reading test may act as a window into the process of comprehension while providing a more rounded and accurate measure of a student's ability.

The current working definition for reading comprehension and response grows therefore, out of transactional and social constructivist theory that includes schema theory. This study leans on research that places a strong emphasis on student talk and writing as the response to what they read as they work toward making meaning.

Transmission Theory

The "transmission" approach to instruction in literature assumed that the purpose of reading was to communicate a message directly from the author's pen. Reading was viewed as a transmission of information or knowledge. It was the "transmission of meaning generated wholly by the author and communicated to the

reader, unchanged, through the vehicle of the text" (Straw, 1990. pg. 130). The instruction of literature did not seek entertainment as its purpose, but the pursuit of knowledge and information. In order to attain this severe goal, good readers researched historical and biographical, moral and philosophical information regarding the author. This discipline would lead readers to the correct reading, a reading that required a reader to follow the correct approach, limiting any development of independency.

Roehler, Duffy, and Meloth (1984) state that the traditional instructional mode of instruction is still widely used and popular and that it focuses on content, excluding instruction that could enhance a student's metacognitive abilities when reading on his or her own. It is the assumption within a transmission model of instruction that if the "teacher explicitly understands the reading process and asks questions about the content of [a] text based on this understanding students will naturally come to understand the system upon which the teacher based the questions" (p. 81). Those instructional strategies that typically fall within what the transmission approach to instruction, are characterized by the use of study sheets, teacher-centered questioning, silent reading, individual student work, applying literary criticism (analysis) to each piece of literature, and the predominant use of one piece of literature at a time. During discussion teachers typically ask content questions in a manner that leads students to one answer. This approach imposes meaning on the text by the teacher and results in teaching a dogma, rather than allowing students to negotiate with the text and each other in order to construct meaning, in the process of becoming mature readers. Straw (1990) points out that when instructors force their "correct" interpretation on students, a dependency on the teacher's correct reading rather than independency results. There is also the danger that instructors of the transmission approach "[privilege] the intention of the author . . . as the 'best,' if not the only meaning" (Straw, 1990. pg. 130) Straw (1990) goes on to suggest that the text may

be closed to students in a transmission approach because only some interpretations of a text are possible and it is the teacher who knows which interpretations those might be. Additionally, a reader's background and experience is not acknowledged, but is replaced by the need to be familiar with the author's background and experience.

When all of these elements are combined, the transmission approach appears to have a devaluing result on students as they are trained to become dependent on instructors, as well as trained to think that reading is a rigid and prescribed pursuit of the truth, instead of developing maturity and self-confidence in their own reading of literature. The possibility of experiencing joy or simple entertainment in the process of reading also seems a strained hope for readers in the transmission mode.

Transactional Theory

Transactional classrooms today are characterized by more student interaction than found in transmission classrooms. Transactional theory places a greater value on student knowledge and experience compared to the more traditional models of instruction because of some fundamental shifts in thinking regarding the source of meaning. And this shift is based in the writings of Louise Rosenblatt (1978), who suggests that when students read a text a transaction takes place. This transaction is like a conversation between the text and the reader, which leads the reader in the process of coming to know the meaning of the text in what she calls a "poem" – the new reading of the text. It is a negotiation between what the reader knows and brings to the text and what the text presents. Through this transaction students construct their own meaning, although Rosenblatt cautions against straying too far from the "experience to which the text actually refers" (Rosenblatt, 1968. pg. 113). This caution – that in order for an *accurate* (my italics) reading to have taken place, the interpretation would have to stand up to the text through negotiation   is a somewhat "conservative" notion. And yet, Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) method of mapping the

relationship between readers and texts – the reader, the text, and the poem – provides the theoretical source for this study's definition of *transaction* as an instructional approach.

Research in both written response to reading and reading comprehension takes its cue from Rosenblatt's work. Traditional lines that formerly separated writing and reading are now seeming to blur as writing theory incorporates a recursive theory, just as reading is defined by Rosenblatt (1978). For example, Emig (1964) deals with composition, and argues against a linear-stage model of the writing process when she suggests that composing "does not occur as a left-to-right, solid, uninterrupted activity with an even pace" (p. 84), much like the transaction that occurs when a reader creates the "poem", while reading a text. The idea, that writing might be a "recursive" rather than linear activity, is precisely the same in reading comprehension.

The shift from a transmission approach to literature instruction to one of transaction implies a significant restructuring of teaching practices so that the expectations of students or teachers are not at odds with the underlying philosophy of literature instruction. Many of the strategies employed by instructors in the transmission mode were based on a notion of determinant, text-based meaning (Straw, 1990). A shift in instruction from the practice of "meaning-getting" to one of "meaning-making" meant that the simple transmission of knowledge from the author through the text to the student no longer worked. So, what typifies a transaction classroom? What ingredients, according to research, separate transmission theory from classrooms that are based on transaction theory?

Typically, a transaction classroom is one where students are encouraged to draw on their own experiences and to spend time in developing a relationship with the text that allows for negotiation between student and text as well as between student and student or teacher, as part of the meaning making process. It is a classroom where the text, the author, and the teacher no longer enjoy the privileged place of

power; the student now has more value and is encouraged to share the construction of meaning with others in the class. It is a class where the threat of "not knowing the right answer" is lessened in favor of students being encouraged to come up with their own new reading of a piece of literature.

Rosenshine and Stevens (1984), through a review of studies carried out since the mid 1970s, find that there are both general and specific instructional procedures which are correlated with students' achievement gains in reading comprehension. Under "general instructional procedures" three variables that improve reading comprehension are teacher-directed initial instructions, instruction in groups, and academic emphasis. Generally speaking, students learn reading most efficiently when they are systematically taught, monitored, and given feedback by a teacher. Furthermore, when students are grouped for instruction, less time is spent on classroom management/discipline issues, and more quality time on teacher-student feedback. Research on specific instructional procedures, at least at the elementary level, has shown that effective teaching is characterized by a predictable sequence of "demonstration, guided practice, feedback and corrections, and independent practice" (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1994. p. 788).

In answering questions regarding with whom, in what situations, and in what ways teaching improves reading comprehension, Tierney and Cunningham (1984) first review current research that deals specifically with issues of methodological significance. What is important in this report is the division of instruction of comprehension into two fundamental pursuits, which are how to increase comprehension and learning from texts (a specific text) and how to increase a student's ability to comprehend and learn from any text (general strategies).

Tierney and Cunningham's (1984) second goal is met by focusing on metacognitive skills that will enhance comprehension strategies in readers. Students learn how to engage prior knowledge, summarize, and think through interpretation

while reading on their own. Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1994), refer to students who demonstrate this as 'self-directed readers' - when students plan, evaluate, and regulate their own skills, they develop an enduring interest in reading. Straw (1993) uses the title "mature independent reader" to describe a student who creates meaning through intentional participation in a social context where negotiation between text, reader and other readers results in that student's understanding of what is read. In addition, teachers can increase students' ability to comprehend from any text by teaching skills and by instructing in such a way that will meet the needs of students when reading a variety of texts beyond literary texts typically found in a literature course. For example, an instructional emphasis on sentence-level processing, sentence-combining and text-level processing by teaching students the structure of ideas or stories and the structure of expository texts, can result in the development of what is referred to as declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge, skills which most certainly meet students' needs in reading (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1994).

Authentic literacy instruction is another valuable instructional methodology that further impacts the modern classroom (Hiebert, 1994) and is a typical transaction strategy for instruction. The main difference between an "authentic literacy" classroom and a traditional classroom is through the shift from a teacher-centered, content-based classroom, to one which involves not only writing workshops, but a parallel format in reading with extensive reading from student-selected books, whole-class lessons, and teacher-student conferences surrounding topics and assignments that are *real* (authentic!). In other words, students are engaged in *real* activities such as writing real reports based on real interviews, reading stories written by real classmates, preparing and writing real newspapers after having been through a newspaper plant. Beach and Hynds (1989) review research that investigates why students enjoy certain reading materials. They find that students become engaged with the text when invited to apply autobiographical experiences, personal problem-

solving strategies, when they are instructed to be aware of their stance, and when students are sensitized to how social and cultural settings influence their reading comprehension. An authentic classroom in a transactional approach to instruction promotes the kind of freedom in which students can interact and are encouraged to thrive in ways that improve their independent ability to comprehend what they read.

Another element that influences successful comprehension of a text is the text's structure – both micro and macrostructure (Kintsch, 1994; Pearson and Camperell, 1994). Pearson and Camperell (1994) review previous research which demonstrates that passages in which the main ideas are presented high in the structure, are more easily understood/interpreted and also remembered for a longer period of time than passages where information is organized in a low level structure. Because schema theory plays a strong role in a transaction classroom, teachers take time to allow students the opportunity to recognize and experiment with text structures through interacting with the text and each other. Teachers model for students how to figure out what the author's general framework or structure is and then allow students to practice discovering it on their own. In addition, research has shown that making use of activities like sentence combining, an activity that uses schema and provides students with ample opportunity to compose or restructure sentences and meaning on their own, leads to increased reading comprehension when students then study a new text (Pearson and Camperell, 1994; Straw, 1979; Moeller, 1983).

Although only a few of the strategies common in a transaction classroom have been reviewed, Tierney and Pearson (1994) suggest that there does not appear to be much in the way of worthwhile instructional practices for developing or improving reading comprehension and response in classrooms today. This is because pedagogy surveys have indicated that the majority of classroom ELA teachers continue to function within a transmission mode of instruction, with content as the main focus.

But schema theory, which began its inroads into the instruction of reading and response in the 1940s and 1950s, does make a useful contribution to the instruction of comprehension and response in a transaction classroom (Bleich, 1990).

As has already been hinted at, schema theory fits into transactional (and social constructivist) models of teaching reading in the way that meaning making becomes more of a student-centered activity. Typically, teachers of reading in a transaction class would be aware of strategies for activating or building students' schemas to aid in the interpretation of each of the variety of literary texts studied. And because there is less of a teacher-centered, content driven style of instruction, students are encouraged to recognize their individual schemas for learning, thinking and reading. The subjective nature of schema theory removes the instructor from "knowing it all" and places students' experience and ways of knowing in the forefront (Bleich, 1980). This approach to instructing reading does not simplify the process. The move from a single prescribed reading of a text in a transmission classroom to the more student-centered subjective nature of a transaction classroom implies more complexity and certainly more trust.

Part of this complexity is addressed through the work of Vipond and Hunt (1984), who suggest that readers learn to adopt a certain stance with regard to the text, an expectation of what the text will offer. If the reader's schema is "point-driven", a search for the main idea will influence interpretation. If "story-driven", the narrative or plot will be of most interest. Applebee's (1991) research and Anderson's (1994) work in both story structure and schema theory demonstrate how students, regardless of whether they are story or point-driven, can predict or know that a story is about to end by looking for contextual clues in the reading to make the meaning within the story accurate. Making meaning successfully in a transaction classroom depends on teachers and students pursuing ways of knowing specific theories of reading and such elements as story structure. Students are also informed about

theories of metacognition, which aid in recognizing the complexities of reading because the aim in such classrooms is to build independent readers who are capable of making meaning through their own transactions with a text.

Social Constructivist Theory

Social constructivist theory holds that meaning is generated within a social context (Fish, 1980). When students come to a text, they come from a particular community that helps to shape the meaning that students construct as they read, talk and write together. This experience is always a social situation, as the meaning of any text is always the result of many voices and influences that change from community to community, thereby affecting the meaning that the same text will generate at different times in different places. What sets social constructivist theory apart from Rosenblatt's transaction theory is the assertion that meaning is generated, not as individuals interacting with a text, but ultimately as the product of social interaction. Another difference between the two is that social constructivist theory does not support the idea that there is more or less an "accurate" reading of the text, as Rosenblatt (1978) suggests. A new reading is a legitimate reading because students work together and with the text to generate a meaning that is "real" to them on a personal level at that time (Straw, 1990; Rivard & Straw, 2000).

Social constructivist classrooms tend to be highly interactive places where cooperative and collaborative strategies are at work almost all the time as part of the pursuit of meaning. These are noisier classrooms by far, compared to a traditional transmission class, because the role of talk in creating and consolidating meaning is paramount to the social construction of knowledge (Straw, 1990). Cooperative and collaborative learning strategies are especially well suited to learning literature because the activities inherent in these highly social methods "approximate the actual act of reading" (Straw, 1990. pg. 142). Straw (1990) points out that there are

numerous reasons why a higher level of success and a deeper level of understanding of the literature results from such student-centered, noisy interaction. Among these reasons are that talk uses higher-level learning and knowledge strategies, that when disagreements occur in a group a higher quality and quantity of learning takes place, time on task tends to be higher in collaborative and cooperative work than during individual work, students are able to vocalize their thinking and rehearse it more than when working alone, immediate feedback in a group is standard behavior, students are actively involved in their own learning rather than sitting passively, listening to the teacher, metacognition is developed as students take control of their own learning, and finally students learn to take responsibility for their own learning as they become aware of the processes they use while learning (Straw, 1990). The emphasis through each of these observations is that when students work in a climate of social interaction, generating meaning from the texts they read, comprehension levels increase.

M. Ruddell's (1994) definition of reading comprehension reinforces Straw's (1990) argument that better comprehension is the result of social interaction when she states that a part of comprehension is made up of the "social interactions and communications" a student is immersed in while reading, which helps to bring about a meaning. This is precisely the idea Stanley Fish maintains regarding meaning making. Fish (1980) states that interpretation is "not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode [texts]; they make them" (p.327). This is similar to both Rosenblatt's and Ruddell's definitions of comprehension. Compared to Rosenblatt and Ruddell, it is the way in which Fish arrives at his definition of interpretation and also his idea of meaning being a social construct, where he enlarges the definition of reading comprehension and response.

As the researcher at the center of social constructivist theory, Fish (1980) suggests that all communication always occurs within situations and that to be in a

situation means that the speaker, writer, and hearer or reader are also in that situation which has as its basis a "structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place; and it is within the assumption of these purposes and goals that any utterance is immediately heard" (p. 318). In other words, because readers are part of a community of readers and because they have already been prepared to expect certain purposes by their community, when they pick up a book and read a passage, their stance is already beginning to shape what will be understood by what they have been taught to expect in a given situation. Readers who pick up a math text, later a science fiction novel, and later yet a phone directory will have in place a schema to give structure to their reading, and this schema has been shaped by their communities.

Fish (1980) advises the skeptic, who fears subjectivism, that readers are not free to make up or interpret anything they choose, because as a "member of a community whose assumptions about literature determine the kind of attention he [she] pays and thus the kind of literature he [she] makes" (p. 11), and therefore meaning will be determined by the community's standards, which are not relative. That means that comprehension is never in danger of relativity. Even a sentence cannot be interpreted in any manner, because it is also always in a context. After all, there is never anything that is not in a situation (Fish, 1980). It will have the meaning that has been "conferred" on it by the situation in which it is created. While the text surrounds each sentence with a "situation" that points the reader in a direction, it is then the interpretive communities, "rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings" (p. 14). And because the strategies used by various communities and by their readers exist prior to the act of reading, they determine the shape of what is read rather than the text shaping what is understood. Fish (1980) states that to understand a text and in order to construct meaning a reader/listener must determine from which of a number of possible community-perspectives reading will proceed.

Ruddell (1994) would agree that a significant influence, critical to understanding the text, on reading comprehension and response is the stance a reader takes.

As Rosenshine and Stevens (1984) point out, research that investigates classroom instructional procedures and their effect on comprehension and response, are almost exclusively aimed at elementary classrooms. Very few studies investigate the effect of a social constructivist approach to instruction on reading and response. However, there are two studies that are quite closely related to this investigation. Straw, Craven, Sadoway and Baardman (1993) investigate comprehension of poetry in a third grade classroom by comparing traditional instruction in poetry with collaborative learning. Similar to the present study, traditional teaching is defined as teacher-led lessons. Straw et. al's collaborative groups interpreted poetry through discussion in small groups, similar to one of the current study's treatments, which is to have student groups processing what they read through talking and writing. Results in Straw's study did yield an effect for a collaborative student-centered study of poetry. Straw's et. al's (1993) study is beneficial to the present study as the rubric for evaluating student written response as a measure of comprehension is based on and adapted from the grade three study (see appendices).

Another recent study that closely parallels the current study, is Rivard and Straw's (2000) investigation on the effect of talk and talk and writing on learning science, and is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First of all, it is authentic – it takes place in an actual classroom of grade eight students with an experienced middle years teacher, teaching a regular unit to his students. Second, the Rivard/Straw study addresses the issue of instructional approaches that can boost students' knowledge over other, less effective approaches to teaching. And finally, while the current study investigates learning in a grade twelve ELA classroom and Rivard and Straw's (2000) study examines a grade eight science classroom, the most important parallel between the current study and that of Rivard and Straw (2000) is found through its

investigation on the effects of "talk" and "talk and write" instruction on grade eight students' learning and retention of simple and integrated knowledge about science. Rivard and Straw find significant results for talking and writing, over just writing with regard to the retention of science knowledge over time. The study finds that comparisons between the talk-and-writing group and groups in which students worked individually on similar (this was the writing-only group) or related descriptive tasks (functioned as the control group) are important as the talk and write group outperformed the other groups on each of three knowledge measures which are identified as simple, integrated, and total knowledge (Rivard & Straw, 2000). One of the conclusions from this study is that writing and talking, when carried out together in groups, aids students in performing above the level of students who just talk, just write, or work independently.

Straw's (1990) and Rivard and Straw's (2000) studies show that when children talk and talk and write together in cooperative and collaborative groups their comprehension and knowledge increases dramatically. Classrooms where students engage in real learning where students' own ideas and work are at stake are often referred to as authentic classrooms. A social constructivist approach to instruction is particularly well suited to authentic literacy strategies for learning comprehension and response. Authentic literacy classrooms devote time to talk before, during, and after reading or writing; sometimes spontaneously as students work together, at other times through structured tasks organized by the teacher, just as is done in work and living situations outside of school. These ideas for instruction are supported by Squire's (1994) list of instructional practices, based on research in reader response, particularly one which states, "the ways in which we teach literature will permanently affect our students' responses" (p. 645). He writes, "if we use literature only to teach reading skills or strategies, we will prevent children from understanding the experience of literature" (p. 645), something that does influence a reader's

comprehension. What characterizes a social constructivist classroom in an authentic literacy lesson is not learning about *what happens* somewhere else, but actually *really doing* the activity together, that leads to a more complete understanding.

Brown, Palincsar, and Armbruster (1994) support the idea of 'authentic literacy classrooms' in a number of ways, as demonstrated through a series of three studies conducted in seventh grade classrooms. For example, simply modeling how to figure out the meaning of a passage will encourage active reading by students. Teachers do this by "demonstrating their own curiosity, posing questions, reasoning, predicting, and verifying inferences and conclusions" aloud in the classroom (p. 761). But the main goal in this behavior is not to convey the content of a particular domain. Instead, the modeling teaches students to think scientifically, to make predictions, to question and evaluate (Singer, 1994) as they work collaboratively generating meaning from the texts they read. To strengthen a student's experience and ability to comprehend, an authentic classroom will provide opportunities for a student to make his/her theories explicit and then provide opportunities to defend them to others in the classroom through a variety of forums. This process always involves the students talking and writing toward developing an understanding of the text.

Other important research that supports the social constructivist approach to instruction reminds us that comprehension has many aspects, particularly metacognitive and cognitive skills. When students engage in oral interaction with each other there is no time to "tune out" as there is when a teacher is busy lecturing. This is where Vygotsky's zone of proximal development becomes fully functional, when the instructor steps aside and students begin to take responsibility for their own reading comprehension and response (Hu-pei Au & Kawakami, 1984).

Both transactional and social constructivist theory support the importance of students' life experience brought to the text (Straw, 1990; Straw, 1989). Niles (1967) states that a variety of pre-reading activities should be employed in order to make use

of and build background knowledge prior to reading, and that background knowledge should be activated in order to help students focus their attention on important aspects of the text. As has been mentioned, drawing on or using "real life" experiences rather than vicarious experiences further enhances learning. Other strategies that assist student comprehension and response are found in activities that guide the reader through text-related interactions during reading by inducing imagery (Sadoski & Paivio, 1994), using self-questioning, practicing oral reading and employing study-guides. Post reading activities in both transactional and social constructivist classrooms which are typically employed by teachers include questions with feedback through individual, group and whole class discussions, as well as student-generated questions.

The learning environment has a powerful influence on students' motivation to engage in learning (Marshall, 1992). It influences not only a reader's decision to engage with a text but also the ways in which the text is engaged (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). In a search for the optimum conditions that contribute to learning in an ELA classroom, Brown (1984) and her colleagues identify several factors: meaningful demonstrations of language in action, development of learner responsibility for independence and self-direction. These elements characterize social constructivist classrooms, in which students are developed into mature readers and independent thinkers. However, Stanley Fish (1980) would add to this list the "authority of the classroom community", by which he suggests that meaning that is constructed as students and teachers interact in the classroom cooperatively and collaboratively is the only meaning that counts when reading a text.

Conclusion

Having briefly reviewed literature relevant to the study at hand, we are left with a context within which to place the current study and its findings before we

move toward the next step – methodology – the way instruction will play out in the classroom. The process of any artistic creation, whether written, interpretive in nature, or visual has long been considered an area off limits to scientific inquiry due mainly to a believed inaccessibility. So even though the complexity of the process of reading is largely hidden from our view, or "substrata" (Singer, 1994), reading researchers have conducted, with growing skill and knowledge, a variety of experimental studies through which it is hoped light will be shed on at least some of those unseen processes. This study does not intend to bring about a demystification of the process of reading comprehension, for that could never be done; however, by obtaining even small glimpses into the process of meaning making in reading comprehension through the study of instructional methodology, the significance of the creative power that rests within the minds of thinking, creating readers and teachers of reading will be reinforced.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The following questions directed the study:

1. Is writing alone or writing paired with talking superior to traditional teacher-led instruction in improving reading comprehension and response as measured by a three-part test which combined a multiple-choice item section, a short answer section, and a written response?

2. Does the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affect student performance in reading comprehension and response?

3. Which instructional approach (presentation) do students most enjoy; and which of the instructional approaches do students feel most benefit their reading comprehension and response to literature?

Based on the results of other studies in response to teaching methodology at the high school level, it is hypothesized that student-centered talk and writing (a social constructivist classroom) results in a significantly superior level of reading comprehension performance, compared to traditional teacher-centered approaches to teaching reading. It is further hypothesized that the reading comprehension performance of those in the student-centered talk and writing approach would exceed that of students in the writing alone condition.

The purpose of this study is to compare the effectiveness of three different teaching methodologies in a senior four classroom on the reading comprehension of

secondary students. It is the intent of this study to compare a traditional approach to instruction to approaches that emphasize writing, and talking and writing in an attempt to discover whether any one or all of these instructional approaches improves reading comprehension and response.

Subjects

The subjects in this study will be voluntary participants from two 40S Core (grade 12 mainstream) ELA classes at a rural collegiate with a population of 260 students between grade seven and twelve. A total of thirty (30) grade twelve students agreed to participate in the study, which translates into a total of thirty sets of data recorded through three sets of unit reading comprehension and response tests. These students vary in age from 16 to 18 and the classes are entirely heterogeneously mixed. There are twelve females and eighteen males in total, with two classes of thirteen and seventeen students respectively. Each class has students who perform well above average academically, students who perform at average levels, and those who struggle to do well. Although predominantly from conservative, middle class homes, students represent a variety of ethnic as well as a wide array of economic, educational and religious backgrounds, reflecting the nature of one of the nearest large city's "bedroom" communities.

Instrumentation

Three reading comprehension tests made up of 20 multiple-choice questions and 10 short answer questions, as well as a single expository essay question, were used to measure reading comprehension and response at the end of each of the three thematic units of teaching. A ratio of two to one explicit to implicit questions made up the level of difficulty on the multiple choice and short answer sections of the tests. An essay question that required a written response to reading selections that

represented both narrative and informative texts constitutes the final measure. Two separate classes were taught each thematic unit in the style of two different methodologies, both of which took the identical test. After each unit had been completed, four randomly selected students (two from each group) completed a series of five researcher-designed questions for interviews. (Copies of all instrumentation materials is found in the appendices.)

Student Written Response Evaluation Rubric

An evaluative rubric based on Straw's (1993) study conducted with primary students reading poetry, was used to evaluate the level of comprehension in the expository essays. This rubric is outlined as follows: 3 = interpretive response, 2 = inferential response, 1 = retelling, 0 = no response or nonsense answer. Definitions of the terms that made up the four levels of the rubric, accompanied by a response which would be typical for that definition, are borrowed directly from Straw's (p. 113-114) study, but adapted to essay writing at the secondary level.

Interpretive (3). Responses are considered to be interpretive if they show insights into a theme from the texts studied throughout the unit (including poetry, short stories, novel, magazine articles, movies). The following examplar contains an interpr4etive response that would merit three points. *The death of Simon in Lord of the Flies shows a breakdown of rules and respect, as well as the fear that had taken hold of the boys; this almost ritualistic death is the result of the boys' fear of the beast, and represented a ritual killing of the beast; institutions which hold superstitions and savagery in check are in fact helpful to society; because they protect us from wild, gang-like actions which result from fear in the shadow of anarchy.*

Inferential (2). Responses are considered to be inferential if they draw some conclusions based on parts of the texts studied, but do not make an interpretive

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statement about an overall meaning or theme. The following exemplar would score a two. *The death of Simon was due to a breakdown of rules, so Simon was killed out of fear; Simon was killed by the rest of the boys because they thought he was the beast.*

Retelling (1). Responses are considered to be retelling if they simply relate the events of a portion of text. This next exemplar would score a one. *Simon ran down the beach toward the dancing boys; they saw him and began to beat him to death because it was dark and stormy; Simon was about to tell them that the beast on the mountain was just a parachutist.*

Nonsense (0). Responses that indicate little or no understanding of the content or the events of the literature selection studied were considered to be nonsense. An answer like this – or rather, no answer – would score a 0.

Order of the Study/Procedures

Students were invited to participate in the study after a brief oral explanation by me, the classroom teacher. A parental consent form was sent home to each student who volunteered. This consent form was completed by parents/guardians who wished their child's results to be used in the study. All students, regardless of whether they participated or not, received the designed instruction units as they met the standards and required general outcomes of the Manitoba Senior 4 Curriculum. The order of the thematic units and the teaching methods employed are illustrated in the diagram which follows:

Themes:	"Nature"	"Stand up for what you Believe"	"Death"
a.m. class	*writing*	*talking and writing*	*transmission*
p.m. class	*transmission*	*writing*	*talking and writing*

The instructional period for each unit was three weeks in duration. Each class received their thematic unit delivered by the prescribed methodology, the order being controlled between the two experimental treatments (complete methodology outlines and lesson plans are appended). At the completion of the unit of study, students in both classes wrote the same evaluative instrument (tests). Students always/only identified themselves by using a number randomly assigned to them for each test. In other words, all subjects' names were masked so that no marker bias could occur. Copies were made of each completed test and were sent to two trained, "blind" markers. The markers had no way of knowing which student was connected to which number as neither marker was from the school or the community where the study was being conducted. Tests were marked according to the multiple choice answer keys and the short answer key. The essay question was evaluated according to the rubric described and explained in the instrumentation section, earlier. Students received a copy of their results from the test as soon as was possible following each administration. The markers also had no idea which instructional approach was used in generating the responses, as the instructional approaches were interspersed with one another (see diagram on previous page).

At the conclusion of the final unit of instruction, four randomly selected students (two from the group one; two from group two) were interviewed regarding the instructional approaches used in the study and their responses to them. These interviews provide slight but informative qualitative data with which to add insight and context to the quantitative data gathered from the administration of the tests, in an effort to provide a more complete picture of events.

Data Analysis

Data from the study was analyzed by employing a three (treatment) by two (presentation/class) Analysis of Variance with repeated measures. The three levels of

treatment (the repeated measure) were traditional (transmission), writing (transactional), and talk and writing (social construction). The two levels of presentation/class were: (1) writing first, then talk and writing, then traditional; and (2) traditional, then writing, then talk and writing. When significance was found, pair-wise *post hoc* (LSD t – test) tests of significance were carried out on the repeated measure to identify where differences lay. The significance level was set at *alpha* = .05. Effect sizes (*g*) were then calculated comparing each of the "experimental" interventions with the traditional/transmission condition. The data analysis sought to explain what effect, if any, each separate teaching approach had on the students' ability to comprehend and respond to reading. By comparing the results between each of the teaching approaches, conclusions were drawn regarding the value of each method for the purpose of improving reading comprehension and response.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Restatement of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the effect of three separate teaching approaches on reading comprehension and response. Specifically, this study investigated the effectiveness of three general approaches to instruction which I have titled (1) transmission or traditional (teacher-centered), (2) transactional (student-centered writing), and (3) social constructivist (group and teacher talking and writing). Using literary texts in a "real" classroom instructional setting, this study attempted to identify any differences in student performance among the three instructional deliveries, and determine which one, if any, was the best approach to use in aiding students to comprehend what they read in the classroom.

The transmission instructional approach involved a traditional teacher-centered approach to teaching literary texts. In this model, there were specific teaching strategies to address vocabulary development as well as question and answer sessions to reinforce comprehension of content. The second instructional approach, the transactional approach, incorporated extensive writing in a variety of forms. Students had a fair level of input regarding the ideas and issues about which they wrote as well as opportunities to respond to each other's writing in written form. The third approach combined talking with writing and is referred to as the social constructivist instructional approach. This approach gave students maximum input

into their studies and meaning making. By directing their learning around the textual material provided, they had control over discussions and the direction of the writing that they employed to express their learning (see Chapter One or Appendix A for a detailed description of each instructional approach).

Through these goals, then, it was ultimately the aim of this study to determine which of the three instructional approaches led to significant levels of performance in reading comprehension and response for senior four (grade 12) students, identifying differences in instructional effectiveness through comparing student performance in reading comprehension and response measures administered following each of the three units of study. This research hoped to readily identify implications for instruction that teachers could implement in their classrooms in order to improve reading comprehension and response to literature.

Analysis of Results By Question

Question One

By comparing the effectiveness of three instructional approaches to teaching literary reading, the first research question raised was whether writing alone or writing paired with talking is superior to traditional teacher-led instruction in improving reading comprehension and response as measured by a three-part test which combined a multiple-choice item section, a short answer section, and a written response.

There were three sets of data gathered to support or reject the hypothesis: (1) multiple-choice tests responses; (2) short answer test responses; (3) essay responses to a reading selection. There were two groups of students within these conditions. Each of the three measures will be examined separately by presenting the results from the data analysis and then followed by an explanation of the results.

Results of The Multiple-choice Responses

According to the means and standard deviations for multiple-choice, the traditional transmission instructional approach provided slightly better results, although the difference among the three conditions was not statistically significant (see Table 1 for results). Students performed at a mean of 16.27 (SD = 3.35) out of a possible 20 when instructed by the use of the transmission model. Under a transactional instructional approach, the mean for multiple-choice items was 15.77 (SD = 1.77). A mean of 15.23 was obtained by the students in the social constructivist approach with a standard deviation of 2.03.

Performance by Group

Group one and group two responded differently to the instructional conditions for multiple-choice (see Table 1 for results). In the transmission model of instruction group two outperformed group one by an average of 1.42 (group two mean = 16.88; group one mean = 15.46). In the transactional model of instruction there was a reversal with group one outperforming group two by an average of 1.09 (group one mean = 16.38; group two mean = 15.29). In the social constructivist approach group two once again outperformed group one by an average of .37 (group two mean = 15.94; group one mean = 14.31). The transactional instructional approach produced an effect size of $g = -.15$. This suggests that the average transactional student was performing at the 44th percentile. Findings for the social constructivist treatment showed students performing at the 37th percentile level ($g = -.31$), compared to the transmission unit of instruction.

Table 1. MEANS and STANDARD DEVIATIONS for <u>MULTIPLE-CHOICE</u>

MULTIPLE-CHOICE	N	X	S/D	Effect Size (g)	% ile rank
Traditional (Transmission)	30	16.27	3.35		
Group One	13	15.46	3.36		
Group Two	17	16.88	3.31		
Writing (Transactional)	30	15.77	1.77	-.15	44
Group One	13	16.38	1.80	.03	51
Group Two	17	15.29	1.65	-.29	39
Talking & Writing (Social Construction)	30	15.23	2.03	-.31	37
Group One	13	14.31	1.25	-.58	28
Group Two	17	15.94	2.25	-.09	46

When using multiple-choice as an evaluative measure for reading comprehension the instructional approach made no significant difference ($F_{(2,56)}$ = 8.44, p = .162). There was also no significance found in examining group (presentation) (p = .304). However, when examining the condition by group interaction, a significant difference was revealed (p = .029). (See Table 2 and Figure 2 following.)

Table 2. ANOVA for MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Source	d/f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Condition	2	8.44	1.88	.162
Group (Presentation)	1	9.47	1.097	.304
Condition X Group	2	16.909	3.765	.029
Error	56	4.491		

<u>Explanation</u>

It is possible that the Hawthorne effect influenced the performance of both groups, as they obtained their highest means for multiple-choice in their first unit tests of the study (see Figure 1). Group one began the project under the transactional

Figure 1
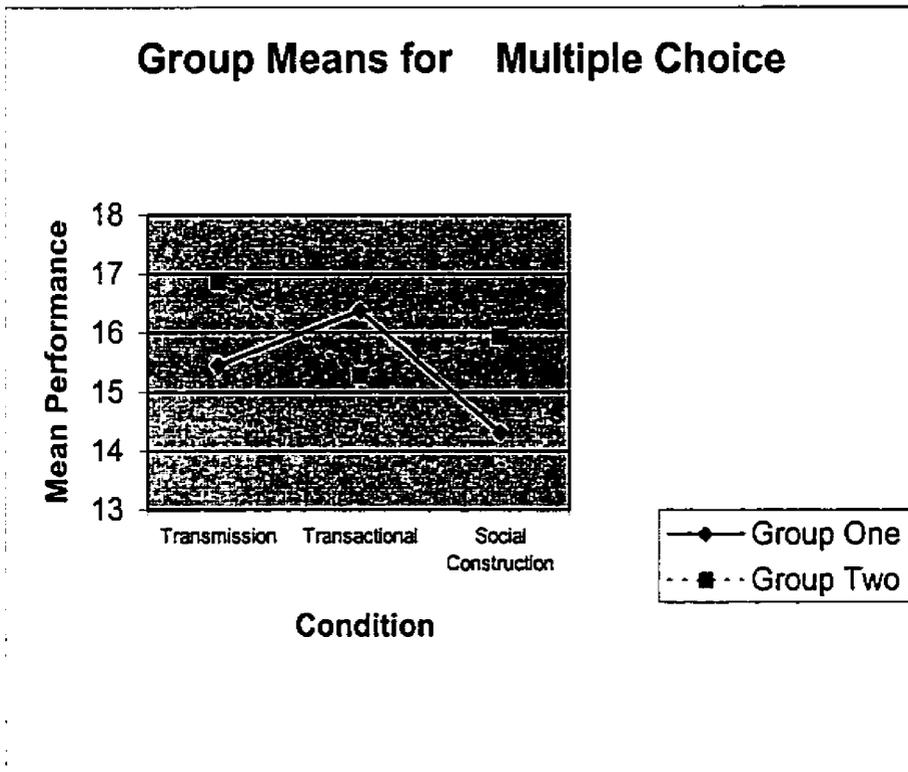
model of instruction while group two began under the transmission approach to instruction. Means indicate, however, that the transmission model had the best response to developing reading comprehension and response when measuring reading comprehension and response with a multiple-choice evaluative instrument. This result may be because the transmission model taught directly to the test instrument through prescribed instruction and directed assignments such as vocabulary and definition lists, teacher-centered questions and through answer responses to readings. In each of these instructional activities students were engaged in materials that were later replicated for test purposes. A multiple-choice test provided a similar prescribed structure and definite answer alternatives for students who had been instructed within a fairly rigid approach to the unit of study. There was thus an extremely "good fit" between the teaching approach and the evaluative procedure.

Students in the writing and talking (social construction) and writing conditions (transactional), on the other hand, did not perform as well on the multiple-choice portion of the test. Britton (1982), as cited by Rivard and Straw (2000), holds that talk does indeed improve learning through the sharing of knowledge and through the process of defining meaning through oral interaction. This condition, however, had very little opportunity in the transmission approach to instruction and therefore did not appear to affect the current study; at least it was not in multiple-choice testing. But why? A possible answer may be found in the condition by group interaction ($p =$ .029), which will be elaborated on shortly.

Figure 2. Presentation Schedule for Morning and Afternoon Groups.

	Unit 1, *"Nature"*	Unit 2, *"Stand up"*	Unit 3, *"Death"*
Group 1 (AM)	*Writing*	*Talk & Writing*	*Transmission*
Group 2 (PM)	*Transmission*	*Writing*	*Talk & Writing*

Compared to group one, which averaged 15.46, (transmission approach), group two averaged 16.88 in the same condition.

Results of Short Answer Responses

Just as the multiple-choice section of the tests, the short answer portion of the tests also consisted of 20 marks worth of questions. The transmission (X = 14) approach to instruction resulted in a mean score just slightly higher than those for transactional (X = 13.68) and social construction (X = 13.78) (See Table 2.). Again, these differences were not statistically significant. Students performed at a mean of 14 out of a possible 20 when instructed in the transmission approach (SD = 2.92). But the difference was slight between the three approaches, as the mean for students

<u>Performance by Group</u>

The most interesting results were found when comparing the performance pattern of the two groups by instructional condition for short answer responses. In the transmission model of instruction, group one outperformed group two by an average of .67 (group one mean = 14.38 with a standard deviation of 2.27; group two mean = 13.71 with a standard deviation of 3.37). Yet, in the transactional model of instruction there was a reversal with group two significantly outperforming group one by an average of 2.3 (group one mean = 12.38 (SD = 3.18); group two mean = 14.68 (SD = 2.57)). In the social constructivist approach, group two once again outperformed group one by an average of 2.33 (group one mean = 12.46; group two mean = 14.79).

The effect size for the transactional instructional approach (writing) was $g = -.11$. While the mean effect size for the two groups in the transactional model of instruction showed students performing at the 46th percentile, it is worth pointing out that group two performed at the 59th percentile ($g = .23$) in the transactional instructional model. Consistent with this pattern, results from the social constructivist instructional approach showed students performing at the 47th percentile, yet group two students performed at the 61st percentile (g = .27) as compared to the group one students, who performed at the 20th percentile. (See Table 3 for a display of data describing results for the short answer tests.)

When using short answer questions as an evaluative measure for reading comprehension and response, the instructional approach made no significant difference ($F_{(2,56)} = 2.203, p = .668$). Once again the groups responded quite differently. While there was also no main effect found in examining group by presentation (p = .150), results of the condition by group interaction revealed a significant difference ($p = .023$). (See Table 3 and Figure 3.).

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Table 3. MEANS and STANDARD DEVIATIONS for SHORT ANSWER

SHORT ANSWER	N	X	S/D	Effect Size (g)	% ile rank
Traditional (Transmission)	30	14	2.92		
Group One	13	14.38	2.27		
Group Two	17	13.71	3.37		
Writing (Transactional)	30	13.68	3.03	-.10	46
Group One	13	12.38	3.18	-.55	29
Group Two	17	14.68	2.57	.23	59
Talking & Writing (Social Construction)	30	13.78	3.54	-.08	47
Group One	13	12.46	3.31	-.53	30
Group Two	17	14.79	3.46	.27	61

Table 4. ANOVA for SHORT ANSWER

Source	d/f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Condition	2	2.203	0.406	.668
Group (Presentation)	1	38.229	2.186	.150
Condition X Group	2	21.97	4.052	.023
Error	56	5.422		

Explanation

Overall, the transmission model of instruction resulted in slightly better results in

reading comprehension and response in the short answer sections of the tests that

were used for this study. However, as is shown in Figure 3, group one performed

best in the transmission model, then fell by an average of two full marks in the

transactional approach, and then came up slightly in the social constructivist

instructional approach, as opposed to group two. Group two performed in a

consistent and what would appear to be a logical pattern. Their mean performance

Figure 3

Group Means for Short Answer

Mean Performance — 15 14 13 12 11 — Transmission   Transactional   Social Construction

———— Group One
...■... Group Two

Condition
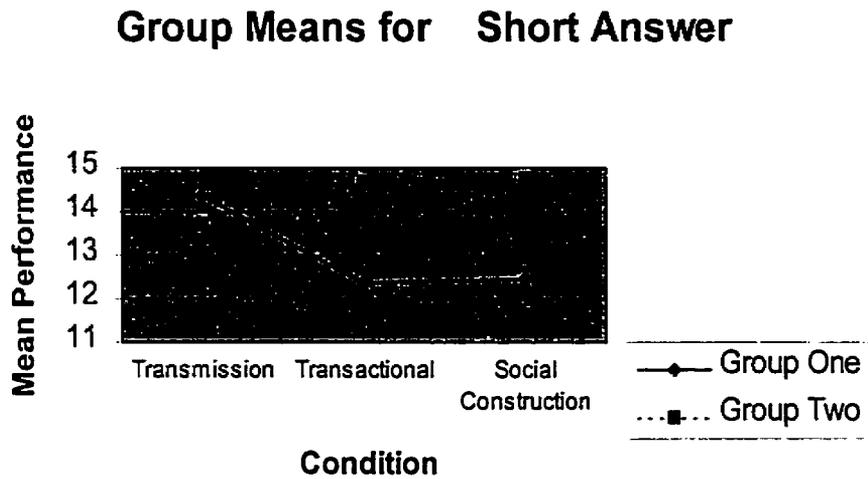
was lowest in the transmission model (13.71) where two or three students consistently

scored poorly. This was the first instructional approach group two was exposed to, after

which their mean performance increased to 14.68 in the transactional instructional mode

(their second instructional approach), after which it increased again in the social

constructivist approach to instruction to 14.79, this their final unit of study. It appears

that a few students may benefit more from a transmission approach while the majority

of students obtained more success in either the transactional or the social constructivist

approach to instruction.

Results of Written Response To Literature

The final area of concern was response to literature, measured by expository

essays of approximately 300 to 600 words. After completing the first two sections of

the unit tests (multiple-choice and short answer), students were asked to compose a

brief essay based on all of the readings they were exposed to during the duration of the unit of study. Students were given up to 80 minutes to complete the test and typically took the final 30 to 50 minutes to compose the essay. Depending on the theme of the unit, a different prompt was given: (1) "nature" - *Is it necessary for humanity to conquer nature in order to survive? In an expository essay answer the question with a minimum of 300 words*; (2) "standing up for your beliefs" - *Write an expository essay in which you comment on the difference that people make when they stand up for what they believe. Write a minimum of 300 words*; (3) "death" - *Is there ever a right time or place to die? Respond to this question with a minimum 300-word expository essay* (see Figure 2 for thematic timeline).

Each essay was leveled on a scale that ranged from 0 to 3 (see Chapter 3 for rubric and scoring description) for the level of reading response (an expression of understanding/comprehending the readings). According to the means and standard deviations for the content rubric, the social constructivist approach provided statistically significant results. The best results on reading response as measured by the content rubric, were found in this condition. As shown in Table 5, students in this condition performed at a mean of 2.57 out of a possible 3 (SD = .50) when instructed by this approach. Under a transactional instructional approach, students' performance dropped to a mean of 2.23 (SD = .68). A mean of 1.93 with a standard deviation of .58 was achieved under the transmission approach to instruction.

Performance by Group

In the social constructivist approach to instruction (talk and writing) group two outperformed group one by an average of .33 (group one mean = 2.38 (SD = .51); group two mean = 2.71 (SD = .47)). In the transactional unit (writing) the two groups achieved almost the identical scores, with a difference of only .01 in their mean scores (group one mean = 2.23 (SD = .73); group two mean = 2.24 (SD = .66)). In the transmission instructional approach (traditional) the two groups performed

differently, with group one achieving a mean score of 1.62, compared to the group two mean of 2.18.

The effect size for the social constructivist instructional approach was $g = 1.10$. This suggests that the average student performed at the 86th percentile compared to their performance in the transmission approach. Group one performed at the 78th percentile when instructed in the social constructivist approach ($g = .78$), while group two showed a remarkable improvement, performing at the 91st percentile ($g = 1.34$), each compared to the transmission approach to teaching. The transactional instructional approach also showed significant improvement over the traditional transmission instructional approach. The average student performed at the 70th percentile ($g = .52$) compared to performance in the transmission unit. Group one and group two achieved effect sizes of $g = .52$, and $g = .53$, respectively. (See Table 5 for a complete presentation of data.)

Table 5. MEANS and STANDARD DEVIATIONS for RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

RESPONSE	N	X	S/D	Effect Size (g)	% ile rank
Traditional (Transmission)	30	1.93	.58		
Group One	13	1.62	.51		
Group Two	17	2.18	.53		
Writing (Transactional)	30	2.23	.68	.52	70
Group One	13	2.23	.73	.52	70
Group Two	17	2.24	.66	.53	70
Talking & Writing (Social Construction)	30	2.57	.50	1.10	86
Group One	13	2.38	.51	.78	78
Group Two	17	2.71	.47	1.34	91

The social constructivist instructional approach produced the most significant results ($F_{(2,56)} = 3.107$, $p = .000$) when evaluating essays using a written response to reading evaluative rubric. While the other two instructional approaches did not produce significant results for the conditions (p = .162 for multiple-choice; p = .668 for short answer), the social constructivist approach did (p = .000). Again, the results for group presentation were not significant, although they were in the expected direction (p = .071), whereas in both previous measures the condition by group interaction was significant. This time it merely came close (p = .080). (See Table 6 and Figure 4 for data summary.)

Table 6. ANOVA for RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

Source	d/f	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Condition	2	3.107	14.307	.000
Group (Presentation)	1	1.931	3.521	.071
Condition X Group	2	6.574	2.643	.080
Error	56	0.217		

Figure 4

Group Means for Response to Literature
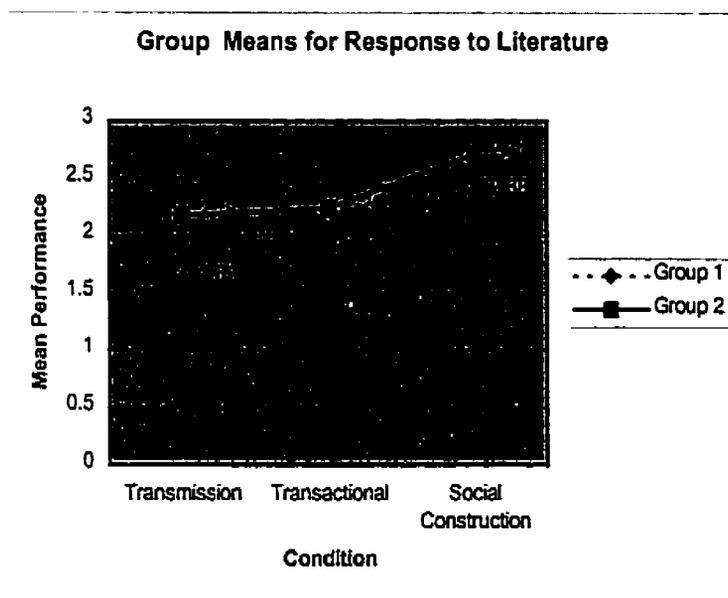
<u>Explanation</u>

The social constructivist approach to instruction clearly resulted in the more significant achievement (p = .000) and improvement for students' reading comprehension as measured by student response to writing. Group one, while slightly behind group two in mean scores in each of the instructional approaches, still demonstrated the same learning pattern. Group one averaged 1.62 in the transmission approach, then rose to 2.23 for transactional (writing), and eventually obtained a mean of 2.38 in the social constructivist approach to teaching. This improvement in achievement is especially noteworthy because group one began the study in the transactional unit, then proceeded to the social constructivist instruction unit and finally completed the study in the transmission unit. It could be logically assumed that, given the order of instructional approaches, having built on the learning through writing and talking and writing, group one would then perform best in their final unit of study, the transmission unit. However, this was not the case. Instead, group one averaged its lowest mean (1.62) in the transmission instructional approach, then improved to their second best result (2.23) in the transactional (writing) approach, and did their best, slightly below average of group two (2.71), by achieving a mean of 2.38 in the social constructivist condition.

The pattern clearly shows steady improvement from a least effective approach of instruction (see Figure 4), the typical traditional classroom instructional approach involving teacher-centered instruction, to a more "student-friendly" instructional approach in the transactional method, to the most successful learning occurring in a social constructivist classroom. What bears consideration is that despite group one

being a weaker group of students compared to group two (see Figure 4), their comprehension achievement functioned at the 70th percentile in the transactional unit of study, and then climbed to the 78th percentile during the social constructivist unit of study. These results should speak loudly to teachers when students average 28 percent above the mean of the comparison group (transmission). If the average student can improve his/her comprehension skills by 28 percent, or even 20 percent simply by having the teacher shift the style of instruction, then the question for teachers of reading is not "when will teachers finally see the need for a change to the most effective approach to instruction", but "why it is not happening right now?" (See Table 5 and Figure 5.)

Group two showed the same pattern as group one in its performance within the social constructivist unit of study (See Figure 6). Under the transmission instructional approach, group two averaged 2.18. They then increased their performance to a mean of 2.24 in the transactional approach (writing) and eventually completed the study with an average of 2.71 out of a possible 3 in the social constructivist approach to reading instruction. In other words, as Figure 4 and 5 indicate, group two steadily improved their performance in reading comprehension and response as measured by their responses to reading. Group two performed with an effect size of $g = .53$, which places them at the 70th percentile when studying under the transactional instructional approach. Under the social constructivist approach, group two students improved their performance to the 91st percentile ($g = 1.34$), compared to group one, who performed at the 78th percentile. Again, if the average

student can improve his/her reading comprehension performance by 41 percent, as demonstrated by group two, teachers should take note.

The instructional approach that fostered the skills necessary to demonstrate the deepest level of thinking and greatest maturity of ideas (comprehension or meaning-making) when students wrote, was evaluated by a written response evaluative tool (written response rubric – see chapter 3). Barnes (1995) states that talking or discussion helps to define, clarify and redefine issues. As students function in a social constructivist classroom, they are naturally involved in a continuous discussion of content where each student's ideas are spoken, explained, defended or expanded through further discussion, and ultimately the group comes to an agreement (for the time being) of what a text might mean. This rigorous process of meaning making is precisely the backbone needed for students to prepare for and then write an essay that demonstrates their thought development and understanding, through deep levels of engagement.

While the transactional classroom might be seen as a process that should have developed high levels of response due to the amount of writing that occurred, it must be remembered that group one and two students only responded to each others' writing in written form. Due to this strategy, without the advantage of talk and its immediate and innovative recursive nature, students were left with having to think through another piece of writing on their own, instead of discussing nuances or instead of orally expanding on arguments through engaging in multiple points of view that could have enhanced thinking and ultimately the quality of their writing,.

Figure 6 illustrates that when both group one and group two means were combined for the response to literature, performance reached increasingly

Figure 6

Overall Main Effect of Response to Literature
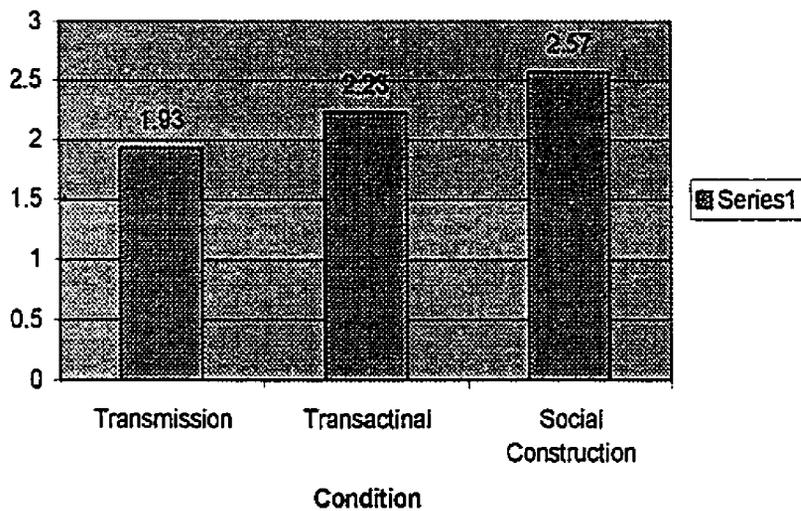
higher levels of sophistication as students moved from a transmission to transactional (then) to social construction instructional approaches. In the transmission classroom where development of thought through writing, and especially through talking and writing was not encouraged, to a classroom where writing was encouraged, and finally, in a social constructivist instructional approach, where students were encouraged not only to talk about their thinking and defend or develop it, but asked further to write thoroughly about their thinking, it is clear that the highest level of thought was expressed.

<u>Question Two</u>

The second question this attempts to answer is whether the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affects student performance in

The second question this study attempts to answer is whether the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affects student performance in reading comprehension and response? Figure 7 shows the order of presentation for both groups. Both groups studied the identical theme at the same time. However, while group one began the "nature" theme in a transactional model of instruction, group two covered the same theme in the traditional transmission approach to instruction. Group one studied the "stand up for what you believe" theme in the social constructivist model while group two moved to a transactional approach for this same unit. The final theme studied by the students was entitled "death", and group one was instructed using the transmission model of instruction while group two finished the study in the social constructivist approach to instruction. Both groups took the identical unit test after each thematic unit was completed, but neither group was aware of which instructional model was used to instruct the classes.

Figure 7. Presentation Schedule for Morning and Afternoon Groups.

	Unit 1, *"Nature"*	Unit 2, *"Stand up"*	Unit 3, *"Death"*
Group 1 (AM)	*Writing*	*Talk & Writing*	*Transmission*
Group 2 (PM)	*Transmission*	*Writing*	*Talk & Writing*

Results of The Multiple-choice Responses

In total, three unit tests, each with three sections (multiple-choice, short answer, response essay), combined for nine test measurements. Group two appeared stronger, as they outperformed group one in seven out of nine test measurements. Because group two tended always to score better than group one, regardless of the condition, they appeared to be a stronger group academically. The only exception to their consistent performance ahead of group one was found in the multiple-choice

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instruction, neither of which appeared to teach to skills that showed well on a prescribed test activity such as multiple-choice. Group one, although they completed their final unit in the transmission model, achieved their highest mean score (15.46) in the transactional model of instruction and not in the transmission instructional model. Just as was demonstrated by group two, this score was reached during the opening unit within the study for group one, under the transactional instructional approach, and their results could be attributed to an excitement-factor (Hawthorne effect). As new volunteers in an "actual research study", students may have been functioning under a heightened sense of awareness and excitement – "we're part of a study!" – which motivated or aided them in attaining a mean of 16.38, compared to the mean score for group two (15.29), while in the transactional instructional unit.

Whether the multiple-choice results are due to transmission instruction providing direct instruction to the test for group two (and the same for group one in the transactional mode), or a heightened sense of excitement by the students, it is clear that the groups were different. They behaved inversely, as is shown on the group by condition interaction graph (Figure 2). This difference in response may not be too difficult to understand, as was mentioned earlier, when noting that group two simply outperformed group one the majority of the time. It is also clear that group two responded differently to the varied instructional approaches, again indicating that they were a stronger group, overall.

Results of Short Answer Responses

Again, the two groups certainly appeared quite different in ability and in their responses to the various instructional approaches ($p = .023$) (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Group one, for example, responded well to the short answer in the traditional approach to instruction, while group two responded more successfully (almost equally) to the

transactional approach (writing) and to the social constructivist approach (talking and writing). Group one began the study in the transactional instructional approach (writing)(mean of 12.38), and then progressed to the social constructivist approach where their mean score for short answer was 12.46, slightly higher than the previous unit. Having had the benefit of two student-centered approaches to learning with a high degree of engagement in the text, including discussion amongst students and teacher, group one went on to their final unit of study in the transmission model of instruction. As a result of directed instruction and prescribed meanings of interpretations on the texts involved, and also because of the benefit of two previous units of study in which they wrote short answer tests, students likely achieved their highest score in the third and final test due to experience and due to the accumulated study benefits of the entire study.

Group two, on the other hand, achieved an average score below group one in its first experience with short answer questions on the first unit test (mean score of 13.71 out of a possible 20). As was mentioned, group one completed the nine-week study in the transmission mode and finished with an average score of 14.38. The comparison breaks down after this as group two then moved into the transactional approach to instruction (writing), where the group's average achievement increased to 14.68 (almost a full mark higher than the first unit). One could conclude that the amount of writing students did in the transactional approach accounted for this increase. Group two improved on its performance again in their final unit of study, in the social constructivist approach to instruction, where they average 14.79, slightly higher than before. Compared to group one, which averaged 12.38 in the

transactional unit and 12.46 in the social constructivist unit, group two did much

better (see Figure 3). Clearly, based on student performance throughout the three

units of the study, group two appears to be a stronger group. The pattern established

by group two, starting with their lowest achievement average in the transmission

mode, then improving in the transactional approach, and again improving in the social

constructivist approach to instruction suggests that they were a stronger learning

group of students compared to the first group in that they seemed to build on their

previous work (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

Results of Written Response To Literature

As was mentioned earlier, group one averaged its lowest mean (1.62 out of a

possible 3) in the transmission instructional approach, then improved to their second

best result (2.23) in the transactional approach, and did their best, by obtaining a

mean of 2.38 in the social constructivist condition. This pattern clearly shows steady

improvement from a least effective approach of instruction (see Figure 4)

(transmission), to the transactional method, and finally, to the most successful

instructional model, the social constructivist classroom. As was also mentioned

earlier, group one improved to a 78th percentile performance level in the social

constructivist instructional approach, an improvement of 28 percentile points over the

transmission model of instruction. (See Table 5 and Figure 5.)

Group two shared the same pattern as group one in its performance within the

social constructivist unit of study (See Figure 6). They obtained their lowest

performance mean under the transmission instructional approach, then increased their

performance to a mean of 2.24 in the transactional approach and eventually

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completed the study with an average of 2.71 out of a possible 3 in the social

constructivist model. This increase in performance placed group two at the 91st

percentile. By achieving a 41 percent increase over the traditional transmission

approach to instruction, group two demonstrated (as did group one) that teachers need

to heed findings that indicate a shift in teaching styles may improve their students'

response to reading performance by a significant margin.

The results of this study clearly indicate that both transactional and social

constructivist instructional approaches are as effective as the traditional teacher-led

transmission classroom in each of the conditions. In addition, and possibly most

importantly, the social constructivist model of instruction leads to more mature

responses from students in a senior ELA classroom.

Question Three

The third question this study addressed was which instructional approach

(presentation) students most enjoyed and which of the instructional approaches most

benefited their reading comprehension and response to literature. Four students were

randomly selected (two from each of the groups) to respond to five questions in an

interview with me, their classroom instructor, at the completion of the final unit of

study. Interviews were held with one student at a time, in an empty classroom, and

were tape-recorded. These students were given the list of questions ahead of time in

order to make notes for themselves to refer to during the interview. Transcripts of the

interviews are found in Appendix B. The five questions that these students responded

to are as follows:

1. What elements in each unit, if any, did you find the most helpful to comprehending the material? What elements in each unit, if any, did you not find helpful for comprehension?

2. Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed most. What did you like about it? Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed the least. What did you not like about it?

3. Were there specific things that your instructor did that helped your comprehension in any way?

4. What do you think is the most important element for teachers when they instruct students in reading?

5. Was that element evident in any of the units?

Summary of Student Responses to Interview Questions

A glimpse into the "unseen" minds of students sheds some light on both the attitudes and interests shared by students as they participated in the study. While the interview process was not sophisticated enough to suggest specific conclusions that might influence the overall outcomes of this study, the collective response of these students is enough to provide a qualitative element for consideration. It is important to note that the four sets of responses often refer to the same theme, but with diametrically opposed attitudes. Keep in mind that the identical theme and materials were being instructed using two different approaches to instruction in two separate classrooms (refer to Figure 7, page 68). (Complete transcripts of the students' responses are found in Appendix B.)

In response to the first question asked, "what elements in each unit, if any, did you find the most helpful for comprehending the material, and what elements in each unit, if any, did you not find helpful for comprehension", each of the students agreed that talking and writing together was the most helpful activity. Each of the students also made positive remarks about sharing ideas and how valuable it had been to be able to hear more than one point of view regarding a piece of reading, before they committed to writing. While one student valued the practice of journaling to make meaning above other elements, she also mentioned, in response to the second half of the question, that she disliked most being on her own or only in a small group. *"When we got to be in large groups for discussion first, that was much better than being alone or just with one or two others."* In response to the second part of the first question, each of the four students again agreed that the least helpful element for aiding them in comprehending the material was working on their own. When they were required to write extensively, interpreting what they had read before first discussing ideas with the group, that was noted as their least helpful practice.

A strong comment in favour of a transactional and social constructivist approach to meaning making was made by one of the interviewees, when he said, *"I hate it when we take a poem and we're told there's just one way to read it. You know, this is correct or that is correct, that's just a stupid way to learn something. So I didn't like the unit where you always told us what was right and what was wrong. You know, because the teacher can say it's this way and a student can say it's this way and it can be both, and we really don't know what the author was thinking. I mean, there's always ideas and things like that. In my mind I think is this really true.*

and how do we know this is true? So, the way we did the poems in the unit where we read the poems together and then discussed them together before writing, that was the most helpful." Another student added, *"I'd say doing the questions on my own was the worst. Like, what was this character's grandma's name, or something. It wouldn't really help me out in understanding what I was reading. Those kind of questions are just too specific and not based on the whole theme or meaning of the story or book or idea of the movie. Like, what's the point?"* These responses indicate that what students find as being helpful and what they find as being not at all helpful are two sides of the same coin: talking before writing is helpful, writing without talking is not helpful. Each of the students further explained their frustration with working alone and doing "busywork" by answer specific questions that had little to do with understanding the story or theme, activities common in a traditional teacher-centered classroom.

In response to the second question asked, "Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed most and what did you like about it, as well as describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed the least. What did you not like about it?" the two students who were from group one, answered with the following insights. Chris said, *"I liked the death unit the most. First of all, because that was the unit we got to talk the most. Also, there's so much superstition that surrounds death, especially in the articles, like in the "Forerunners". It was great to hear everybody's opinion about death and compare them to what I think."* Brad said, *"The unit on death was my favorite unit because of the criminal aspect in the unit and because we talked a lot about people's experiences, reading, what we all thought. I've read a great number of books on*

crime and justice and I was able to draw on that knowledge. I also loved the material we read. For the first time in years I found myself going home and talking about the books and articles we were reading in class. " Both students agreed that the topic itself was a favorite of theirs, but again, both also stated that part of their enjoyment came from the instructional approach used in this ELA class, a talking and writing based approach which allowed them to build and redefine their own meaning as the entire group shared ideas back and forth before beginning the writing tasks.

The third question asked students to identify specific techniques that the instructor used to help students comprehend best what they read. The students provided interesting responses, especially a student from the first group, who said, *"I don't know if there were specific things, because from the way I've seen you teach in class, you sort of like to surprise attack people. Like you're not going to say, 'I'm going to do this to help you understand something.' You kind of just do it. Like if you punch somebody in the gut, it's going to be a lot more effective if they don't know it's coming than if they know it's coming. But if I had to choose the best techniques used to teach, they happened in the 'death' unit because there was a lot more discussion before we wrote. "* While all students agreed that having an instructor who was available was important, and using current, interesting materials was stimulating, a student from the second group suggested, *"Maybe it's us teaching ourselves, like we did in the talking and writing unit, the newspaper, because we did the best there, as a group and individually. Instead of you telling us, we tell ourselves, which makes us learn the stuff better because it's coming from us and not you. "* Two students noted that including topics and reading materials that were

"real", were important techniques for aiding their understanding because this was a method that captured their personal interest. *"That unit was real, it wasn't just from books or movies. It was real to my life."* Clearly, students felt the most confidence when they felt personally responsible for their learning. Based on the interviews, this appeared to occur consistently in the social constructivist classroom setting.

Students felt less confident answering the fourth question, "What do you think is the most important element for teachers when they instruct students in reading?" Answers varied from *"I don't know"* to being relieved at not having deadlines, to being put in the *"right mindset"* before reading. Once again, the importance of *"real life"* stories, especially when a number of pieces were all tied together, was identified as being key to helping students better comprehend what they read.

The fifth and final question asked of the students was whether they had noticed that the most important element (from number 4) was evident in any of the units. A student from the second group summed up the entire group's opinion by saying, *"I don't think you were very helpful in the 'death' unit because we were just given information and questions and told to do our own work. Very little talking happened then. But in the newspaper unit you prepared us and we interacted a lot all of the time, even while writing."* The social constructivist unit in which the newspaper was produced was identified by these students as being the most helpful approach to teaching students skills and strategies that would produce a higher or deeper level of comprehension and response to literature.

Students in this study overwhelmingly favored the social constructivist approach over the transactional approach to instruction. Both of these instructional

approaches were enjoyed by students over the traditional transmission approach. It was felt by students that the social constructivist classroom provided more time for talking and sharing ideas, which led to more insightful writing. Although *"real"* stories were used in each unit, regardless of instructional approach, students believed that when combining *"real"* stories, prereading activities that helped produce the *"right mindset"*, and a classroom where discussion was encouraged before, during and after writing, they were able to construct the best possible meanings from the texts they studied.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Restatement of Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the effect of three separate teaching methodologies on reading comprehension. Specifically, this study investigated the effectiveness of three general approaches to instruction which I have titled (1) transmission or traditional (teacher-centered), (2) transactional (student-centered writing), and (3) social constructivist (group and teacher talking and writing). The effectiveness of these three instructional approaches was tested using three different measures in unit tests: multiple-choice items, short answer questions, and an essay question which was evaluated using a written response rubric that distinguished between nonsense, retelling, inferential, and interpretive responses that revealed the level of comprehension a student had accomplished. Using literary texts in a "real" classroom instructional setting, this study attempted to identify any differences in student performance among the three instructional deliveries, and determine which one, if any, was the best approach to use in aiding students to comprehend best what they had read in the classroom.

The transmission instructional approach involved a traditional teacher-centered approach to teaching literary texts. In this model, there were specific teaching strategies to address vocabulary development as well as question and answer sessions to reinforce comprehension of content. One of the purposes of this study was to determine whether or not developing skills from a transmission instructional

approach would increase students' ability to comprehend what they read. The second instructional approach, the transactional approach, incorporated extensive writing in a variety of forms. Students had some input regarding the ideas and issues about which they wrote as well as plenty of opportunity to respond to each other's writing in written form. The third approach combined talking with writing and is referred to as the social constructivist instructional approach. This approach gave students maximum input into their studies and meaning making processes. Although the basic organizational structure or nature of the social constructivist project was entirely prescribed in the form of a newspaper room from which a final newspaper would be produced, the students directed their studies around the textual material provided on their own. They had control over discussions and the direction of the writing that they employed to express their learning. In fact, they determined the ingredients, the roles, the meaning, and the approach with which they would attack the assignment completely independent of the teacher.

Through these goals, then, the ultimate aim of this study was to determine which of the three methodologies would lead to the highest scores in reading comprehension and response tests for senior four (grade 12) students. This has been done by identifying differences in instructional effectiveness through comparing student performance in reading comprehension and response tests following each of the three units of study. This study hopes to create some readily identifiable implications regarding reading instruction for teachers to implement in their classrooms as they seek to improve students' literary reading comprehension and response.

Restatement of Questions

By comparing the effectiveness of three instructional approaches to teaching literary reading, the following research questions were raised:

1. Is writing alone or writing paired with talking superior to traditional teacher-led instruction in improving reading comprehension and response as measured by a three-part test which combined a multiple-choice item section, a short answer section, and a written response?

2. Does the order of presentation (the three instructional approaches) affect student performance in reading comprehension and response?

3. Which instructional approach (presentation) do students most enjoy; and which of the instructional approaches do students feel most benefit their reading comprehension and response to literature?

## General Observations and Comments (limitations)

Limitations such as the relatively short treatment period – nine weeks in total, three weeks for each of three units of study– as well as the small sample size (two classes of students numbering thirty in total) made up of thirteen female and seventeen male students in total, must be considered when attempting to make firm conclusions. It is also possible that students' strategies employed in reading and writing were entrenched enough by grade twelve, for example, that a study which emphasized an alternative approach to reading instruction may have had little effect in reshaping their usual strategies. If students were used to a classroom where much talking and writing occurred as a matter of course, then it may be that students, although not permitted to talk and write like before, continued quietly and individually to use helpful adapted strategies from earlier training, for reading.

Patterns, however, were clearly evident in the data, allowing me to suggest a few conclusions, following a brief summary of the results of this study. These patterns most obviously presented themselves when looking at the reading comprehension and response results by placing the transmission, then transactional, and finally social constructivist results side by side in this order. In Figure 1, the

mean score results of the written response results (essay response) for all students shows a consistent improvement in students' performance, with the highest achievement in the social constructivist approach.

Figure 1.

Overall Main Effect for Written Response
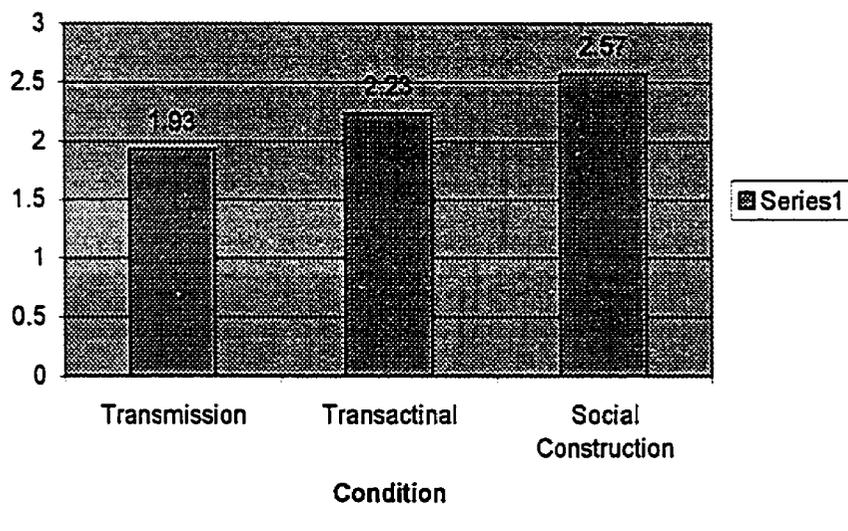
Summary of Results By Condition

The three categories of evaluation used for this study were put in place to measure the effectiveness of three different approaches to instruction on reading comprehension and response. They were multiple-choice items, short answer questions and an essay response, which measured students' reading comprehension levels through writing; each a section of a single test written by students at the completion of a unit of study. The three conditions of instruction were transmission, transaction and social construction. The transmission approach to instruction was used as a control (or to set the standard), as this is the most common method of instruction in secondary classrooms. It was used as a standard against which to measure the effectiveness of a transactional and social constructivist approach to

instruction for reading. Following is a summary of the effects of each instructional approach on multiple-choice items, short answer questions, and on a written response essay requirement, ordered from least effective instructional approach to the most effective in the category of the written response, which produced a significant effect $(p = .000)$.

Transmission Approach to Instruction Condition

When students were instructed using the transmission model of instruction, significance was achieved only in the condition by group interaction. This simply showed that the two groups responded differently to the instruction. Group one performed below the mean of group two in the transmission unit of instruction, but then outperformed group two in the transactional unit and then again fell behind group two in the social construction unit when looking only at multiple-choice results. Because group one began the study in the transactional approach to instruction, then moved into the social constructivist and ended in the transmission approach, it is possible that compared to group two, which began with transmission, then transaction, and then social construction, group one outperformed group two in their first attempt at multiple-choice results because they were excited about the study. Both group one students who were interviewed identified the topic or theme that began the study as their favorite. This was not the case for the group two interviewees, who agreed that their favorite topics of study were the units entitled "death" and "stand up for what you believe" (where writing and talking took place).

The group interaction is further visible when comparing each group's performance for multiple-choice, short answer, and the response section of the tests. Group one falls well below the achievement level of group two in the multiple-choice and again in the written response scores. In the short answer responses, however, they were slightly ahead of group two. In other words, there could have been an

effect when the conditions were presented because the two groups are so obviously different that group one might simply have responded more vigorously if the unit topic or instructional approach had been presented in a different order. Instruction in a transmission approach was vocabulary specific and prescribed to the point where successful performance on multiple-choice tests was most easily attained. Specific ideas, themes, and vocabulary were identified by the instructor during lessons in preparation for the reading comprehension test.

. Because the pattern (order) of results were not shown to be significant, it is clear that possibilities for future research can be found in this area.

Transactional Approach to Instruction Condition

The transactional approach emphasized writing. Students were required to write in the form of journals, short paragraphs, letters, essays, and scripts. They also critiqued each other's work by writing responses after having read a sample of each other's writing. Predictably, this approach to instruction should have resulted in higher means than in the transmission approach because thinking independently and demonstrating comprehension through writing were practiced throughout this unit of study. However, some interesting findings occurred in this condition. First of all, the difference between the two groups was again noteworthy. Although group one outperformed group two in the multiple-choice section of the tests and were within a percent of the mean of group two in the written response, they fell quite far behind in the short answer section. The two students from group one who were interviewed following the study indicated that they very much enjoyed the topic of their first unit of instruction – "nature". "Nature" was instructed in a transactional approach for group one, while it was taught through a transmission approach to the group two. Group two studied the unit titled "Stand Up for What You Believe" in the transactional model of instruction. According to the students interviewed, interest in

the topic for the transactional unit was higher than the "nature" topic, which was studied while they were in the transmission instructional approach. The transactional approach required students to write prolifically. Each piece of literature required students to respond in writing and then respond to each other's writing in a written response. The written response to literature measure indicated that students improved their comprehension from the transmission unit to the transaction unit by twenty percentile points. If students are able to perform a full 20 percent above the mean by emphasizing writing in as many forms as is feasible, while taking more ownership of content and knowledge by doing the writing instead of being told what they need to know, as in a teacher-centered approach, then it is certainly worth consideration as a viable approach to teaching reading.

Social Constructivist Approach to Instruction

According to the results of students' tests, the social constructivist approach to instruction did performed as was expected in the multiple-choice measure, then faired somewhat more successfully in the short answer measure, and finally achieved significance in the written response. It does not appear that a social constructivist classroom supports testing in a manner more consistent with a traditional trans-mission classroom (multiple choice). The short answer measure, on the other hand, resulted in scores vastly different between the two groups. Group two performed at the 61st percentile, suggesting that students either developed more independence of thought and were more capable at comprehending and responding to reading under this approach, when their reading was measured through short answer testing.

The most significant results found in this study revealed that comprehension measured in a response to literature while in the social constructionist approach to instruction was indeed where students performed at their best. The level of achievement in reading comprehension and response for grade twelve students in a

social constructivist approach was far superior to either the transactional or the transmission approaches. Talking and writing in a collaborative environment improved students' ability to comprehend what they read, just as is supported in the review of literature (Straw, 1993; Rivard and Straw, 2000; Barnes, 1995). Students in both groups were given the opportunity to work within a structured newsroom while producing a newspaper that included specific reports on unit themes, analysis of events; and readings, documentaries on particular aspects of the theme or of a text, discussions in the form of editorials, or letters to the editor. Each collaborative group rotated editors for the day who met with the teacher to review topics and writing assignments which they were distributing to their colleagues. Students then spent time reading and discussing before going on to write their various assignments. It appears that through this highly student-centered approach to learning where talk and writing were emphasized, mature readers who have learned to rely on their own interpretation as it was shaped by their reading communities, eventually responded with the most success and confidence when tested for reading comprehension and response.

Implications for Teaching

The results of this study do offer some implications for how teachers of English Language Arts might develop strategies for improving reading comprehension in secondary classrooms. While there is definitely a place for direct instruction found in a teacher-centered classroom, a time when specific vocabulary and specific facts or knowledge are to be learned (as shown in the transmission instructional approach results found in multiple-choice testing), the shift to teaching students to become mature readers and independent thinkers is widely supported in research literature (Hillocks, 1971; Barnes, 1995; Fish, 1980; Straw, 1993; Rivard and Straw, 2000). That approach has been referred to as the social constructivist

approach to instruction throughout this study, and central to this approach is the social collaboration between teacher and students and between students and students, in their construction of meaning as they work together to build a thorough framework from which to comprehend and respond what they read. This approach to instruction develops ownership for learning and making meaning in students and gives students purpose of their own. They are responsible for creating meaning by interacting with the text and discussing their thoughts and reactions to the text, challenging each others' opinions, and then writing through their thinking, a further extension of the process of coming to know something. Students, in this type of classroom, have the opportunity to make choices about what they study and how they are going to go about learning material. An increase in taking part in controlling the outcomes of their education, students in turn become deeper and keener readers, able to think through and write through toward meanings that reveal their increased levels of maturity. The teacher's role in all of this continues to be important, as it is her role to ensure that the assignments pursued, the talking that ensues, and that the writing that follows stays on topic and that each student is pushed to purposeful in the pursuit of meaning making/comprehension.

As was mentioned, the results of this study suggest that there is a place for direct, traditional instruction in an ELA classroom. Encouraging results for a transmission approach to instruction were found in measures like the multiple-choice section of tests, where both groups of students performed well when given direct instruction. This suggests that when an instructional objective requires certain, specific knowledge or organizational skills that will benefit students in learning toward a test, teachers can play an invaluable role by guiding those students through activities like vocabulary lists, teacher-centered questions and answer sessions, expository essay writing with the use of heuristics, or note-taking lectures. Yet, it is advisable that teachers not monopolize direct instruction at the expense of any student

input. It appears that when students have some input in decision-making about the text and when they have some say about ideas and issues raised in the class and in the text, they simply perform better in reading comprehension test results.

It is clear that when both students and teachers work together toward meaningful interactions with texts and with each other, the maximum advantage in learning can occur. Talking and writing, between both students and teacher, ultimately leads to the best comprehension and response results when discussion is not a masked process of leading students to a particular reading and when writing response is allowed to be individual and fresh. We are reminded by Straw (1990) that "meaning in literature is, ultimately, opinion, and interactive and transactional theorists suggest that the opinion is arrived at through the negotiation" (p. 132). In order to keep from presenting the meaning of texts and encourage students to generate the meaning socially through negotiation with the text and among each other, teachers will need to adapt their instructional approaches so that all members of a class become active participants in the process of learning and making meaning out of a text. To do this we will need to teach students to become active negotiators in the act of creating meaning in their classrooms. Classrooms like this will be characterized as "socially-based, talk-based classrooms . . . that lead students to meaning-making rather than meaning-getting" (Straw, 1990. pg. 133). Collaborative learning methods are well suited to fostering meaningful transactions among students (Straw, 1990), with research suggesting, "work in group settings is generally superior to teacher-determined knowledge passed on through transmission methods" (pg. 133)

Recommendations for Further Research

The scope of this study was somewhat limited from the outset. The subject pool numbered a total of just 30 in two groups, the entire study was conducted over

nine weeks, with three-week units of instruction, three separate, yet overlapping instructional approaches were taught for each of the three-week units, and only three themes were taught. Further study in any one or all of these areas would be warranted, in an attempt to more clearly determine specific effects.

By having students choose their class the previous year, the groups ended up as randomly divided into two heterogeneous groups of different sizes. Group one, the morning class taking 40S ELA, consisted of thirteen students, while group two, the afternoon class, was made up of seventeen students. As assignments were completed and the tests were written and marked by "blind" markers, it became clear that the two groups were quite different in their abilities. Group two was significantly stronger according to the ANOVA and mean performances in virtually every category. Larger sample sizes could be achieved through involving more schools or larger numbers of students from a single large school, and might lead to different findings.

Another area for future research would be to investigate the issue of instructional time dedicated to each approach or style of teaching. The short time, only three weeks, that was used for each of the three approaches, may not have been sufficient to allow students to truly grasp the skills and concepts related to that approach to instruction. By increasing the time significantly, students might become more familiar with and indeed further removed from the previous approach, thereby generating the potential for performing better in reading comprehension. More time would naturally allow students to learn their texts more thoroughly, more time to talk and write in groups and individually. A more accurate picture of reading comprehension might be possible with longer instructional times.

Three instructional approaches were used for this study. Further research might look into ways of adapting or modifying these instructional approaches in an attempt to build the ideal teaching approach, suitable for maximizing student

potential in reading. The literature review suggests that a social constructivist approach to reading should produce a more competent and mature reader. And while this study found significance in the written response measure and a strong performance in the short answer measure, the other measure (multiple-choice) did not fair well. Therefore, it might be worthwhile investigating other instructional approaches or the combination of a few styles of teaching to find which results in the best reading performance.

Closely related to the instructional approaches, are the themes used for this study and the order in which texts and assignments were presented. "Nature", "standing up for your beliefs", and "death" were the three themes dealt with through the units of study. Beginning with nature, progressing to standing up for your beliefs, and finally ending with death might have skewed the results. Future research might rearrange the themes in order to discover whether death held the most fascination for students and resulted in higher scores on reading comprehension simply by virtue of "higher interest". Would altogether different themes provide totally different results? Would allowing students to choose their own unit themes and then find the texts that would fulfill the unit of study change results? Implications for unit planning are a definite and important ingredient in this area for future research.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly indicate that both transactional and social constructivist instructional approaches are as effective as the traditional teacher-led transmission classroom in each of the conditions. In addition, and most important, the social constructivist model of instruction leads to more mature responses from students in a senior ELA classroom, as it did show significance in this condition. And this improvement was due to the instructional approach presented in

the class, an approach that emphasized a social constructivist environment in which collaboration and student-centered activities were the standard. The purpose of ELA classrooms from "nursery through the university is to synthesize knowledge rather than to pass it along" (Bleich, 1980. pg. 159). That is why research supports teachers who build classroom settings where units of study are a collaborative effort between student and teacher and student and student. Classrooms like this, that involve a high level of talk and writing, where making meaning of texts is a social responsibility in which all members of the classroom take part, are classrooms where students learn best how to make meaning of texts. Pursuing their own interests and convictions, making use of past experience, working together to make decisions that will effect outcomes through discussion and writing - students in a class like this get to take ownership of their learning, and that makes all the difference. Reading comprehension and response results are highest in a social constructivist classroom as measured through students' writing.

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Appendix A:

Teaching Methods and Assignments

For each unit

Theme: *Nature*   *(Unit One)*
(Traditional)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie	Methodologies
Never Cry Wolf (fiction – novel)	Chapter questions Word lists for definitions Paragraph question Essay question for unit
To The Brink (nonfiction)	Questions on sections read Crossword Puzzle – terms/vocabulary
Ride the Dark Horse (short story)	Oral questions – teacher led Paragraph – obstacles of nature and man
.	
The Shark (poetry) *The Oak and the Rose* *The Burning of The Leaves*	Technical Terms & Definitions Question sheets that require IDing definitions Look up authorial information Information sheet handout with background Analyze poem
.	
National Geographic Article *"Arctic Wolf" (nonfiction)* (May 1987, pg. 562-592)	Essay: compare and contrast the novel's wolf with Nat.G.'s wolf – Prepare expository essay outline and notes for writing
Movie: *"Twister" (film)*	Question for teacher-led class discussion: Does the movie accurately reflect/depict the forces of nature? Can media ever reflect nature accurately?
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Description of "Traditional" Instructional Method

In this method, the teacher directs the learning activities by providing specific questions and terms for the students to learn. The teacher acts as the provider of the knowledge and leads the students to that knowledge by employing the following assignments:

1.   Definition lists generated by the instructor. Students will complete these on their own before the instructor leads the corrections.

2.   Worksheets with questions regarding the readings. The questions are instructor-generated and then led through corrections.

3..   Paragraph writing on instructor-identified topics related to the text. The instructor will do all the evaluating; there will be no peer editing or collaborative writing.

4.   Preparations made to write an Expository Essay on the theme of one of the pieces read.

Unit One: "Nature"
Traditional

Section One: National Geographic Article, "At Home with the Arctic Wolf" –
magazine news item
   (One 80 minute class)

1.   Assignment: Read the article and receive the handout on writing expository
     essays. Begin outlining an expository essay in which you are to COMPARE AND
     CONTRAST THE "REAL" WOLVES WITH THE WOLVES IN THE NOVEL,
     Never Cry Wolf.
2.   Handout – see "handouts" folder

Section Two: Never Cry Wolf – novel study
   (Seven 80 minute classes)

1.   Vocabulary definitions from the novel – see "assignments" folder
2.   Chapter questions – Complete each set of chapter questions when you have
     finished reading through the assigned chapters. See "assignments" folder for
     chapter questions.
3.   Paragraph writing – Write a paragraph on 3 of the following topics:
     a.   Relationships in nature
     b.   Exploitation or damage to nature
     c.   Stereo-types about nature
     d.   Conflict between man and nature
     e.   Humour in the writing of the novel

Section Three: "To The Brink" – non-fiction
   (One 80 minute class)

1.   Crossword Puzzle – complete the 30-word puzzle – see "assignments" folder
2.   Short answer questions to be done in notebooks:
     a.   What previous accident was the author involved in?
     b.   Describe what went wrong.
     c.   Describe the injuries that resulted from the accident in "To The Brink".
     d.   Why is it important to climb with a partner?
     e.   Name the location(s) where the story takes place.
     f.   List the steps of the rescue.
     g.   Why do people climb mountains, according to the author?
     h.   Do you agree that these are valid reasons?
     i.   Which events occurred that gave the author, Joe, new hope that he would
          survive?

Section Four: Imagery in Poetry - Poetry
   (Two 80 minute classes)
   "The Shark", "The Oak", and "Burning of The Leaves"

1. Technical Devices of poetry – handout to be gone over with the class, focusing on imagery.
2. Look up biographical information on each of the authors, on the web/net.
3. Identify one simile for each poem or create two similes for each.
4. Answer the following question: How is imagery used in each of the poems, and for what purpose?
5. Write new lines of metaphors/similes/symbols from each poem.

Section Five: "Ride The Dark Horse" – short story
    (One 80-minute class)

1. Paragraph writing assignment – Write a paragraph on the following question: What obstacles (nature/self) did the author have to overcome to help his friend, Jean-Paul Levesque?
2. Teacher-led Discussion Questions:
    a. Relate the title to the story.
    b. What does it mean to be a hero? Coward?
    c. What are typical dangers that one must prepare for when going out into nature?
    d. What other courses of action would have been possible, instead of "riding the dark horse"?
    e. Was it wise to take the risk?
    f. Explain the personal fears and risks taken in the story.
    g. How did the friendship develop within the story?
    h. What prompts action or inaction when faced with a crisis or quick decision to be made?
    i. Is there a type of person who would not take action?
    j. How does society welcome heroes or reject cowards?

Section Six: "Twister" – movie
    (Three 80-minute classes)

1. Make available the National Geographic book, Nature On The Rampage, on the bookshelf and ask students to look over the articles within.
2. Project discussion questions before the movie begins and ask students to make notes for use later.
3. Teacher-led discussion – questions:
    a. Does the movie accurately reflect/depict the forces of nature?
    b. Can media ever reflect nature accurately?
    c. Why are people fascinated by movies and stories about nature?

Never Cry Wolf by Farley Mowat
Chapter Questions to be done in notebooks

Chapters 1 and 2

1. What was it about Farley's childhood that made him pursue a career, which involved animals?
2. Describe the characters that influenced Farley's scientific life, as he grew older.
3. What is scatology?
4. What was the paradox explained on page 5?
5. Paint a picture (with words) as Farley saw it.
6. What is unique about Farley Mowat's style of writing in this chapter?
7. List the supplies Farley brought with him to the north.
8. Did the pilot believe what Mowat was doing? Why or why not?
9. What is ironic about the message cabled to Mowat from Ottawa while he is in Churchill?
10. Describe two of the superstitious stories which made the rounds regarding wolves and their habits.
11. What was Mowat's important discovery which occurred while he was in Churchill?

Chapter 3 and 4

1. What does the pilot's activity and his first words tell us about the kind of man he is?
2. How did Mowat "pull the wool" over the pilot's eyes?
3. What are some of the events of the flight which mark this pilot as a good flier?
4. Where is Farley Mowat dropped off?
5. Recall two funny/humorous portions of writing found in chapter 4.
6. What is it about the transmitter radio that typifies the government, according to Mowat's slant?
7. Recount the story of Mowat's encounter with the Peruvian.
8. How does Farley Mowat both intensify and humorize the account of his "first contact with the study species"? (Pages 27 to 28)

Chapter 5 and 6

1. Who is Mike?
2. Why does Mike poke at things with a stick and act strangely? (What is the real reason?)
3. Why did Mike leave to visit his "sick' mother?
4. Describe Mowat's first meeting of/with an actual wolf. (Page 36)
5. What is the size of a wolf print?

6.   How does Mowat come to find the den of the wolves?

Chapter 7 and 8

1.   What is an esker? (See chapter 6, if 7 is not good enough)
2.   What is a periscopic telescope?
3.   How come Farley Mowat glanced about before relieving himself?
4.   Did it or did it not surprise you that the wolves were watching Mowat from so neat behind him?
5.   Describe a wolf-pup.
6.   How does the centuries-old myth of the wolf as a savage killer begin to crumble in Mowat's mind?
7.   Who ate the most bloodthirsty creatures of the Arctic? Manitoba in early summer?
8.-   Describe Mowat's performance of staking his territory
9.   How do the wolves react to the new boundaries?

Chapter 9 and 10

1.   Do you think a human could actually function properly and sleep as a wolf does?
2.   List some of the elements of George and Angeline's relationship.
3.   What is another myth which is shattered in this chapter?
4   Describe Uncle Albert's role in this wolf family with great detail.
5   Articulate the humour* in Mowat's descriptions of mouse reproductivity as found on page 69.
6   By what method does Angeline try to hunt ducks?
7   Another wolf legend bites the dust. What is it?
8   What is the crude practical joke played in this chapter?

Chapter 11 and 12

1.   What are a few of the reasons for creating Souris a la Creme?
2.   What is the Inuit myth concerning humans eating mice?
3.   Why is Ootek's knowledge of wolves special?
4.   Other than mice, what do the wolves eat a lot of?
5.   What role does Ootek play in this relationship with Varley Monfat?
6.   Describe the process a wolf goes through when catching Northern pike.
7.   Briefly-paraphrase Monfat's paraphrase of Ootek's tale of the caribou and wolf.
8.   Which question of Varley's from an earlier chapter is answered in this chapter?

Chapter 13 and 14

1. What information about "wolf talk" is learned by Mowat in this chapter?
2. Can you believe the incredible story of Ootek's understanding where and when the caribou would be for hunting purposes? Why or why not?
3. What are two more fairly incredible incidents of interpreting wolf language in this chapter?
4. Parallel the behavior of the wolves in this chapter with the behavior of a family of two parents and three children and other relatives. Write at least two paragraphs. Include all aspects of the wolves' behavior.

Chapter 15 and 16

1. What are the differences between wolves and huskeys?
2. In your opinion, how does Farley Mowat handle the descriptions in this chapter, of Kooa and Uncle Albert's love affair?
3. Is there another myth which is shattered in this chapter? If so, what is it?
4. What do the following two words mean: satiated? Braggadocio?
5. Why might F. Mowat have included this chapter at this particular place?
6. How has Mower built up Angeline to human proportions? How does it show in this chapter?

Chapter 17 and 18

1. Explain the humor in Mowat's description of Uncle Albert's yelp when pounced on by George.
2. What would you compare the wolves' frolicking to?
3. Who are the unexpected visitors?
4. Why does Mike comment to Farley that he has maybe been here in the north too long?

Chapter 19 and 24

Quotes – name the speaker and the context for each.

1. "The caribou feeds the wolf, but it is the wolf who keeps the caribou strong."
2. "It will grow in any of them, though perhaps not as well in people."
3. "Now you go back to camp and cook our super of big steaks."
4. "One of my trappers come in an hour ago and he seen fifty deer down on the ice, all of them killed by wolves - and hardly a mouthful of the meat been touched."
5. "Dammit! Let's see you do better!"

Chapters 19 to 24 (continued)
Define the following terms:

1. idyllic
2. quandary
3. traverse
4. meandering
5. demented

Answer the following in regular sentences, as earlier on.

1. Explain how the 50 caribou dead on the lake actually got there.
2. What surprise awaits Mowat as he makes his way back to Wolf House Bay?
3. How is it that the "caribou feeds the wolf, but the wolf keeps the caribou strong. "?
4. When F. Mowat chases the wolves in his nakedness, what does he observe about the wolf and the caribou?
5. Describe the scene where Mowat scares the Eskimos with his mask..

Unit One – Nature
"Never Cry Wolf"
Vocabulary Terms

Define the following terms which appear in the chapters of the novel. Indicate the page on which each is found and define in the context of the story use.

|				
Exasperated	*aristocratic*	*bewilderment*	*rampant*	*recalcitrant*
Aeronautical	*plaintively*	*credulity*	*extravagance*	*irrational*
Inveigled	*implicit*	*scavenge*	*frenzied*	*metamorphosed*
Vanguard	*psyche*	*scatology*	*insatiable*	*cognizance*
Austere	*ebullient*	*longevity*	*albeit*	*vulnerable*
Somnolence	*milieu*	*demented*	*paroxysm*	*hypnotized*
Apparition	*foreknowledge*	*substantiated*	*metabolism*	*specimens*
Shaman	*ameliorate*	*expenditure*	*skeptical*	*linguistics*
Haunch	*taciturn*	*conviviality*	*promiscuous*	*patriarch*
Disconsolate	*domestic*	*paean*	*morose*	*forestalled*
Sinew	*carnivore*	*credence*	*excursions*	*amorous*
Caribou	*impetuous*	*ecstatic*	*suitor*	*assuaged*
Census	*epidemic*	*equivalent*	*invigorate*	*animation*
Imminent	*brandish*	*inexplicable*	*haphazard*	*apprehension*

Unit One – Nature
"To The Brink"
Crossword Puzzle Terms:

Neve, gale, ascent, plummeted, windchill, addled, crampon, curious, accelerating,
somersault, diagonally, instantaneously, resignation, tranquility, inexorably, crevasse,
airborne, unconscious, desolate, deadweight, descent, impatient, slick, twisted,
nightmares, miracle, crimson, breath, savage, jolt, hacked, executed, concussion,
flushed, faint, exhausted, soothing, collapse, ashamed, reassure, lonely, hypothermia,
gaping, dread, frenzy, odyssey.

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Nature: "To The Brink"
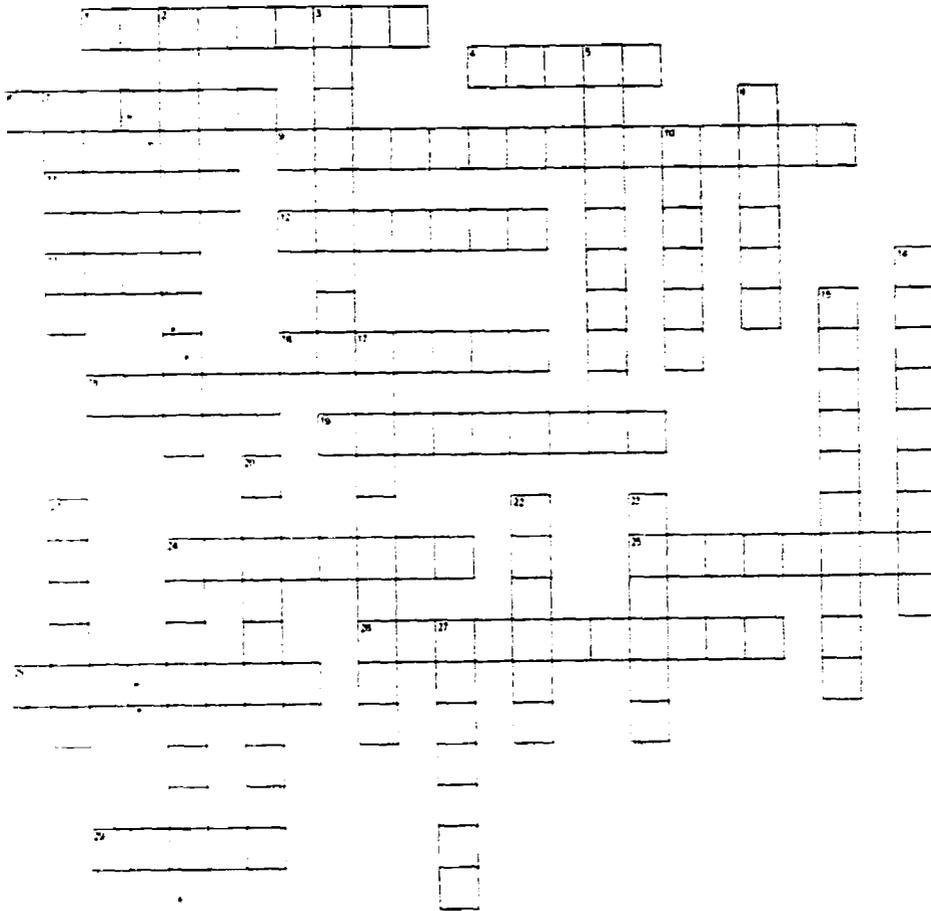
Constructed by <PSL> using Crossword Weaver(TM)

ACROSS

1 very, very tired
4 a glob of something
6 ice-climbing footwear
9 immediately
11 placate
12 highly interested
13 very strong wind
16 to go down
18 lose consciousness
19 "I can't wait!"
24 deep fissure
25 lofted up
26 to be totally unaware
28 lonely and windswept
29 afraid

DOWN

2 severely cold
3 peaceful
5 blow to the head
7 give up
8 climb up
10 incredible adventure
14 fall down quickly
15 speed up
17 head-over-heal
20 to make a move
21 shaken; disoriented
22 wild motion
23 wide open

24 crumple down
27 colour of blood

Theme: Death   (Unit Three)
(Traditional)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie	Methodologies
Lord of the Flies (fiction – novel)	Chapter questions Word lists for definitions Essay: compare and contrast the deaths of Piggy and Simon.
Bloodflowers *(short story)*	Questions on the story Crossword puzzle Terms/vocabulary
Forerunners *(non-fiction)*	Oral questions - teacher led Paragraph - How do superstitions affect peoples' views on death?
Because Death Did Not Stop for Me *Do Not Go Gently into that Good Night* *After Apple Picking (poetry)*	Technical terms and definitions Question sheet - Identify elements in poems. Research authorial Information. Analyze poem.
"Take off to Disaster" (nonfiction)	Write a letter to the Concord company from the perspective of one of the following: potential passenger; relative of deceased; pilot's association; and/or airplane mechanic.
(*Macleans*, August 7/00)	
"Dead Man Walking" (film)	Questions for teacher led discussion:

Unit Three: "Death"
Traditional

Section One: News Item, "Take Off To Disaster" – Macleans magazine
(One 80 minute class)

1.   Assignment: Write a letter to the Concord Company from the perspective of one
        of the following:
 -      a.   Potential passenger
        b.   Relative of a deceased
        c.   Airplane pilot's association
        d.   Airplane mechanic.

Section Two: "Forerunners" – non-fiction
(One 80 minute classes)

1.   Teacher-led discussion – project questions for discussion ahead of reading and
        encourage students to make notes for use later. The questions are:
        a.   Are you familiar with any superstitions related to death? Mariner's or
                sailor's lore?
        b.   Can these seemingly supernatural events be explained in rational terms?
        c.   What superstitions are held by people in this class? Community?
        d.   Which vignette did you find the most convincing and captivating and why?
        e.   The final question is the paragraph question below (#2).
2.   Paragraph writing – How would you respond if you encountered a forerunner of
        death in your family or community?

Section Three: "Lord of the Flies" – novel/fiction
(Five 80 minute class)

1.   Word list to be handed out and completed as students read – see "handout"
        folder
2.   Chapter questions to be completed as students read each chapter – see
        "assignments" folder
3.   Paragraph writing – Write a paragraph on three (3) of the following topics:
        a.   Compare the deaths on the island to deaths in the war.
        b.   Is it possible to justify Simon's death as an accident?
        c.   Could the presence of an adult on the island have prevented the deaths?
        d.   Why did Roger and Jack feel that Ralph's death was necessary?
4.   Essay Question – Expository essay assignment: Compare and contrast the
        deaths of Piggy and Simon.

Section Four: Bloodflowers – Short story
(Two 80 minute classes)

1. Crossword Puzzle – complete puzzle after having read the story – see "assignments" folder.
2. Questions for notebooks:
   a. What is the story within the story?
   b. What is the menaing of the stosry within the story?
   c. Is the warning against picking flowers borne out in the story?
   d. What adjustments did Danny Thorsen have to make for lving on Black Island?
   e. Were the Poorwillys good hosts to Danny?
   f. What does it take to make a person change their ways?
   g. Is there any truth to the superstition that bad things happen in threes?
   h. What do you think is the worst thing that happened in the village during Danny's time there?
   i. Would Adel have said yes if Danny had asked her to marry him? Why or why not?
   j. How would you explain why the radio never worked when Danny wanted to send a message?

Section Five: Poetry: "Because I Could Not Stop For Death", "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night", "After Apple Picking"
(One 80-minute class)

1. Technical poetic devices handout – emphasize imagery when going over sheet
2. Assignment – Find or create examples of similes, metaphors, and symbols from each poem.
3. Question to answer in notebooks – How is imagery used in each poem? What is its purpose?

Section Six: "Dead Man Walking" – movie
(Three 80-minute classes)

1. Teacher-led discussion – project for reading before viewing movie:
   d. How does the prisoner eventually come to terms with both the deaths he has caused, as well as his own impending death?
   e. Is executing a person who has committed murder a fair or just sentence?

Lord of the Flies
Chapter and Section Questions

Section One: Death of Adult Fighter Pilot, now Parachuter
(Chapter 6, p. 118 to 122; 124 – 127)
1.   What is the sign which comes down from the world of the grownups? Who saw it land?
2.   What is the beast? How do Sam and Eric describe it? Why is their description so different from how the parachutist actually looks?
3.   Does Simon believe Sam and Eric's story? How does he imagine the beast?
4.   What do the boys do about the beast from the air? What might they have done?

Section Two: Death of Simon, after Encountering the Parachuter
(Chapter 9, p. 180 – 190)
1.   What does Simon discover about the ape-like beast? How does he feel when he makes the discovery?
2.   Why do you think Simon released the tangled parachute lines? What does this show you about him?

Section Three: Death of Piggy, When Bringing Clarity and Reason
(Chapter 11, p. 213 – 224)
1.   On the way to Castle Rock, Ralph's band sets off across the beach, which is "swept clean like a blade that has scoured". What tone is set by this detail of setting? Can you think of a different simile that could describe how clean the beach was, while setting a more pleasant, comfortable tone?
2.   What happens when Ralph's band arrives at Castle Rock? Should Ralph have foreseen this outcome?
3.   How is Piggy killed? What do you think he sees/experiences right before he dies?
4.   What is meant by the narrator's statement that "the hangman's horror clung round Roger"? Do you think Jack and Roger are equally responsible for Piggy's death?

Section Four: The Hunt for Ralph Results in Rescue
(Chapter 12, p. 234 – 248)
1.   Sam and Eric tell Ralph that Jack has sharpened a stick at both ends. What do you think Jack intends to do?
2.   Why does Jack start the whole area on fire? How did this plan backfire on Jack?
3.   How do Jack's boys know where to find Ralph?
4.   Once Ralph starts running from his pursuers, he knows that he must decide quickly what to do. What are his alternatives? What would you do?
5.   What do you think would have happened without adult intervention?
6.   Why does Ralph cry at the end of the book? How do the other boys respond?

Crossword Terms for "Death" Theme: "Bloodflowers"

Hovered	Squall	Sympathy
Chastised	Prison	Elated
Sanitárium	Shroud	Tell
Embarrass	Keep	Concentrate
Honeymoon	Board	Skittish
Doze	Solemn	Check
Able	Temperature	Incongruous
Tarpaulin	Crisis	Phlegm
Harbour	Confine	Superintendent
Anchor	Static	Dance
Privacy		

Death: "Bloodflowers"
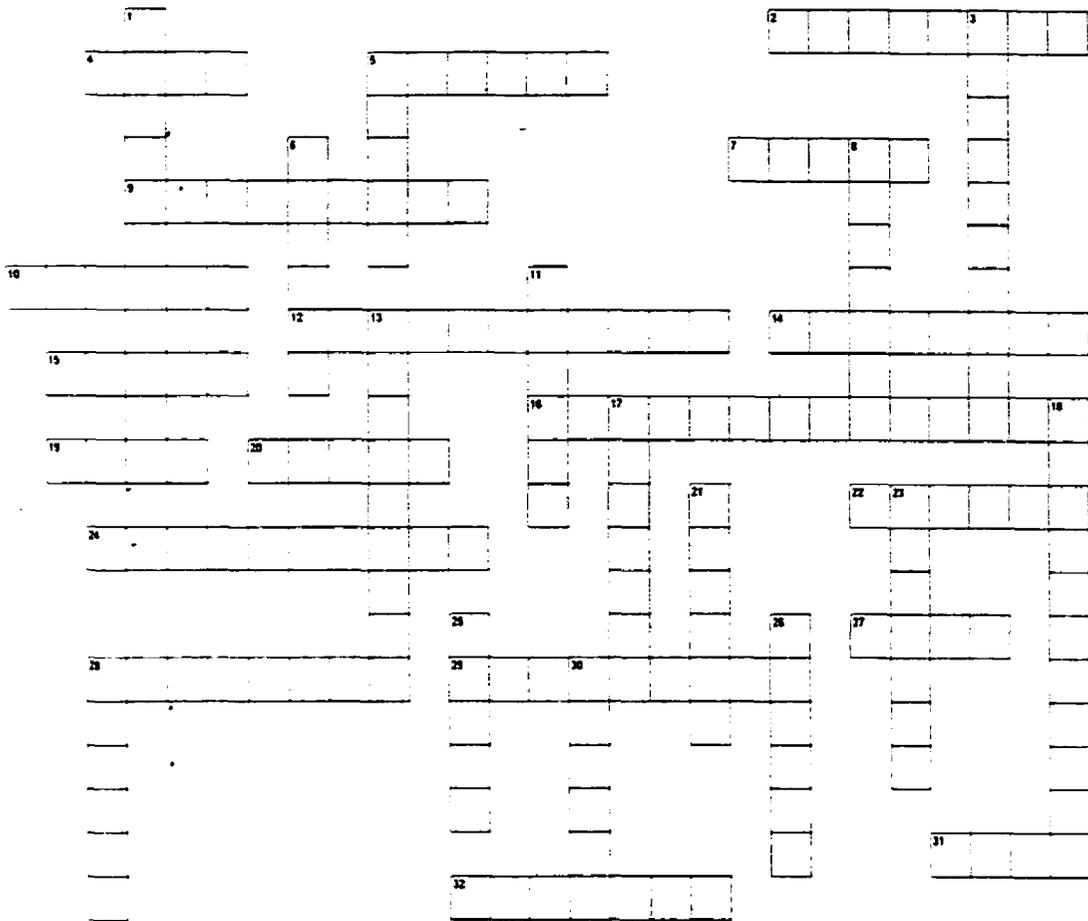
ACROSS

2 feel sorry for
4 fall asleep
5 to envelope
7 do a jig
9 to feel ashamed
10 to stay still
12 not consistant or the same
14 a bit nervous
15 chairman of the __
16 the head honcho
19 to not give away
20 red-faced
22 dribbles out of one's mouth
24 place for sick people, like a hospital
27 to inform
28 dragging feet
29 just after a wedding
31 can do it
32 to foretell

DOWN

1 keep attentive
3 a strong cloth cover
5 a storm
6 an urgent situation
8 keep within
11 penal institution
13 to scold
17 have your own space
18 how cold/hot it is
21 where ships like to go
23 hung around nearby
25 to look into or investigate
26 secures a boat
28 very serious, even sad
30 feel very happy

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Heuristic: Writing an Expository Essay

An expository essay is one in which an issue or a problem is explained. It might also describe action that could be taken to deal with the issue or problem.

Pre-Writing
1. Carefully read your assigned essay topic to determine exactly what it is that you are supposed to be discussing in your paper.
2. Identify your topic, assertion and resulting thesis statement. Topic – general area of information about which you are writing; Assertion – position to be explained; Thesis – a meaningful, controversial and/or defensible assertion about your topic. The thesis should be stated in a sentence that appears somewhere in your first paragraph (normally not your first sentence as you need a lead).
   For example:
   - Topic – blood imagery in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*
   - Assertion – poet uses it to support theme of violence
   - Thesis – Shakespeare uses blood imagery to support the theme of violence in *Macbeth*.
3. Brainstorm for ideas that support your thesis statement.
4. Organize your ideas into an outline, keeping in mind an appropriate method or methods of developing your paragraph structure.

Writing
An expository text consists of three main parts: the introduction, the body and the conclusion.
1. The **Introductory Paragraph** consists of attention grabbing details [a lead sentence (s)] that set up the main idea (thesis). The thesis is rarely the first sentence; it must, however, be found somewhere in the opening paragraph and is often at the end. The introduction can "hook" readers in a variety of ways: begin with an amusing or interesting anecdote, begin with a quotation or a paradoxical statement. Statements are better than questions. To explain the thesis is the purpose for writing. It is the point you focus on with supporting arguments throughout the remainder of the essay.
2. The **Body Paragraphs** will vary in number depending on how many supporting arguments the writer has for their position. Every subsequent paragraph must deal with the evidence for the thesis. Each piece of evidence is written up in its own paragraph. Each paragraph should consist of: (a) a topic sentence which introduces the main idea of the paragraph; (b) a sub-topic sentence which divides the topic into its component parts; (c) supporting sentences which explain, describe, detail, illustrate or elaborate on the idea; (d) closing sentence which summarizes the paragraph; and (e) a connector or transition sentence that connects one paragraph smoothly to the next.
3. The **Conclusion** often restates the thesis before moving to a general comment about the topic. It may summarize the supporting arguments before drawing conclusions from them. It may remind the reader of future action to be taken or the significance of the position developed by the arguments. Quotes may be used as closing statements. The conclusion needs to effectively draw closure to the position taken.

Some ideas for Organization

Expository essays can be organized in a variety of ways. Following are a few ideas: (a) chronological – presented in order of occurrence; (b) logical – presented in an order which reflects steps of logical reasoning (strong to weak); (c) cause and effect; (d) compare and

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contrast: (e) thematic explanations: (f) classification of ideas into groups: and (g) climatic. Choose the method that works the best for your essay.

Post-Writing – Revising and Editing

Here are some ideas to consider when editing your first draft:

Topic

1. Is this a topic I am interested in and want to/can write about?
2. Have I narrowed my topic sufficiently?
3. Have I understood the expectations of the essay question?

Organization of Ideas

1. Can I point to a thesis statement? Is it clear?
2. Have I made the thesis statement interesting?
3. Do my details/arguments support my thesis statement?
4. Have I used enough examples to develop my topic sufficiently?
5. Have I stated my ideas in an appropriate order?
6. Have I provided a good introduction and satisfactory closing?
7. Are there clear topic sentences for each paragraph?

Language

1. Have I used the language that is appropriate for my purpose?
2. Have I used language that is appropriate for my audience?
3. Have I used words and expressions that produce vivid images?
4. Have I clearly defined the meaning of words?
5. Have I avoided the use of colloquial expressions or jargon?
6. Is my sentence structure correct?
7. Have I varied my sentences in length and structure (simple and complex)?
8. Have I used "signal words" or transitional expressions to clarify meaning and add unity?

Mechanics

1. Have I used a consistent verb tense throughout?
2. Have I used standard capitalization and punctuation?
3. Have I checked my spelling carefully?
4. Have I kept a consistent subject-verb agreement?

Neatness

1. Can anyone else read this paper?

Final Considerations

1. Did I select a suitable voice and tone for the paper?
2. Did I keep my audience in mind while I was writing?
3. Did I make use of a dictionary and thesaurus?
4. Did I proofread it before handing it in?

Description of "Writing" (Transactional) Instructional Method

In this second method, the students have much more control over the ideas with which they will be working. They are given time to write about their own ideas during a daily journaling time and will be highly interactive with peer editing and feedback for their written work. The students will engage in the following types of assignments:

1. Journalling on a daily basis. This is the free-writing part of which we spoke. The students have 10 minutes per class (at the start) to write anything in response to the texts that they are studying or about what is happening in the class. This writing can serve as the jumping-off point for other writing assignments and as a study guide for tests.

2. Student response to other students' writing. All students writie a particular piece. It is given to another student and that student returns his/her own writing. This can be done in the form of letters or articles with letters of response or . . . etc.

3. Heuristics are a series of questions that guide a student to writing a complete piece by the time all is answered and will be used to direct the newspaper style writing of articles and editorials.

4. Letters in varying forms (personal, to an editor, formal) and from various perspectives (first person, observer, characters from the story).

Theme: *Nature* *(Unit One)*
(Writing)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie	Methodologies
Never Cry Wolf	*Journalling* Create series of three – five reports about what is happening and the issues related to this northern study; have a "superior" from bureaucracy respond.
To The Brink (nonfiction)	*Journalling* Write a series of letters: one as from a member of the expedition to a person at home; exchange, write a letter of response.
Ride the Dark Horse (short story)	*Journalling* Interview with one of the characters
The Shark (poetry) *The Oak and the Rose* *The Burning of The Leaves*	*Journalling* Re-write one of the poems into a newspaper article. Write an editorial response to Another poem's ideas
National Geographic Article *"Arctic Wolf" (nonfiction)* (May 1987, pg. 562-592)	*Journalling*
Movie: *"Twister" (film)*	*Journalling* Write a script for a 10 minute documentary or movie that represents the forces of nature.

Theme: Stand Up For What You Believe (Unit Two)
(writing)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie	Methodologies
The Crucible	*Journalling* Create a series of three-five reports about what is happening in Salem and the issues related to witchcraft. Write the text of a sermon offered in a church in another town regarding the situation in Salem.
A Retrieved Reformation (short story)	*Journalling* Interview with one of the characters
"Why I am not going to buy a computer" (nonfiction)	*Journalling* Write two letters: one supporting Berry's ideal of not using computers and another in which you suggest why computers are important/necessary.
Dulce et Decorum est (poetry) *Charge of the Light Brigade*	*Journalling* Rewrite one of the poems into a newspaper article. Write an editorial response to the ideas found in the other poem.
LIFE MAGAZINE (nonfiction) *"Columbine High School"* (May 1999, pg. 562-592)	*Journalling*
Power of One (film)	Questions for teacher led discussion:

Guidelines: Writing for a Newspaper

Article   You have to choose a topic/event about which to write first. Once you have done that, you need to answer six questions: who, what, when, where, why and how. The order of those answers is not important, how you string the ideas together is. You need to have clear connections between the ideas and make sure you use sufficient detail to create a clear picture.

Editorial You need to feel strongly about the idea you are writing about. The direction of your feelings does not matter as an editorial is supposed to have a clear bias. Again, you start by choosing a topic or issue. Ask yourself a question about the issue – what is right or wrong with this picture? Then go on to answer that. You still need to include the ideas of who, what, where, when, why and how, but this time the answers to each of those questions needs to reflect a clear bias as well as just details of the event/issue. You include descriptions of feelings alongside the facts.

Reviews   When reviewing something - either a book, a movie or an event – you need to give a summary of the item under review. The summary should be very brief and can be woven into the rest of what you are writing. You must write about your personal reaction or response to the item being reviewed. What was good? Interesting? Boring? Well done? Worth mentioning? Accurate? Just plain wrong? Enjoyable? How does it compare to other books/movies/events? Include anything that has a relevant connection to what you are reviewing.

Letters to the Editor   Determine from what point of view you want to look at something. Once you have decided that, you need to ask questions about

something that has been printed or comment that something that the newspaper has reported. You can also write regarding anything that has happened around you and you want to publicly air your thoughts and reactions to.

Response Letters From the perspective of the newspaper staff, respond to a letter that has been written to you. You need to either defend the situation or idea or agree with the writer about their point of view. Give specific details as to the position that you are taking.

Essays Write essays the same way that you would for an English class, except you might want to keep them a little shorter. An essay for a newspaper tries to explain something in more detail than an editorial does. It might also look at a variety of angles in creating an explanation rather than focusing on a clear bias. Explaining why something is the way it is/why something happened the way it did is the key approach to an essay.

Pictures Any picture that you create must be reflective of some significant event. You might have written a report about the event or just allow the picture to speak for itself. Pictures must carry a caption of some sort.

Comics A series of drawings that tell a story. The pictures have dialogue bubbles for the characters conversations or ideas. These can be funny or serious.

Cartoon Is a single frame drawing that presents an idea, and most often mocks it in some way. Satire is often presented in this form.

Headlines The title for the piece of writing or drawing must be clearly connected to the ideas found in the piece. They appear in a bigger font and are usually bold in appearance.

Advertising Combines a series of words and pictures or designs to highlight a specific feature or item. It gives specific information about the item, but not usually in sentence form. It tries to pack as much specific information as it can into a small space. Ads try to appeal to emotions like pride, desire for something or they make testimonial pitches to promote the item.

Description of the "Talking and Writing" *(Social Constructionist)* Instructional Method

This third method places almost full control into the hands and minds of the students. They will determine the scope and range of topics for discussion and lead small group and whole class discussions on ideas and issues that they choose. The teacher will act as facilitator, support person and initiator by providing the assignment around which the following activities will revolve:

1.   . Think/Talk-a-louds, think-pair-share, jigsaws, group brainstorming . . . are all collaborative methods led by student ideas responding to texts. This conversation/dialogue happens before any journaling is done.

2.   Class discussions on ideas relating to any written assignments completed before the writing begins.

3.   Peer editing for all the written work. Use a variety of formats for editing from chosen classmates, randomly selected classmates, parents/siblings . . .

4.   Student-teacher conferencing before, during and after writing.

5.   Writing assignments can be newspapaer style articles and editorials, paragraphs, literary critique style essays or any other form of written work done in traditional or non-traditional areas.

The approach to completing the work for this unit will be handled as a newsroom. The final work piece will be a series of newspapers created by the students in the following manner: the class will function as a newsroom. There will be a revolving series of editors in chief (three or four per day in total) so that each student will be in that position at least once during the duration of the project. The editors in chief will meet with the instructor in the morning or before class, and will plan the topics, issues and questions for discussion for that day's work. They will deal with each of the texts utilizing each of the ideas identified in numbers one through five above.

The students will lead the discussions with their classmates who will then all function as the newsroom staff working on articles, editorials, letters, essays, pictures, advertisements, stories, interviews and anything else that they can plan and create for inclusion into their final product paper. There will be an ongoing engagement in discussion, writing, peer editing, conferencing, more talking, dialoguing and re-writing before the final product is put together.

Theme: Stand Up For What You Believe (Unit Two)
(Talking and Writing)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie   Methodologies**

The Crucible   (drama)

A Retrieved Reformation (short story)

"Why I am not going to buy a computer"
(nonfiction)

Dulce et Decorum est (poetry)
Charge of the Light Brigade

LIFE MAGAZINE (nonfiction)
 "Columbine High School"
(May 1999, pg. 562-592)

The Power of One (film)

** See the description of "talking and writing" methodology just preceding this outline
for a description of the specific lessons and strategies that will make up this unit of
study.

Theme: Death   (Unit Three)
(Talking and Writing)

Article/Novel/Drama/Poem/Movie   Methodologies**

Lord of the Flies (fiction – novel)

Bloodflowers *(short story)*

Forerunners *(non-fiction)*

Because Death Did Not Stop for Me
Do Not Go Gently into that Good Night
After Apple Picking (poetry)

"Take off to Disaster" (nonfiction)
(*Macleans*, August 7/00)

"Dead Man Walking" (film)

** See the description of "talking and writing" methodology just preceding the previous outline for a description of the specific lessons and strategies that will make up this unit of study.

Evaluation of each unit.

The instructor will grade the daily work of the students as it is completed. It will be graded following the regular grading rubrics used in his English class. The results of the ongoing work will not be used in the data collection for the purposes of this study.

The evaluation data to be used for analysis in this study will come from three unit tests, which will follow the completion of each unit of study. Each of the tests will follow the same format. There will be a multiple-choice section followed by a short answer section to measure reading comprehension. This section of the test will fill in the blank questions and definition types of questions (see appendix B for complete tests). The third section of the test will result in a piece of writing that will be used to measure content as a function of comprehension. The rubric used to evaluate this writing follows in appendix B.

The instructor will grade the short answer sections with acceptable responses based on a standard key. The longer piece of writing will be marked by a series of two or three markers who will follow the comprehension content rubric set out for this study. Each of the first two markers will mark the piece of writing for content. If there is a discrepancy of only one level (marks range from 0 to 3), the student mark will be raised to the higher mark. If, on the other hand, there is a discrepancy of two or more marks, a third marker will evaluate the essay and assign a final mark. The third marker will have the option of agreeing with one or the other of the first two markers in determining what the correct mark should be. Each of the markers chosen will have received training as part of their involvement in marking provincial exams and will already be familiar with the protocol set in place for this exercise in marking.

Appendix B:

Unit Tests
And
Interview Questions with Student Responses

Instructions: Place all your answers on the answer sheet provided.

Section One: Multiple Choice

1. What role is played by the wolf named "George"?
a. protector
b. uncle
c. father
d. baby-sitter

2. The purpose of Farley Mowatt's visit to the north was to
a. find material for a new cook book.
b. provide Inuit with government work opportunities
c. investigate the life habits of canis lupus
d. do field studies in anthropology

3. The caribou skeletons around the cabin were
a. the result of wolve's carnage.
b. the remains of Inuit hunts.
c. actually the skeletons of husky dogs.
d. the results of a diseased herd.

4. Attempting to understand the diet of wolves, Farley
a. drank three gallons of tea.
b. Invited the Inuit over for dinner.
c. Cut open the stomachs of dead wolves.
d. Ate mice himself.

5. The death of Angeline was caused by
a. bone marrow disease.
b. Fighting another wolf pack.
c. Hunters flown into the area for sport.
d. Ingesting scats.

6. The Inuit women who saw Farley running naked over the tundra
a. chased him into the herd of caribou.
b. Thought this was a "white man's ritual" for hunting.
c. Looked the other way.
d. Thought he'd lost his mind.

7. Farley's childhood experiences suggested he would do well to pursue a career in
a. aeronautical engineering.
b. gourmet cooking.
c. biology.
d. Anthropology.

8. Joe Simpson had previously
a. broken his leg on a mountain.
b. climbed three of the world's highest peaks.
c. Soloed Annapurna.
d. Worked as a mountain climbing guide in Switzerland.

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9. In which country did Joe Simpson's second climbing accident happen?
a. Peru
b. Equador
c. Nepal
d. Switzerland

10. The prospect of being lowered down the mountain-side
a. caused both climbers to rise excitedly to the challenge.
b. brought on the fear of imminent death.
c. Caused Joe to panic.
d. Caused Mal to panic.

11. The story, "Ride the Dark Horse" takes place in
a. Northwest Territories.
b. Northern Manitoba.
c. Quebec.
d. New Brunswick.

12. The largest obstacle the narrator had to overcome was
a. his own fear.
b. his previous rescue failure.
c. the bears on the river bank.
d. the fish hook in his eye.

13. How did the workers at the dock feel about the rescue attempt?
a. respectful
b. sympathetic
c. angry
d. apathetic

14. The description of the shark makes him appear
a. effortless.
b. dangerous.
c. clumsy.
d. near death.

15. What is the common theme found in each of the poems studied in this unit?
a. unity between the elements of nature
b. conflict between forces of humanity and nature
c. differences between flora and fauna
d. the essence of nature

16. Wolves found in the far North
a. are less carnivorous than at first thought.
b. have only attacked a few humans.
c. have no fear of humans.
d. all of the above

17. Hunting tactics practiced by the wolves involve
a. running in single file.
b. barking for help.
c. working together to capture prey.
d. none of the above

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18. What attitude toward wolves is promoted by the National Geographic?
a.   fear
b.   hatred
c.   mystery
d.   respect

19. What prompts weather scientists to chase tornadoes?
a.   childhood experiences
b.   curiosity
c.   search for knowledge
d.   all of the above
e.   none of the above

20. Movies of this genre attract huge audience attention because
a.   humanity is drawn toward the thrill generated by fear.
b.   they show the mysteries of nature.
c.   governments have thrown full support into funding nature films.
d.   they are thoroughly fabricated stories.

Section Two: Short Answer

1.   Identify two (2) features of the wolves from each of the novel and the National Geographic article.

2.   Explain the major decision the narrator had to make in "Ride The Dark Horse".

3.   Explain one image from nature in the poem, "The Burning of The Leaves".

4.   List four (4) of the steps taken to rescue Joe, in the story "To The Brink".

5.   Which of the four (4) steps in question #4 was the most crucial for the success of the rescue?"

6.   Identify two (2) myths regarding wolves that were shattered by Mowatt's research.

7.   Explain the cause of the largest number of deaths to the caribou in _Never Cry Wolf._

8.   Describe the change in attitude that Mowatt has toward the wolves from the beginning to the end of the novel.

9.   Explain the reason that the scientists offer for following the storm, in the movie, "Twister".

10.   With references to the texts studied in this unit, identify six (6) forces found in nature.

Section Three: Essay

Is it necessary for humanity to conquer nature in order to survive? In an expository essay answer the question in a minimum of 300 words.

Instructions: Place all of your answers on the answer sheet provided.

Section One: Multiple Choice

1. Why does Abigail have a hold on John Proctor?
a. she was pregnant with his child
b. he still loved her deeply
c. she had an affair with him
d. she had been his maid

2. A central theme in *The Crucible* is
a. communism does not work.
b. guilt by association.
c. witches exist in all societies.
d. good always conquers evil.

3. Elizabeth Proctor is arrested because
a. a poppet was discovered in her house.
b. she could not recite the ten commandments.
c. she read strange books in the evening.
d. all of the above

4. Giles Corey was found guilty of being a witch and
a. was hanged.
b. was fined heavily.
c. was whipped and placed in the town's stocks.
d. was pressed to death.

5. John Proctor dies with dignity because
a. he will not lie to save himself.
b. Elizabeth cannot convince him otherwise.
c. his executioners allow him his final request.
d. None of the above

6. What started the witch hunt in Salem?
a. Tituba admits to being a witch.
b. A witch is seen flying over a barn.
c. A bunch of young girls were caught dancing in the woods.
d. The Puritan religion was ideally suited to fearmongering.

7. What claim does John Proctor make about his wife in court?
a. That she was a cold-hearted woman.
b. That his wife was incapable of telling a lie.
c. That his wife always went to church.
d. That he wanted to trade places with her.

8. Why did Mary :Warren not confess her role in the naming of witches?
a. She believed she was doing the right thing
b. She hated John Proctor.
c. She was afraid of Abagail
d. She knew about the affair.

9. What is Wendell Berry's best reason for not buying a computer?
a. Costs too much
b. Takes up valuable space
c. He's too old-fashioned
d. It doesn't improve his writing

10. To what values does Wendell Berry contrast the worth of computers?
a. Peace and economic justice
b. Ecological health and political honesty
c. Family and community stability
d. All of the above
e. None of the above

11. One respondent accuses Berry of
a. being old-fashioned.
b. being close-minded.
c. taking advantage of his wife.
d. writing the article condemning computers on a computer.

12. Jimmy Valentine gets out of jail because
a. he has-done his time.
b. government officials give him a pardon
c. he manages to escape
d. he makes a deal with the warden.

13. Jimmy went to jail because
a. he was a bank robber.
b. he was a counterfeiter
c. he was a kidnapper.
d. he was framed.

14. What turned Jimmy into an honest man?
a. He could make more money in an honest fashion.
b. Realizing a life of crime did not pay.
c. Having done time in jail.
d. True love.

15. In what tone does the writer say, "dulce et decorum est"?
a. In an ironic tone.
b. In a supportive tone.
c. In a bitter tone.
d. In a tone of idealism.

16. Why did the light brigade charge into the valley?
a. Because they always followed orders.
b. Because they believed they could win.
c. Because they didn't know what faced them.
d. all of the above

17. One of the reasons for violence in today's youth, according to psychologists, is that
a. their parents spend very little time with them.
b. expectations are too high.
c. they want to be heroes in the news.
d. they watch too much violent television.

18. Why did Rachel Scott die?
a. She professed a belief in God.
b. She was a member of an opposing clique.
c. She had mocked the boys on various occasions.
d. She was a jock.

19. This story of apartheid takes place in
a. Alabama.
b. Rwanda.
c. Brazil.
d. none of the above

20. The "Power of One" suggest the idea that
a. all people are equal.
b. all people have the right to an education.
c. boxers tend to become leaders.
d. people should have inter-racial relationships.

Section Two: Short Answer

1. Explain John Proctor's opinion regarding the motives behind the accusations of witchcraft in Salem.

2. Identify two (2) choices Jimmy Valentine made in the story. "A Retrieved Reformation".

3. Identify the attitude of the speaker of the poem. "Dulce et Decorum est".

4. List two (2) examples of people standing up for what they believe from the article. "Columbine High School".

5. List four (4) reasons that could lead to a person's arrest in *The Crucible*.

6. Explain what precipitated the trouble in Salem.

7. Explain what the boy was attempting to accomplish in Pretoria.

8. Explain why the cavalry decided to follow the order to make their change into the valley in "Charge of the Light Brigade".

9. List three (3) reasons not to buy a computer. according to the author. Wendell Berry.

10. Outline two (2) reasons why readers disagreed with Wendell Berry's not buying a computer.

Section Three: Essay

Write an expository essay in which you comment on the difference that people make when they stand up for what they believe. Write a minimum of 300 words.

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Unit Three Test – Death
Identification Number : _____

Instructions: Place your answers on the answer sheet provided. Wait for further oral instructions from the instructor.

Section One: Multiple Choice (20 marks)

1. The cause of Simon's death was
a. bloodlust.
b. accidental.
c. ritualistic.
d. premeditated.

2. The main purpose for setting the island on fire was to
a. Attract the attention of passing ships.
b. Flush out the pigs.
c. Destroy the beast on the island.
d. To hunt a member of the other tribe.

3. Piggy's death symbolized
a. The hope of being saved.
b. The end of reason.
c. The final triumph.
d. None of the above.

4. What did Simon discover on the mountain just before he was killed?
a. The snake things.
b. A view of a ship in the distance.
c. The beast.
d. A dead parachutist.

5. Why was the destruction of the conch at the same time as Piggy's death, appropriate?
a. It was a loss of innocence.
b. The conch symbolized order.
c. They were both accidental.
d. All of the above.

6. From what ailment did Mr. Poorwilly suffer?
a. Pneumonia.
b. Bronchitis.
c. Appendicitis.
d. Arthritis.

7. What was the result of picking bloodflowers?
a. You found a girl's affection.
b. You bring bad luck upon yourself.
c. You brought the flower one step closer to extinction.
d. You could make a poultice to cure all ailments.

8. With what did Danny never have any luck?
a. Contacting the mainland by radio
b. Teaching the school children.
c. Getting to know the community residents.
d. Getting it on with Adel.

9. Why did the islanders want to keep Danny on the island?
a. He reminded them of a famous song.
b. He was such a good teacher.
c. He was needed to break the cycle of bad luck.
d. All of the above.

10. "After Apple Picking", by Robert Frost, is a metaphor for
a. Harvest during Fall in rural farmland
b. Choosing a direction in life.
c. Facing death at the end of a long life.
d. The economics of farming in the US.

11. What symbol is used to portray death in Emily Dickinson's poem?
a. The grim reaper
b. A black flag
c. The ace of spades
d. A carriage

12. What did Dylan Thomas want of his dying father?
a. A final blessing.
b. A greater share of the inheritance.
c. The postponement of his death.
d. To trade places with him.

13. Forerunners are considered to be
a. Supernatural warnings of approaching events.
b. Gifted prophets.
c. Visionaries whose ideas are ahead of their times.
d. A vining plant that grows on graves.

14. A forerunner may appear in the form of
a. An apparition
b. Long-lost relatives
c. The town's most educated folk.
d. All of the above.

15. People's beliefs about death frequently contain
a. Notions of an after-life
b. Superstition
c. Fear and faith
d. All of the above

16. What observation about the Concord did people on the ground make?
a. A plume of flames
b. A tire had exploded
c. Glass windows exploding
d. A ten-meter tear in the fuselage

17. Tragedies like this (the one in #16) cause people to
f. Stop flying
g. Launch massive lawsuits
h. Feel close to complete strangers
i. All of the above

18. Matthew's partner in crime receives
a. The death penalty
b. Life imprisonment
c. Freedom in exchange for testimony
d. Twenty-five years in prison

19. This movie could be seen as realistic because
a. It deals with an intensely emotional topic
b. The subject matter is convincing
c. It avoids Hollywood glamour and thrills or action
d. All of the above
e. None of the above

20. How does Matthew deal with the circumstances leading to his execution?
   a. Claims innocence to the complete end
   b. Admits to raping the girl
c. Accepts responsibility for his role in the crime
d. Confesses to the other crimes he committed

Section Two: Short Answer (20 marks)

1. Explain six (6) reasons people died in the texts studied for this unit.

2. State a reason that Jack and Roger wanted to kill Ralph.

3. Identify the problem that witnesses on the ground observed on the Concord before it crashed.

4. Explain Dylan Thomas's advice to his father.

5. Identify the purpose of a "forerunner".

6. Describe two (2) ways in which Sister Helen's life was impacted through her relationship with a condemned man.

7. Explain the meaning of the line, "death did not stop for me", in the poem titled with the same line.

8. Identify the reason the islanders wanted to keep Danny Thorsen from leaving the island.

9. List two (2) ways in which the deaths of Simon and Piggy were different.

10. Explain the irony in Jack's and Roger's attempt to murder Ralph.

Section Three: Essay (60 marks)

Is there ever a right time or place to die? Respond to this question in a minimum 300 word expository essay.

Student Interview Questions:

1. What elements in each unit, if any, did you find the most helpful to comprehending the material? What elements in each unit, if any, did you not find helpful for comprehension?

2. Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed most. What did you like about it? Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed the least. What did you not like about it?

3. Were there specific things that your instructor did that helped your comprehension in any way?

4. What do you think is the most important element for teachers when they instruct student in reading?

5. Was that element evident in any of the units?

Student Interview Responses

In response to the first question asked, what elements in each unit, if any, did you find the most helpful for comprehending the material, and what elements in each unit, if any, did you not find helpful for comprehension, Chris said,

> "I liked the talking, the discussing, stuff like that. When you hear another person's idea and they would explain what they were thinking, or the whole group would explain what they were thinking in their separate thoughts, or if we'd go around and each person would build on the rest of the group's ideas . . . that was very helpful for understanding what we read because then we'd have a whole bunch of views on it and it wasn't just your own view, but you got a variety of ideas to build the best one. I least liked the writing on our own without first discussing what we'd read with the group or at least with a few others. I have my own ideas, but I'm not necessarily confident in what I think. And you know, two heads are better than one, and the whole group is obviously better than a few. So the writing alone just didn't work for me. If we had done our writing after discussing, I'd have had more to say. I often ran out of ideas when I was on my own."

Another student, Travis, said of the same question,

> "The class discussions and the journaling. Talking and then writing allowed me to understand the material the best because it gave me a better general idea about the information we studied. That way I could understand the whole story, or whatever, instead of just one specific little portion or skill. I'd say doing the questions on my own was the worst. Like, what was this character's grandma's name, or something. It wouldn't really help me out in understanding what I was reading. Those kind of questions are just too specific and not based on the whole theme or meaning of the story or book or idea of the movie."

Carissa said,

> "For me the journaling helped the most because, the kind of person I am, I tend to understand things better when I can write them down. I may have a lot of thoughts going through my head after reading or discussing something, but until I write it down and work it out that way, it's still kind of a muddle. To make something fall in line or make sense, I need to write it down. Also, writing helps me to look at it from all points of view because I can reread my writing and come up with other arguments. I didn't like being on my own or only always in

a small group. When we got to be in large groups for discussion first, that was much better than being alone or just with one or two others."

The fourth student interviewed, Brad, said,

> "I liked having all our materials ahead of time in the 'standing up for what you believe' so that we could read and talk before we had to write. Instead of pounding the living snot out of one piece, we could move from piece to piece and work as a group on which ever one we wanted. We got to talk amongst our peers while we worked. I hate it when we take a poem and we're told there's just one way to read it. You know, this is correct or that is correct, that's just a stupid way to learn something. So I didn't like the unit where you always told us what was right and what was wrong. You know, because the teacher can say it's this way and a student can say it's this way and it can be both, and we really don't know what the author was thinking. I mean there's always ideas and things like that. In my mind I think is this really true, and how do we know this is true? So, the way we did the poems in the unit where we read the poems together and then discussed them together before writing, that was the most helpful."

In response to the second question asked, "Describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed most and what did you like about it, as well as describe which unit of instruction you enjoyed the least. What did you not like about it?" the four students answered with the following insights.

Chris said,

> "I liked the death unit the most. First of all, because that was the unit we got to talk the most. Also, there's so much superstition that surrounds death, especially in the articles, like in the "Forerunners". It was great to hear everybody's opinion about death and compare them to what I think. I didn't really like the unit 'standing up for what you believe' because it seemed a little bit repetitive. Maybe because we've done some of those same poems before, you know, the Robert Frost poems. Like, there are decisions of right and left and different variations of right and left, and it all got quite repetitive."

Travis said,

"I enjoyed the nature unit the most, because even though I don't like journaling a lot, I did better when I spent time journaling after reading. It was like four pages of writing every day."

Carissa said,

"I liked 'standing up for what you believe" the most because I thought it was just really, really relevant to us. It's something we deal with everyday even when we don't think we're doing it. Some of the articles and pieces we read were fantastic, like the 'Columbine' article. Plus our discussions got me thinking about other ways of standing up for what I believe. Even people doing what I believe to be wrong or not good, are standing up for what they believe, so that's good. That unit was real, it wasn't just from books or movies. It was real to my life. The death unit was my least favorite because I felt too isolated. And when we did get to do a little group work, it was only in small groups and never in a larger group, where you get the most ideas shared and the biggest challenge and material to see all the sides of an issue. Being able to bounce ideas off a number of people or hear their ideas leads to deeper understanding and we didn't get that in the death unit."

The final student, Brad, said,

"The unit on death was my favorite unit because of the criminal aspect in the unit. I've read a great number of books on crime and justice and I was able to draw on that knowledge. I also loved the material we read. For the first time in years I found myself going home and talking about the books and articles we were reading in class. The unit I found least enjoyable was the nature unit. Again, it had nothing to do with the instructor or the methods of instruction; I just don't enjoy reading about and studying nature. Although, having said that, the novel Never Cry Wolf was the brightest point of that unit."

The third questions asked students to state whether there were specific things

that their instructor did that helped their comprehension in any way. Chris said,

"I don't know if there were specific things, because from the way I've seen you teach in class, you sort of like to surprise attack people. Like you're not going to say 'I'm going to do this to help you understand something.' You kind of just do it. Like if you punch somebody in the gut, it's going to be a lot more effective if they don't know it's coming than if they know it's coming. But if I had to choose the best techniques used to teach, they happened in the 'death' unit because there was a lot more discussion before we wrote. And we got split into

groups, everybody got to share ideas, and we weren't being told what to say or believe. The nature unit was just reading and then answering some questions, that was the most boring, or least interesting and helpful way to learn."

Travis responded with,

"Not that I can think of. Maybe it's us teaching ourselves, like we did in the talking and writing unit, the newspaper, because we did the best there, as a group and individually. Instead of you telling us, we tell ourselves, which makes us learn the stuff better because it's coming from us and not you."

Carissa said,

"You being available to answer questions or talk about what was going on in the material or in the class during some of the units. And also, the movies, because you took something in our lives that is very normal or usual, and you brought it here and it was, we got more out of them in here because we were looking for something, not just being entertained."

Brad said,

"The instructor found meaningful current newspaper articles, news that most of us knew of and found interesting, good full-fledged discussions with the whole class. If you can talk about something before writing, that's a key aspect to learning. I also liked the videos. In past classes, videos were used to reward students for good behavior or for finishing a book, but in this unit the video was part of the curriculum, it was a text we studied, just the same as any novel or article and we were quizzed on it just the same. It really helped to tie the unit together."

Three of the students interviewed had opinions regarding the fourth question, "What do you think is the most important element for teachers when they instruct students in reading?

Chris said, "I don't know."

Travis answered the question by saying,

"Not to have deadlines. When we worked as a class, we set our own deadlines and it wasn't you telling us 'have this read by so and so.' We didn't feel quite as rushed."

Carissa said, "For the teacher to put us in the right mindset, or prepare us for what we're going to read or see. And to get us ready to work together."

Brad had the most involved answer, in which he said,

"Teachers get students involved with a catchy introduction to reading. Like in the 'standing up for what you believe' unit, we first read an article about the famous 'Greenland' disaster before we read a real Canadian disaster story. It was true, real, and it foreshadowed what was to come. Plus we discussed difficult decision situations in our lives and then related them to the article and then the novel. It also helped that the instructor was a very approachable teacher and he was always available for questions and discussion. Another thing that helped was the way the units were all tied together. You'd have a real-life story in the unit that you got captivated by and it prompted you to want to read more and more or even if you read something you didn't understand, there were always a bunch of other pieces to respond to on the tests so you could fall back on those. And by reading and talking about the other articles, you might better understand that difficult one. That was helpful."

The fifth and final question asked of the students was whether they had noticed that most important element (from number 4), was evident in any of the units.

Carissa said,

"I don't think you were very helpful in the 'death' unit because we were just given information and questions and told to do our own work. Very little talking happened then. But in the newspaper unit you prepared us and we interacted a lot all of the time, even while writing."

Appendix C:

Official Communications (Letters!)
And
Forms Used for Participants
And Their Parents/Guardians

Paul Reimer, Landmark Collegiate
Mark Reimer, SRSS

Gilbert Unger, Superintendent of Hanover
John Peters, Assistant Superintendent of Hanover
Hanover School Division
Box 2170
Steinbach, MB   R0A 2A0

September 13, 2000

Mr. Gilbert Unger and Mr. John Peters:

We are writing this letter as a follow-up to a conversation that took place last June between Paul Reimer and John Peters, regarding the completion of a study in Landmark Collegiate to be used as data collection for Masters degrees for both Mark and Paul. Both of us are currently in our "thesis year", and are planning to complete a joint study in order to collect the data necessary to write our separate theses. We are requesting permission from you to run the study during November, December and January, in the two 40S Core ELA classes at Landmark Collegiate.

The study would address reading comprehension and quality of written response in the classroom. Our research study would compare the results achieved through the use of different methodologies, all of which are curriculum-approved and support the curriculum's desired "general outcomes". At the end of nine weeks all students would have received the identical forms of instruction and content. By using this study design, no student would be at an advantage or disadvantage compared to his/her classmates. Students would be invited to participate in the study on a voluntary basis, indicating their willingness to take part by completing a personal and parental consent form. Students choosing not to be part of the study would still study the exact same materials, write the same tests, and complete the same assignments, as these units are a regular part of the course requirements, but their results would not be entered as part of the data-collection for the study. No student would be identified in the study in any way nor would any student's academic record be jeopardized either by being included or choosing to opt out of the study.

The three units of study are units that were developed in this course and have been taught for a number of years. The difference is that one unit will involve a traditional approach to teaching reading comprehension, while the other two units will be based on Thompson's and Hillocks' models of teaching, which reflect a higher degree of student-centered talk and writing assignments. Paul will deliver the instruction and supervise the testing, while Mark will evaluate and collect the data from the essays. The results of this study, to be published at the University of Manitoba, will be analyzed and made available to you and any interested parents or students who were participants in the study.

We would ask that you consider this request and then let us know as soon as possible of your decision, so that letters of invitation could be sent to each of the grade 12 students at LCI, before the end of September. Please contact either of us at our respective schools if you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Reimer and
Mark Reimer

CC: Dr. Stanley B. Straw, U of M (advisor); Ken Klassen, Principal at LCI

Study Participation Consent Form

Please complete this form with appropriate names and signatures to show your willingness to participate in the previously described study being conducted in the 40S ELA classes at the Landmark Collegiate. Please return this signed form to Paul Reimer by November _____, 2000.

       I, _____ (student's name), am willing to allow my unit test marks to be included in the data collection for the above described study. I may change my mind and withdraw, without penalty, by completing a withdrawal form (like the one below) at any time before the conclusion of the study.

       I/We, the parents/guardians of the above named student, also consent to the inclusion of our child's marks in the data collection for the above described study. I/We may change our mind about his/her participation at any time, for any reason, and withdraw his/her participation by completing a withdrawal form (like the one below) and returning it to the school at any time before the conclusion of the study.

Signature of student _____

Signature of parent/guardian _____

Date: _____

If you would like to receive a summary of the study results please complete the section below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

I would like the results summary mailed to me.

I would like the results summary given to my child at school to deliver to me/us.

Withdrawal form:
I, _____ (name of student/parent/guardian) would like to withdraw, without penalty, from having my results used in the study being conducted in the 40S ELA classes at the Landmark Collegiate.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Paul Reimer, Landmark Collegiate
Mark Reimer, SRSS

Parents and students of:
Grade 12 Core ELA
Landmark Collegiate

November   , 2000

Dear parents/guardians and students of Mr. Paul Reimer's 40S ELA classes;

· Both Mark Reimer, an English teacher at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School, and myself, the senior English teacher here in Landmark, are currently in their "thesis year" of study at the University of Manitoba. To complete the requirements for a Master of Education program, we are required to complete a research study and have chosen to conduct this study in the 40S ELA classes at the Landmark Collegiate during November, December and January. We are writing this letter to give some explanation of the study and then to invite your child's voluntary participation.

The study will address reading comprehension and quality of written response in connection to three different teaching delivery methods. Three units of study have been developed for delivery in this course. Textual materials from each unit have been used in previous years' instruction, as have the delivery methods. What makes these units unique from previous instruction is the way in which the textual materials have been combined with the delivery methods. Each three-week unit focuses on two specific methods of delivery. Each class group will receive the identical material, however it will be delivered by varied methods. At the end of the nine-week study, all of the students will have received the identical instruction and exposure to material, the only difference will be the order in which they receive the delivery methods. No student will gain an advantage or experience a disadvantage as a result of being in the classroom for the duration of the study instruction. All delivery methods and assignments being used in this study are consistent with the expectations described in the general outcomes of the provincial ELA curriculum. As the instruction is part of the regular ELA program, all students will remain in the class, receive the same instruction and complete the same assignments, regardless of participation. At the end of each unit of instruction, there will be a two-part test. The first part will consist of short answer questions to deal with reading comprehension and the second part will be an essay, to deal with the quality of written response. Students will write an additional essay at the start of the study to serve as a comparison piece.

Paul Reimer, the teacher who will deliver the instruction, will explain the study purpose and design to the students in the class. Upon receiving a verbal explanation of the study, with opportunities to ask any questions, students will be invited to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. Due to the design of this study, participation requires only that students and parents agree to allow the student's marks on four test pieces to be used for analysis. Analysis will consist of blind markers evaluating the test pieces. The results on each unit test will be compared to determine whether or not the teaching

method effects the level of reading comprehension or quality of written response. So, voluntary participation means that your child's marks will be used in the comparison of the results from each delivery method. At the bottom of this letter is a "Return" portion on which both the student and parents/guardians indicate their consent for the child's participation. If a student is under the age of 18 years, the signed consent of both the student and parent is required before any marks will be used in the study. If the student is 18 years of age, they may sign their own consent form and return it to the school. The signed portion of the letter must be returned to Paul Reimer at Landmark Collegiate.

- If the student, and his/her parents/guardians have agreed to have their results included in the study, and then at a later date, for any reason, change their minds about participation in the study, they are welcome to do so. Withdrawal from the study can be done without penalty at any time. In order to withdraw, the student needs to complete a study withdrawal form, which will be available in both the classroom and in the school office. An example of the form is shown below. Both the student and the parents/guardians for students under the age of 18 years must sign the withdrawal form. Students over the age of 18 may sign their own withdrawal forms.

The data for this study will be collected by the end of January, when the semester ends. The analysis of the marks will be conducted during the spring months, with the final results being available by the end of the school year (June) at the latest. Upon completion of the data analysis, a copy of the results will be made available to any interested student and/or parent/guardian. If you know that you would like a copy of the results when they become available, please check the appropriate box on the consent portion to be returned to the school. When the results become available, there will be a notice to that effect placed in the school newsletter. This notice will inform parents/guardians of when and where they may pick up a copy of the results or how to request a copy to be sent out to them if they did not already indicate their wishes on the consent form. The data of the study will be presented in letter form, comparing the marks achieved under each of the teaching methodologies along with any conclusions arrived at as a result of this study. There will also be a short evening reception at the Landmark Collegiate where Paul Reimer and Mark Reimer will be available to discuss or offer additional explanation regarding the study, the data collected, the conclusions or any other aspect of interest from the students or parents/guardians represented. The date of that reception will also be identified in the school newsletter at the appropriate time.

Please consider your (child's) participation in this study and return the consent form by the date indicated, November _____, 2000. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact either of Paul (355-4020) or Mark (326-6426) at our respective schools, or you may contact our study advisor, Dr. Stanley Straw, at the University of Manitoba (204-474-9074).

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Reimer and

Mark Reimer.

Paul Reimer, Landmark Collegiate

Parents and students of:
40S ELA Core classes
Landmark Collegiate

January   , 2001

Dear parents/ guardians and students of Paul Reimer's 40S ELA classes;

-      By this time you have heard about the study on teaching methodologies and reading comprehension and quality of written response that has taken place in Paul Reimer's 40S ELA classes over this last term. The study, to this point, has concerned itself with the data collection necessary to assess whether or not different teaching methodologies effect student learning. Alongside that quantitative measure (analyzing the numerical data), both Mark Reimer and Paul Reimer would like to obtain some feedback from some of the students whereby they give some anecdotal responses to their perceptions of the study. We would like to find out from the students whether or not they preferred a certain delivery method, regardless of the results obtained from evaluative measures. We would like to know from the participants how they experienced each segment of the study. To gather that information, both Paul Reimer and Mark Reimer wish to interview four different, randomly selected students from the study. The interviews will consist of a series of seven to ten questions regarding the study. The responses of the students will be used to present a qualitative assessment (personal response) of the study by the participants.

         The students' names have randomly been assigned a number. Eight numbers were randomly drawn from that list. Four of those have been selected for Paul Reimer's interviews and four of those have been selected for Mark Reimer's interviews. Your child's number was one of the numbers drawn. Would you consent to your child being asked a series of questions regarding the study? The interview questions will be sent home with the student at the end of the day on January __, 2001. You and the student will have the opportunity to read the questions and discuss them together if you wish. The student may write responses to the questions on the paper. The next day, January __, 2001, the student will have the opportunity to meet with the instructor whose interview questions they have answered. They will have a chance to add any explanation to what they have already written. Both parts of this interview process are voluntary. If your child or you, his/her parent/guardian do not wish for him/her to participate, they are not compelled to do so. There will be no penalty for choosing not to participate in an interview if asked. If you would agree to the interview, please complete the return portion at the bottom of this letter and return it to Paul Reimer by January __, 2001.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Reimer and
Mark Reimer.

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Interview Participation Consent Form

I, _____ (name of student), am willing to complete an interview questionnaire regarding the study that was conducted in my 40S ELA class this last term.

I/We, _____(parents/guardians name), am/are willing to allow the above named student participate in an interview regarding the study conducted in his/her 40S ELA class this last term.

Please place a check mark in one of the boxes below and return to Paul Reimer at Landmark Collegiate by the specified date.

I agree only to complete an interview questionnaire.

I agree only to meet with Paul Reimer to discuss the reading comprehension study or to meet with Mark Reimer to discuss the quality of written response study.

I agree to complete an interview questionnaire and to meet with either of Paul Reimer or Mark Reimer to discuss their respective portions of the study.

By not returning this form to Paul Reimer by the date specified above, we are indicating that the student will not participate in the interview. I/we understand that if the above named student does not agree to participate in the interview, another randomly selected student will be asked to complete the interview.

Signed by: Student _____

Parent _____

Date:' _____