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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine: (1) which perspectives of Reader Response Theory were most applicable in this study; (2) which factors influenced reader responses; and (3) how readers' responses changed over time. The four participants for this case study were chosen from a subject pool of 10 initiate adult full-time divinity students in a theological seminary and college. Standardized testing, which was administered as a part of the school's orientation procedures, showed that these four students needed reading instruction in order to meet the academic demands of the college and seminary. Data collection, which provided a deep picture of the bounded system, included documents, interviews, and observation during a semester of instruction in the fall of 1999. Triangulation of data was secured from the syllabus, lesson plans, the researcher daily log, student questionnaires, initial written student responses, student journals, transcribed class discussions and individual discussion with students, and transcribed interviews with students as well as with assistants and others within the milieu. Assessment instruments for qualitative analysis included "Levels of Engagement" (Iser, 1978) (Labercane, Olafson, Hunsberger, Watt, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), the "Efferent/Aesthetic Continuum" (Rosenblatt, 1978) (Cox and Many, 1992), and the "Levels of Personal Understanding" (Cox and Many, 1992). The textual and the experiential perspectives were both well employed. Students had a deep understanding of the text as well as a latitude of efferent/aesthetic response. Among factors which affected student response, initial fears disappeared with the development of social and cross cultural growth. Types of teacher questions and class discussion influenced student response, as did task type and text. Reflection, writing assignments, and reader interest provided thinking opportunities for students. Christian values, ethics, morals, and religious views, against a background of embedded loving concern for humankind and a deep faith, figured heavily in student responses. Students extended their reading stances, both efferent and aesthetic, across time. The two week period used for transactions with each text provided for a deeper understanding and growth across the efferent/aesthetic continuum. (Contains 19 figures, 144 references, and a 63-item list of texts used for student choices. Appendixes contain evaluation instruments, a literacy autobiography assignment, and five texts chosen for response analysis.) (Author/RS)

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Finding a (W)hole in the Text: A Case Study of Four Readers Reading

by

Mary Moore Nance

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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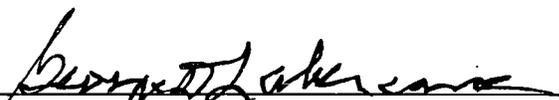
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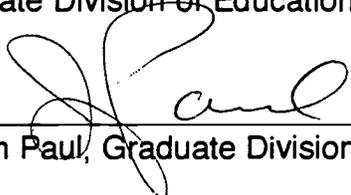
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine: 1) which perspectives of Reader Response Theory were most applicable in this study, 2) which factors influenced reader responses and 3) how readers' responses changed over time.

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Data collection, which provided a deep picture of the bounded system, included documents, interviews and observation during a semester of instruction in the fall of 1999. Triangulation of data was secured from the syllabus, lesson plans, the researcher daily log, student questionnaires, initial written student responses, student journals, transcribed class discussions and my individual discussion with students, transcribed interviews with students as well as with my assistants and others within the milieu.

Assessment instruments for qualitative analysis included **Levels of Engagement** (Iser, 1978)(Labercane, Olafson, Hunsberger, Watt, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) the **Efferent /Aesthetic Continuum** (Rosenblatt, 1978) (Cox and Many, 1992) and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992).

The textual and the experiential perspectives were both well employed. Students had a deep understanding of the text as well as a latitude of efferent / aesthetic response. Among factors which affected student response, initial fears disappeared with the development of social and cross cultural growth. Types of teacher questions and class discussion influenced student response, as did task type and text. Reflection, writing assignments and reader interest provided thinking opportunities for students. Christian values, ethics, morals and religious views, against a background of an embedded loving concern for humankind and a deep faith, figured heavily in student responses. Students extended their reading stances, both efferent and aesthetic, across time. The two week period used for transactions with each text provided for a deeper understanding and growth across the efferent/ aesthetic continuum.

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## DEDICATION

To those who come behind me. May they find me faithful (Mohr, 1996) in fulfilling my dream for each one, especially those who thought they couldn't, to enjoy meaningful reading. May each and every one know the Truth.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Our society needs . . . to make possible the growth of personalities sufficiently sensitive, intelligent, and humane to be capable of creative literary experience . . . developing critically minded, emotionally liberated individuals who possess the energy and the will to create a happier way of life for themselves and for others (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 328).

Of all the approaches which examine reader-text relationships, Reader Response Theory seems to hold the most promise for examining what the readers do in their engagements with the text. Moreover, the theory also provides a framework for looking at moral and ethical concerns as they arise in the course of the reader's transaction with the text. Louise Rosenblatt has also expressed her "value of democracy for human beings, and the importance of preserving and improving our democratic way of life", a concern which she has acted upon in "trying to understand how schools can contribute to the growth of people able to preserve and carry into greater fulfillment the democratic society, imperfect as it may be, that we are now benefiting from" (Karolides, 1999, p. 159). Rosenblatt was one of the first persons to conceive the seminal idea of the Reader Response Approach. It was out of her felt responsibility for average students that she saw a need to modify the traditional classroom regime. Out of these early experiences came the development of the Reader Response Theory and its application to the classroom.

### The Background

When I was invited to initiate a language arts programme for adults in a divinity school I became aware of specific student reading needs. This study

developed out of needs I saw in my developmental reading class. In order to be better readers my students needed to know themselves and others, as well as about cultures and societies (Probst 1994, pp. 39, 40). They needed to interact with the text, to enjoy reading and to know that their life experiences had authenticity in meaning making.

### The need for the approach

As I explored the reader response approach as a possibility in meeting student needs, I realized that I must learn to practise this theory before I could knowledgeably assess the theory in practise in my classroom. In three subsequent consecutive terms I gradually involved myself and my class in the practise of reader response theory. First, I asked my students to write reflectively on their reading. They could draw upon life experiences and enter the make-believe world of the text as they became part of the text. Next, I practised discussions of a novel with an international student. In this interaction we made meaning together which was richer than when we had each read the text alone. In the third term I asked my students to write a preliminary reflection and to formulate discussion questions before the class met together. I broadened my co-discussant role as I practised using discussion in this wider classroom setting. Students also wrote a post reflective journal entry. During this particular term, as my students enjoyed actively making meaning, I felt that it was possible for me, as an instructor, to put reader theory into practise.

Convinced that the reader response approach could be a part of my pedagogical repertoire, I put aside my primary concern for my own

methodological development and more specifically addressed how reader response theory in practise could meet the needs of my students. Positive student attitudes, coupled with reader meaning making, convinced me that there were indeed plausible possibilities in the use of reading, writing, discussing and journal writing for social and literary development during the reading experience. I addressed the question which evolved as I explored and learned the application of reader response theory. Acknowledging my students' need for reading development, I came to this question in regard to the enactment of this response approach among them:

“How will reader response theory, applied to a class of adult readers with unique backgrounds, affect their making of meaning?”

#### The purpose of the study

In this qualitative study, my aim was to analyse how adult divinity students respond to a variety of texts using a reader response approach. As a teacher-researcher, my goal was to examine ways in which these students, with the background of experiences they brought to a text, responded to texts: how they questioned, discussed and wrote as they made meaning through their transactions with the text. Thus, theory was utilized to provide a framework for analyzing student responses. In endeavoring to make a descriptive interpretive account of how these students responded to text, it was of interest to learn whether these individual students' experience with text was one which assisted them in their transactions with text (Rosenblatt, 1978)

## Literature Review

### Reader theory

Recognizing that students need to enjoy and to assimilate literature, Louise Rosenblatt (1991, p. 57) used human interest discussions with her non-English major university students. Reading interest developed among those students who had not thought literature could be an interesting part of their lives (1990, pp. 99, 100). They brought their life experiences to the text, transacted with it and made meaning through a lived through experience, which Rosenblatt termed the "poem" (1978). Transaction with the text involves an equality between the reader and the text, just as the buyer and the seller have an equality in any transaction where goods and money are exchanged. This transaction could apply to either reading for pleasure or reading for information.

Rosenblatt espoused an efferent/aesthetic continuum in which persons could mix varying degrees of reading for pleasure (aesthetic stance) and reading for information (efferent stance). The efferent/aesthetic continuum could be experienced in a mix decided upon by the reader as s/he used selective attention (James, 1905) in the making of meaning.

In class discussion, the teacher is facilitator of interchange, rather than the bank of exclusively correct answers (Rosenblatt, 1989, pp. 173, 174) as readers develop literary understanding. In making "live" meanings (p. 172), the lived-through evocation can be maintained as spontaneous student comments are used as a starting point. The teacher's manner in asking questions, in outlining assignments and in assessing can create a nurturing milieu.

Interactive discussion aids the making of meaning. Fish (1980) discussed the possibility of an interpretive community, which can develop within the transactional reading class, but it must be acknowledged that this community can “show readers that not everyone shares our beliefs and that . . . readers muse . . . [and] adjust [their] views of what a text means in light of new understandings gained by sharing . . . viewpoints with others” (Labercane, [forthcoming]; Dasenbrock, 1991). The puzzling context is an invitation to the making of meaning and to the opening of new vistas as new thoughts and feelings well up in writing, as in reading. The milieu can be conducive to the development of readers and writers (Rosenblatt, 1989) who are purposeful and who can utilize past linguistic and life experiences to make meaning as they utilize selective attention and synthesis of resources.

Reader response theory provides a framework to meet the varied needs of students. Rosenblatt’s theory can work in tandem with textual theory and practise (Iser, 1978) in which meaning making happens through the interaction of the reader with the text.

Iser theorizes that the text is “a set of incomplete instructions to be completed by the reader”. The reader maintains a “wandering viewpoint” which “travels along inside that which it has to apprehend” (Iser, 1978, pp. 108, 109). Since the reader never sees the total journey at any time, s/he seeks to establish a consistent pattern while s/he continually adjusts to the changing scene represented in the text. The reader and the text are linked by the

“theme” (foreground) and the information to be left in the background, the “horizon” (p. 97). The reader utilizes background knowledge to predict, to make continual adjustments and to infer meaning. Further adjustments to the presentation in the text must be made as “negation” provides a change of direction in the main thrust of the story. Gaps in the presentation give the reader opportunity to provide omitted scenes or to develop details regarding characters who are fleetingly mentioned in the story line. From the viewpoint of textual theory, the filling of these gaps by using oral or written response in classroom practise can assist the reader in the meaning making process.

The practise of the theoretical concepts of the reader response approach has been addressed in a number of recent studies (Greco, 1990; Probst, 1992; Langer, 1998).

#### Some recent findings in applied theory

Both written and oral responses showed gains in the making of meaning among students (Gantzer, 1993; Coe, 1996; Bradley, 1994). Students reached a deeper level of personal understanding when they chose the aesthetic stance (Cox and Many, 1992). At risk readers learned to make meaning (Eeds and Wells, 1989; Langer, 1998) and became motivated (Gantzer, 1993, pp. 363, 364). Multicultural and ESL classroom studies showed that students make cultural, social and affective connections to texts and are more highly motivated if texts fit student interest and cultural background (Toskos, 1993; Guzman-Trevino, 1996; Flores, 1998; Carter-Jones, 1999; Webster, 1999). Ethnic background seemed to be a determining influence upon literary response

(Toskos, 1993). Readers drew near to those characters with whom they felt they had similar religious/philosophical experiences and beliefs (Mathey, 1993), which could be an aid to the lived through experience. The literature class influenced morals and values (Gantzer, 1993; Coe, 1996; Macguire, 1997).

This sample of studies showed an interesting mix of responses to literature. I was interested to determine if meaning making among participants in my reading class would also reflect some of these same types of responses. Questions had evolved which I hoped to answer.

### Research Questions

As I weighed the possibility of a reader response study in my reading class, I put forward the following questions to frame the study and to guide me:

1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?
2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?
3. How have readers' responses changed over time?

I did not expect to thoroughly answer all of these questions, but I looked upon them as an aide to my inquiry. As I delved into the literature, in preparation for gathering and analyzing data, I was aware that, although this research project did not replicate previous research, the literature gave strong support.

### Methodology

Participants for the study were four students selected from the annually scheduled 3 credit hour semester course, 1L3311 English Grammar, Reading and Writing (an English 100 course) within the bounds of a Bible college, which used faculty, administration and physical facilities of a seminary in Western Canada.

The Initiate students in the Associate Diploma of Christian Ministry programme at the Bible college were required to take the English course for college credit. According to official school policy, these students were required to be at least twenty-two years old and to have a GED or a high school diploma. The two students in the study who were in this “diploma” classification were aged 28 and 31. They were choosing a career change from successful experiences in truck driving and in cabinetmaking. Each of these students needed some type of language remediation.

The class also included two initiate Master of Divinity students at the seminary. Both held undergraduate university degrees and one student held a Master's degree. These two ESL students from Korea, aged forty-one and forty-seven, were older than the diploma students. They, too were activating career changes from international diplomacy and military careers. They had each attained the minimum TOEFL score of 550 required for entrance. A standardized comprehensive English entrance examination, which is administered to all initiate full time students, determined that they had need for language remediation. They were required to enroll in this course on a non - credit basis.

Although there was a linguistic, cultural, ethnic, academic, work experience and age mix, two typical commonalties which students in this course had was a need for reading instruction and a keen interest in the needs of humankind. As individuals, though, these students from broad geographic areas, and who had rich life experiences, brought all that they had been and all

that they were to the response process and, as such, each student's response to text could reflect those unique background experiences. I keenly anticipated the classroom experience with these study participants of varying academic, career and interest backgrounds. As far as possible, texts within student interest, as determined by An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, were used as part of the planned instructional programme. Please see Appendix A.

Orientation and assessment, which determined the class list for this course, were conducted on August 26 and August 27, 1999. My sessions with the class began on September 2. The final assignment for the study was given on 25 November and the final journal response for this assignment was due on 9 December. Since the class was especially small, all four of the remedial students were chosen as participants in this case study.

### Research Framework

I chose the case study approach within the milieu of my regular reading class within the bounds of a divinity school during a semester course.

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### A Case Study

The case study framework fit the purposes of my investigation. My case was my students as they were in response to the reader response programme which I was giving them opportunity to use. I explored a "bounded system". I explored within the bounds of time and place: the time period of a semester within the seminary climate (Creswell, 1997, p. 61). In the context of this seminary setting, the "in depth data collection" included "multiple sources of information". Purposeful sampling of detailed, in-depth data used involved

multiple sources of information which were rich in context. Analysis of these data could enable me to make a thick description of this inductive study. I hoped to discover themes and to make the students “live” as I presented a descriptive detailed picture of the students in transaction with text within the milieu (Creswell, 1997, pp. 60, 62, 63, 65, 67).

Within this case study framework, I could undertake an intensive analysis of reader responses in the context of my particular reading class (Bogdan and Biklen 1982, p. 59). I felt it was important to do a descriptive account of what happened as my students made meaning, and to see how this fitted into the overall picture of their developmental reading. I attempted, as a participant observer, to make an intensive study of the happenings in the class and to make a clear descriptive picture of student experiences as I figuratively placed this learning situation under a magnifying glass for intense study and analysis (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). I gathered data from various sources and attempted to fit the pieces together inductively in order to extend understanding and meaning and to gain perception of what was happening as my students read and responded. This scrutiny confirmed and facilitated my understanding of this reading approach as it was enacted in my classroom, and opened new vistas for practise and further studies (Merriam, 1988, p. 13).

Thus, qualitative research was done as a systematic case study to describe the effects, an interpretation in context (Shaw, 1978, p. 13), of the implementation of Reader Response Theory in the developmental reading programme in course 1L3311 English Grammar, Reading and Writing within the

bounds (Smith, 1978) of a theological school during a semester. This case study was “qualitative in nature, emphasizing description and interpretation within a bounded context” (Merriam, 1988, p. 21).

This class met on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Working from a common syllabus, the Tuesday class (composition) and the Wednesday class (grammar and reading strategies) were covered by assistants. I taught the Thursday class (spelling and reader response) and conducted the study in the weekly reader response sessions of the course to determine characteristics of individual reader response to text. The case study approach afforded a close examination of, not only the class as a whole, but the facets of individual response.

### Validity

Triangulation, as detailed under the data collection section of this paper, was utilized in an effort to present an accurate portrayal of the situation addressed. Data were collected from a variety of sources (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, pp. 245, 246). Reliability, as reflected in consistency of findings, was secured as I explained assumptions and theory, triangulated data, and gave descriptive detail concerning the study: how it was conducted and how the responses provided findings (Merriam 1988, p. 183).

### Instruments used for data collection

Students received a text to read each class day (based on the results of An Inventory of Student Reading Interest [Greene, 1994]. They were invited to write personal reflections to be completed after reading the selection for the

day, but before class discussion. They were also asked to formulate questions for routine audio recorded class discussion. Then they were routinely asked to write a post reflection journal entry to be completed after the class discussion of the text.

An assessment system utilized Rosenblatt's stance descriptions (1978, 1985, 1986), in **A Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 44) and **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56). Although **The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) assured me that the students had been makers of meaning, I wanted to scrutinize the types of aesthetic responses they experienced. Thus, I employed the **Levels of Engagement** instrument (Labercane, Olafson, Hunsberger, Watt, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) to examine more closely the nuances of aesthetic response.

I desired to know more about how the students responded to texts. I assessed the effect of the task type and of the text upon the student response within the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992). This analysis provided better understanding of the effects of text and task upon the response of the readers.

#### Data gathering

The modes of observation, interview and document collection (Smith and Glass, 1987, pp. 264-70) were interspersed in the daily gathering of data to

determine the individual student's response to texts and the effects of the strategies on the response.

The researcher's daily log (with researcher reactions and post reflections regarding observations of response) and transcribed daily audio recordings of classroom discussions documented literate behaviours in the classroom, as did Levels of Engagement assessment of reader response in daily written reflections, formulated discussion questions and post reflection journals. The syllabus and daily lesson plans provided the time sequence of events.

Person to person interviews provided perspectives of persons within the boundaries of the milieu. I interviewed each student concerning his response to **An Inventory of Student Reading Interest** (Greene, 1994). I also conducted a second interview with each student regarding his response to a text (Browne, 1961) which he had read. In this small closely knit institution, the two assistants, the Academic Dean, the President, the Registrar and the Admissions Director received semistructured interviews with the possibility of subsequent structured interview interaction (Merriam, 1988, pp. 74, 75, 80,). Interview notes, transcriptions of audio recordings and post interview reflections concerning student response were captured in an interview log (p. 81) to fortify a thick description.

I kept documentation (hard copy) on individual student responses in an initial chronological file. Transcribed recordings, A Reading Autobiographical Sketch (Vacca, Vacca and Gove, 1991) (See Appendix B), A Literacy Autobiography ( Greene, 1994) (See also Appendix C), all written reflection

assignments (Probst, 1992 and Greco, 1990) as well as a transcription of the December 2 class session in which the class reflected upon knowledge they had gained about reading, were part of the data I used as I sought to determine student response to text. These data were all catalogued in files.

### Analysis of the data

A continuous attitude of analysis of reader response for effective teaching was simultaneous with instruction in this study. Since "analysis is a process of data reduction" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 177), the coding of data followed a categorization of themes, number assignments upon **The Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992), **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), and the placement upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) grid for each student and each text analysed. I colour coded the raw data from written and spoken responses according to the **Levels of Engagement** grid and made hard copies. Then I colour coded these new hard copy grids. I used the same colour throughout for each classification.

Analysis of data in conversations, researcher field notes, student hard copy responses and transcribed tape recorded interviews and classroom discussions aimed at discerning how initiate divinity students responded to text.

### Limitations of the Study

The following considerations represent some of the limitations to this study:

1. A sample size of only four people is a definite limitation.

2. Since the participants involved were remedial readers, doubts could be cast upon their ability to express themselves in a way which could accurately portray their level of understanding, both in oral and written expression.
3. Since the instruments of assessment have not been in established use, it could be thought that trustworthiness could suffer.

### Significance of the Study

This study is of value because it shows how adult developmental reading students from a variety of backgrounds responded to a variety of texts, within several different task types. The vast and varied career and cultural backgrounds of the participants afforded a richness as they made meaning. Since the case study method was used, there was opportunity to delve deeply into the response spectrum of each individual student in this cross cultural classroom, affording a thick description. The assessment instruments I used afforded a valuable opportunity for a measurement for depth of understanding in the light of the reader's own experiences, a plausible goal in the reading classroom. The conclusions derived from this study could be helpful in other adult education or cross cultural contexts.

### An Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter One presented an introduction to the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to this approach. Chapter Three reports the methodology which I used. An account of the analysis process is in Chapter Four. Chapter Five is a compilation and summary of conclusions and implications derived from this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

For the very nature of the literary experience is a living into the experiences of others and a comprehension of the goals and aspirations of personalities different from our own (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 108).

In this review of literature I describe the five basic Reader Response theories (Beach, 1993). My primary focus is on the two theories which I felt were germane to my study: the textual and the experiential theories, as espoused by Iser (1978) and by Rosenblatt (1978). In general, I attempt to incorporate into my analysis the basic tenets of Reader Theory. This, of course, included Rosenblatt and Iser, but I also attempted to include the work of other theorists and practitioners in Reader Theory. I also included in this review some selected studies which address the practise of reader response theory.

#### Reader Theory

A brief review of the developed terms regarding theoretical perspectives of reader response theory as classified by Beach follows, if only to provide an overriding framework for exploring pertinent studies. He acknowledges five basic perspectives of reader response: the textual, the experiential, the psychological, the social and the cultural perspectives (Beach, 1993). Although his portrayal may seem a bit simplistic, it gives organization and classification to concepts which could otherwise be as confusing as the uniqueness of a myriad of designs of individual snowflakes or the facets of a cut diamond: an overall unity of classification, but a uniqueness in the effects of the facets.

Following the brief review, I examine reader theory as espoused by Iser (1978) and Rosenblatt (1978) in regard to what they offer in terms of insights into the role of the lived through experience for all readers. Although not perfect, Beach's (1993) basic perspectives lend helpful organization to the examination of these insights. The textual perspective espoused by Iser (1978), the experiential perspective espoused by Rosenblatt (1978) and other perspectives are acknowledged.

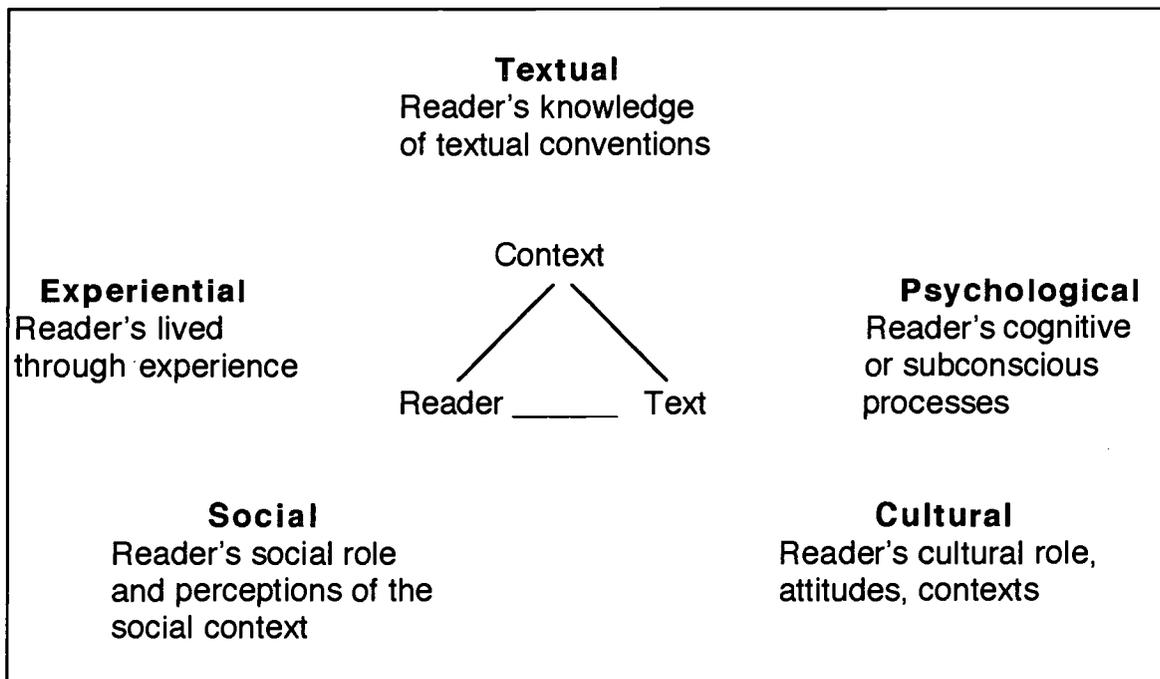
### Five Basic Perspectives

A wide range of perspectives concerning the reader, the text and the context engulfs the broad category of Reader Response Theory. The amount of equality deemed to reside within the realm of the reader, the text or the context of the reader's existence, the "crucial influence of social, cultural, or situational contexts on the nature of this transaction" (Beach, 1993, p. 2) determines much of the variation of perspectives within the reader response theoretical approach to reading. Figure One diagrams the five basic perspectives of Reader Response Theory as categorized by Beach. The five basic theoretical perspectives, the textual, the experiential, the psychological, the social and the cultural (Beach, 1993, p. 8), influence classroom purpose and practise, resulting in variation in the role of the instructor and of the student. The five basic perspectives within reader response theory, which encompass the reader, the text and the context, include:

- 1) Textual theory, which centres upon the reader's knowledge of conventions in immediate transaction with the text. The reader uses knowledge of conventions of the text, whether a mystery or an adventure, for instance, to predict and to understand the development of the story.

2) Experiential theory, which centres on the reader's engagement or experience in transaction with texts, whether for aesthetic or efferent purposes. The reader uses visual images to construct a realistic textual world and to recall personal experiences as s/he identifies with characters in the story.

*Figure 1. Five perspectives of reader response theory (Beach, 1993, p. 8).*



3) Social theory, which centres on the reader's social role and perceptions of the social context in the reader/text transaction.

4) Psychological theory, which centres on the reader's cognitive or subconscious processes, as the transaction is tempered by the developmental level and the unique personality of the reader.

5) Cultural theory, which centres on the reader's cultural role. Reader attitudes and values shape the reader's transaction with text, under the influence of socialization within a particular culture (Beach, 1993, pp. 8, 9).

### Textual Perspective

Through the experience of the text, then, something happens to our own store of experience (Iser, 1978, p. 132).

Early reader response theorists adopted a “textual” perspective as they focused primarily on readers’ application of knowledge of text conventions to make meaning, thus making the text more important than the reader. Although “interaction” is a key word in textual theory, Beach asserts that in the textual perspective the “meaning was now perceived to be constituted by the transaction between the knowledgeable reader and the text” (Beach, 1993, p. 15). Although textual theory is commonly ascribed to Iser, there are several nuances of this perspective which are recognized as part of the whole. Jauss (1989), Poulet (1969) and Ingarden (1973) are also recognized within the textual perspective. Each theorist has definite opinions regarding the reader’s relationship to the text.

Jauss expects readers to make historical comparisons of their own response to those of historical figures, to “discover how the reader of that day viewed and understood the work . . . [bringing out] the hermeneutic difference between past and present ways of understanding a work [pointing up] a history of its reception” (Jauss, 1989, p. 90). Meaning, then, would be timelessly objective, but it would be open to the interpreter of any era, provided s/he has an historical understanding. At the same time Jauss states that previous knowledge is an element of literary experience used in a “...process of directed perception...” ( p. 84) involving a narrow, but changing horizon of expectations (p. 85) coupled with “the wider horizon of his experience of life.” (p. 86). The stance Jauss holds regarding the background knowledge the reader brings to

the text and the reader's processing of meaning contrasts with Poulet's more passive reader.

Poulet envisions the reader as passively surrendered to the text. He ignores the reader's background experience and the author's biographical background. The reader is "thinking the thoughts of another" (Poulet, 1969, p. 55) as the reader is possessed by another (p. 57). Poulet would say that the reader is passively dependent on the word. The reader is invaded by the thoughts of another person to the extent that "I am the subject of thought other than my own" (Poulet, 1969, p. 56). Poulet would not embrace the idea of a close reciprocal I - You relationship with the work, such as Stewart, a student of Buber, says is possible between readers and literature (Stewart, 80, p. 36). "I no longer have the right, strictly speaking, to consider it as my *I*. I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me" (Poulet, 1969, p. 57) encompassing one's objective and subjective self.

In contrast, Ingarden sees Poulet's view as passive surrender to the text and espouses that readers use their prior knowledge in knowing how to perceive and to image when making sense of the text. Ingarden projects that "readers draw on their own prior knowledge of ways of perceiving and imaging to make sense of the text, a more active role . . ." (Beach, 1993, p. 20). Ingarden's reader can fill in indeterminant gaps as s/he peels away layers of schema to make "concretizations" or embellishments to the presentation in the text. Ingarden acknowledges the reader's action of gap filling, which he termed "concretizations" (Ingarden, 1973, pp. 14, 17).

Iser uses gaps, blanks and vacancies which are left in the text to provoke the making of meaning, a pedagogical opportunity for discussion, generative fabrication and reflective writing (Iser, 1978, p. 225). He espouses a textual perspective, in which the active reader interacts with the text (Iser, 1989, p. 31). The reader adapts to a “wandering viewpoint” as the presentation in the text unfolds and the reader continuously adapts to a new perspective, an experience comparable to the constant adjustment in perspective which encompasses the unfolding in life-long learning. The reader must “produce for himself the conditions of ‘experienceability’, which emerge as a history of open-ended transformations of the connections established and invalidated by the wandering viewpoint” (Iser, 78, pp. 210, 211). Adjusting his approach to the pattern of modern writing, Iser asserts that thought provoking negation offers a change of direction in the thought pattern of the text (p. 227), a text which is “potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever narrow, but changes the horizon of expectations” (p. 85), in conjunction with “the wider horizon of his experience of life.” (p. 86).

In reflecting on the wider horizon of life experience, I think that it is most likely that Iser’s textual theory presents a workable viewpoint regarding textual reader response theory. He builds upon the notion of gaps prevalent in contemporary writing. He looks upon the “text as a set of incomplete instructions to be completed by the reader . . . The reader maintains a “wandering viewpoint” (Iser, 1978, p. 108) which “travels along inside that which it has to apprehend” (p. 109). The reader is continually adjusting to this

changing scene which the text presents, as s/he seeks to establish a consistent pattern. At no time can s/he have total view of that journey (Iser, 1974, p. 144). Iser has a “theme” (foreground) and information to be left in the background, the “horizon”, which is the link between the reader and the text (Iser, 1978, p. 97). He expects a knowledgeable reader with enough background knowledge to predict and to continually make adjustments to the presentation in the text and to infer meaning. Quite often the reader is expected to fill in meaning when the text leaves gaps in the presentation. Beach states that the meaning is perceived to be “constituted by the transaction between the knowledgeable reader and the text” (Beach, 1993, p. 15). Iser usually refers to the reader-text relationship as an interaction.

The flavour and organization of twentieth century writing requires the interactive reader to actively construct meaning to complete gaps which are left in the narrative. The textual perspective within Reader Response Theory can utilize freewriting and thinking aloud in the classroom as readers strive to make meaning. In this respect, practise based on textual theory can overlap Rosenblatt’s experiential theory.

### Experiential Perspective

... we need to see the reading act as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group...not...separate entities, but as aspects or phases of a dynamic process, in which all elements [are] ... part of the organically-interrelated situation...a complex network or circuit of interrelationships, with reciprocal interplay (Rosenblatt, 1985, pp. 100, 101).

The experiential perspective can serve as the basic assumption in Reader Response Theory with the textual perspective to complement and to extend it. More astutely recognizing the equality of the reader and the text, experiential theory uniquely centres on the momentary transactions which involve “emotions, attitudes, beliefs, interests” (Beach, 1993, p. 52) of individual persons who are in a continuous growing process. They bring this new growth to each new experience of reading a text.

Louise Rosenblatt addresses more than the simple expression of reader feelings as she focuses upon the literary experience itself. As an educator with training in literature, anthropology and art appreciation, she had early concern for comparative cultures and the relationship which writers have with society (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 96). Her terminology of “the event” includes social response (Beach, 93, p. 50). Conscious of the needs of humanity in general, not just the narrow needs of the English major, Rosenblatt sought to meet needs of her average non-English major students who were not aware of how literature could be an interesting part of their lives. Using human relations discussions in introductory courses in her university classroom, she acted upon her belief that personal response could aid growth toward a “more balanced, self-critical, knowledgeable interpretation” (Rosenblatt, 1990, pp. 99, 100).

Rosenblatt's ideas, which rejected the traditional methods, received favourable response after her 1938 publication of Literature as Exploration when she was invited to address teachers at their annual conference, the National Council for the Teaching of English. She was pleasantly surprised that

leaders in attendance, who were proponents of traditional approaches, openly sought to promote the development of critical minded, socially productive individuals through educational processes (p. 101). The Modern Language Association adopted a statement on the teaching of literature which she helped to formulate. At this point, she deplored "the neglect of literature as an art" (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 102).

In the post World War II era, Sputnik and the Cold War triggered a survival instinct in the United States. Thus, the objective positivistic scientific method was propelled to the fore. A more analytical approach to the study of literature took the lead over a more humanistic experiential perspective in a scientific era when behavioristic psychology and positivistic philosophy were in vogue (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 103). Could a contributing factor have been that the teacher shortage of the era had a bearing on this adoption? Canned teacher guides would have been easier for the inexperienced postwar teacher than would have been a more subjective approach.

In her 1964 publication of "The Poem as Event" Rosenblatt called for a reader response criticism (Rosenblatt, 1990, p. 103) as she declared that

the reader is *active*...not a blank tape registering a ready-made message. . . actively involved in building up a poem for himself. . . . He must select from the various referents that occur to him in response to the verbal symbols. . . the reader is paying attention to the images, feelings, attitudes, associations that the words evoke *in him*. . . . He can respond to the words only out of the substance of his own past experience and present preoccupations (Rosenblatt, 1964, p. 125).

She further asserted that the reader brings past experience and thus a lived through new experience, a poem, an event in time, is born as there is

involvement of both the reader and the text. She was concerned about the neglect of the role of the reader in an impersonal, objective approach to the study of literature (Rosenblatt, 1964, pp. 126, 127). Her 1968 (second edition) of Literature as Exploration was given revolutionary credit. From thence "transaction" became the abiding term to describe the reading process (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 100).

As a reaction to narrow "correct" inferred answers which had been used in the past, in 1978 Rosenblatt introduced the terminologies of "aesthetic" (lived through experience with the text, which is more than a vicarious experience) and "efferent" (factual), two opposite modes of experiencing a text. The efferent-aesthetic continuum modes may be used by the same reader with the same text as the reader relates his/her experiences in living through the event with the textual material and/or looks for factual information to take away.

Just as human beings transact with cultural, social and natural elements as they interfuse in the experience of living, the reader transacts with the text. This transaction is not specifically between the reader and the author, but the reader transacts with the text: ". . . a particular reader and a particular configuration of marks on a page and occurring at a particular time in a particular context" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 11). The human being internalizes language as s/he transacts with a particular sociocultural environment, producing an individual cumulatively-funded "linguistic-experiential reservoir" (pp. 9, 10) which is useful in the reading transaction. This ingrained reader background helps the reader determine the focus of attention.

Rosenblatt uses the term “selective attention”, which she credits to William James (1905). “‘Selective attention’ brings some elements into the center of attention and pushes others into the background or ignores them” (Rosenblatt, in Karolides, 1999, p. 164). She describes it as “the cocktail party phenomenon” in which a person screens out all of the background babble in order to transact a conversation with an individual person (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 10). She referred to reading as a “selecting, organizing, synthesizing activity” (Karolides, 1999, p. 164). A reader selects the type of reading to be done and uses selective attention to accomplish that purpose.

The reader who has chosen the stance of reading for facts, termed the “efferent reader”, screens out all distractions except the facts s/he wants to retain. The reader whose stance is that of seeking the event of the lived through experience of “the poem”, the “aesthetic reader”, will select to seek ideas, feelings and attitudes presented which promote the experience of the aesthetic poem. The reader receives verbal stimulation from the text while using the personal linguistic experiential reservoir as selective attention aids the transaction. As the reader organizes the response, the event of the lived through experience, the poem, is formed. “The meaning” does not reside ready-made in the text or in the reader, but happens during the transaction between the reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 11). Thus selective attention is central to the transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 43), a component of the synthesis necessary to the making of meaning as the reader chooses an

efferent or aesthetic stance, whether the reader is conscious or unconscious of that choice (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 12).

The stance which the reader chooses reflects the reader's purpose. There can be a predominance of an aesthetic or an efferent stance, playing across a continuum. The efferent reader might be so practical as to seek only the elements to be retained for a public practical purpose, the "tip of the iceberg" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 12), which is readily assimilated and immediately useful. The term "efferent", was coined from the Latin word *efferre*, to carry away, showing that the reader is centering attention on the information which can be obtained and carried away from the reading event as stored knowledge (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 12). If the reader is reading an historical novel, however, the practical efferent reading might also have an element of the aesthetic as historical characters become real. A single reading of a text can thus play **The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992). Figure Two yields a graphic representation of how this phenomenon is possible.

#### The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum

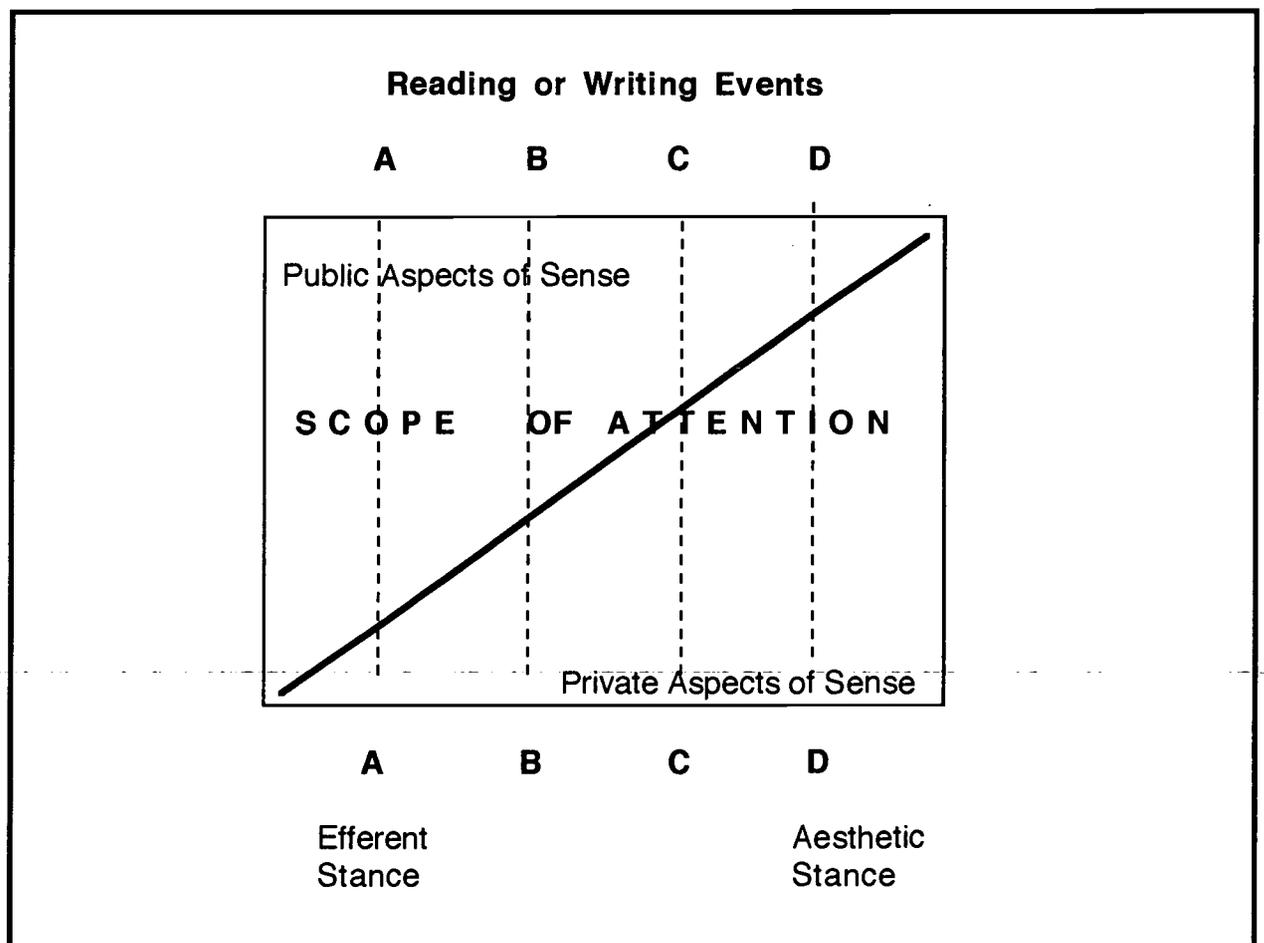
The term "aesthetic" was derived from the Greek language, denoting the qualitative experiential perception, the intuition, the senses and feelings. The reader of fiction may play the aesthetic side of the continuum, as the more hidden portion of the iceberg, the aesthetic half of the continuum is utilized (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 13). Whenever there is linguistic activity, there is both the public and the private aspects. The public component includes the lexical, analytic and associational aspects of the transaction. If the reader or writer

selects to give attention to the efferent stance, the public aspect of stance is addressed. The public component includes the efferent as in A and B of Figure Two. If the reader chooses the aesthetic stance, more of the private experiential aspect will be addressed, as in C and D of Figure Two (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 15).

A reader can read from either the efferent or the aesthetic stance or varying degrees of each. A ten year old girl efferently read a postcard from her suddenly hospitalized mother as she learned where the mother had stored the reserve family bed linen. Forty years later, as she read the same card she aesthetically made meaning in regard to a parent's poignant yearning for longevity. An efferent first reading of the text had become an aesthetic second reading.

Since the reader does not transact with the author, but with the text, texts have a polysemous character: that is, the text has no one absolutely "correct" meaning. Readers retain within their linguistic experiential reservoirs a store of linguistic- and life-experiences which may lend a purpose quite different from that of the author's (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 14). Rosenblatt observes that "The observer cannot be completely banished from the observation" (Karolidis, 1999, p. 165). Although this theory does allow for a varied perceived meaning (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 14), this is not to say that relativism is the standard . It would be better to say that the literary text affords a "broadened 'other', opened to the reader to aid in definition of self and of the world" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 145).

Figure 2. The efferent / aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 15).



In 1985 Rosenblatt described the evocation of meaning in transaction with literature as:

the process in which the reader selects out ideas, sensations, feelings, and images drawn from his past linguistic, literary, and life experience, and synthesizes them into a new experience ( p. 40).

Thus all reading is experienced meaning, a necessary tool in learning. Reader theory also includes the idea of learning through the influence of the interpretive community.

### The Interpretive Community

Stanley Fish (1980), after a decade of searching, espoused the “interpretive community” as the communal source of meaning of a text. His early stance favoured the power of the text; he agreed with the formal viewpoint that the valid meaning of the text was found in the final reading (p. 3). In a period of generality, he declared that all people have the same reading experience, whether they know it or not (p. 6). He eventually gave power to the social community (p.11). In his viewpoint the interpretive community, not the text or the reader, produce meaning:

. . . there is no subjectivist element of reading, because the observer is never individual in the sense of unique or private, but is always the product of the categories of understanding that are his by virtue of his membership in a community of interpretation (Fish, 1981, p. 11).

Iser thought that Fish's support of community interpretation would not allow for different interpretations of the same text (Iser, 1981, p. 86), but Fish would likely not take his theory to that extreme. The stable interpretive community perspectives, its purposes and goals, determine the way of reading for that community, while other communities perceive different ways of reading. Hence,

there is “no single way of reading that is correct or natural” (Fish, 1981, pp. 15, 16). Fish acknowledges that each of us proceeds within a structure of beliefs. He claims that the “whole of critical activity” is “an attempt on the part of one party to alter the beliefs of another so that the evidence cited by the first will be seen as evidence by the second” (p. 365). Thus, firmly held belief is subject to change (p. 370). Fruend observes that Fish’s position has not acknowledged the grimly coercive possibilities in interpretive communities (Fruend, 1987, p. 110).

Although Fish (1980) presents an interpretative community which is likely monocultural, many classrooms of today include a multicultural population. It is wise to be open to this likelihood as we think upon pedagogy. The interpretive community could well “show readers that not everyone shares our beliefs . . . readers . . . muse . . . [and] adjust views of what a text means in light of new understandings gained by sharing viewpoints with others”. (Labercane, [forthcoming]; Dasenbrock, 1991).

If Fish’s interpretive community theory is strictly applied, the individual reader disappears. Fish, however, would assign credibility to the interpretive community of the reading class. It is in this central aspect that his viewpoint has some compatibility with the viewpoints of Iser and Rosenblatt in that they, too, would value conversation and class discussion. The making of meaning is a speech act, a conversation, between the text and the readers. In the same mode of thought, conversations among readers aid the making of meaning.

### Conversation in the Transactional Reading Classroom

Recent research suggests that “immediate social context” significantly shapes “the direction in which participants focused their attention” (Fisher, 1998) and that “group decision making” was “motivating and crucial to successful literature study” (Siddall, 1998). The teacher must foster an environment in the interpretive community of the classroom in which students are encouraged to “make ‘live’ meanings” (Rosenblatt, 1989, p. 172). Rosenblatt suggests that the lived-through evocation can be maintained as spontaneous student comments are used as starting points for further discussion. Questions and comments can lead the reader to continue to savour whatever was “seen, heard, felt, thought, during the calling-forth of the poem or story from the text.” (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 393). If the teacher feels a need to begin the discussion, the climate can be set for aesthetic reading rather than efferent reading by asking questions such as:

What caught the interest most?  
What pleased, frightened, surprised?  
What troubled?  
What seemed wrong?  
What things in the [student’s] own life paralleled those in the poem or story? (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 393).

These questions can encourage students to seek to return to the text to find reasons for varied interpretations or ideas in their responses.

The goal in the use of speech in the dialogue among students and teachers is not merely the development of the ability to discuss, but the metalinguistic understanding of the skills and conventions to be used in meaningful contexts. As they “share their thinking and feeling responses to

literature” students learn “to notice narrative gaps, pose narrative dilemmas and speculate on possible intentions behind human actions by drawing on their own lived experience”. Over time, they can move “inward to . . . the “students’ [own] conscious strategies for narrative reflection. . . . ongoing intertextual conversations . . .” can provide the “experience of a literate culture-in-practice” (Miller 1999, p. 10).

As students discuss, they come to understand more deeply the processes which they use in reading and writing. New writers and readers can experience transactions with texts which are meaningful as they read established authors. They gain consciousness of English structure and the way that it is used to organize meaning and to express feeling. As they seek to make themselves understood in discussions, students become conscious of varied interpretations which colleagues have made from the same text. Students can clarify emotion and have “a basis of intelligent and informed thinking” as they “develop the habit of reflection”, a “development of social understanding”. (Rosenblatt, 1938, pp. 281, 282). Discussants are stimulated in their reading and critical thinking as they converse about these differences in interpretation with peers.

A peer group which reads and discusses texts becomes more conscious of the transactional relationship with readers which they have as writers. An awareness develops regarding the need they have as writers to write clearly enough that readers can conceptualize facts, form attitudes and make understandable transitions in thought.

The teacher is facilitator of interchange, rather than the bank of exclusively correct answers (Rosenblatt, 1989, pp. 173, 174) as readers develop literary understanding. The manner in which the teacher asks questions, outlines assignments and assesses can create a nurturing milieu. This climate can be conducive to the development of readers and writers who are purposeful and who can utilize past linguistic and lived experiences to make meaning as they utilize selective attention and synthesis of resources.

#### Writing in the Transactional Reading Classroom

Rosenblatt (1989) acknowledges that the reading and writing process overlap but also differ. Both reading and writing involve transaction with the text. The past experiences and the present context have to bear on both reading and writing. Selective attention is important in the meaning making of both the reading and writing process, processes which both fit somewhere along the efferent-aesthetic continuum. A person who is composing written text, however, begins with a blank page and creates a genre of reading which is authorial, an effort to step back and see how another reader would transact with the newly created written text. The reader of an existing text does not do this authorial type of reading. Although reading and writing are not “mirror images” (Rosenblatt, 1989, p. 171), instruction of one in the proper milieu can facilitate the development of the other. “Students who connect reading and writing . . . have two characteristics . . .” a strong reading comprehension ability and a preference for an aesthetic stance when reading literature (Courtney, 1999).

Constructive cross-fertilization will happen at the level of reinforcement of linguistic habits and thinking patterns resulting from sensitivity to the

basic transactional process shared by reading and writing (Rosenblatt, 1989, p. 171).

Free writing can free the student to warm up and to unlock the essential linguistic reservoir. This free state enables the student to become conscious of experiences past and present, of verbal expression and to become conscious of present concerns. Mechanics, sequencing or subject are not a concern as the student puts something on the blank page which might be worthy of developing. Selective attention helps the student to begin developing focus. Transaction happens as the context of the situation inspires the necessity to write and the writer becomes conscious of the potential audience.

Stance (Rosenblatt's terminology) in writing is important along the efferent-aesthetic continuum, just as it is in reading. The relationship of the writer's self and the world help forge a purpose as the writer perceives whatever is to be communicated and the audience for which it is intended. Vivacious writing refreshes as the writer with purpose uses needs, interests, questions and values to form a life-giving root system for growth and development of the written text. The writer can test ideas or serve a need for communication of ideas to a specific audience as s/he is conscious of a purpose.

In writing, as in reading, the puzzling context is an invitation to the making of meaning and the opening of new vistas as new thoughts and feeling well up. Writing is a learning process as discoveries are made in the making of meaning. The "links, sometimes subterranean, between the subject and the interests, needs, prior knowledge, or curiosities of the writer" (Rosenblatt, 1989,

p. 166) in reading and writing show us parallels between these ventures: but in spite of parallels, there are distinct differences between reading and writing.

As the writer begins with a blank page s/he becomes the first reader of the created written text as an authorial reading transpires. The symbols on the page are tested according to the dictates of the writer's inner urge to suit a desired tone in a transaction, even if the writer is only writing for him/herself. If the writer is writing for an audience, then there is the consciousness of the anticipated transaction with other readers. In this second type of authorial reading, the writer tries to distance self from the text as an effort is made to weigh the writer's purpose against the potential sense that other readers could make of the text. Self understanding and the understanding of the "cultural, social and educational contexts of the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1989, p. 168) aids the writer in helping the reader link inner resources in the making of meaning. Revision is done according to the criteria of author purpose and of reader orientation. Rosenblatt parallels this second type of authorial reading (reading through the eyes of a potential reader) with the reader who strives to sense the author's intention (p. 168). Although writing to fill Iserian gaps is conducive to the development of meaning for the reader, Rosenblatt declares that writing pedagogy should not include instruction in providing holes in the text. She asserts that in the teaching of writing "gaps . . . must be avoided" (p. 169) as the student writer prepares the written text for its life in the world.

The writer must choose stance, as must the reader. Definite clues as to the aesthetic or efferent stance, as outlined in Figure Two, help clarify the

author's purpose for the reader. As our students respond to reading they produce a new text, using a chosen stance, in their interpretation from their own state of mind. The efferent stance would involve explaining, analyzing, summarizing and categorizing. Conversely, an aesthetic response could involve the writing of a poem or another type of new text in response to an efferent piece.

My Chinese former pastor, who recently emigrated from Canada to the United States, efferently translated two patriotic songs from English to Cantonese Chinese to aid his Boston congregation in a worshipful celebration of American Independence Day. After his efferent translation, he then wrote an aesthetic response to the meaning he had made as he had studied the songs as a part of his translation effort:

. . . we sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful" today at the church at Point Benton State Park, RI. It faces Atlantic Ocean. After we sang the national anthem in chinese [sic], our "neighbors" clapped.

I called our City hall and found that there is nothing in chinese [sic] version. So, they asked me to translate it and give them a copy. (In fact, they have nothing in other languages too). . . . it bless me so much as I dug out the background story of songs. Both were written by Christian. Katherine L Bates, wrote America the Beautiful when she made a visit to Colorado in 1893. She was inspired by the beautiful mountains. . . The story of Francis Scott Key who wrote the national anthem is even more enchanting. . . . I am glad he put this in the last verse, that says, "This is our motto: In God We Trust [sic]" (Chan, 1998).

These aesthetic observations were written from literature as the writer had efferently made meaning.

Probst (1992) observed that readers can write *from*, *of* and *about* literature in a cancellation of the traditional conformity which has been expected in English classes. He acknowledged that in the literary experience

. . . . a broad objective subsuming all others is pleasure...whether it is the pleasure of self-expression...the pleasure of artistic creation . . . , or the pleasure of intellectual accomplishment or problem solving . . . (pp. 125, 126).

When the instructor asks, "What does this story make you think of in your own life?", or "As you read this . . . ., what thought or feelings did it awaken in you? Try to recapture them, and jot them down" (p. 120), students might write reflections which at first might seem tangential to the text. The students, however share real life meaning in these reflections as they write about their own lives. "Writing *from* literature leads the student toward two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of self and knowledge of others" (p. 121). A particular reading may prod a recollection or provoke a reflection on an issue, a problem or a question which is of significance to the student. This prod provides motivation for writing which gives the student a stronger base for developing understandings of him/herself and the world, and thus of the text.

The significance of the work, then, does not lie in the meaning sealed within the text, but in the fact that that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us (Iser, 1978, p. 157).

Writing *from* literature can be either efferent or aesthetic. Whenever a person is writing *of* literature, in contrast, it is an invitation to imaginative writing.

In writing *of* literature it is important that the student become convinced that it is possible to do imaginative writing: writing of literature is approachable. After reading an imaginative poem the instructor can ask, "What did you see as

you read the poem?" as the student is invited to unleash the imagination and write about it. The student can see that literature can help in possibility thinking (Probst, 1992, p. 124). A student who learns to write *of* literature may feel that writing *about* literature is more accessible.

In the more traditional approach of writing about literature, the expository essay remains . . . an extremely important tool . . . it would be foolish for the literature or composition program to ignore it. . . Students learn . . . the process of making meaning . . . strategies of critical thinking . . . and a myriad of other useful things" .(p. 124).

Words have different inflections of meaning, so the expectancy of a single valid interpretation cannot be a reality. Probst prescribes a number of appropriate questions which could be effective in inviting students to this type of writing:

. . . what word, phrase, image or idea struck you most powerfully--why? What . . . [is] the most important word or phrase in the text? What . . . [did] you have the most trouble understanding? Did your first reaction to the text raise questions for you that led you to analyze and interpret? How did those first responses guide your thinking?. . . How did your reading of the text differ from the readings of those with whom you discussed it? . . . similarities. . . ? (p. 125).

Reading and writing connections make for cross-fertilization in transactions which are typical of human activity within the context of the social environment and the total situation of the reading classroom.

In this section there has been an acknowledgment of the five perspectives of Reader Response Theory according to Beach. The Textual and Experiential theories have been examined more closely and the social, psychological and the cultural have received mention. Iser's textual theory regarding reader interaction with the text and the filling of gaps have displayed a possibility for rich literary experience. Experiential theory, pinpointed in

Rosenblatt's efferent-aesthetic continuum, has displayed opportunities for students to make meaning. The interpretive community of Stanley Fish lent a richness to possibilities. The utility of conversation and writing within the context of textual and experiential Reader Response Theory have been shown to have a complementarity. The findings of recent studies which apply these theories in practise need addressed.

Studies have made attempts to develop instructional implications relevant to textual and experiential Reader Response Theory as espoused by Iser and Rosenblatt. The findings in these studies can enrich the scope and practise of Reader Response Theory as lived in the classroom, whether in discussions, music, paintings, drama or writing (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 393). Some selected studies, specific to oral response and written response, as well as ethnic, moral and ethical implications, will be addressed.

#### Review of Selected Studies

##### On the Applications of Reader Response Theory to the Classroom

At the basis of conceptions emerging today of literature and its teaching is the assumption that knowledge is made and that it must be remade by each of us. It is an epistemology that ties together language, literature, and composition. The making of meaning is a linguistic process, the formulating and testing of propositions and assertions: literature is the reservoir of meanings made, the visions others have had; composing, both oral and written, is the act of forging our own visions. An English classroom that accepts this epistemology and strives to cultivate the relationships among readers and texts that it implies is likely to produce enthusiastic readers who will continue to learn from their reading (Probst, 1986, p. 67).

This section addresses a review of some selected studies which were designed to address issues concerned with the making of lifelong readers.

Although this review is by no means exhaustive, it does show some of the ways in which textual and experiential Reader Response theories have been put into practise. I sought to explore studies which might fit some of the situations and challenges I might find in my classroom of adults. A loosely chronological portrayal, under each category of some pertinent studies, show findings in the realm of oral and/or written response to literature, as well as studies which show consideration to cross cultural, moral and ethical matters, as well as teacher attitudes. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are all of importance in the linguistic process as readers make meaning. Some studies address both oral and written response, but often emphasis is given to one type of response more than the other. The supportive role of the teacher will be viewed in some variations. Studies addressing the pedagogical challenge of the ESL reader response classroom and the special challenge of the multicultural classroom will receive attention. The moral and cultural influence of the literature class and the need for teacher preparation for this facet of response to literature will be among the studies which are explored.

### Socially Constructed Meaning

Eeds and Wells (1989) noted that a variety of high quality textual material of the readers' choice produced insightful dialogue. Students themselves can secure rich literary meaning in the reader response classroom as they read, write and discuss.

Socially constructed meaning was focus of an Eeds and Wells study (1989) of grade five and grade six students which formed an interpretative

community in small groups of four students each. Students in each group had varying degrees of reading ability. Reader response theories of Fish, Iser and Rosenblatt were applied as undergraduate reading practicum students acted as group study leaders. Groups met for 30 minutes each day twice per week for 5 to 7 sessions. Group leaders were instructed to encouragingly coach students, rather than seeking traditional “gentle inquisitions” for facts (p. 4). Students constructed simple meanings, shared personal stories, shared in active inquiry, “interpreting, hypothesizing, predicting and verifying”, as each group “valued and evaluated, critiquing the work before them” (p. 15). Rich discussions of novels they had chosen revealed students were capable of:

1. Articulating their construction of simple meaning . . . ;
2. Sharing personal stories inspired by the reading or discussion;
3. Participating as active readers, predicting and hypothesizing and confirming or disconfirming their predictions as they read;
4. Showing that they had attained insights about how the author had communicated her message . . . supporting . . . evaluations of . . . their interpretation of the text” (p. 27).

Classroom talk served a central role in the construction of meaning in using literary text. It helped extend the interpretations of individual students and contributed to a better understanding of the text. In this interpretative community, an at-risk reader developed ability to make meaning in “a rich interaction with her teacher and peers” (Eeds and Wells, 1989, p. 26). As classmates challenged, confirmed, modified and extended the individual responses of classmates, meaning was constructed. Academic achievement was attained through social interaction as teachers were fellow-participants, but there are other matters of concern regarding this study.

Undergraduate students, with their lack of experience, were assigned a responsibility which had potential to do harm. They seemed to feel that they were on trial. One undergraduate group leader journaled:

To be perfectly honest, I feel completely lost on what you mean by 'dialoging' with the group. I feel terribly insecure and uncomfortable, . . . . I have a grad student taping me and observing me in my frustration and lack of experience" (Eeds and Wells, 1989, p. 26).

Another group leader voiced frustration regarding the ability to steer the group:

I had high hopes of . . . the group really thinking about . . . metaphor and simile in the book. but every time I tried, . . . the kids started talking . . . we went in another direction. So I felt confused . . . whether I should have just gotten it in or if . . . discussing what they felt was important was . . . of most importance (p. 27).

One group leader

. . . on maintaining the conversation and missed . . . opportunities for picking up on what the children were offering her through their comments . . . she was not . . . perceptive . . . on teachable moments (p. 27).

A questionable time span for long term results, a mere five to seven sessions, were used for reading instruction.

In spite of any misgivings, literary understanding was accomplished in this situation where teachers were not blatant monitors of reading comprehension within the classroom context. It produced theory and practise guidelines. Greco (1990), also did a study in the context of her secondary classroom, which included uninterested readers, as she enacted a phenomenological approach which created reading interest for the reluctant readers.

### Written Recreation of the Text

As a teacher researcher in the secondary classroom context, Greco (1990) tried to teach literature by the traditional methods, but her students insisted upon becoming personal and active participants as they constructed textual meaning. Initially, their written responses were dull and boring. As she studied literary theory, she realized that response to literature was an

energetic, intellectual and imaginative activity of shaping meaning--working out connections in the context of one's personal and cultural histories. . . . a process of knowing and discovering . . . (pp. 39, 40).

She became conscious of Iser's (1978, 1980) theory that in the dynamic process of reading, the individual reader makes connections and becomes uniquely active in the act of co-creating the text. His theory regarding interaction with the text and the filling of gaps influenced her own theoretical base as she met the needs of the students in her classroom.

She used four types of writing assignments which aided students in the construction of meaning. She found that in these assignments students made connections and became more aware of their own culture, which affected their making of meaning. The four types of assignments were:

1. Writing to fill in spaces.

The instructor invited the reader to find a viewpoint in the text and to fabricate a text to fill in the indeterminacies and omissions in the text:

. . . . write about this incident from the point of view of either Roland or Ganelon. . . . use the form of a letter or diary entry or any other form that would allow you to recreate the incident as you imagine it to be (p. 35).

The student could take the point of view of a story character and fill in gaps and ambiguities. The students needed to do close reading to ascertain details in the story. As students wrote to fill in gaps, they created colour and interest, especially useful in historically or culturally distant material.

### 2. Writing to explore points of view.

Students were invited to narrate a story from the point of view of someone in the story other than the narrator. Seeing the story from the viewpoint of a new character aided student perception and interpretation as they made connections in prewriting. Through careful reading they became conscious of clues to the filling of gaps.

### 3. Writing to reflect upon silences.

Since stories often omit scenes, the students were invited to recreate the untold scene. It was a rewarding exercise as the story became alive. Students came to appreciate gaps as tools which help pieces of literature to be timeless. One student wrote:

Because Hardy's technique of omitting passages makes the reader's mind work individually, *Tess* will never cease to be good literature. Such a style inherently requires that ideas, the result of the reader's experiences and personality, be formed to fill in the missing parts. Thus, *Tess* is valuable to each reader in a different way, but it will always be considered good literature because the reader puts a part of herself into it (p. 37).

### 4. Writing to explore one's reading process.

This assignment, given in application to a poetry assignment, motivated careful reading among secondary students, who might have tended to skim a poetry assignment. A journal entry was assigned. The next class period the students

were invited to reread the journal entry and reflect upon how they made meaning of the poem. Thought provoking questions fed the effort to discover what happened in the reading process. Students discovered, not only clues to their reading process, but there was self discovery as they reflected upon their own lives.

Greco observed that these focused writing assignments, which put the reader at center, invited students to be active readers who were critical, and reactive (Greco, 1990, pp. 34-38). They became imaginative “producers” (Barthes, 1974, p. 4) of literary texts, rather than being merely “consumers” who were seeking the one right answer (Greco, 1980, p. 34). Iser (1978, 1980) theorized that in the dynamic process of reading, the individual reader makes connections and becomes uniquely active in the act of co-creating the text.

As teachers invite students to produce texts, there will be an integration of reading and writing in the classroom. Both reading and writing will be enhanced as students participate in aesthetic response.

#### Focus on Aesthetic Response

In a year long study with 38 grade 5 students as well as a subsequent study with students in grade four, six and eight, Cox and Many's (1992) students had primarily aesthetic response to literature. All responses showed that readers centered their attention on feelings, associations, questions, images or pictures which came to their minds during the evocation. Although the responses were individual and unique, three characteristics were evident in the aesthetic responses:

1. Students tended to image and picture a story in their minds.
2. They tended to make an extension to the story or make hypotheses while reading.
3. They related the feelings and associations which were evoked while they were reading and responding.

In the imaging and picturing, the students wrote of living through the scene depicted:

Towards the end of the book I felt I was really there. They had to look for Charlie. I really got worried. And before that they (Sara, Charlie) were down looking at the Swans I felt like I was Sarah. And it really seemed as if Charlie was holding my hand too . . . . It made me feel like my brother was missing . . . (Student Journal).

Some students extended the story by writing a poem which realistically showed the feelings, emotions and state of mind of a chosen literary character.

In extending and hypothesizing, one student wrote an imaginative vignette which showed his understanding of a character. Others wrote of how they anticipated the story would end, how they felt during the evocation or their thoughts about the possibility of events similar to those in the story happening in their own lives:

It made you think about what you would do if someone very close to you died. . . . I really wasn't expecting her to die. I thought that she would come close to dying, but I really didn't expect her to actually die (p. 31).

After some students related associations and feelings which were evoked, they then related past personal experiences in which they had known similar emotions. A girl in grade five centered her response upon the death of her three grandparents within the past three years:

they were all very close to me. When they died I felt like it should have been me instead of them. Sometimes at night I can remember running downstairs and giving Gran a big hug and kiss.

But now when I go running down there it's only our playroom. I always wish she'd come back . . . (p. 31).

From this study in the classroom context, Cox and Many surmised that the teacher's focus of attention in the reader response class should be upon the response of the students. In order for this to happen there are a number of possibilities that the teacher could fulfill in supporting the students:

1. "Write anything you want about the story you just read or viewed" (p. 32) was the prompt which opened content and form of response choices for the students as they organized their evocation of the text. Poems, vignettes and synopses were not required, but the opportunity was there in the intensely personal responses which they voluntarily shared.

2. Students were given plenty of time for response. Students used a period of days to sift their feelings and ideas in the process of evocation. Some students needed an extended time of retelling before they generated new meanings.

3. Students were given opportunities to talk to the teacher, to themselves and to each other. All listeners truly wanted to know what the students were thinking. Often the talk was groping during these open informal discussions, but "quick flashes of personal understanding" (p. 32) occurred.

4. The teachers invited and encouraged students to make connections which were personal and intertextual. Students did make these intertextual connections: "It reminds me of this book I read. . ." "I wonder about life." (p. 29). Students made associations with, not only their own personal experiences, but the experiences of others in books and film, television and other media (p. 32).

5. The teachers were ever conscious that they needed to “recognize, support, and further encourage” signs that the reader’s focus of attention is on the “lived through experience of the literary evocation” (p. 32).

Cox and Many came to believe that a key element in changing curriculum is for the teacher to truly acknowledge and to understand the “active role of the reader in constructing meaning from text” (p. 33). Rosenblatt theoretically referred to the active reader in the process of evocation when she wrote of “the process in which the reader selects out ideas, sensations, feelings, and images drawn from his past linguistic, literary, and life experience, and synthesizes them into a new experience” (1985, p. 40). Readers in Cox and Many’s studies in grades four, five, six and eight were active in constructing meaning from text within the practise of Rosenblatt’s transactive theory. Gantzer extended the practise of this theory to adults in a 1993 study.

#### Adult ESL Response

Gantzer diminished the role of teacher talk in a student centered regularly scheduled intermediate ESL reading course in a junior college, as he practiced Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Since my adult classroom was cross cultural, this report was important to my study. In his 1993 study, Gantzer’s eleven class members were from nine countries with nine different mother languages. The age range of the five males and six females was from 18 to 40 years (p. 92). Focus was not upon the instructor, but upon the questions, responses and reflections of the students.

Students read the assignment of a high interest poem or short story and composed individual questions which were then used in student led class discussion. Post-discussion response papers addressed their opinions, interpretations and lingering questions. Conversational analysis during this process showed that, over a term, there was development in the ability to question and to discuss.

The questions students composed evolved from seeking literal facts regarding the text to examining motivation and then to becoming more reflective in exploring symbolic meaning in the stories and in the issues which the texts raised.

Early discussions were filled with short "canned" pronouncements and interruptions with an abrupt change to an unrelated topic as students had a spirit of competition for an opportunity to talk. As students grew in their ability to discuss issues, they began to think aloud. Then they became tentative in their statements as they collaborated to make meaning. In time the students no longer changed topics abruptly: rather, they learned to collaboratively refocus the topic.

In the early phase, student topics were unrelated and egocentric. With time the discussions centered on social values and moral issues which evolved from the texts. Teacher input, which was low in the beginning, became less and less throughout the term as the students made meaning together. The teacher was an attentive listener who occasionally reminded students to speak more loudly. He helped with pronunciation of unfamiliar words, but the students

collaborated to ascertain meaning on unfamiliar vocabulary. They left the surface meaning and delved into the implications of the text. The questions, the content and direction of the discussion and thus the making of meaning (Gantzer, 1993, pp. 351-356) in oral and written response were under student control.

In addition to post-discussion papers, some students kept learning logs in which they recorded class discussion details. They registered their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the course structure, speculated about how they could improve their performance and they valued each person being privileged to have a voice in the class (Gantzer, 1993, p. 360). Early entries were doubtful of the class aura:

In this class I know I'm a curious person and that I like very specific answer. . . So again, what I don't like from this class is that I always want a specific answer and you never know what is the truth . . . (p. 362).

Other students observed "I'm really learning to read and to understand what I'm reading". "The story we read today was easy to read but difficult to understand." "The author make you to feel that you are with them in this village" (p. 278).

It helps me to improve my English reading and writing, its helps to understand how I should read something, and what should do during the reading. I learned so many interesting stories . . . I read more than the teacher requires . . . (pp. 262, 263).

The unmotivated student had a change of attitude:

Well its getting to be the end of this class and I must say was a good one for me. I came to here because my parents they wanted that I get a education higher than they did. I didn't like it so much in the beging [sic]. But this class it was cool. I think its good when they don't treat us all the time like babies which we are not. Here we get to talk about things like adult and tell what we are thinking on that time,

and it [sic] what I call a good way to teach. The teacher [sic] a quiet in class but not in the halls... A first I though this was a strange way but now I think it let us to talk and not just to listen to his opinions and makes us to understand how much we know and got to say. I just wish all my teacher respect our opinion in this way (pp. 363, 364).

The early post-discussion response papers were simply very short summaries of the discussions, but in time they became longer and were more personal and more reflective. The researcher felt that the papers would have been more helpful to the adult ESL students if they had received more emphasis.

Bradley also analyzed oral discourse and written discourse, as she investigated the social bases of literary response in a study of grade six English first language students.

#### The Role of Oral Discourse

Basing her study on the theories of Fish, Iser and Rosenblatt, Bradley (1994) used discourse analysis to describe how grade six students in pull-out groups constructed text as they made meaning. In the process of using written texts to make meaning within their interpretative community, they created oral and then written texts (p. 274). Small group interaction interpreted short stories which the researcher assigned for them to dramatize. The meaning making talk of these eight students, two groups of two boys and two girls each, was analyzed. Their interpretive written texts were analyzed and compared for similarities and differences in patterns.

Bradley found that interpretive texts were made within the social interactions of the participants in the groups as they met. Insider understanding

developed (Bradley, 1994, p. 282). Social and academic threads of group life were interwoven, although one group meshed better and were more productive than the other group (pp. 278, 283). Analysis of transcripts of participant talk showed that there was a relationship between the groups' social and academic natures. Each group had a dynamic of its own.

Bradley surmised that self-selected individual reading outside the classroom has a different nature than the socially oriented reading done within the reading classroom (p. 276). An assignment which the teacher looked upon as academic in this ethnographic and sociolinguistic study was interpreted as a social experience by the students (p. 289).

Although Bradley's study was done with a group of students in a pull out section and the discourse analysis addressed only a few sessions of interaction among students, findings upheld the theory that "meaning is socially constructed in the day-to-day, face-to-face life of classrooms" (p. xii).

An analysis of student journal writing two years later, conducted by Coe (1996) addressed writing, a complement to oral response.

### The Role of Journals

Coe (1996) observed the practise of Reader Response Theory in a grade eleven advanced English classroom. She "hoped to discover just what effect one teacher's teaching process had upon the students' journal responses" (p. 47). Using Rosenblatt, Bleich and Probst as her theoretical support, she observed formal lessons, small group discussions, whole class discussions, student presentations and teacher/student conferences.

Student - to - student feedback on journal entries (p. 37) were balanced with writing. In interviews with the teacher, the researcher learned that the teacher hoped to lead the students into academic writing as they did their reader-response journals (p. 26). The teacher commented:

. . . . reader-response is very dynamic, and there is an interaction, if I can use the word phenomenological, between the teacher and the students all the time, between the students and the text all the time, between the students and the context . . . (p. 92).

In the response programme, the students were required to prepare "journal assignments, class/group response discussions, essays and presentations" (p. 56).

Coe chose three journals to analyze: one from each of three different teacher classified achievement levels, so that she could see how journals affect different attainment levels (A, B and C) of students (pp. 56-59). The researcher sought to learn how journal writing affected each level of student regarding what they chose to write about, how they responded, if they improved in their ability to learn and understand, whether the journal assisted them with formal essays, and how journal assignments of different types (teacher-directed or student directed) affected journal writing.

The researcher learned that the experience of writing journals and formal academic writing connected as the students wrote and discussed their feelings, then with newly gained confidence, they made judgements and critical analyses. She found that the lack of emphasis on spelling, grammar and critical analysis in the journals left room for the students to get ideas on a page so that they could have a better understanding of text. "Reader-response may assist

students in understanding texts allowing them to write formal examinations more easily. . . ." ( Coe, 1996, p. 162). She could "see the practical end of the theory" (p. 165). ". . . . how can teachers of literature ignore reader-response theories (p. 167)?" Through this process the students had become active readers.

In the classroom, the researcher observed that there was a variation in the application of Reader Response Theory. This approach:

lends itself to constant change in teaching practice. The change will depend on the students and will be designed to improve learning. The notion of making changes goes along with the idea that everyone is different, and essentially, every learner comprehends in a unique manner (Coe, 1996, pp. 156, 157).

Students were aware that, not only had they experienced reading development, but character development had also happened.

Character development was apparent in Coe's study. In a final essay one student wrote:

This novel has taught me many things, about geography, history, and the human being and its reactions. . . It taught me never to loose hope, never give in to despair and keep dreaming, because someday that dream may come true . . . It taught me that all the advice ever given by men can be expressed in one single thought "wait and hope". ISP Journal, Unit #3 (Coe, 1996, p. 129).

Another student's final essay on The Count of Monte Cristo showed meaning he had worked through in previous journal writing:

. . . Dantes shows himself to be worthy of regaining his happiness when he puts the wishes of others over and above his own well being...He continues to show this kindness when his first thoughts are of his poor, lonely father (page 5), and his anxious bride-to-be (page 8) . . . Final essay, p 1. (Coe, 1996, p. 130).

The next section addresses character development which has happened in the practise of the reader response approach.

### Morals, Ethics and Values

Since morals, ethics and values were important to the students I was teaching in a divinity school, it was paramount to pinpoint the numerous references to these features which appeared in the literature. Maguire (1997) asserts that "Moral education is happening all the time, whether or not teachers plan it to be so" (p. 2). Rosenblatt observed that "Our task is . . . to face squarely the fact that we shall in one way or another be helping to form the student's system of values" (1938, p. 23). Findings from some of the above studies indicate these observations.

The literature teacher . . . shares with all other teachers the task of providing the student with the proper equipment for making sound social and ethical judgments. . . . the English teacher can play an important part . . . since the student's social adjustments may be more deeply influenced by what he absorbs through literature than by what he learns through the theoretical materials of the usual social science course (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 22).

Although there are studies which address moral teaching in the literary classroom, some studies which do not pointedly address moral teaching report an ethical or moral impact in the literature class.

The purpose of Gantzer's (1993) study was not to explicate the moral thinking in an approach, but it occurred as students addressed the human condition. Unprompted journal entries in this adult ESL class seemed to be the response in which students showed moral concern and voiced it. Some of those responses follow:

“Also think about things that happened to you in own personal life, because it may be related to your personal life. . .” (p. 366).

What happen with the baby (p. 365)?

Why do so many stories of Americans tell about the people who are not just to their spouses? It seem that American people do not want to have only one lover for all their life . . . I wish we would read stories that have more morality. These stories can become rule [sic] that we can try to live by (p. 278).

In Coe's (1996) study, a thought provoking response question was worded, “How do you react to Victor's feelings of guilt in the novel? When are feelings of guilt good for a person? When is guilt destructive?” The student responded:

. . . to be considered human, one must feel guilt and remorse at one time or another in their life. Feelings of guilt can be good for a person as a healing process. . . . Showing one's feelings of guilt does not make them weaker but in the end their lives become enriched, one may feel stronger and wiser after a [sic] . . . Guilt can also be destructive...If one blames themselves for everything their guilt becomes uncontrollable and destructive. . . . I feel that Victor's feelings of guilt are necessary. If Victor felt no feelings of guilt he would seem inhuman. . . . I was surprised at how Victor's guilt left him in despair but also seeking revenge. But who can he seek revenge on but himself? Victor's actions express that he may never recover from his past. Frankenstein Journal, Unit #2 (p. 101).

The same student had a moral discussion in her journal as she questioned the text and related the main character's actions to her own life and then proceeded to understand the actions of the main character. She wondered why:

Stevens confidently lied to a guest and for what. To protect himself, to hide from the truth. Stevens always talks of how great his former employer was, however underneath I think he knows that Lord Darlington was not such a respectable

man. I have always wondered why people lie to themselves or others to protect something. I know that I have lied myself so that I would not hurt my friends feelings or to save myself from getting in trouble. . . . I remember once [sic] to one of my best friends about a guy she liked. . . . I think that we all hurt ourselves even more by lying. . . . ISP Journal, Unit #3 (Coe, 1996, p. 109).

This student demonstrated that a person can learn much through the exploration of thoughts in journal writing. One of Rosenblatt's students articulated a personal value of literature when s/he acknowledged:

its objective presentation of our own problems and conflicts. It places them outside ourselves, enables us to see them with a certain detachment, and to arrive at a more objective understanding of our own situation and of our own motivation (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 50).

Rosenblatt stated that students need to enlarge their knowledge "concerning people and society and . . . self-understanding" (1938, p. 64). This understanding is "a much more elaborate, involved, personal process than many of us are willing to admit" (p. 130). This could only be accomplished, she said, through refining the

primary reactions to literature . . . through a sharpening of . . . senses, a greater knowledge of . . . self, and an increasing refinement and enlargement of his scheme of values. Growth in human understanding is a necessary basis for literary understanding (pp. 64, 65)

This enlargement of the scheme of values and the growth in human understanding can make for student moral growth. Some studies have addressed the possibilities of moral growth through the use of reader response approaches.

Mathey (1993) investigated whether or not religious/philosophical beliefs of readers are influenced whenever they interpret stories which have these issues as a focus. She also chose to investigate if readers would have positive descriptions for story characters who embraced values similar to their own. Would readers have negative descriptions for story characters whose values were different from their own? Would readers with similar beliefs form interpretive communities? Would the influence of similar beliefs make for similar interpretations to stories?

Female honours students at New York University between the ages of 18 and 21 formed the study group sample. They were matched according to age. These students were from three religious/philosophical groups. Two were traditional practicing Catholics, two persons had rejected Catholicism and were Catholic-skeptics and two persons, who were reared without religious instruction, were secular humanists.

One cornerstone for this research was provided by Iser (1978), since he believes readers are guided by their experiences as they interpret the actions and motivations of characters. Fertile ground for the readers to capitalize upon their experiences was provided by the "gaps" (ambiguous parts of texts). The other cornerstone of this doctoral research was Fish's belief that interpretive communities are formed due to shared beliefs and world views of readers.

Data analysis showed that readers do heavily rely upon their religious/philosophical experiences and beliefs as they interpret stories which have these issues as focus. Respondents, however, did not draw nearer to

characters who held similar beliefs. Nor did they distance themselves from characters who held dissimilar beliefs. Instead, they drew near to those characters with whom they felt they had similar religious/ philosophical experiences. Readers also relied heavily upon personal experiences whenever they were challenged with ambiguous aspects of the text. Despite putting forth highly individualistic responses, there were instances in which respondents formed interpretive communities. The researcher thought that this choice of forming an interpretive community could indicate that there were possibly major differences, due to religious/philosophical beliefs, in the ways in which respondents interpret literature. These useful data fit well with Maguire's (1997) study, which addressed the predominance of discussion of moral issues in the literature classroom.

Seeking to determine "what, if any, patterns of communication on moral issues emerge when teachers and students in a high school classroom setting discuss works of literature", Maguire's study (1997) was based on observations of 80 episodes in high school English classes. Seventy-five of the episodes yielded discussion of morals and values (p. 78). Some episodes yielded several issues. The researcher acknowledged that choice of literature can predict morality discussion, but with a teacher's willingness for students to include life-literature relationships there is more room for personal redirection of discussion. A total of eighteen virtues were considered. Honesty, self-preservation/fulfillment and compassion were most frequent, with references 14, 14, and 11 times respectively. Other virtues discussed included respect for

parents 9, responsibility 7, respect for religious beliefs 6, social amity 5, loyalty 5, individual determination 5, regard for life 4, proper sexual relations 3, right to privacy 3, obedience to authority 3, gratitude 3, justice 1, contractual integrity 1 and conservation 1. Respect for property was not discussed. The researcher reasoned that adolescents would naturally value virtues of self and family, such as honesty, self-preservation, compassion and respect for parents.

The researcher acknowledged the “trickle-down” effect of Reader Response criticism as a vehicle for heightened classroom discussions of morality in literature. Discussions were definitely teacher led and teacher controlled situations, but the tone of questioning was democratic.

The qualitative analysis showed that the English teachers sought and brought up in class discussion the moral issues which were in the literature. Efforts were made to relate the questions to the students’ experience. Teachers listened as students freely and honestly responded, especially if the issue being discussed related to themselves or their family or friends. Only twice did teachers indicate their own personal codes of morals or values. They did not flaunt their own opinion of right or wrong behavior codes. The discussion usually ended with, “There are many opinions on that topic.” or “You’ll want to think about that more later.” Teachers did, however, speak from a moral foundation which accepted the existence of good and evil, or good and bad behavior, of sin and guilt, of rights and responsibilities, and of compassion and honesty (Maguire, 1997, p. 145).

Macguire felt that true engagement with literature can come alive as the moral dilemmas of literary characters are related to the dilemmas in today's world, in the students' lives. They can learn to voice their views and those of society. She sees the public school as walking a fine line between prescriptive moral teaching and withdrawal from moral questions (p. 150). Students bring to their reading codes of morals and religion, as well as the social philosophy which they have experienced in their communities and family backgrounds (Rosenblatt, 1935, p. 110). They can broaden and deepen as they reinterpret the existing "sense of things" in light of the new literary experience unfolding of new thoughts and feelings introduced by the text .

Our object [as teachers] . . . to help the student, through a critical scrutiny of his response to literary works, to understand and organize his personal attitudes and to gain the knowledge and the sense of values . . . enable him to respond more fully and more justly to the work of literature (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 128).

Macguire made no attempt to label herself as a religious person, but she shared observations that , since the Bible is a part of cultural heritage, " An English teacher needs to recognize allusions to the Bible and to other basic items in the canon . . ." ( p. 146). She was conscious of this need because a student who was discussing Twain's Mysterious Stranger stated the tradition that the devil was a fallen angel, referring to this tradition as common knowledge. The teacher labeled the comment "silly". No mention of The Bible or Paradise Lost was made in that discussion. The researcher also observed a teacher's ahistorical explanation of Puritanism. She observed that the eleven teachers in the study lacked knowledge of the philosophical foundations of

ethics and values discourse (p. 146). This observation could cause concern in the light of the stated top priority goal of high school English teachers : "To help students understand themselves and the human condition". This statement was recorded in a survey paper published by the National Council of Teachers of English (Purves, 1981, p. 29). In the multi-ethnic world of today, ethics and values, particularly in relationship to human relations knowledge of ethnicity, should be a part of each teacher's repertoire.

Since the students in my class were from more than one cultural and linguistic background, I felt a need to examine some studies which addressed this situation. Benson (1996) conducted a study of the meanings preservice teachers applied to ethnicity.

#### Cross Cultural Studies

The purpose of Benson's study (1996) was to investigate the meaning and understanding of ethnicity which was constructed by preservice teachers and to develop grounded theory. The researcher and 59 preservice teachers participated in a junior level (third year university) multicultural education course over a semester.

The questions which drove this study included:

1. What understandings of ethnicity do preservice teachers bring with them to the course?
2. How do preservice teachers construct their understandings of ethnicity?
3. How do preservice teachers make meaning from course-related experiences and other identifiable experiences relating to ethnicity?
4. How do preservice teachers think that their beliefs about ethnicity will influence them in their roles as teachers?

In this naturalistic, interpretive study, qualitative data were collected from participant observation, audiotapes of selected class meetings, analysis of dialogue journals, reader response journals and modified case studies of elementary school children. Transactional Reader Response Theory of Rosenblatt formed a part of the theoretical framework.

This study demonstrated preservice teachers' need for teacher educators who will assist them in an understanding of multicultural education: that it is not as simple as mastering curriculum content. It also encompasses the need to teach for equity and for the reduction of racism (Benson, 1996).

Guzman-Trevino (1997) conducted a study in which Mexican-American students experienced a growth in motivation to read as they read literature of their own culture, as did Flores (1998). Carter-Jones (1999) found that background knowledge and experience relevant to the text had a stronger influence upon a deep rich reader response than did high formal education. This finding supports the Guzman-Trevino findings.

Developmental reading students in a college setting participated in a book-club group as they read and discussed Mexican-American literature selections. The researcher served as facilitator, participant and observer. She secured data from transcribed interviews of individuals, small and large group sessions, entries in response journals and the researcher's journal notes.

Results showed firstly that Mexican-American students made cultural, social and affective connections with Mexican-American literature. In turn, students gained higher motivation to read and a sense of accomplishment

which they had not formerly experienced in their previous education. The researcher noted that these findings indicate a need for careful examination of content and pedagogical practices for ESL students.

Secondly, the study of interactions among the researcher and family members of students showed a high level of family support and involvement. The Mexican-American students brought useful cultural resources to the classroom milieu.

A third finding revealed that interest had a strong role in the motivation of students. The students felt validated through the use of Mexican-American literature and through group interactions. The researcher surmised that students who are culturally diverse need the experience of studying literature which is representative of their own ethnicity. This opportunity would offer students the opportunity of having a voice in the construction of their own lives. Both of Benson (1996) and Guzman-Trevino (1997) found a need to acknowledge the ethnic background of the student in the reader response classroom.

Toskos was led to conduct a cross-ethnic study when she became conscious of the increasing numbers of Third World (better termed "Two-thirds World") students who were being placed in high school English classes. She thought that a study of the ways in which these diverse students responded to literature and a comparison of how their responses contrasted with responses of students from other backgrounds could assist teachers as they met needs of ethnically diverse classrooms.

Six students participated in the study which Toskos (1993) conducted. Language and ethnic backgrounds of these students were: two Chinese, two Americans, and two Spanish-speaking Columbians. Selected short stories were read by the individual students and then they wrote a free-response essay. A week later each individual student sat for a focused interview with the researcher. Both oral and written responses to literature showed differing responses between and among the ethnic groups. Ethnic background seemed to be a determining influence upon literary response.

Response was influenced by a reader's identity with the ethnic culture in the story. If a reader was familiar with the ethnic experiences in a story s/he became interested in the efferent rather than the aesthetic aspect of the story, a finding also observed by Webster (1999). Both Reader Response Theory and its teaching implications were supported by the data. This approach to ethnic literature enriched the interest and capabilities of the various ethnic students.

The value of training student teachers in multicultural awareness and how to use it was the subject of a study (Arshad, 1999) involving student teachers in a Bachelor of Education (TESL) program in Malaysia. A "significant relationship" was displayed among the subjects' scores, their "intertextual links" and "levels of response", and their "cultural background in reading multicultural literature". The study showed a need for multicultural literature courses in teacher training programmes in countries with "a multiethnic population".

Young adults (Bloem, 1997), high school students (Nevil, 1999), and grade two students (Gwinn, 1998) who have been exposed to multicultural

literature in the classroom have developed positive “thoughts toward other cultures” (Bloem), have identified with minority immigrants (Gwinn) and have been “amazed at the similarities human beings share throughout the world” as they “identified with characters and entered” imaginatively “into lives very different from their own” (Bloem).

Langer stated that literature:

is humanizing not only in its content, but also in the ways in which it invites people to contemplate the content. Literary orientations can enrich students' capabilities as learners in all their academic experiences, and as creative change agents throughout their lives (Langer, 1998 pp. 22, 23).

Rosenblatt was sensitive to the needs of society and to the role which she and other teachers of literature could play as they worked toward the development of character among the students they taught. With a background in language arts appreciation, anthropology and the teaching of post secondary English literature, she made observations which suggest that the literature class can be an example of human relations.

Human relations will be a part of the student's involvement as “concentric circles of interest focused on the student's sense of the particular work will involve him” more deeply. This will enable him to see in the literary piece a “specific reflection of general ideas concerning good and evil, concerning the desirable goals in life” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 139). In this transaction, the student will become conscious of the values that the writer presents in the social relationships and in the individuals (p. 140). The student in this experience will be aided in knowing the unconscious assumptions which are basic to his own

judgement (p. 141). A habit can be developed of using a broader perspective of social context when people and situations are under consideration. The student gains an “awareness of the complexities of human relationships” (p. 144). As he learns to weigh his understanding and judgement regarding a work he will see a need to study the work more closely and to study his own experience and basic assumptions in order to have “a valid foundation for interpretation” (p. 146). Social sensitivity can be a product of this self-examination. The student can see models of decision making in the lives of other people.

Prolonged contact with literature may result in increased social sensitivity. . . . [the student] becomes aware of the complex personalities of other people. He develops a stronger tendency to notice the reactions of others to his own behavior. He learns imaginatively to “put himself into the place of the other fellow”. He becomes better able to foresee the possible repercussions of his own actions (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 217).

In daily relations with other people, such sensitivity is important. Through literature, the individual may develop the habit of sensing the subtle interactions of temperament upon temperament; he may come to understand the needs and aspirations of others, and he may thus make more successful adjustments in his daily relations with them. (p. 218). Thus, the teacher can aid the student through the study of literature that:

they will absorb from their reading ideas concerning the kinds of behavior or types of achievement to be valued, and they will acquire the moral standard to be followed under various circumstances (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 222).

In the multiethnic classroom “literature is one of the important media through which our cultural pattern is transmitted” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 223). “It is

true that the reading of a book has sometimes changed a person's entire life" (p. 233). The teacher can be an instrument of understanding among all peoples.

### Teacher Attitudes and Response Roles

Langer (1998) conducted studies over an eight year period as she involved students from pre-kindergarten through adults who had diverse cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds. Inner city and suburban schools participated. She hoped to develop a response-based theory of teaching which would give reasons for this approach and to develop practise guidelines in an effort to overcome established authoritarian pedagogical routines and to support students in their development of literary understandings. Her studies showed that teachers must work to overcome their authoritative role in the classroom and become the teacher-enabler, in which students are supported in developing understanding.

She found that better readers formulate understanding, organize and reorganize ideas and possibilities as they use their sense of a whole piece, as their "sense of the whole" (Langer, 1998, p. 18), a construct which is still in the process of evolving. Less proficient readers are apt to become fixated at an Entering In option, as they build less complex envisionments and are more easily dislodged by unfamiliar concepts, words, information or organizational structures. The developing text world for the less proficient student has bits of ideas, not cohesive ever-changing wholes. If less proficient readers feel activities are personally meaningful, their meaning building processes become more like those processes of higher proficiency readers (p 18). As readers

learn to develop and share their individual growing envisionments, the less proficient readers become indistinguishable from the better readers (p. 19).

Although her data are helpful, her use of grammar translation for student compositions and her insensitivity to cultural rhetorical styles likely lessened the effectiveness of the pedagogical effort.

### Concluding Remarks

This section addressed some selected studies which, although not exhaustive, showed some ways in which textual and experiential Reader Response theories have been practised. The role of the teacher as enabler has been prominent in studies addressing oral and written response, the multi-cultural classroom and the moral influence of the literature class. These concepts were useful in the construction of this study.

Reader theory recognizes that both reading and writing are ways to make meaning. Louise Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) students brought their life experiences to the text, transacted with it, and experienced the lived through experience, the poem. Her aesthetic/efferent continuum included reading for pleasure and reading for information. Persons could have a mix of varying degrees of these two types of reading. This transactional approach gave equality to the reader and the text, just as the buyer and the seller have a balance of equality wherever goods are bought and sold. Readers can interact with the text and fill in gaps in the story to make meaning (Iser, 1978). The text in Iserian textual theory is stronger than it does in transactional theory, but the reader can still make meaning through imaginatively filling in the gaps left in the

storyline of the text. Response to literature is a learned response that which, although not behaviouristic, is activated within the social context of the classroom (Probst, 1991). The transactional reading classroom forms an “interpretive community” (Fish, 1980). This community is the communal source of the meaning of a text, but also provides an opportunity for exposure to other viewpoints. The personal experience of reading owns a selectivity between “centers of attention and emotion and the peripheries” and there

must take place that mysterious fusion of knowledge, judgment, sensory comprehension, and emotional response toward which we hope our teaching and scholarship labor (Slatoff, 1970, p. 31).

There has been acknowledgment of the challenge facing readers who must read materials strange to their religious background (Bleich, 1988).

Recent studies show that teachers using the reader response approach must form new attitudes about their role in the classroom as they become enablers and a fellow reader rather than the holder of objective facts (Langer, 1998; Coe, 1996; Gantzer, 1993; Greco, 1990). Oral and written responses have shown gains in the making of meaning among students (Gantzer, 1993; Coe, 1996; Bradley, 1994). At-risk readers learned to make meaning (Eeds and Wells, 1989; Langer, 1998) and became motivated (Gantzer, 1993, pp. 363, 364). Multi-cultural and ESL classroom studies have shown that students make cultural, social and affective connections to texts and are more highly motivated if texts fit student interest and/or cultural background (Eeds and Wells, 1989; Toskos, 1993; Guzman-Trevino, 1996). Ethnic background seemed to be a determining influence upon literary response (Toskos, 1993; Benson, 1996;

Guzman-Trevino, 1996; Webster, 1999). The literature class has influence on morals and values (Gantzer, 1993; Coe, 1996; Macguire, 1997). Furthermore, readers draw near to those characters with whom they feel they have similar religious/philosophical experiences and beliefs (Mathey, 1993), which could be an aid to the lived through experience. Multicultural literature broadens the outlook of readers (Bloem, 1997; Flores, 1997; Gwinn, 1998; Halfyard, 1999; Carter Jones, 1999; Nevil, 1999). These findings lent credence to the exciting possibility of a study centred in a private divinity school.

The reader response approach, which I endeavored to develop in my instruction, held possibility to make a difference in the reading experience of my students throughout their lives.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

A qualitative research design was employed in this case study. The purpose was to discover and to describe how a particular group of adult readers responded to a variety of texts. The needs of my students in my cross cultural reading class provided the basis upon which or from which my study proceeded. I wondered how a reader response approach had implications for deepening and extending the literate behaviour of students under my care. To effect such an analysis, I searched for recent studies which attempted to examine classroom applications of Reader Response Theory, both in English as a first language and in English as a Second Language. I also searched for studies which attempted to examine the impact of ethical, moral and religious phenomena on the reader. Hence, the research questions which provided the impetus for this study were:

1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?
2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?
3. How have readers' responses changed over time?

It served me well to survey the basic characteristics of a case study, and their usefulness, as I set about to answer the questions I had concerning reader transaction with text in my classroom. In this next section I address some of the more prominent features which distinguish a case study and how I saw these features as a helpful framework to use in answering my questions. As an instructor, I felt that each class and each student is unique; therefore an in-depth

study of this particular class, and its individual students, could be aided through a case study approach.

### Characteristics of a Case Study

A case study explores a “ ‘bounded system’ or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Time and place are the perimeters of the “bounded system”. The bounded system in my study involved the bounds of a time period of a semester within the bounds of a place, the milieu of the seminary. The case itself, whatever is being studied, is a “program, an event, an activity or individuals . . . .” (p. 61). Addressing the situation of my students while they were using the reader response approach served as my “case”. The in-depth data collection involving “purposeful sampling of multiple sources of information” in this case ran the gamut of documents, interviews and observations within the context. These raw data provided ample sources for an “in-depth analysis” (p. 65), a rich, thick description within the context of the case (Creswell, 1998, pp, 61 - 65; Merriam, 1988). These analyses allowed me, not only to describe, but also to make assertions (Creswell, 1988, p. 65) concerning the student experience and pedagogy.

Some considerations which precipitated the use of a case study design included (Merriam, 1988, p. 9):

1. The nature of the research questions: My questions of “How” and “Which” were used. These questions are appropriate for case study use (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1984). The methods involved in a case study are

important, but the questions asked and their relationship to the end product are important. They produce an end product of a descriptive narrative, an interpretive account or an evaluation (Merriam, 1988, p. xiv).

2. The amount of control: In this study control was not as stringent as it would have been in a quantitative study.

3. The desired end product: The nature of the questions are linked to the end product. In a case study the end product which is sought is a holistic, intensive description, an interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon.

The focus of the investigation is a bounded system (Smith, 1978). A qualitative case study is "an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group". It is designed to help the researcher understand deeply the situation and meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1988, p. xii). The interest is more in process than in outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than in confirmation. It is likely the best methodology for addressing problems in which understanding is sought in order to improve practise: a problem centered, situation - specific, qualitative case study (Merriam 1988, p. xiii).

Since the main concern of a case study is interpretation in context, there are four main characteristics which set case studies apart (Merriam, 1988, pp. 13 ff.). These characteristics are:

1. Particularistic:

Focusing on a specific situation, event, programme or phenomenon and giving help for analysis of everyday practise. Since this type of study is problem

centered, it can be used to describe particular groups of people as they confront specific problems. A holistic (the whole is more than the parts) view of the situation can be used in analysis to show the reader of the narrative what can or cannot be done in a similar situation. Although it describes a specific instance, it can illuminate a general problem (Merriam, 1988, p. 11; Olson, 1982, in Hoaglin and others, pp. 138 - 139).

### 2. Descriptive:

Providing a complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated. A case study can provide “descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions . . . .” (Merriam, 1988, p. 11, 12; Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 119). Illumination of the complexities of a situation and factors, including the influence of personalities, which contribute to it, can give relevance to the present issue, as well as providing information from a wide variety of sources.

### 3. Heuristic:

Giving insights into the situation under study. New meaning can be discovered as the reader’s experience is extended. Thus the investigator can gain “insights into how things get to be the way they are” (Stake, 1981, p. 47) and there is confirmation of what is known. Applicability is increased as persons learn the background situation and why a problem developed (Merriam, 1988, pp. 13, 14; Olson, 1982, in Hoaglin and others, pp. 138 - 139). The wide variety of data gathering gives a many faceted picture of what is happening and why.

#### 4. Inductive:

Finding new data aids the development of new understanding and concepts, rather than proving hypotheses (Merriam, 1988, p. 14)

A description of our own concrete experience and knowledge, planted in a context presents itself to the reader, who with his/her own background, can generalize this information to a population within his/her experience (Merriam, 1988, p. 15; Stake, 1981, pp. 35, 36).

#### Setting of the Bounded Study

This case study was undertaken within the bounds of a theological school in the foothills of Western Canada. Located on a 149 acre site, a high plateau among rolling hills in the quiet countryside outside a small town, the physical plant has grown year by year since the establishment of the institution in 1987. At the time of the study, the academic buildings included a library / administration building and an academic building. Campus housing included a unit for adjunct professors and two student housing units. Although day students were a part of the enrollment, two more student family housing units were under construction to meet the demands of increasing enrollment.

#### Academic Climate

The theological seminary offers a Master of Divinity degree and a Master of Religious Education Degree to persons with a bachelor's degree in any field. A Doctor of Ministry programme, through the auspices of a fully accredited sister seminary, offers training to persons with the Master of Divinity Degree. The seminary has a Candidate Member status with The Association of

Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). In the fall semester of 1999 the seminary was in an intense self study, the final stage of accreditation with the ATS.

The Bible college, which is administered by the seminary in its physical plant, offers students undergraduate diploma programmes. These undergraduate programmes offer a 30 hour Certificate of Christian Studies, a 60 hour Associate Diploma of Christian Ministry or a 60 hour Associate Diploma of Christian Education. Students in the diploma programmes can begin study with a high school diploma or a GED. Students in these programmes, in cooperation with a neighboring Christian college, can then choose to apply these credits toward a Bachelor's degree, as an encouragement to more developed training.

The growing library aims to "support and facilitate both students and faculty in their educational life" (Blackaby, 1999, p. 25). Over 26,000 volumes are on site. Periodical subscriptions include 150 titles. The library, which is in the automation process, participates in the On-line Computer Library Center for cataloguing, interlibrary loan and further reference. On-line database searches, audio and video material, microfilm/fiche reader-printer, photocopy and computers, Internet access and CD-ROM database programs are available.

The faculty, by right of their own academic experience, hold high academic expectations for their students. The five full time faculty members hold doctorates, and two of the three part time faculty hold doctorates. Four of these professors hold a Ph. D. and the two Adjunct Professors held a doctorate

and a Master's degree. Reflection has, in recent years, become acknowledged by graduates of the school: "The professors here teach you to reflect. I couldn't think before I came here, but reflection taught me to think" (Lincer, New Student Luncheon, 27 August 99). English instruction in the school is designed to fit the students for achievement in accordance with faculty and institutional expectations.

### Student Initiation

Four students were selected from among a total subject pool of 10 initiate full time divinity students in the seminary and in the college. These 10 students were required to participate in orientation at the school, a necessity for finalization of admission. This orientation included mandatory English language testing, which included a standardized comprehensive English test, a spelling dictation test, a composition test and attendance at a research and writing seminar, which covered Turabian form, as well as writing strategies.

The 10 initiate divinity students were given a standardized test designed for college entrance examination which covered structure, usage and reading comprehension (Bahe, V., Beck, R., Kilday, D., Martin, P., McGahan, S., Mybro, C., Sabol, R. and Menninga, L. (Eds.), (1979). Scores of at least 57 on the comprehensive English Placement Score and at least a 33 on the Reading Comprehension Score in this instrument are required to pass.

Additional required testing included a spelling dictation which I selected from a list of the most often misspelled words at the seminary; the required passing score for the spelling segment was 60%. The essay examination, a

compare and contrast assignment which I formulated, concluded the required entrance examination. Students were required to make a 4 on a 6 point grid, a GED type of scoring, in order to pass.

The rationale for using this test battery was based on the notion that a number of seminary students were admitted partly on the basis of a "calling". Some of these students arrived without adequate instructional background in the English language arts to meet the demands of the academic challenges at the institution. The school administration thus allowed these students to follow their feeling of "oughtness" without sacrificing academic quality. Thus, the testing I administered was designed to obtain a profile of the literacy levels of the initiate students. This knowledge would also provide me with a basis for proceeding with my study.

#### Validity

Data were secured from a broad spectrum of sources, including observation, interviews and document collection (Smith and Glass, 1987, pp. 264 - 270) to ensure trustworthiness and to prepare for an in depth description (Creswell, 1998, p. 65). Sources for triangulation of data (Merriam, 1988, p. 169) included the syllabus, lesson plans, the researcher's daily log, student questionnaires, initial written student responses, transcribed class discussions and my individual discussions with students, student journals and transcribed interviews with students as well as my assistants and others within the milieu. This breadth of data provided an in depth picture of the bounded system.

Although analysis was ongoing during the semester of contact time with the class in order to aid instruction, the study was basically organized into an on - site phase of collecting data from September 2 to December 9, 1999 and a post-site phase of analysing data and writing a descriptive report beginning in January 2000.

### Participant Selection

The four students for the study were chosen based on the following criteria:

1) In keeping with school policy, initiate students enrolled in the college level Associate Diploma of Christian Ministry or an Associate Diploma of Christian Education programme in the college are required to register for the credit course, 1L3311, English Grammar, Reading and Writing. These students must have a GED or a high school diploma.

2) Master of Divinity or Master of Religious Education students in the seminary who had deficits in any facet of the entrance examination would be required to take "a non-credit English program designated by the seminary in order to strengthen the student's reading and writing skills. The number and type of credit classes taken by the student "will be restricted until the English class was successfully completed" (Blackaby, 1999, p. 19). Students in these programmes hold a bachelor's degree from a variety of fields.

A total of four students met the criteria for the study. Two students met the first criteria by the fact that they were in programmes which required English 1L3311 for credit. These persons, between them, showed a need for help in

reading comprehension (scores of 44 and 30, with a required passing score of 33, essay (scores of 2.7 and 3.4, with a required passing score of 4). One diploma student had a score of 50% in spelling, with a 60% score required to pass. They were both high school graduates.

Two ESL Master of Divinity students needed English remediation and thus met the second criteria. The two Master of Divinity students, between them, had deficits in reading comprehension (with scores of 15 and 27, short of a score of 33 needed to pass), essay (with scores of 2.7 and 3.4, needing a 4 to pass) and spelling (one student had a score of 50 %, needing a 60% passing score). The Masters of Divinity students both had Bachelor's degrees earned using the Korean language and one of them had earned a Masters degree in Management at a university in the United States.

The four adult male students enrolled in course number 1L3311 English Grammar, Reading and Writing, which met each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 8 am. The semester extended from August 31 to December 10, 1999. The final assignment, which was analyzed, was given on 25 November and response extended for two more weeks.

The four students who met the criteria were also a part of a seminar which I gave to all ten initiate students during orientation. It was entitled "Research and Writing Seminar: An Exploration of Turabian Form and Seminary Writing Tasks" (Nance, 1999). This seminar and the testing situation on 26 and 27 August were my first acquaintance with the diploma students. I was already acquainted with the ESL students because I was in friendship

relationships with their families and I had tutored or supervised instruction of these men to help them acquire a score of 550 on the TOEFL, the minimal required score for admission to study at the institution. A biographical vignette of each of the participants, **Abe, Bob, Ike** and **Ivan** (not their real names) follows.

### **Abe**

Abe was 28 years old and enrolled as a student in the 60 hour (two year) Associate Diploma of Christian Ministry programme at the college, administered by the seminary. This programme was an option for persons with high school or a GED and who were over 22 years old. His vocational interests in his second career included involvement in the pastorate, missions and marriage counselling.

He had lived his entire life in north central British Columbia where he graduated from high school and had been a self-employed truck driver in the logging industry all of his adult life. He continued weekend runs. He was the only person among his immediate family who graduated from high school: "My grandfather was the only other member that studied beyond high school". His grandfather studied for the Catholic priesthood until he entered active service in World War II and

he had become fluent in seven different languages including Hebrew, Latin and Greek. My grandfather's collection of books and his seemingly unlimited knowledge sparked a desire in me to gain it as well.

He acknowledged that "in Junior High I led my class" (Reading

Autobiographical Sketch, 10 September, 1999).

Abe's mother, who taught him to recognize words before he started school, was the most influential person in his reading experience. His home reading centred around the Bible and novels. He felt that the schools had a "high opinion of reading and tried to teach us not only how to read, but the value of reading", but that he had not been effectively taught how to handle the variety of reading tasks he has encountered in the real world. In his Reading Autobiographical Sketch (10 September, 1999) he stated that his involvement in instructional activities and practises in elementary school included

Sunday School, music lessons, swimming lessons and school phonics. . . . From my mother's example, and influence of the Christian school, I enjoyed reading the Bible, especially the Old Testament. I am intrigued by the history, the great men and the common sense of the Old Testament.

He also read the fantasy fiction of Calvin Miller and Steven Lawhead as "an escape or distraction from reality". His mother

read quite a lot, either Western Women books or her Bible. Aside from her books, and our own Bibles I don't recall any other books in the house. My family's reading habits I believe have not changed over the years.

He observed that his reading habit is to skim for facts only (An Inventory or Student Reading Interest, 2 September 1999).

The first writing Abe did by choice occurred when he was 14 and a student in a Christian school: "I wrote a one page sermon on my belief of Baptism". His next experience of writing anything by choice were "a few letters to my wife before we were married. The only reason for writing to her was it was easier to write how I felt than to talk to her" (Student Interview).

The writing habits of Abe's family included only "casual notes on greeting cards". Although the family of origin have lived miles apart over the past ten years,

I don't think any of us has ever written a letter. I do remember my mom studying her Bible and taking notes during various Bible studies. However, recently I have also observed my dad taking notes during a few of my Sunday School lessons (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September, 1999).

In his Literacy Autobiography (7 September 1999) Abe observed,

Even today, I still have trouble expressing what I want to, whether written or spoken, especially emotion. As a result not only writing, but communication in general is difficult. . . . I think that's the hardest thing for me is trying to be open.

Abe observed that his school writing assignments which were most difficult were those which

required imagination or make believe, although I did do better when the topic was based on facts or experience. For example, the one research report that I enjoyed writing was for a grade 7 science fair. The report was about the effects of drug addiction on both the addicted and the family, this included a lot of research as well as personal experience (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September, 1999).

He pointed to conditions at home which affected his problems with writing in school:

When I was very young we endured the drug abuse of my father; my mom who I believe would have told us bed time stories and read us books was otherwise occupied with trying to cope. And then starting when I was about 12 years old, we were faced several times with the highly possible death of my father due to severe heart trouble, and then more serious drug addiction. I am convinced that this is why I had so much trouble with writing: having to face reality so young I had a hard time trying to make up stories, or express how I felt (Semi-Structured Interview, 14 October).

His wife home schooled their two young sons. He stated:

I have noticed several interesting facts in children who were not only raised in a Christian home, but grew up reading directly from the Bible. I believe they can read better, have a higher reading level and when reading other material their comprehension is greater. .... When all things are considered, literacy improves the person, and thus makes our society better (Semi-structured Interview, 14 October).

The comprehensive English entrance examination, which is a part of orientation of initiate students at the seminary, showed that Abe had passing scores in reading comprehension, spelling and the composite segment which scored of grammar, usage and reading comprehension as a unit. He acknowledged his need for essay instruction. His essay score showed need for instruction, as reflected in a 2.1 score on a grid which required a score of 4 to pass and a 6 as the highest score.

His vision and purpose in life, in spite of various obstacles, could motivate his study:

I know just in coming here half of my family thinks I'm nuts. . . . it's actually surprising. especially for people who have been Christians for -- twice as long as you have. They -- they still -- they -- they don't seem to -- to grasp (Discussion of Johann Gerhard Oncken text with instructor, 16 November 1999).

From the beginning of the Bible, right through today, God has repeatedly used one man to accomplish great things. A lot of these men were not of any great significance until God started to use them. This both encourages and frightens me. It is encouraging because God can, if He chooses, use me to do great things. The same thought also frightens me because I'm not completely sure that I will be willing to allow God to use me. It is odd, that the same thing can create such different feelings. My prayer is that whatever God has for me, whether great or small, I will be willing to follow Him (Final Reflection, Johann Gerhard Oncken text, 18 November 1999).

**Bob**

Bob acknowledged that he had need for literacy development and that he was anxious about the challenge involved in this opportunity:

My single greatest regret since high school graduation, was the decision to forego post-secondary education in favour of full-time employment. So it is with great joy and sense of fulfillment that brings me to [this school]. Yet I am gripped by my shortcomings in the areas of reading comprehension and writing (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September 1999).

Indeed, the results of the Comprehensive English Entrance Test upheld his self assessment. His Reading Comprehension Score of 30 was short of the 33 needed to pass that segment. His spelling score of 40% was 20 points shy of the required passing score. His felt need was for "reading speed and comprehension" (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September 1999). As a student enrolled in the two year Associate Diploma of Christian Ministry programme in the divinity college, this 31 year old student could benefit from the required English 1L3311 course.

He was born in Ontario and lived there until he was through grade eight. The family moved to Southern Alberta where he graduated from high school. He then became a cabinet maker, who was self employed the past several years. He continued to do flex time in the cabinet making industry in order to support his wife and two daughters as he studied full time.

His mother emigrated from Germany at the age of eight, so she naturally desired that her son could communicate well. Her keenness to oversee his linguistic learning could have been intensified when, due to divorce, his father

left the home at the time Bob was in the lower grades. He observed that she was the most influential person in his reading experience:

... she ... encouraged me to read more. She helped me with word pronunciation and definitions. Some of my friends, unknowingly, shamed me into reading more as they could cite book quotations by well-known authors while my adeptness was limited to describing a pretty picture I once saw (Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September 1999).

He described his mother's mode of encouraging him toward literacy:

I grew up the son of whom I regarded as *the* literary perfectionist. Every writing assignment ultimately became 'hers', not mine; her structure, her style, her vocabulary, ... Most students would revel in their parent's insistence on 'checking it over'. I, however, took exception to this ritual. Apparently, I was the only twelve year old who could use 'equivocate' in a sentence!

In her defence, my mother taught me a valuable lesson. One's inability to proficiently employ proper language skills is disabled throughout life. Only in later years would I realize my mother's profound influence over my appreciation for excellence of expression in the written and spoken word (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Literacy was a family matter. Beyond his mother, his grandparents "Oma" and "Opa" (in German) were avid English language learners and readers.

My grandmother, with no formal education beyond grade school, was the first to become fluent in English. Her determination was such that she taught Sunday school to several grades within one year of her arrival! My grandfather ... a devoted man of God...successful window maker ... a brilliant man ... [could read] a two hundred page novel in twenty minutes, *and actually* remembering the story. I, however, am living proof that this is no hereditary trait. I have always struggled with reading comprehension and speed ... Textbook reading is analogous to receiving a mailed cheque for one hundred million dollars - I need to review it five times to digest it. (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Although Bob described himself as a “motor reader” (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September 1999) he acknowledged a natural bent toward aesthetic reading: “In spite of this impairment, I do possess an uncanny ability to remember scenes and events in descriptive novels, often years later” (Literacy Autobiography).

Bob learned to read by the phonics method. During elementary grades he thought that proficiency in oral reading was proof of reading skills. He often enjoyed reading to the younger grades:

A small group of expectant kindergarten children would huddle around your feet as you were perched on your chair like a monarch. . . . I can not recall a time when we were tested for comprehension . . . if you appeared a healthy reader, outwardly, there was little to be concerned about (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September).

His early home reading experiences included “the Hardy Boys series, Readers Digest, A Woman of Substance ( at age 10), Bible stories from daily devotional and a variety of picture books”. Weekly trips to the school library enabled him to sign out special interest books, within the curricular mandate for a broad subject field (Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September).

He had no special instruction in reading improvement beyond elementary grades. In high school he “struggled with reading comprehension” (Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September): “. . . torture would have been a tempting alternative to Hamlet and MacBeth. Among my friends, reading simply wasn’t ‘cool’ and few engaged in it”, which he now regrets (Literacy Autobiography). Since high school, he has struggled with reading comprehension:

It is difficult for me to read a single paragraph and its main details without rereading . . . Reading aloud increases my incomprehension . . . But now my appetite -- and I have developed one -- for reading is satisfied by quite a broad spectrum of topics, including business management, trade references and motivational publications, and . . . indulgence in the occasional novel. . . . reading books have vastly broadened my vocabulary. . . . (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

He lamented the state of his reading situation:

I have no recollection of ever having been taught proper reading skills. Skimming, prereading and identifying major points within an article are as foreign to me as knitting a scarf. I understand the concept but struggle nonetheless. I have always been and continue to be, at best, an average reader (Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September).

Writing, however, afforded enjoyment:

I enjoy expressing myself, however flawed, in written form . . . verbosity is my trademark. . . . Concise writing has always been my nemesis. I love . . . writing sermons, church council reports and yes, English compositions! (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

On his Inventory of Student Reading Interest, completed on September 2, his declared vocational interest was pastoral ministry, but by the time he had the semi-structured interview with me on 14 October his interest was shifting toward evangelism. In November he wrote:

With each passing day, I sense the call of God to be one of those vociferous proclaimers of Christ and Him crucified. . . . Fear and trepidation blaze through my mind as I contemplate the possibility of sharing company with the outcast, downtrodden evangelists. Still, what else can I offer my Lord who has already done eternally more for me? My comfort comes with the knowledge that God rarely chooses a candidate appropriate for the task. I, then, am uniquely qualified in my ineptness (First Written Reflection, Johann Gerhard Oncken text, 11 November 1999).

**Ike**

I became acquainted with Ike through his wife, who studied in 1L3311 English Grammar, Reading and Writing in the fall of 1998 when she was a Master of Religious Education student at the seminary. As her supervisor in her Field Education internship in Literacy Missions, I had weekly sessions with her. The family were landed immigrants and they had resided in Canada for one and one-half years at that time. We socialized in each others' homes and I became acquainted with her entire family, including their three sons and Ike.

Ike had retired from the position of Lieutenant Colonel in the South Korean Army, and after a stint as house parents in a missionary boarding school in Indonesia, Ike was hoping to pass the TOEFL so that he could enroll in the Master of Divinity degree programme. In January 1999 I evaluated him, prescribed curriculum for his TOEFL preparation and tutored this very dedicated student until June. In April his TOEFL score was satisfactory for admission to the seminary.

Ike, who was 47, was born during the Korean War (Semi - Structured Interview, 14 October 99): "My parents were struggling to save their lives and my two brothers and one sister ...." (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September 1999). Ike's parents did not have opportunity for public education, since they were born in a Korean war for independence from Japan. They grew up in

small mountain villages in the countryside of [North] . . . Korea, which was occupied by Communist since Korea got the independence in 1945 from Japan. They did a kind of home schooling and tutor like most other contemporary kids (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Ike “automatically learned to read in school through repetition: The teacher read, I followed. The teacher gave reading homework”. He was to “read an assigned text for 5 or 10 times and the parents signed” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September). He felt that his home had priorities other than reading:

I could not easily get someone help my study at home . . . [in] elementary school, my dad, who was contracting modern buildings and dams, was too busy to help me study and to play with me. My mom was also busy in managing her own business. . . . I [had] . . . a difficult time in school . . . (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September 1999).

He “cannot remember any home reading given by my parents” (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

In elementary school, he liked writing homework, “. . . because I could improve my writing”. He felt, however, that “the teaching was boring” and he has “no fond memories of early reading” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch).

Pedagogy was compounded by health problems:

I was sick . . . pneumonia and other illness until 4th grade. But I started to study very hard since the 5th grade. One day my teacher selected my book review, which was the story about Brother Light who flied the sky in the airplane invented by them, as one of the best composition (My Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

He felt that his elementary teachers believed that reading involved “. . . the students having respect for what the teacher read, and memorization of what we learned” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch (9 September).

By middle and high school, Ike had such an intense interest in Korean art that he “read a number of [modern] Korean novels and Western ones written by

Shakespeare . . . and other famous authors” (My Literacy Autobiography, 7 September). In grade 7, he “tried to read aloud by myself, like an announcer” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September). In grade 9, he felt that he was taught something about how to handle one variety of reading in the real world as “we learned how to critically read the newspaper . . . editorial section . . . the critical viewpoint” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September). That year he and three friends “wrote several poems, book reviews, and essays and published a book by ourselves to memory our friendships” (A Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

The person who was most influential in his reading was: “My high school Korean Literacy teacher who taught me seriously. . . . He was eager to teach more than we expected” (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September).

His favourite subjects were math and painting, while his most difficult subject was English (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September):

The English language, though, was difficult: because of different structure, grammar, and a lot of vocabularies to memory. Though I spent more time in English than in other subjects, English always made me confused and was the biggest obstacle through my school life ( My Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

As a management student at university, he forsook English to study intensive Japanese for two months. The similarities of the Korean and the Japanese languages helped him to understand that English was difficult because it had different linguistic characteristics. He continued English reading of:

field books as possible as I could. One of the best impressing books was the sermon book written by Martin Luther King Jr. I

was so impressed by his thought which advocated me how to fight against the unjust, the racism, and the Communist with love and God's words. . . . a candidate of ROTC, I could not have enough time to enjoy reading a book (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

During his military career, he realized that his inability "to communicate with American officers" was a handicap, With self study he obtained a TOEFL score which enabled him to attain a Master of Science degree in management at the U. S. Naval Post Graduate School, ". . . though I had difficulty in listening and speaking English. I spend most time in reading English books during that time" (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Once again in Korea, he sought to expand his English beyond military and economic fields:

I often tried to read Christian English books that my wife was translating in Korean. But when I was assigned in the commander of a supply battalion . . . I would like to read management books to study how to develop the Korean army supply system efficiently with minimum cost and the best readiness. I got the reputation by suggesting the effective supply system. . . . I was satisfied with my career, I wonder if I was pleasing God. I would ponder to find God's will in the rest of my life. I started to read the Bible regularly. . . . I could not satisfied with my military life. . . . Since that time I . . . read Christian books, . . . for prayer, studying the Bible, parenting adolescent. . . . But I was forgotten English, since I had . . . few chance to speak English in Korea (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

With immigration to Canada and a job at Safeway:

I was so disappointed with my pronunciation and listening. I would face different English patterns according to a person. . I tried to tell my thought or to express my feeling came from my heart, I felt frustration. As I sensed that God still wanted to use me for His mission, I prayed for my English. God sent me . . . English teacher. . . taking the TOEFL test at the first class, she explained

my weakness in detail. . . how to refresh and improve my English. . .  
 . . . one lesson per a week (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

In addition to Korean, Japanese and English, Ike has studied Chinese to a grade 2 level. He studied the Indonesian national language (*bahasa Indonesia*) in that culture for 9 months.

He felt that he needed to achieve “faster reading by dividing a phrase” (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September). Also:

I am still reading an English book slowly, though I am a fast reader in Korean books. I need to improve my pronunciation and speaking, because I think it is impossible to master any language without the sound (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

His aspiration for his second career was to be a pastor or a member of a ministry team.

The comprehensive entrance examination showed that this Master of Divinity student needed instruction in reading comprehension (a score of 27 on a grid which required a 33 to pass) and in essay (a 2.7 on a scale which required a 4 to pass, with 6 being the maximum score). He had asked permission for this one more opportunity to concentrate on the English language, even before he sat for the entrance examination.

### **Ivan**

I first became acquainted with Ivan (not his real name) in the Fall of 1996 when he took the comprehensive examination during orientation so that he could begin studying toward the TOEFL examination. He sat in my reading and spelling class in English 1L3311. I prescribed curriculum for him to study with my intern to raise his TOEFL score from 500. At that juncture, listening

comprehension and oral expression were my biggest literacy concerns for him. I felt that gaining these abilities would lay groundwork for other development he needed. He and his wife also began attending a conversational ESL class I teach on Sunday mornings. We paid social visits in each others' homes and I became acquainted with their two young sons.

After Ivan obtained a TOEFL score above 550, he began part time study as he took night courses offered by the seminary. He enjoyed this practical study, compared to the previous structured English study, which "was boring" (Private Conversation, 1998). Through the years I have seen a steady improvement in communicative abilities, although I have not formally taught this couple during much of this time. The family were landed immigrants and were in the process of becoming citizens. Ivan left a career in diplomacy to prepare for ministry. He worked as a janitor at a local public school to support his family while he studied full time for the Master of Divinity degree.

Forty - one years ago, Ivan was born in South Korea (Semi-Structured Interview, 17 October 1999), where he lived until he was 30 years old. He has no fond memories of reading from his childhood (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September 1999):

I believe that I didn't have a good environment for developing literacy in my childhood". . . . The literacy levels of my parents were low. They only took primary education. I have never seen that my parent read a book. I think that they didn't have enough opportunities to develop literacy. . . . Also they didn't realize the importance of literacy education in childhood. However they had a great deal of interest in the education of their sons (My Literacy Autobiography, 7 September 1999).

His mother taught him the Korean alphabet when he was about five years old (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September). He did “not like reading in elementary school” (An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, 2 September 1999):

When I entered primary school, I have took literacy training with teachers. . . . literacy learning environment was so poor. I had just a few text books. There was no library in the school or community which I lived in. My parents have never bought any book for me. . . . grade one, I memorized whole text books. Because I didn't have any other books to read, I just used to read my text books so many times. With the passing of years, I gradually lost interest in reading and writing, and my scores in Korean slowly lowered (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Also I regret that I didn't develop a concern and interest in literacy. Such a weak background of literacy education has made my studying of Seminary more difficult. I need to improve my literacy (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Throughout his academic career language had been his most difficult school subject, while Math and physics had been his easiest subjects. He never received any instruction in how to handle various reading tasks (A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, 9 September). He began English study in middle school, but he disliked memorization of vocabulary and the grammar, which seemed complicated in contrast to Korean. He accredited much of his lack of attainment in reading to:

my lack of concern. Also my language teacher seldom gave reading homework to their students. . . . it was rarely that I read to the end of the books. . . . teachers used to ask the students to write a diary during vacation, but I used to do mine at one time around the end of vacation time (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

University study, with its many reading and writing assignments, showed him the “necessity of literacy. . . . my reading speed was too slow and I made many spelling mistakes” (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

After university graduation with a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science, Ivan worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Republic of [South] Korea. First as a computer programmer in South Korea, then as Vice-Consul at the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Caracas, Venezuela. He studied four months of Spanish language during the four year tenure. Then for two years he continued his diplomatic service in Indonesia, where he did self study of the national language, *bahasa Indonesia* : “I had to make many official documents. When I made documents I had sometime had trouble because of the lack of writing skills”. (Literacy Autobiography, 7 September).

Ivan’s comprehensive English entrance test during orientation in 1999 showed that he had multiple needs for instruction, although his composite score of usage, structure and reading showed a 59, an overall acceptable score, since a 57 was needed to pass. His reading comprehension score of 15 was less than half of the 33 required. His spelling score of 50 was 10 points shy of the required 60. The required essay score was 4 out of a possible 6, but his examination showed a 3.4. The scores were a vast improvement over the 1996 scores.

He, himself, noticed improvement in his English communication abilities in the immediate past. He wrote:

two years ago you corrected -- you corrected so many. Right now is almost half of them. . . . Previously it was hard to read to Bible in English, but right now I don't need to use the dictionary just. Some of the word I don't know, some time without dictionary I can read the Bible . That's the way I feel I've improved (Semi- structured Interview, 17 October).

He wanted to improve writing skills and reading speed.

Despite his language deficiencies, Ivan was interested in cross - cultural ministry: "South America . . . China is some similar as our country. Some benefit. Languages some similar". He had a mandate:

God is always good. At the time when I was sick when I felt alone and when I suffered from a pain persecution, god was good and love.

Since I met Him, Jesus, I have praised Him everyday when I see his missionaries or pastors who under burden I felt sorry. . . . I want to follow the direction that he wants because He is so good and loving to me. . . . the God is so good and so lovely so He can not be disobeyed! (Discussion, Johann Gerhard Oncken text with instructor, 12 November 1999).

### Meeting Student Needs and Gathering Data

Efforts were made to become better acquainted with the students and their backgrounds in order to know and to meet their needs. These efforts also provided documentation for this study.

### Questionnaires

On September 2, students were given opportunity for input on the texts to be chosen for class use when they completed An Inventory of Student Reading Interest (Please see Appendix A). During the week of October 17, they had individual interviews with me concerning their response to this inventory. On September 9 in the Friday class, I invited the students to complete A Reading Autobiographical Sketch (Vacca, J., Vacca, R., and Gove, M., 1991) (See

Appendix B) regarding initial literacy, home reading, academic reading experiences and the person who most influenced their reading, as well as teacher attitudes toward reading.

The composition assistant conducted composition instruction each Tuesday. In September she received an assignment, which was a part of the syllabus (Nance, 1999), from each student entitled, "My Literacy Autobiography" (Greene, 1994) (See Appendix C). This document included personal and family literacy history and attitudes, student literacy development, as well as pertinent influences upon reading and writing provided by the community. She shared this documentation with me, as I had previously requested.

#### Researcher Log and Interviews

I kept a Daily Researcher Log, which recorded my observations and reflections regarding the Friday reader response class. I maintained regular communication with the composition and the grammar/reading strategies assistants. Since the assistants were a part of the classroom climate as they taught on Tuesday and Wednesday, a semistructured audiotaped interview was conducted with each assistant near the end of the term. Individual student needs and growth were addressed, both with the composition assistant and with the grammar and reading strategies assistant, who gave instruction on Wednesdays. In this small theological school, student, faculty and administrators are in close contact with each other and each person on the premises contributes to the learning situation. Thus, other audiotaped

interviews in the climate included the President, the Academic Dean, the Registrar, and the Admissions Director. These interviews addressed background views on reading approaches and reading needs at the college and seminary which could contribute to student attitude toward response in the reading classroom. I transcribed all interview and class discussion tapes.

On December 2, classroom reflection and discussion were undertaken regarding what the students were aware of having learned about reading, both in the reading strategies and reader response approaches. This session was designed to provide information about student awareness of reading and response strategies. I audiotaped and transcribed the session as the students openly shared their consciousness of what they had learned. It provided valuable information, as did the other opportunities to receive student input.

### Response Invitations

The four students in the study were given opportunity to respond to one text per week for 12 weeks. Once during the term, each student also responded to one other text (Johannn Gerhard Oncken by Browne, 1961) in which he had the usual written responses and, instead of class discussion, had a one on one discussion with me.

Each text received response over a period of two weeks. At the end of the first week of each assignment, each student submitted initial written reflection and three questions which he planned to use in class discussion. After the audio recorded class discussion, each student was invited to write a journal response to be submitted at the class session the same day the

following week. They were also given a new text to make the 2 initial responses plus formulated discussion questions. This overlap enabled the class to have a new text to discuss each week.

When formulating the invitations to written reflection, I drew principally upon Probst (1992, pp. 117 - 127), from the approach of “writing *from*”, “writing *of*” and “writing *about*” literature. I synthesized this approach with Greco’s (1990) ideas about practise. These ideas are based upon Iser’s theory and fit well with, not only the practise of this approach, but with the assessment tools used in this study. Development of the lesson plans fit under these three approaches, as follows:

1) **Writing from literature** (Probst 1992, p. 119).

Students wrote reflectively about their own lives (p. 119). The first invitation to the initial written response in each assignment early in the term consistently had this element as an impetus for the lived through experience. “Have You Ever . . . ?” was used as an aid to transaction (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 393), an invitation for students to write about the personal meaning of the text. Students were asked to reflect upon a time in their lives (or in the life of someone they knew) when they faced a choice, situation, barricade, major illness, injustice, problem, conflict, doubts, handicap, choice, value shift, turning point, adversity, crisis, decision counter to expert advice et. al., as did a person in the text. For instance, in *The Trouble with “X”* (Lewis, 1989) the first initial invitation to written reflection asked,

“Have you (or someone you know) ever had a bothersome person in your life? Relive this trying circumstance as you write”. The students looked upon this type of assignment as an opportunity to expound upon their values.

2) **Writing of literature** (Probst, 1992, pp. 122-124).

Readers used their imagination in creative writing (pp. 122 - 124). This type of assignment aided the development of insight and empathy. I used three types of invitation for this response opportunity, drawing upon Greco (1990, pp. 34 - 40), whose methods are an elaboration of Iser’s (1978) theory regarding interaction with the text:

**a. Writing to Explore Points of View** (Greco, 1990, p. 35).

The text ostensibly came to life as the reader assumed the identity and viewpoint of a person contemporary with the text presented (p. 35). This type of assignment was particularly helpful whenever the text was about another period of history or a different culture. In *Susanna Wesley: Mother of John and Charles Wesley* (Deen, 1959), the assignment used this approach:

“Reflect upon the situation and viewpoint of a parishioner in the pastorate of Samuel and Susanna. Take the identity of this person and vividly tell their stance from within that person’s skin.”

**b. Writing to Fill in Gaps or Spaces** (Iser, 1978; Greco, 1990, p. 34). The reader contributed to the reality of the scenes (Greco, 1990, p. 34).

Since modern narration leaves gaps which afford the reader opportunity to exercise imagination, instructional strategies can aid the lived through experience by asking the student to fill in the untold segment of the text. This approach is especially helpful when the text deals with a strange culture. For

instance, in the text *Crises in Kosovo* (Finn, 1999, p. A 4), I issued the second invitation to reflection:

Elshani's wife, Mahije, never saw her husband from the time he left his uncle's home in Kosovo on March 25, 1999 until she entered his hospital room in Tirana, Albania. Fill this untold gap in the story. Assume the identify of this Islamic lady with two small children. Make her live as you tell the story of her journey from inside her skin.

**c. Writing to Reflect upon Silences** (Greco, 1990, p. 36, Iser, 1978). The reader builds upon facets of the story (Greco, 1990, p. 36). In *The Suitcase Lady* (McLaren, 1995), the response invitation used this approach thusly:

Build upon a facet of this story as you reflect upon the suitcase lady's son, who is mentioned, but who is silent. Let this son speak. You yourself take this son's identity and write about this situation, his potential attitude toward his mother and street people in general and any implications you may foresee for your life in ministry.

**3) Writing about literature** (Probst, 1992, pp. 124, 125).

Reflection focuses upon the "characters' attitudes and values; the ethical positions presented in the text; . . . , dilemmas in the plot -- the characters' problems and choices, . . ." (p. 125), issues which the aware adult student is apt to bring to the text (pp. 124, 125). This particular response invitation was especially valued by the divinity students, since morals, ethics, values and attitudes were a dominant part of their thought patterns. I used this approach in *The Cat in the Bag* (Pearson, 1992):

The author states that these urban legends contain moral advice. Have stories affected your moral development? Write reflectively"(Second Initial Response Invitation, 21 October).

The initial response invitations became less structured as the term progressed and the students became accustomed to the approach. The first response invitation for I Have a Dream (King, From Wyrick, J. and Slaughter, B., 1989) simply stated: "Write whatever came to mind as you read this account. . . ." (11 November). The Probst (1992) and Greco (1990) based approaches served the class well.

### Initiating the Study

I used a straight forward regimen for initiating this study. The four subjects were selected from 10 initiate students at a theological college and seminary. After orientation and testing the students who were enrolled for college study and the seminary students who needed language remediation were placed in the 1L3311 English Grammar Reading and Writing course. A choice of a variety of texts were offered these students who were needing assistance with reading. Using student input, I chose twelve texts to be presented to the class. The invitation to response to each of these texts followed the approaches presented by Probst (1992) and Greco (1990). The next section presents characteristics of the five texts which I chose for further analysis, as well as the lesson plan for each one.

### Texts Chosen For Further Analysis

Thirteen texts were used during the term. The texts which I chose for analysis were spread across the term, so that I could have an idea about how student response to texts changed over time. Response to each text happened over a two week time period. The second week that the student was transacting

with the text in a journal entry he was also responding to a new text. This chain allowed the class to discuss a new text each week. Five texts were chosen for further analysis:

**The First Text: The Laundress** by Einar Paul Jonsson (1996), response began on 2 September.

**The Second Text: The Trouble with "X". . .** by C. S. Lewis (1989), began on 14 October.

**The Third Text: The Cat in the Bag** by Ian Pearson (1992), began on 21 October.

**The Fourth Text: I Have a Dream** by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1989), began on 4 November.

**The Fifth Text: Love is Healthful**, a compilation edited from: Gilbert (1997), Morrison (1948), and Roche (1995), began on 18 November.

For the entire texts chosen for response analysis, please see Appendix D.

The response of the four students to these five stories were basic to my analysis. These data included initial written response, formulated class discussion questions, transcribed audio recorded class discussion, and a final journal response for each student on each story. Interviews with administration in the school, with the students and with the two assistants gave bearing to the climate of the school.

### The Analysis of Data

Data were filed chronologically in a portable accordion file, an audio tape file, an interview log and the researcher's log. I transcribed all of the class discussions and all of the interviews during the semester while I had contact time with the students. Daily marking of written responses began this part of the analysis. At the beginning of the off - site phase, I read and examined responses to all five texts chosen for analysis. I chose three stories from each

student's responses to be analyzed for use in the descriptive account. I am including here a synopsis of each text and its corresponding invitation to response. For complete text, please see Appendix D.

The texts and response invitations.

**The First Text: The Laundress**

**“The Laundress”** (Jonsson, 1996) was a poetic vignette of an immigrant to Winnipeg. She sang Icelandic hymns as a means to personal peace. This two paragraph text framed the contrasts from the cultural norm which was observed by English speaking acquaintances of the laundress. In this first reflection assignment on 2 September the students were invited to provide one initial written response to this text (Probst 1992, p. 119):

WRITTEN REFLECTION

**Writing From Literature:** Writing from your own life, think about the laundress and how she found peace in a chaotic immigrant experience. Think upon experiences of peace you have had in your own life. Write about any experience of peace (perhaps in the midst of chaos) in your life which came to mind as you read this text.

**The Second Text: The Trouble with “X”**

**“The Trouble with X”** (Lewis, 1989), classified in An Inventory of Student Reading Interest as a Human Relations text, admonished persons to cease dwelling on the faults of others and to look inward for the correction of one's own faults. There were two initial reflection assignments (Probst, 1991, pp. 119, 122 - 124) with this text on October 14:

WRITTEN REFLECTION

**1. Writing From Literature:** Have you (or someone you know) ever had a bothersome person in your life? Relive this trying circumstance as you write.

**2. Writing About Literature:** C. S. Lewis presupposes that each reader of this article is in some kind of difficulty about another person. Since one's relationship with one's life mate is the most important relationship on earth, you as a minister will be dealing with persons in marital difficulty a great deal. In this reflection, assume the identity of a husband who is having difficulty with his wife. She is disillusioned about marriage, as are you. Perhaps money or teenaged children or life changes have strained your relationship to the limit. Write as if "divorce " were not in your vocabulary. This mate is not a disposable commodity. You are resolved to keep your vow before God and mankind. Put yourself in God's hands as you reflect upon Dr. Lewis' ruminations. Write about how you plan to improve yourself as God helps you make your marriage a genuine one, rather than just a legal state.

### **The Third Text: The Cat in The Bag**

The third text to receive analysis was "**The Cat in the Bag**" (Pearson, 1992), a Canadian urban legend, but it was listed under Humour in An Inventory of Student Reading Interest. The story centred around the disposal of the body of a cat which was the accidental victim of an impact with an automobile. The cat's body was stolen after it was placed in a bag from a popular department store and human nature ran its course. On 21 October the students were invited to two consecutive initial responses (Probst, 1992, pp. 119,124, 125):

#### WRITTEN REFLECTION

**1. Writing From Literature: Think about your own life.** Has there been a legend which has been a part of your life or the life of someone you know? Write about it.

**2. Writing About Literature: Focus on Values and Ethics.** The author states that these urban legends contain moral advice. Have stories affected your moral development? Write about it.

### **The Fourth Text: I Have a Dream**

The fourth text analyzed, **I Have a Dream**, by Martin Luther King, Jr., was an epic presentation on human rights. It provided the impetus for a

turning point in enactment of government policies concerning the descendants of former slaves in the United States. Since the students had been using this approach for several weeks when this assignment began on 4 November, the reflection assignment was quite open. The assignment was presented in the following manner (Probst, 1992, pp. 119, 122 - 124):

#### WRITTEN REFLECTION

**1. Writing From Literature:** Write whatever came to mind as you read this account. Reflect upon feelings, associations, memories, conceptions and judgements.

**2. Writing About Literature:** Martin Luther King, Jr., an ordained Baptist minister, was felled by an assassin's bullet in 1968 at the age of 39. Think upon his attitudes and values and his ethical positions which are presented in the text. Were his views similar or different from yours? As an aware adult who is anticipating vocational ministry, reflect upon ways you can be an effective minister in our world and how each of your years can count, as did his.

#### The Fifth Text: Love Is Healthful

The fifth text to be analyzed was begun on 4 November. Entitled **Love is Healthful**, it incorporated texts from Gilbert (1997), Morrison (1948) and Roche (1995) and played across the theme of the effect of love in human lives. Students were invited to the two initial written reflections (Probst, pp. 119, 122 - 124) in this way:

#### WRITTEN REFLECTION

**1. Writing From Literature:** As you read this text, what thoughts or feelings did it awaken in you in relationship to your knowledge of yourself and others? Try to recapture them and write them down.

**2. Writing Of Literature:** Did this text call to mind any memory of places, events, sights, smells - or perhaps something more ambiguous, such as an attitude, which you might feel compelled to develop? Write about it.

### Instruments used for analysis

Qualitative analysis of each student's responses was based upon Cox and Many's (1992, p. 45) **A Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (See Figure 3) and upon **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many 1990, p 56), (See Figure 4) . I also utilized **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript). (See Figure 5).

The **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum Student** (Cox and Many, 1992) is based on Rosenblatt's stance description (1978, 1985, 1986). See Figure 3. There are five graduated points, with the first and most efferent stance involving focus on realism, and what was learned. This allows for a factual making of meaning. The second stance is an efferent retelling of the storyline. Mid-point stance of the continuum has portions of both the efferent and aesthetic stances. This stance allows for the reader to use some of his/her imagination. The fourth stance on the continuum involves an elaboration of a story event or of a character as the reader elaborated description, judgement or preference. The fifth and most aesthetic stance on the continuum focused on the lived-through experience, as the reader experienced associations and emotions in connection with the transaction (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45). These assessment possibilities can address a full spectrum of responses from the objective factual to the imaginative. It also allows for the reader to synthesize past experiences and feelings with the present reading in the meaning making process.

Figure 3. A five point efferent-aesthetic continuum (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45).

Efferent		Aesthetic		
1	2	3	4	5
Analysis of elements according to outside structure (what was learned, literary elements, production analysis, realism).	Retelling (concentration relating the storyline, narrating what the story was about).	Portions of both efferent analysis and aesthetic experience of work (primary focus using a single stance indeterminable).	Selection of story event or characters to elaborate preference, judgement, description (I enjoyed it when . . . I thought it was good/funny/unfair when . . .).	Focus on the lived-thorough experience of the literary work (the world created while reading and the emotions or associations resulting from the experience).

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The **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56) criteria had four stations, with the first station adhering to the world of the text and literal meaning. The second station involved the interpretation of story events. In the third station, the reader understood story events through use of an analogy to self or to the world. In the fourth station the reader expanded understanding to relevance to other possible worlds or expressed a generalized belief or understanding about life. (See Figure 4, **Levels of Personal Understanding**).

Figure 4. Levels of personal understanding (Cox and Many 1992, p. 56).

[world of text]	2	3	[applied to life]
1			4
literal meaning	interpretation of story events	understanding of story events through analogy to self or world	generalized belief or understanding about life

**Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), based on Iserian theory, blends reader response vocabulary in an attempt to more closely examine aesthetic response to text. (Please see Figure 5). Working from left to right, the grid aids assessment of a reader's response to a specific text. It enables the assessor to determine depth of four types of response to text: interacting with text (transaction), intertextuality/risk-taking/ imagination, extending beyond the text and insight/ empathy. Under each of these four types of response are three indicators which help to determine depth of response within that type of response. Under interacting with text, a determination of the lived through experience of the text is indicated if the establishment of contact with consciousness or an enrichment, and/or an extension and deepening of the roles of both the reader and the text in the interpretive community. Under intertextuality /risk-taking/imagination, depth of response is indicated as the reader connects personal experience with the characters and his/her own life, uses literacy and cultural repertoires, and/or

Figure 5. Levels of Engagement (Labercane, Olafson, Hunsberger, Watt, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript).

	<b>Interacting with Text (Transaction)</b>	<b>Intertextuality</b>	<b>Extending Beyond Text</b>	<b>Insight/Empathy</b>
	Meaning as interaction is defined in User's terms.	Intertextuality refers to connections with the text and beyond the text.	The virtual text is created by both the actual text and the reader's contributions.	Recognition of the horizon of possibilities inherent in the text.
<b>I n t e r p r e t i v e / a e s t h e t i c</b>	<p>The reader's response demonstrates a lived-through experience with the text.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrates reader's active engagement in filling gaps and questioning norms.</li> <li>- Establishes points of contact along landscape of consciousness.</li> <li>- Enriches, extends and deepens the roles of the reader and text in the interpretive community.</li> </ul>	<p>Reader is able to see metaphoric connections and analogies across texts, the life of self and others.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes connections between personal experience, characters, and one's own life.</li> <li>- Draws on literacy and cultural repertoires.</li> <li>- Shows insightful connections to other texts.</li> </ul>	<p>Response uses text (an image, a concept, a "jumping off point" to extend the live-world of the text and the reader, perhaps to create another text.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generates expectations about alternative possible outcomes.</li> <li>- Develops alternative interpretations supported with relevant textual information.</li> <li>- May thoughtfully support or challenge the author's assumption, perspective or style.</li> </ul>	<p>Response demonstrates ability to shift perspectives and empathizes with different characters or positions and sees the implications of each and the contrasts among them.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrates ability to see through the eyes of one other character, perhaps the protagonist of the story.</li> <li>- Demonstrates emotional engagement with characters, events and texts.</li> <li>- Reveals understanding beyond personal experience.</li> </ul>

shows insightful connections to other texts. Under extending beyond the text, the reader and the actual text create the virtual text. The extension to the life-reader's response displays the filling of gaps and questioning of norms, the world of the text shows depth as the response generates alternative possible outcomes, textually supported alternative possible outcomes and/or an indication of support for, or challenge to, the author's stance. Under insight/empathy, possibility thinking is present as the response shows the ability to see through the eyes of others, emotional engagement and/or a depth of understanding beyond personal experience.

I used all three of these systems of assessment because the Cox and Many assessment tables, while pinpointing student understanding and stance, were made more complete by the use of the developed facets of interaction with the text in the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), which had further indicators of depth of transaction with the text. There are a number of terms within the Levels of Engagement which are specific to assessment in this approach to reading instruction.

Terms Used in **The Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript)

The most frequently used terms in this analysis are based on the theories of Iser (1978), Rosenblatt (1978) and Probst (1991). Please see Figure 6. These terms were helpful as I analyzed student response from initial written reflections, their formulated discussion questions, class discussion and final journal responses.

### Preliminary written description.

After I determined the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), the placement on the **Efferent/ Aesthetic continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), I used the Theme and Pattern Analysis Form Used for Colour Coding. Please see Figure 7.

Using the data consisting of the transcriptions of the audiotapes from class discussions and the student written responses, I colour coded the original document and placed each student's five responses to each of the three texts on a Theme and Pattern Analysis Form used for Colour Coding (Figure 7), which used the terms which were prominent on the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) form. I used a different colour for each of the four main categories on the Levels of Engagement form. I then colour coded each of these processed data sheets, keeping the colours the same as I had used on the original document. I completed a form for each text for each student response I analyzed.

### The descriptive account

My first step in written analysis involved compiling a biographical vignette on each student from data which I had gathered and pondered upon during the semester as I sought to understand my students and to meet their academic needs. These data included An Inventory of Student Reading Interest and a subsequent one on one interview with me concerning that document, A Reading Autobiographical Sketch, My Literacy Autobiography,

Figure 6. Explanation of terms used in **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript).

- 1. "Interaction with the Text"** (Iser 1978). Parallel to Rosenblatt's (1978) "transaction", a lived through experience with the text.
- a. "Establishing contact along the landscape of consciousness"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The reader acknowledges commonalities with the situation in the text.
- b. "Filling gaps"**(Iser 1978), (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): A reader actively takes the identity of a person who is met for an instant in the text and, as s/he writes, builds upon the character or situation of that person.
- c. "Extending or deepening the roles that reader and text play in the interpretive community"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The reader becomes more deeply involved in thought or action of the text. For example: "Do you have an idea for resolving the population problem of China?" (Ivan, Discussion Question. A Question of Duty, Wong, 1995).
- 2. "Intertextuality"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): A reader brings the (nonlinguistic) text of past experience (Oyler and Berry 1996, p. 326) of class discussion, diagrams, illustrations, or (linguistic) reference books, writing, as well as any other texts s/he has read, to the making of meaning (Wells and Chang-Wells 1992, p. 112). Thus, readers bring all that they have experienced, have been, and are, in its signification of meaning. The reader comes to know the link between the text and his/her domain.
- a. "Making connections between personal experience, characters, and one's own life"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The reader applies the text to his/her circumstance or role.
- b. Drawing upon "literacy and cultural repertoires"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The reader associates the text with the norms of his/her life.
- c. Showing "insightful connection to other texts"** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The reader perceives the relationship between this text and another text.
- 3. "Extending Beyond the Text"** (Probst 1991) and **"risk-taking and imagination"** (Labercane, et. al, In Unpublished Manuscript). The reader uses an "image, a concept or a character" in the text as a launching pad to extend the response to the text, to the point, perhaps of "creating another text" (Labercane, et. al., In Press).

(continued on next page)

Figure 6. Explanation of terms used in **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript). (Continued).

- a. Generating the expectation of “alternative possible outcomes”:** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The response demonstrates the potentiality of consequences other than those which have been brought forth in the text.
- b. Developing “alternative interpretations” which are “supported with relevant textual information”** (Labercane, Olafson, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The response might draw upon a literary, cultural, technical, experiential or linguistic background which is different from the one assumed in the text.
- c. Thoughtfully “supporting or challenging the author’s style, assumption, or perspective”** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The student response could genuinely second or defy the reasoning presented in the text.
- 4. “Insight/Empathy”:** The response indicates the **“horizon of possibilities inherent in a text”** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), especially in the feasibility of new deeper vision and experience with humanity.
- a. Seeing “through the eyes of one other character, perhaps the protagonist of the story”** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): the response shows evidence that the reader has gained a new perspective.
- b. Demonstrating “emotional engagement with characters, events, and texts”** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): The response indicates that the student has developed a sensitivity for the situation presented in the text.
- c. Displaying “understanding beyond personal experience”** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript): Although the reader has not been in a situation similar to the one presented in the text, the response indicates a grasp of the implications.
- 5. Theme:** The reader, in constant process of synthesizing the shifting viewpoints in the text, creates a theme in interaction with the text. This underlying implication will likely be remembered after the details of the action are forgotten (Iser 1978, pp. 96, 97).
- 6. Pattern:** A response which is repeated. In this study, the five responses each student gave to the text were analyzed for repetitions. For example, one student might repeatedly change his perspective after the influence of thoughts in the discussion in the interpretive community.

written reflections and a one on one discussion of a text with me, data I had gleaned from student responses, my Researcher's Daily Log and befitting information I received through interviews and conversations with my assistants.

The next step was colour coding, according to the Levels of Engagement. See Figure 7. I read the data. Then I searched each original document for each response of each student. I charted the data for each text for each student, analyzing the responses on one student at a time for all of the texts. I listed the theme, the **Level of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), the placement on the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and the placement within the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), as I sought themes and patterns of response.

Using these data, I wrote individual analyses for each student for each text. After writing these preliminary assessments I again visited the data to further familiarize myself and to search for any themes and patterns I might have missed in previous study. For further analysis, I made tabulations of a non statistical nature to examine the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) and placement on the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) for each student and for the class according to text and according to task. These data gave me further understanding of reader response to text and factors affecting this phenomenon. I consulted these findings in the descriptive account for each individual student and for the class.

Figure 7. Theme and Pattern Analysis Form used for Colour Coding

Student Name _____		Text Title _____		
Date Assigned _____	Date Assigned _____	Date Assigned _____	Date Assigned _____	Date Assigned _____
<b>THEME</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>THEME</b>
<b>Level of Personal Understanding</b>	<b>Level of Personal Understanding</b>	<b>Level of Personal Understanding</b>	<b>Level of Personal Understanding</b>	<b>Level of Personal Understanding</b>
(Number and description)	(Number and description)	(Number and description)	(Number and description)	(Number and description)
Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum	Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum	Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum	Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum	Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum
(Number and Description)	(Number and Description)	(Number and Description)	(Number and Description)	(Number and Description)
<b>INTERACTING WITH TEXT (TRANSACTION) :</b> (The reader's response demonstrates lived through experience with the text).				
Demonstrates reader's active engagement in filling gaps and questioning norms:				
Establishes points of contact on the landscape of consciousness:				
Enriches, deepens and extends the roles of the reader and the text in the interpretive community.				

(Continued on next page).

*Figure 7.* Theme and Pattern Analysis Form used for Colour coding.  
(Continued).

**INTERTEXTUALITY:** (Connections with the text and beyond the text).

Makes connections between personal experience, characters and one's own life:

Draws on literacy and cultural repertoires:

Shows insightful connection to other texts:

**EXTENDING BEYOND TEXT; RISK TAKING / IMAGINATION:** (The reader's contributions and the text create a virtual text, using an image, a concept or character to extend the world of the text and the reader, perhaps to create another text).

Generates expectations about alternative possible outcomes:

Develops alternative interpretations supported with relevant textual information:

Thoughtfully supports the author's assumption, perspective or style:

Thoughtfully challenges the author's assumption, perspective or style:

**INSIGHT / EMPATHY:**

Demonstrates the ability to see through the eyes of one other character, perhaps the protagonist of the story:

Demonstrates emotional engagement with character, events and texts:

Reveals understanding beyond personal experience:

Summary

This case study was conducted within the bounds of a divinity school. A broad sampling of data yielded an in depth study of 4 adult male students' responses to a variety of texts. The research questions addressed were:

1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?
2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?
3. How have readers' responses changed over time?

Triangulation of data included observation, interviews and document collection to ensure trustworthiness and an in depth description. The syllabus, lesson plans, the researcher daily log, student questionnaires, initial written student responses, transcribed class discussions and my individual discussions with students, student journals and transcribed interviews with students as well as my assistants and others within the bounds of the divinity school provided a broad data base for a deep analysis.

Analysis necessary for efficient pedagogy and this study began with the first acquaintance with the students during the on site phase of the study, beginning with school orientation in the final days of August, 1999 and continuing through the marking of the final response papers received on December 2. The off-site phase of the study, which began in January 2000, centered on examination and analysis of documentation. It involved careful examination, colour coding and interpretation of documents. These findings were processed according to the three chosen instruments of assessment: **The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), and the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript). Then I chose to take the assessment a step farther by tabulating the **Levels of Personal Understanding** and **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** responses of

individual students and the class according to text and task. Results of that tabulation were included in the descriptive account.

In Chapter Four I give examples of the types of analysis, the themes and patterns which emerged from the data and present a description of the responses of individual students and the class.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Analysis of the Data

#### Introduction

The focus of this case study was to determine how adult students from unique backgrounds responded to a variety of texts when the reader response approach was used. In this chapter I give deep impressions and understandings which presented themselves as I analyzed individual and class responses to texts.

Questions used for analysis included:

1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?
2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?
3. How have readers' responses changed over time?

These questions will be addressed at the end of this chapter.

I analyzed the response of each student on the three assessment instruments. I then reported excerpts on three of the five texts chosen for analysis in the study as each student made initial written responses, formulated questions for class discussion, participated in class discussion and wrote a final journal response. I report further analysis on the effects of text and tasks.

Diagrams of the assessment tools which I used have been repeated in this chapter for convenience of the reader. For this assessment, I used **A Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 42) (Figure Eight), the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56) (Figure Nine) and the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) (Figure Ten).

**A Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992,

p. 42) (Figure 8) proposes five levels of response to the text, termed "stances"

*Figure 8. A five point efferent-aesthetic continuum* (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45).

Efferent			Aesthetic	
1	2	3	4	5
Analysis of elements according to outside structure (what was learned, literary elements, production analysis, realism).	Retelling (concentration relating the storyline, narrating what the story was about).	Portions of both efferent analysis and aesthetic experience of the work (primary focus using a single stance indeterminable).	Selection of story event or characters to elaborate preference, judgement, description (I enjoyed it when . . . I thought it funny/unfair when . . .).	Focus on the lived - through experience of the literary work (the world created while reading and the emotions or associations resulting from the experience).

(Rosenblatt, 1978). It is based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory. These stances are graded left to right, from the most efferent (factual) to the most aesthetic (imaginative) reading. Stance 1, the most efferent response, centres on what was learned and stance 5, the most aesthetic response, focuses on the lived through experience. In stance 2, an efferent response, the reader retells the story as a basis for response. The central stance 3 response evidences characteristics of both efferent and aesthetic

reading. Stance 4, an aesthetic response, indicates that the reader chose a story event or character in order to elaborate an aesthetic response. It is to be understood that readers may play back and forth across this continuum.

The **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56) assessment tool has gradations of four levels of understanding. It can be used to indicate readers' comprehension, in correlation with the Efferent/Aesthetic Continuum. Please see Figure Nine. The first level indicates a literal understanding and the second level displays reader interpretation of story events. Level 3 shows that the reader goes more deeply and uses an analogy of self or the world to understand the story events. The fourth and deepest level of understanding displays that the reader applies the text to his/her beliefs and understanding of life.

*Figure 9. Levels of personal understanding* (Cox and Many 1992, p. 56).

[world of text]			[applied to life]
1	2	3	4
literal meaning	interpretation of of story events	understanding of story events through analogy to self or world	generalized belief or understanding about life

**Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) (Figure 10), an aesthetic assessment, follows Iser's (1978) terminology and deals more with the quality of mind as it employs a closer examination of the nuances of understanding manifested in the aesthetic response. The four main

facets of response analysis, working from left to right, include: Interacting with the Text, Intertextuality, Extending Beyond the Text and Insight/ Empathy. Each of these categories, in turn, has four detailed opportunities for assessment, which gives a deeper picture of aesthetic response

In addition to the above three instruments, I also looked for a theme for the response to each text. After analyzing the responses of Abe, Bob, Ike and Ivan (pseudonyms I used for these students), I then did further individual analysis according to task and text to further understand the responses of the participants. An analysis of the class performance regarding task and text followed.

In the next section I present an analysis of each student's experience with the approach I used for this study. I begin each section with observations in the classroom and then proceed to interpretation of the student's response upon the **Five - Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and upon the **Levels of Personal Understanding** grids (Cox and Many, 1992), with interpretation concerning response according to text and task type. This analysis gives a thumbnail sketch of what was happening as each student responded to texts and tasks. Following these descriptions I proceed with excerpts from student responses, represented upon the three instruments of assessment I used. Analysis of class responses using texts and tasks are reported. Attention was given specifically to the questions I asked in this study. Given that Abe provided a richer basis for growth in response, I examined his protocols in greater detail than I did the other three readers.

## Analysis of Respondents

### Abe

#### Changes within the bounded climate.

At the first class meeting on 2 September 1999 Abe seemed quite anxious in the experience of returning to the classroom after a decade as a self employed trucker in the forestry business. In my Researcher's Log I commented, "Abe acts very uptight about English study. His bad experience in high school seems to colour today's experience".

"Abe was late to class" when the class met on 9 September. "Neither he nor his wife heard the alarm. . . ." Tiredness affected Abe's class participation. I noted: " He is quiet in class. He is reserved and also afraid of English study" (Researcher's Log).

At discussion time for The Laundress, I reminded students that we were co-learners who were exploring together. If there were confrontation, it was to be within the realm of exploration and a consensus was not required. Abe was ill at ease and tense in this first discussion. "What was it that brought her peace, . . . singing or something else?" was a question he formulated and made a bid for discussing in class. He attempted twice to introduce the questions he had prepared, but he made no other utterances as he silently absorbed the ESL students' accounts of trials of immigrant chaos, which were new and strange to him.

In the Initial Written Reflection he brought to class he had shown an insightful intertextual connection (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) in

the role his wife played during a chaotic time in his trucking business: “. . . it was my wife that provided the only peace I experienced . . .” (Initial Reflection, 2 September), but this connection did not come to the fore in the class discussion. The final Journal entry response displayed that Abe gained new insights: “After the discussion in class I am forced to consider other dimensions of the story” (16 September). He also demonstrated further growth in insight concerning the plight of the immigrant experience:

[Immigrants] changing to a completely different culture and sometimes dealing with discrimination can cause a great deal of stress . . . split between the old and the new. The amazing thing is, they find something to hold onto which gives them peace.

I observed Abe’s personal social adjustment to his new academic community. On September 9, the Seminary Family Picnic was enacted on the patio of the Academic Building. In this inviting climate in the lazy September sunshine I noted that “Abe and his family did not mix [with others] as much [as did my other students]” (Researcher’s Log, 9 September).

I had concerns about his adjustment to the cross cultural classroom. Artista (a pseudonym), the Grammar/ Reading Strategies assistant, shared with me after her first meeting with the class that Abe had flinched when Ivan had said “an woman”. I wondered how he would adjust to having Koreans, who did not have our perception of articles in their language, as co-discussants.

Since it was her first year on the teaching team, I had regular conferences with Artista. In the conference on 10 September she observed that Abe “seemed in a daze in class” I stated that “I thought he was exhausted from the move of a mobile home from northern British Columbia and that I also felt he

was scared. Yesterday in my class he acknowledged: 'So far it hasn't been as bad as I thought it would be' " (Researcher's Log).

I noticed that Abe displayed the pattern of "I don't know how to say it . . ." or "you know" as a short cut to ending a turn in class discussions, but he was growing. By September 16, when the class discussed Frank Laubach, Abe was "more conversational and sharing . . ." (Researcher's Log). On 23 September, when the class discussed Salvation by Langston Hughes, the melding was well underway and I referred to the discussion time within the context of "an interpretive community" (Researcher's Log). The discussion of Crisis in Kosovo on September 30 found Abe participating in "a many faceted discussion, primarily with Bob, about whether or not Canada could likely be involved in a civil war which would be centred on First Nations' forestry and fishing rights". Further evidence of his growth in the interpretive community was displayed as he "brought in a human element of the story [in the discussion of Crisis in Kosovo] as Elshani protected his son from seeing his demolished face. He told of temporary disfigurement from a logging accident . . ." (Researcher's Log).

In the midst of this observed growth, though, Artista related his report that "he always reads quickly". She lamented: "I am sorry that he does not get to pause and savour the nuances of meaning", but she also could see development: "This is all coming together. We are building rapport . . ." (Researcher's Log, 30 September Conference).

By the 21 October discussion, Abe was feeling confident as he "presented sound principles on marriage" (Researcher's Log) as the class

discussed The Trouble with "X". Later analysis showed response to this text to be a real turning point upon the Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum (Cox and Many, 1992) for Abe.

As the term mellowed, I conducted Semi-structured Interviews with the two assistants. Artista nicknamed Abe as:

'the minimalist', because he seems to fare best on few words. He seems to want to dive into the core of what a person is saying and not be interested or even desire to have interest in anything that he views as peripheral or unnecessarily extra (23 November).

Scriba (a pseudonym), the Composition assistant, also noted this tendency:

Today I read the first paragraph of Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities:

"It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness. It was the epoch of belief. It was the epoch of incredulity. It was the season of light. It was the winter of despair . . . ."

When I finished the entire paragraph, I asked the class, "What is the author saying?" . . . Abe replied, "I don't think he said much of anything. I could have said all of that in one sentence".

Scriba felt a need to build up Abe, whom she described as "a simple writer" (Semi-structured interview, 25 November 1999).

I thought he was likely so deeply grounded in common sense that everything must be practical and to the point. At the beginning of the term I had thought upon Abe's narrow world, his need to learn oral and written expression, his reading habits and his acknowledgment of difficulty with writing and the imaginative, I pondered how he would adjust to the classroom. In this account I attempt to show how, indeed, Abe's world broadened, his ability in class discussions and written expression grew and he broadened his stance from

effequent to also include the aesthetic stance. He not only adjusted to the use of the imaginative, but he also became a part of the social climate of the cross cultural classroom.

All of the instructors saw marked growth in Abe as the term progressed.

Artista declared:

He is very astute. He is very bright. He picks up very quickly on everyone else's input, including mine. Nothing, although he seems to be quite introspective, nothing really flits past him. He will say, 'Why did you say that?' He is very alert. And I feel that his individual personality . . . he's grown, as little groups do, to have a bonding and I could see the warmth in his smile this morning, and a gentleness" (Semi-structured Interview, 25 November 99).

When I asked, "He has changed since the first day of class, hasn't he?", she replied, "I think very much. He was on his guard, yes".

Scriba noted his writing awareness and growth. In an assignment in which each student was to do self assessment on what he had gained in the composition class, she observed:

And what [Abe] said means the most to me. And this is absolutely what I have tried to do this year. He talks about . . . writing styles, . . . short sentences and long sentences. . . cadence . . . And then he said this:

Aside from the physical activity of writing, I have learned other things as well. Confidence is what I have gained the most. Until forced by an English instructor, (that's me) I did not think I could express my thoughts on paper. Although I am still far from a perfect writer, I do believe I have improved. Certainly as a future pastor, improvement in writing can help with communication, either written or spoken" (Semi-structured Interview, 25 November, 1999).

Abe had improved in composition, his need at matriculation. Turn taking and fluency in class discussion gained. In the class discussion on "What I have learned about reading" on December 2, Abe observed:

the biggest thing . . . was . . . it makes it easier to read a text and immediately think about what -- what it's saying besides what it's saying. And [referring to discussion] how different people can approach it and think.

He spoke of a change in his thinking about reading:

I always have just kind of scanned over it. I just never -- you know. So that part of it (reading strategies) was easy. But this part (reader response approach), you know, you actually have to read it. . . . Yeah. I'm not used to spending that much time on a little piece of -- just a little story". . . . It was a lot of work (Class Discussion: What I Have Learned about Reading (2 December 1999).

In early December I sat with Abe's family at the Seminary Family Christmas Banquet. The tranquil atmosphere at our table reflected more than the goodwill of the season. The adjustment to seminary life had been made and it showed on the faces of this happy family.

A more intense look at Abe's growth can be expounded in an observation of his responses to texts. As a further attempt to describe Abe's growth in response to texts, I present his growth in responses upon the **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and upon the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) with extensions to the effect of text and task type. Then I present specific responses upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) in an analysis of aesthetic response.

Changes related to texts and tasks.

For the analysis upon the **Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic**

**Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) I examined the texts chronologically, with *The Laundry* as the first assignment of the term on September 2 and *Love is Healthful* as the final assignment of the study, assigned upon 18 November, with the final reflection for this assignment submitted two weeks later. These five texts were chosen for response analyses from among thirteen texts to which the class responded during the term.

Abe began the term with a bent to efferent reading. He had only one higher level (stance 5) response on The **Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) as he responded to the first text (*The Laundry*, Appendix D). See Figure 8. I had, however, specifically designed this first response invitation to aid an aesthetic response for the texts used early in the course. He did gain more aesthetic responses with time, even with less pointed response invitations. This inaugural assignment had only 1 initial response invitation. He had the most stance 5 responses (4) to *The Trouble with "X"* text. By the end of the term he had more highest level (stance five) than stance one responses, an indication that he gained more aesthetic response with time.

In analysis of his placement upon the **Levels of Personal Understanding** grid (Cox and Many 1992), all of Abe's responses to *The Laundry* were within the range of a deeper understanding. See Figure 9. Across the texts, Abe had almost all of his responses to texts within the level 3

and level 4 areas. His level three and level four responses were approximately equal, with 10 responses in level 3 (understanding of story events through analogy to self or world) and 11 responses in the highest level four (generalized belief or understanding about life). Abe definitely had a deep understanding of the texts using aesthetic response, but *The Trouble with "X"* received the deepest response among the analyzed texts, with all 5 tasks yielding a level 4 response. It is interesting that he also had the highest aesthetic response with this text. I was interested to see the effect of task upon his responses.

I assessed all of the responses to the five texts upon the **Efferent /Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) according to task type among the 5 tasks he was assigned for each text, with exception of the first one, which had only one initial response invitation.

On the five-point **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum**, Abe had the most aesthetic (level five) responses in task one (20), a first written reflection assignment. I had specifically designed these first response invitations to aid the lived through experience early in the course. The second written reflection continued with generous manifestation of aesthetic (stance 5) responses, with a total of 16. Since the first two tasks involved instructor framed questions, this could show an effect for teacher questions.

For a deeper understanding of Abe's ability to understand the texts across tasks, I analyzed the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) across task type for all 5 texts. Task 5, the Journal, generated the

deepest personal understanding with the most level 4 responses. Perhaps a longer exposure to the text yielded a deeper understanding, since the Journal response was done at the end of a two week exposure to the text. A deep understanding was indicated as all of his responses were levels 3 and 4.

Certain texts seemed to generate a stronger lived through experience for Abe. He had four highest level (stance 5) responses for The Trouble with "X" on the basic **Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992). This text, which was assigned on 14 October, led the aesthetic responses he had among the tasks. This text also generated the deepest and most consistent personal understanding. In this seventh text to which he had given response during the six weeks period since the first class meeting on September 2, Abe had grown tremendously in his ability to transact with the text. As a person who had insisted upon reading only for the "gist" at the outset, Abe was showing growth in becoming a reader who included the aesthetic stance in his response. I noticed that his new enthusiasm for participation in class brought animation to his expression and a smile to his face.

A deeper look at the aesthetic responses upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al. Unpublished Manuscript) could reveal more detail concerning the gradation within the aesthetic response. It better represents the rainbow of colours on my assessment sheets when I was colour coding. This type of assessment fits well with the personal and individual nature of the reader response approach by giving detail concerning the type of aesthetic response which has come forth.

The levels of engagement assessment sample.

The above observations give an overall view of what happened in Abe's response experiences, but the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) assessment afforded an opportunity for me to scrutinize the actual responses and to become more closely acquainted with Abe's aesthetic responses. Figure 10 outlines a left to right movement of development in aesthetic response upon the **Levels of Engagement** grid. Figure 6, Explanation of terms used in **Levels of Engagement**, gives definition of the most used terms. For the convenience of the reader I present here a review of the key ideas on this grid.

*In interacting with the text*, the reader shows evidence of a lived through experience with the text as the response evidences that the reader acknowledges commonalities with the situation in the text, fills blanks in the narrative, questions whatever is assumed to be normal, or becomes more deeply involved in the action of the text. The second station on the Levels of Engagement addresses *intertextuality*, a compendium of nonlinguistic (experiential) and linguistic (textual) experiences, in which the student connects self and others in a response which can make connections with his/her own life, and its norms, and perceives connections between this text and others. The third station, *extending beyond the text*, involves the virtual text which is created with the text in hand and the reader's contributions. In this station, a reader might create another text, as s/he thinks of potentialities which have not been presented in the text. A reader with a cultural or linguistic background which is

Figure 10. Levels of Engagement (Labercane, Olafson, Hunsberger, Watt,

<b>Interacting with Text (Transaction)</b>	<b>Intertextuality</b>	<b>Extending Beyond Text</b>	<b>Insight/Empathy</b>	
Meaning as interaction is defined in user's terms.	Intertextuality refers to connections with the text and beyond the text.	The virtual text is created by both the actual text and the reader's contributions	Recognition of the horizon of possibilities inherent in the text.	
<b>I n t e r p r e t i v e / a e s t h e t i c</b>	<p>The reader's response demonstrates a lived-through experience with the text.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrates reader's active engagement in filling gaps and questioning norms.</li> <li>- Establishes points of contact along landscape of consciousness.</li> <li>- Enriches, extends and deepens the roles of the reader and text in the interpretive community.</li> </ul>	<p>Reader is able to see metaphoric connections and analogies across texts, the life of self and others.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes connections between personal experience, characters, and one's own life.</li> <li>- Draws on literacy and cultural repertoires.</li> <li>- Shows insightful connections to other texts.</li> </ul>	<p>Response uses text (an image, a concept, a "jumping off point" to extend the live-world of the text and the reader, perhaps to create another text.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generates expectations about alternative possible outcomes.</li> <li>- Develops alternative interpretations supported with relevant textual information.</li> <li>- May thoughtfully support or challenge the author's assumption, perspective or style.</li> </ul>	<p>Response demonstrates ability to shift perspectives and empathizes with different characters or positions and sees the implications of each and the contrasts among them.</p> <p>The response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrates ability to see through the eyes of one other character, perhaps the protagonist of the story.</li> <li>- Demonstrates emotional engagement with characters, events and texts.</li> <li>- Reveals understanding beyond personal experience.</li> </ul>

to form an alternative interpretation. S/he could genuinely support or challenge the author's reasoning. The most developed response presented on this assessment grid involves *insight and empathy*. The reader's response shows a deeper vision and experience with humanity. A reader can display a new perspective as s/he gains a new outlook, demonstrates emotional engagement or develops an understanding of the implications of the story which is beyond his/her own personal experience.

#### The Laundress: Abe's Response

The first assignment, The Laundress by E. Jonsson, included the invitation for each student to complete one written reflection assignment. The assignment was given on 2 September and the final Journal response was due on September 16 for this text, which can be accessed in Appendix D. Students were to formulate three questions which they would like to use in class discussion on September 9. The final reflection Journal was due one week after the class discussion. Thus, the students had two weeks to respond to each text.

Abe's initial written response followed the theme of Peace. Variations on this theme, against the background of the Christian faith, continued in his questions for class discussion, the discussion itself and in the final journal entry.

"I am reminded of a time when things were very chaotic as well . . . for about two years", he wrote in his initial reflection. His formulated questions

dealt with Christian peace in the life of the laundress as he reflected upon life experiences:

The majority of my business relied upon the forest sector; when markets and gov't [sic] regulations began to worsen, work became hard to find. . . . a busy trucking company. . . . included payments that didn't stop, parts and fuel accounts that had to be paid, employees that wanted to stay working, hours trying to keep equipment working, and many nights repairing trucks so they could work the next day. . . . a young family at home that needed me there (Initial Written Reflection, 2 September).

He responded with examples from his business and that of his family in his initial reflection, but after the discussion he seemed to gain more insightful connections (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) with the immigrant plight as he became aware of the cross-cultural turbulence expressed in the texts of the lives of the ESL students: "During the discussion in class I realised how much agony a lot of immigrants face . . ." (Journal, 16 September), as his transaction addressed other facets of the text. This pattern of modifying the focus of his response after the class discussion often happened in Abe's journal response.

A further comment revealed his ability to move beyond what the text was saying, "No matter what went on that day when I got home my wife was able to make me forget it all" (First Reflection), and "Most immigrants have the most difficulty with language and communication" (Journal Entry, 16 September) as he supported the author's perspective. See Figure 10.

His "lived through experience" (Rosenblatt, 1978) seemed to result in emotions and associations resulting from the experience (See Figure 10) in the following comment, "I realized that true peace and fulfillment would come from

my home, not my business” (Initial Reflection, 2 September), and in this response he seemed to use analogy to self to understand story events, a placement of 3 on the Levels of Personal Understanding grid (Cox and Many, 1992). See Figure 9.

Since Abe had one stance 5 (Cox and Many, 1992) response in this very first experience with the reader response approach, I was encouraged that he held possibilities for more development in the aesthetic approach. The analysis which follows covers his seventh experience with this approach.

#### The Trouble with “X”: Abe’s Response

Abe played across the theme of human relations in this assignment which had two initial invitations to reflection. See Appendix D. He was open in his first reflective response as he elaborated concerning a person who had been bothersome in his life and in the life of the church:

We had a person who was very annoying in our own church . . . I learned that sometimes it is best to watch what I say and to keep my thought on why she is reacting this way, instead of trying to fix her (14 October, First Initial Reflection).

The second initial response invitation for The Trouble with “X” text invited the reader to assume the role of a husband who was willing to work to mend his faltering marriage. Although he used the modal “I would” instead of the more committal “I will” In the second initial reflection, he did conditionally enter the lifeworld of the text (Please see Figure 10.) as he took the role of a husband trying to improve his shaky marriage:

The best place to start to help my marriage is with my own attitudes and character. Starting with the passages in the Bible that tell me, as husband, specifically what my

responsibilities are, . . . I would read them over and over until they became a part of me. One by one I would make a list of what I could specifically change that would make me a better husband. . . . my wife would . . . follow as well (14 October, Second Initial Reflection).

He challenged norms (See Figure 10.) in his formulated discussion questions:

Is this always true that problems with others can always be lightened by our own character or attitude?  
 What difference does it make if we never look [at] faults in others before we first look in the mirror? (Formulated Discussion Question, 14 October).

Since it was the responsibility of the class to fuel class discussion with their formulated discussion questions and input, Abe carried his questioning over into the class discussion in the "interpretive community" (Fish 1980): "Is this always true? Can we always lighten a situation by your own -- by changing your own character? A hundred per cent always true?" (Class discussion, 21 October).

Abe was learning to be more open to revealing his private thoughts as he responded to a response invitation which had asked him to reflect upon a situation in which he, too had experienced a troublesome person in his life. From his reservoir of experience, he declared: "Too sensitive, very stubborn and sometimes just hard to take, this [church's problem] person used to frustrate me along with most everyone else" (First Reflection, 14 October). In the class discussion, he could see principles in the text which he had already tried to practise:

I have taught or led some different marriage enrichment kind of things. . . . It is hard to communicate that to somebody.

Especially when their marriage isn't the greatest. It is hard to get them to quit pointing the finger and look in the mirror. . . . from outside you can see what is going on and if both of them would just look at themselves there wouldn't be a problem. [to Bob's question as to whom he would tell to change themselves]: . . . . It depends on who you are talking to. If I am talking to . . . your wife, . . . she should change . . . If we're talking to you, you should change. . . It's the bad attitude that is divisional (Class Discussion, 21 October).

The deepening of this response was evidenced in the Journal: "I know from my own marriage . . . Looking at yourself first does not come naturally" (28 October).

Abe dealt with his culture concerning the church's problem person (See Figure 10):

No matter what was said or done, feelings were hurt, . . . usually ended . . . in a huge ordeal over whether myself or someone else was acting like a Christian" (First Reflection, 14 October),

and, in the troubled marriage role-play: "Starting with the passages in the Bible . . ." (Second Initial Reflection 14 October), again in the formulated discussion question: "As a pastor, how can this principle be taught and practised in the church?" (14 October) and in discussion concerning ministerial divorce: "This is important for pastors. I take it very seriously. I cannot look after my own family, no way can I lead the church" (Class Discussion, 21 October); concerning marriage counselling:

It is far easier to blame someone else rather than accept that there is something wrong with us. . . . It is easier for human nature to see the flaws in others without seeing our own (Journal, 28 October).

He seemed to see how Lewis' idea of understanding the stance of the other person and fitting one's own actions and attitudes to their situation connected with his own experiences concerning the church's problem person:

It is amazing how things changed after this [his own thoughtful contemplation of her situation]. It became easier, and more productive to look for the source of the problem and try to help (Initial Reflection, 14 October).

and in the troubled marriage role-play: "As I begin to change my own character to be more like the one God expects, my wife is bound to notice" (Second Initial Reflection, 14 October). "It [divorced pastors] is a contradiction in itself, I think" (Class Discussion, 21 October).

Two of his responses showed insightful connections to another text : "I am convinced that as I strive to become the husband God intended, . . . " (The troubled marriage role-play, Second Initial Reflection, 14 October), and :

You know, the Bible is very clear on that [grounds for divorce] -- I mean there - there are cases that - that I can be given an excuse. Like unfaithfulness (Class Discussion, 28 October).

As he extended beyond the text he toyed with an alternative interpretation (See Figure 10.) suggested by Ike:

That (ministerial divorce) totally depends on what kind of a context you look at it in. As I see it, you know, there is -- there is nothing that my wife can do that can force me -- or should to break up our marriage. . . . But, I don't think there is a point where -- where a marriage has to fail. No matter what -- what it is"(Class Discussion, 21 October).

His written response also supported the viewpoint of the author (See Figure 10.): "This [problem] person [in the church] couldn't see that she was doing the same thing, and usually started the problem ( First Initial Reflection, 14 October) and concerning the healing of problem marriages: "It can be done" (Journal, 28 October).

There was evidence that Abe gained insight and had empathy in dealing with the church's problem person: "Thinking now, I wonder how many ordeals could have been avoided had I tried to help and understand rather than fix (Initial Reflection, 14 October) and: "I know from my own marriage" (Journal, 28 October). His response further showed understanding beyond his own experience (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript): "Once I have shown that I planned to continue, my wife will start to see what life could be like" (Troubled marriage role-play, Second Initial Reflection, 14 October), as he applied the concept in formulated questions and discussions and again on the Journal reflection: "You must make the choice" (Journal, 28 September). In these responses Abe demonstrated an ability to engage in lived through experiences, except for his Discussion Questions, which centred on realism (Cox and Many 1992).

In these responses Abe became familiar with the procedure. Especially in his class discussion he seemed to rise above his initial shyness and reticence as he openly responded to a subject which was a meaningful part of his personal experience and values. It was evident that he felt he was becoming a vital part of discussion as he was reaching beyond himself and becoming a reciprocal member of the interpretive community. Once again, he displayed the pattern of changing emphasis after the class discussion as skepticism about the universality of the principle turned to support. His countenance during class discussions henceforth exhibited a glow.

### The Cat in the Bag: Abe's Response

Although this story was listed under Humour in An Inventory of Student Reading Interest, legends was a definite theme in Abe's response, as he played out his reasoning against the backdrop of Christian faith. See Appendix D. He questioned the wisdom of societal customs (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) in his formulated discussion questions and in class: "What about Santa or the Easter bunny?" "Should these kinds of stories be told to children?" (Formulated Discussion Question, 21 October) and:

The thing that has always bothered me about this is especially Christians . . . What do we tell our kids? Do we tell them this story? Should we?" (Class Discussion, 28 October).

His consciousness was raised: "As we discussed in class about legends I was made aware that they exist in many cultures around the world" (Journal, 4 November):

. . . most legends I have herd [sic] do contain moral advice" (First Initial Reflection, 21 October). "I remember as a child how adults would threaten us with dire consequences . . . Most of these came out of old fairy tales. . . the boy who cried wolf . . . has always stuck in my mind" (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October).

as he thought upon childhood memories.

After class discussion, Abe displayed new cross-cultural knowledge as he extended, even changed, his viewpoint (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript):

As I learned in class, even in Korea the legends contain moral advice . . . Legends can be a good way of passing on moral values from one generation to the next. They do not just teach a lesson, but usually they are in such a way that they are easily remembered" (Journal, 4 November).

The principles behind other stories such as the hare and the tortoise or the wolf in sheep's clothing, give very practical moral advice. Even though I couldn't repeat these stories accurately, the moral advice behind them remains very clear (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October),

showing some agreement with the author's viewpoint (See Figure 10) and then in the Journal: "As it was with the lady in the Cat in the Bag, there is a lesson to be learned" (4 November).

In formulated discussion questions, however, he had "challenged the author's perspective": "If we do tell these to our children, at what point are we teaching them to lie? Where do we draw the line?" (21 October).

His world of understanding had expanded in this final statement: "I would guess that in all cultures there are legends of this kind in some form" (Journal, 4 November).

In his response to *The Cat in the Bag*, Abe again used the pattern of formulating a fresh viewpoint after the class discussion. In his written and class discussion sections he seemed to figure his own experience into his response. The formulation of discussion questions displayed an efferent attitude toward reading. His written and discussion responses evidenced a "lived through experience" (Rosenblatt, 1978) as did the Journal response. Abe was growing in oral response. His contribution to class discussion had become fluent, even when information unfamiliar to him was the focus. He broadened his reading stance to regularly include the aesthetic stance, even when the response invitation was more open. These changes, within the period of a semester, should help Abe achieve in his seminary studies.

Summary statement: Abe.

In this analysis I attempted to present an account of Abe's social growth within the bounds of the seminary community. This growth aided expression in class discussion. In turn, his viewpoints grew from exchange in the interpretive community. I addressed his performance according to **The Five-Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), with responses per text and the response totals. This analysis documented his growth in the aesthetic response and portrayed his deep personal understanding. Analysis of the five tasks employed in this class showed the deepest personal understanding to occur in the Journal assignment, a task completed at the end of a two week exposure to the text. Further analysis upon the **The Five - point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** according to text showed the most aesthetic response was generated by The Trouble with "X" text. I continued analysis of his response to three texts, using the Levels of Engagement grid (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) an aesthetic stance assessment. These analyses gave a deeper knowledge of Abe's aesthetic response to texts. Abe came to include the aesthetic reading stance and he had a deep personal understanding Abe had shown a need for instruction in compositions when he sat for the entrance examinations. According to Scriba, his writing ability had improved in such a way that she was confident of his ability.

By the end of the term Abe had confidence to anticipate a Master of Divinity degree. His diploma credits could apply toward a bachelor's degree. Then he could pursue the higher seminary degree. Abe had become more pliable and teachable, but no magnetism could change the most important reading on his compass. He had encompassed aesthetic reading.

Abe's statement that "I always read just the opposite of Bob" was evident to the assistants and to me. Bob's orientation was toward the aesthetic.

### **Bob**

#### Changes within the bounded climate.

Bob was smiling and excited on the first class day on 2 September 1999. It was encouraging to see a student so radiant on his first day of reading remediation. I was to learn that smiling was a part of Bob's countenance. His manner did not portray the academic anxiety which he acknowledged. Although Bob had problems with reading comprehension, he loved to write with flourishes. I pondered about a student whose written and verbal expressions were so vivid but whose reading showed need of remediation.

At the Seminary Family Picnic on 9 September "Bob was quite social with his conversational ability and ready smile" (Researcher's Log). He was quite conversant in the class discussions from the beginning. Bob's amiability was an asset to relationships in the classroom. His countenance facilitated the Researcher's Log report on 16 September: "The students conversed more easily with each other today without expecting me to emcee . . . There were both

aesthetic and efferent responses". As I could see the interpretive community developing, I entered this observation in my Log on 23 September:

Discussion of a text tends to be carried on among people sharing a common cultural climate. Within the setting of a particular time, culture and social milieu, a group of readers or critics can bring a sufficiently similar experience to the text . . . . Despite the inevitable uniqueness of each life, readers under such circumstances . . . . . [use their] acquired similar ethical and aesthetic values (Booth, 1977, p. 412).

Bob described himself as "a detail person. I need to plan it out first. . . . In cabinet making and when we build the church . . . ." (Semi-Structured Interview, 14 October). As a tradesman he had experienced an "us - them attitude", but he felt that "I'm still in the majority" and that this past experience would be advantageous in helping him to empathize with and to help manual laborers in his professional life.

By 30 September, Bob was sharing his inner thoughts as his conversation included "changes he sees in his cancerous father-in-law and how he looks like a different person" as the class addressed Elshani's disfigurement from the violence of war in Kosovo (Researcher's Log).

Bob seemed to reach an apex of his aesthetic responses as he responded with flourish to legends in our time in the writing of his home town legend on October 28. Thence, he began to broaden his stance toward the efferent, both in his discussions and in his written responses. On 4 November I recorded, "I felt that Bob dominated the discussion by expounding upon Martin Luther's view on infant baptism" (an efferent stance) as we discussed *A Child to Lead us*, the account of a Down's syndrome child (Researcher's Log).

In the summations given by the assistants near the end of the term,

Artista described Bob:

Bob is the same as when I first met him. He is the Bob that you see and I think continue to see. He's prepared to be vulnerable. . . . enthusiastic. . . . desiring of giving a hundred and ten percent of everything that he is to the Lord. And that includes the gritty subject of grammar. . . . a highly sensitive person. . . . opposite of Abe with his minimalism. Bob enjoys words and likes to understand more of them and he will not find any further researching unnecessary. He will enjoy that. He will enjoy exploration for its own sake, which is after my own heart. He is expressive (Semi-Structured Interview, 24 November 1999).

Scriba talked about Bob:

this student who grew up in a family where his mother really encouraged him to write, but he tends to write a little bit -- perhaps because of her, over the top. So . . . I have been working with bringing Bob a little bit down to earth. That is really tough for him to hear, because he has a wonderful vocabulary. But I felt like he needed to simplify a little bit and get a little bit closer to his writing, rather than being a step back from it (Semi-structured Interview, 25 November 1999).

Bob's aesthetic response to Scriba's reading of the first paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities*: "He was giving us an entire view of his novel in that first paragraph. I think it's great". I looked upon this statement as an appreciation for the aesthetic.

During the December 2 class discussion on *What I Have Learned About Reading*, Bob first talked of growth in reading strategies, an area in which he had needed to improve:

In particular I -- I really enjoyed McCart and his book. That is one of the areas I struggle with is -- is in reading and comprehension in it. I thought it very helpful that there can be a structure to reading. . . . if we do it with purpose, then we can pull so much more out of the reading. . . .

Then he addressed the reader response approach:

what I enjoyed most was the assignment of putting ourselves into the text and in the story that we were reading, because I think that's the most interesting thing -- is that as each of us read a book we might assume a different character role within it. And I enjoy that because it lets your imagination run wild. (Chuckle). Sometimes really wild! . . . I need time to think about the Journal reflection. . . .

Although his change in position was not as apparent as some of the other students', Bob asserted: "Several times my opinion was actually changed in class". When I asked the class if writing was not as painful for them as it was the first day of class, Bob replied, "No question! (Chuckle)". Bob had broadened his reading stance to include the efferent during this semester of reading instruction and the interpretive community had afforded him growth.

Bob's career goals on his 2 September Reading Interest Inventory were in pastoring, but by the time of his Semi-Structured Interview on 14 October, his career interest had changed to evangelism:

I have a real passion for evangelism. Actually I'm torn because that pastoring is one of the most important jobs there is, however, that is a conflict between head and heart.

An analysis upon the **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and upon the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) with extensions to the effect of text and task type give a picture of changes as Bob's responded to texts across the term.

#### Changes related to texts and tasks.

An overall look at Bob's responses according to the Cox and Many scales (1992) reveals the nature of his responses. His responses upon **The**

**Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum (Cox and Many, 1992)**

showed 16 higher (stance 4 and stance 5) responses out of a total of 24 responses. He had more stance 5 responses than any other stance, but his stance 5 responses diminished after responses to The Cat in the Bag text.

When task type was considered across the texts, Bob had a predominance of higher level (stance 5) responses in the First Initial Reflection, likely an effect of teacher questions. He, however, had stance 5 responses in every task. Bob had four highest level (stance 5) responses to The Cat in the Bag when the individual texts were considered. The other response for this text was a stance 4. Thus, his response to this text was quite aesthetic. He had three stance 5 responses to The Trouble with "X".

In assessment according to **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many 1992), Bob had a level 1 response in his first experience with this approach, when he read The Laundry. All of Bob's responses were in the higher (levels 3 and 4) except this one. He had more level 3 than level 4 responses after The Cat in the Bag response, a time when his efferent aesthetic continuum stances were also lower. Bob seemed to have lower level of personal understanding when his aesthetic stance was lower. In consideration of tasks, the deepest levels of understanding were expressed in tasks one and three, the first initial reflection and the class discussion. Text 2, The Trouble with "X", had scores reflecting the deepest personal understanding. This response correlated with a high aesthetic response.

Bob, who had shown need for instruction in reading comprehension at the beginning of the term, experienced a deep level of personal understanding with this approach. His reading approach had spread across the continuum to include the efferent stance. This movement could have been due to the reading strategies and the composition instruction, both of which had an efferent tilt, but in it all, Bob was showing more confidence in his academic abilities.

These assessments showed important facets of Bob's reading development. It appeared that Bob could assume the heavy reading load which was paramount to this studies. In the following section I deepen the assessment to samples of Bob's responses as a living, breathing person. I have used the **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) for *The Laundress*, **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) for *The Trouble with "X"* and **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) for *The Cat in the Bag*.

The five-point efferent / aesthetic continuum assessment sample.

The Laundress: Bob's Response

This assignment, the first reader response opportunity of the term, was given on 2 September and the final Journal response was submitted on 16 September. Bob's responses played across a theme addressing transition in the lives of humankind. I have plotted a sample of his responses on a **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992). Please see Figure Eleven. Figure 8 gives the basic assessment grid. The text and

Figure 11. The five point Efferent / Aesthetic continuum (Cox and Many, 1992): The Laundress, Bob.

Efferent			Aesthetic	
1	2	3	4	5
Realism	Retelling	Both Efferent and Aesthetic	Elaboration	Focus on Lived Through Experience
(A question to an ESL student). . . . If you are from a different country. . . everything must be completely different . . . you consider Canada your home. . . but you still -- Korea is your home, right? (Class Discussion, 9 September).	The devotion towards homeland and pride in its heritage as the Icelandic hymns "brought all her joy. . . all her peace" (First Initial Reflection, 2 September).	Just as the laundress was a foreigner in Winnipeg, as Christians we too are foreigners in this world. "but our citizenship is in Heaven. . . Philippians 3:20" (First Initial, Reflection, 2 September)	As affluent Canadians . . . unlikely that we judge another culture by its economic status . . . more concerned with human rights (Journal, 16 September, referring to Class Discussion).	How tragic for anyone to endure the trials of life alone! (Initial Reflection, 2 September).

response assignment can be found in Appendix D. His responses which I detailed on the chart show efferent realism as he pondered the experiences of his Korean classmates, who were in a new homeland. Bob showed growth in his cross cultural knowledge and associations during the semester. The most aesthetic response was stance 5: empathy for the plight of the laundress who

endured the hardships of life without the open friendship of those near her. The stance 3 response involved both the efferent and aesthetic responses. The efferent retelling in stance 2 and the aesthetic elaboration in stance 4 further manifested his responses on the continuum. This sample chart shows each kind of response from an overall response pattern which was both efferent and aesthetic.

The levels of personal understanding assessment sample.

The Trouble with "X": Bob's Response

Bob had a basically aesthetic stance in his responses as he played across a theme of the basis of human relations in this response opportunity which began on 14 October and was concluded on 28 October. He indicated a deep understanding of the text as displayed on the **Level of Personal Understanding** grid (Cox and Many 1992). Please see Figure 12. The basic assessment grid is in Figure 9. He consistently displayed a "generalized belief and understanding about life", with 5 level 4 responses. In Figure Twelve I relay samples which give exemplary responses across the grid, although the overall classification of responses were level 4. His level 1 (literal response), which expressed wonderment as to why attitudes toward the sanctity of marriage have changed, was steeped in literal meaning. The level 2 response interpretation of scripture involved a mode of thinking which was a part of his daily life as a divinity student. A question for class discussion in level 3 could be a thought provoking question for him and his married classmates as they contemplated an understanding of themselves and of life. His level 4 response was an

Figure 12. Levels of Personal Understanding (Cox and Many, 1992), The Trouble with "X", Bob.

[world of text]		[applied to life]	
1	2	3	4
Literal Meaning	Interpretation of Story Events	Understanding of Story Events through Analogy to Self or World	Generalized Belief or Understanding about Life
What has contributed to, or is the cause of, the decline in the belief in the sanctity of marriage? (Formulated Discussion Question, 14 October).	The trouble with expecting perfection in others is that you are often required to flawlessly exemplify it. Jesus... "... first... must be... servant... slave"... washing their feet. (Journal, 28 October).	Which is preferable to you, a wife who unquestioningly obeys your every wish, totally mindless of her own desires, like a robot. Or a woman who can think and decide for herself? (Formulated Discussion Question, 14 October).	As I read this excerpt by C. S. Lewis, I was brought to an understanding of how change in others is precipitated by our first affecting change from within. (Journal, 28 October).

application to life, reflecting a deep personal understanding of some basic tenets of human relations. Although Bob's responses were consistent examples of lived through experiences, a striking example of the lived through experience was displayed in his response to The Cat in the Bag text. This particular text proved to quicken the interest and responses of Bob and all of his

classmates. I analyzed it here upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) grid to show the nuances of meaning which he made as he had transaction with this text.

The levels of engagement assessment sample.

The Cat in the Bag: Bob's Response

Bob received this assignment on 14 October and the final Journal response was submitted on 28 October. His response showed that his transaction with the text involved mainly stance 5 responses, in this Canadian urban legend, which was listed under Humour in An Inventory of Student Reading Interest (Appendix A). This text gave him rein to act upon his love for the imaginative with expressive use of words. Herewith is a presentation of his reflection as it fit into the Levels of Engagement assessment grid.

The story aroused his consciousness of a legend from his childhood:

Why don't the police come and arrest her?" I cried out in fear, as I dared to peek through the curtained window of the A & W restaurant. (My home town's) most notorious blood thirsty villain was getting away, and I was watching it all happen.

No youngster grew up in my home town without knowing the gory details of "Genie Rubberneck" and her appetite for consuming unsuspecting children -- which, of course, was why everyone needed to know about her. The more unsuspecting one was, the more likely a target they became. . . . No one ever knew how she got the nickname, Genie Rubberneck, but we could certainly imagine why (First Initial Reflection, 21 October).

His response also showed that he was able to connect his personal experience with characters in the text (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished):

The tale goes: She waited each winter to harvest the huge (four to five foot long) icicles which grew from her eves trough. . . . everyone had these beautiful decorations encircling their homes, but nowhere near the size of Genie's -- they grew

especially large for her purposes . . . "(First Initial Reflection, 21 October).

His ability to engage in risk taking and imagination was expressed in the first reflection:

Somehow, she (Genie Rubberneck) meticulously preserved them (the icicles) throughout the year to be used as weapons at a later time. For a while, she owned a rusty, black sedan which barely accommodated her 350 pound frame . . . and the icicles. We knew this was how she collected her victims and so, whenever it was seen on the road, we were nowhere to be found. Her home was about one-and-one-half miles from the safety of our school's playground but we were certain she could survey us perfectly during recess from her vantage point: likely in search of a tasty morsel (21 October).

. . . I had cause -- inquisitiveness -- to walk home from school along a circuitous route . . . past her home. . . . I slowed to a snail's pace so I could investigate without appearing to do so. . . . in front of her door, . . . it opened. My heart seized as an enormous figure of a woman filled the opening" (21 October).

Emotional engagement (See Figure 10) was evidenced, in response to his adventurous hometown legend:

For a moment , I was sure I caught a glimpse of something shining in her hand, whether a stunted icicle or a set of utensils, it didn't matter, I was going to be nobody's lunch! I ran as fast as my eight-year-old legs would carry me, the whole while vowing never to be so careless again (21 October) .

After analyzing Bob's responses to The Cat in the Bag thus far it would be easy to think that legends are a source of simple pleasure for him, but as he came to the final Journal entry he displayed both insight and empathy that perhaps provided him some closure on a childhood experience. From the vantage point of his adulthood, it was also evident that in his empathy he had the ability to see through the eyes of another character:

Kidding aside, some urban legends have been to the detriment of people still living in the area, as in the case of a lady in my home town . . . Stories among us youth . . . told of her unspeakable atrocities. No name was more famous than "Genie Rubberneck". But none of us, to my knowledge, ever met her or talked to her. She was branded because of her large size, nothing more. It seems the innate quality of every legend is its hunger for embellishment. . . . Sometimes, the flourishes add to the colour, sometimes it renders them off-color (Journal, 4 November).

His support of the author's perspective (Please see Figure 10.) was displayed in his Second Initial Reflection. An impressive part of Bob's responses to *The Cat in the Bag* was his statement concerning the advantages to memory afforded through a text which allows room for reflection, as modeled by the parables of Jesus.

These stories, in fact, all the biblical stories have greatly affected my moral development -- they have changed my life, or more appropriately, God has changed my life (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October).

Probably the most effective way of presenting an idea or strengthening a point of view is through illustrations or stories. . . . A story, I can vividly picture in my mind and place myself and situation in it. A lecture may be a little more than a compilation of meaningful words strewn together which the hearer must then decipher into appropriate wisdom. One is simple and immediate to even a lazy mind, while the other requires time to comprehend and a PHD. [sic] (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October).

For me, (the Word of God) . . is the heart and mind of God personified in text. . . . all that is needed for life's journey is contained within its pages; so I believe it is more analogous to an owner/operator's manual than a fanciful narrative (Second Initial reflection, 21 October).

I looked upon this response as a growth in understanding of this approach to reading. Perhaps a theme for his responses could deal with holes in the text.

In a phone conversation with Bob in February 2000, he revealed that this lesson was the most difficult for him of all the lessons. He had entered into it so wholeheartedly that I had thought the opposite to be true.

Summary statement: Bob.

At the end of the term, Bob had become more confident in his reading comprehension: so much so that he did not want to take the abbreviated Diploma route in his preparation, but he anticipated applying his diploma credits toward a bachelor's degree. The Master of Divinity degree could then be within the realm of possibility. Bob, who came to the class as a solely aesthetic reader, had begun to spread his reading stance across the continuum to include the efferent stance. He had also learned to freely communicate with his Korean classmates, Ivan and Ike. A review of Ike's experiences with this approach follows.

Ike

Changes within the bounded climate.

As the oldest member of our class, Ike had a more developed experiential reservoir. He seemed less timid and apprehensive than did the other students, perhaps due to his military background. Ike had maintained the erect posture and purposeful gait of a military officer. As a person with his regimented military background and a cultural background which embraces memorization in education, I wondered, at first, how Ike would adjust to the more subjective involvement in this reading approach. I became sure that, as a

person who had a strong self-discipline in study, he would strive to meet this one more challenge.

I had tutored Ike in preparation for the TOEFL and in that mode I had used a reading lab because it sought the type of answers he would be expected to give on the TOEFL. I knew that in English 1L3311 he was apt to find the reader response approach puzzling, especially from the same teacher within a few months. When I had the Semi-Structured Interview with him on October 14, he declared,

At first I couldn't understand your class, but 2 weeks ago you told me this class will help build up sermon, then my interesting (sic) was getting bigger . . . Then I can focus my thought and idea to prepare sermon for my ministry. . . . Now I understand. . . . It's so nice course. Thanks.

When the class discussion convened for the first time on 9 September "Ike was the most vocal [among all the students] in sharing his discussion questions on The Landress" (Researcher's Log). At the Seminary Family Picnic that evening "Ike helped a second year student cook the sausage and hamburgers and joined in the games". I noted his culinary activity as a sign of acculturation, since men in Korea stay out of the kitchen to escape the threat of losing their manhood (Researcher's Log, 9 September).

In my 30 September conference with Artista she mentioned that Ike was "troubled about forgiveness and whether it is possible" (Researcher's Log, 30 September). In the class discussion on the Suitcase Lady on 14 October his theme was God's love and forgiveness, a follow-through (Researcher's Log, 14 October). Ike was quite open with the class on 7 October when we discussed A

Question of Duty, which addresses infanticide. He “told about how he and his wife were considering an abortion for their third child in Korea (The Korean insurance plan does not cover a third birth). They are now thankful for their (expensive) third son” (Researcher’s Log, 7 October). During the discussion of *The Cat in the Bag* on 28 October, everyone fully participated and Ike, along with Ivan, had cultural sharing (Researcher’s Log).

Ike continuously strived for excellence in his academic pursuits. Artista described Ike as a person who:

enjoys being taught. He seeks to fill in the gaps in his knowledge. . . . he has learned his grammar in a very formal way and I find that very exhilarating. . . . and challenging for myself. . . . he is extremely sensitive. . . . an honest man. He has told me that there were two areas that we were studying in which he was plain to say he had no interest. He had learned that when he was a teenager. He didn’t particularly want to go into it now. Other times . . . he simply smiled his beautiful smile of delight in that which we have been dealing with (Semi-Structured Interview, 24 November).

Scriba gave no individual description of the two Korean students as individuals, but spoke of them as a unit. She felt that her responsibility to them was “encouraging the two Korean students, Ivan and Ike, that they really are good writers” (Semi-Structured Interview, 24 November).

As the interpretive community melded, Ike was a part of the camaraderie and took any teasing he received in a diplomatic fashion. In the class discussion on *What I Have Learned about Reading*, Ike acknowledged that written reflection was difficult for him because his vocabulary was not as large as he would like. He revealed the strategy which he used in order to get to personal reflection:

... in reading, ... [I] search for the meaning of word. Because I didn't know the English words deeply. That's why I try to know sense of the word in the sentence. Then I can get more imagination or thoughtful idea. ... I try to search for the meaning of the words and then first time I want to scan the whole stories and the check the several words that I want to study the meaning of the word and then try to match the (unclear) ideas with my own and I try to reflect on the articles (2 December).

A preliminary response analysis revealed more about Ike's reading experiences.

#### Changes regarding texts and tasks.

In assessment upon the **Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992), Ike had more stance 5 responses than any other. All of his responses were in the upper stances, except for 3 in stance 1. His stance 5 responses were enacted in the first 3 texts, with none in the last two. The text which received the most aesthetic response was *The Cat in the Bag*, a Canadian urban legend. This text encouraged Ike in aesthetic response.

When task was considered, Ike's dominant aesthetic responses were in tasks 4 and 5, the Class Discussion and the Journal reflection. His response showed that tasks 4 and 5 had higher aesthetic response than the earlier tasks, although there were 2 stance 5 responses in the first task. Ike's responses became more aesthetic as he spent more time in response to the text. He, however, had the most (2) stance 5 responses in task 1, the First Initial Reflection, possibly due to teacher questions. These text and task analyses showed that this approach aided Ike in aesthetic response. His former reading habits were opening to this new approach.

In the **Levels of Personal Understanding** analysis (Cox and Many, 1992), all of Ike's responses were in levels 3 and 4 except for 2. This was an indication of a deep understanding of the texts. He had the deepest understanding in response to Love is Healthful, text 5, but he had a consistently deep understanding of all of the texts. Ike had more responses with a level three understanding than with a level four. Level three, in which the reader understands story events through analogy to self or the world, draws heavily upon concrete life experiences. (See Figure 9). Perhaps, as a person with many life experiences, Ike was inclined to use this level of understanding often. See Figure 9. He also had a number of level 4 responses, which indicate a reader has developed a generalized belief or understanding about life, fortify the indications that Ike had a deep personal understanding of the text.

When task was considered, Ike had the deepest level of understanding in task five, the Journal. This tally could reflect the effect of a longer exposure to the text. The first task, the first Initial Reflection, rated high also. Teacher question formulation could contribute to these task one responses.

Summarily, Ike's most aesthetic response was to The Trouble with "X" and his most aesthetic response to that text was the first initial reflection. His deepest levels of personal understanding were in the journal assignments.

These assessments are helpful, but an examination of Ike's actual responses can give clarification and a deeper picture of his experiences with this approach. In this descriptive account, The Laundress response is described upon the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992),

The Trouble with "X" response is described upon the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) and The Cat in the Bag response is assessed on the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript).

The efferent / aesthetic continuum assessment sample.

The Laundress: Ike's Response

Since Ike had 3 stance 5 responses to this text, there were many evidences of aesthetic response in his first experience with this approach, which began on 2 September. Figure 8 provides clarification of the stance classifications used for assessment. He played across the theme of human transitions in a Christian perspective as he responded to this story of an immigrant lady in Winnipeg. See Appendix D for the text. A sample of his responses upon **A Five Point Efferent/ Aesthetic Continuum** is provided in Figure 13. His efferent response in the Formulated Discussion Question, stance 1, was heavy with realism which he had experienced as a lonely immigrant. The most aesthetic response (stance 5) revealed his method of coping with the immigrant experience, a lived through experience. The stance 3 response included efferent past experience and aesthetic expression of feeling. Aesthetic (stance 4) response elaborated a part of the story, with suggestions concerning how the laundress could share joy and the love of God. A retelling of the story facilitated his efferent stance 2 response. As indicated in this sample, throughout all of his responses Ike's verbalizations resonated with the presence of God with him in transitions.

I used the Levels of Personal Understanding assessment grid to give examples of Ike's responses to *The Trouble with "X"*, the text in which he had two stance 5 responses. The descriptive grid for these responses can be viewed in Figure 14. The basic assessment grid for the Levels of Personal Understanding can be viewed in Figure 9.

**Figure 13. A five point Efferent / Aesthetic continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p 45), *The Laundress*: Ike

<b>Efferent</b>				<b>Aesthetic</b>
1	2	3	4	5
Realism	Retelling	Both Efferent and Aesthetic	Elaboration	Focus on the Lived Through Experience
As a Christian do you think you will always be peaceful in any circumstances? (Formulated Discussion Question, 2 September).	When she lay dying, she sang hymns in her mother tongue because it is easier ... to express ... feelings ... in mother tongue (Initial Reflection, 2 September).	I understand her feeling ... I worked at Safeway ... Some people wanted to listen to me ... but others doesn't to listen ... my accent. ... (Class Discussion, 9 September).	... I think that she could share her joy and peaceful life with her neighbors through God's love, the prayers and the hymns (Journal, 16 September).	... reading the Bible and singing hymns were only way to have peaceful time, because I could get God's comfort and love. Only He understood my broken heart and loved me perfectly (First Initial Reflection, 2 September).

The levels of personal understanding assessment sample.

The Trouble With "X": Ike's Response

In all of his responses to The Trouble with "X" Ike played across the theme of attitudes which Christians need as they trust God for help in human relations. His level of personal understanding in this text, which was assigned on 14 October, centred on understanding of story events through analogy to self and the world, while he focused on the lived through experience. Figure 14 presents samples of these responses. Ike's formulated level one (literal) Formulated Discussion Question on the left side of the chart was designed to promote classroom conversation. His contribution to Class Discussion which was displayed in the chart as a level 2 of personal understanding, interpreted story events. Deep personal understanding was displayed in his level 3 and level 4 responses. The class discussion was not a turning point in his viewpoints, but it did serve to remind him of one other bothersome person in his life and to deal with that situation in his Journal. Since Ike had lived longer than the other students, he had a number of human relationships to reflect upon.

There seemed to be a correlation between a higher stance response and a deeper level of understanding. This is indicated in responses to The Trouble with "X" and The Cat in the Bag. Ike had more level 3 responses to The Cat in the Bag (4) than he had to The Trouble with "X" (3), indicating he had a deeper understanding of this Canadian urban legend. . He also had more stance 5 aesthetic responses (3) to The Cat in the Bag than he had with The Trouble with "X" (2).

**Figure 14. Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56), The Trouble with "X" : Ike.

[world if text]		[applied to life]	
1	2	3	4
literal meaning	interpretation of story events	understanding of story events through analogy to self or world	generalized belief or understanding about life
What kind of person is a bothersome person in your life? (Formulated Discussion Question, 14 October).	Like Jesus, I do not want to blame anyone. He did not blame Judas who betrayed Him. . . . He always received the power to love the world through His Father. (Second Initial Reflection, 14 October).	Through class discussion, I thought about the trouble my boss I had in my military life. He always pressed his staff. . . (Journal, 28 October).	I think he showed us to focus yourself on what you have that is (unclear) trouble. It is easier to see others (Class Discussion, 21 October).

The levels of engagement assessment sample.

The Cat in the Bag: Ike's response

Ike played across the theme of legends as teaching tools of humankind in his responses to this Canadian urban legend. He seemed to have studied the characteristics of legends and to particularly enjoy this assignment. During the process of this assignment he purposed to create a living family legend which he could use as instruction for his children. In this analysis I pinpointed

prominent responses on the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript).

He had a level 4 personal understanding in his First Initial Reflection and his aesthetic stance was 3. In interaction with the text he "established points on the landscape of consciousness" (Bruner, 1986) as he told a Korean legend:

According to the legend written in the oldest Korean history book "Sam-KKK You-SA", the first Korean ancestor is the son of the god in heaven and his wife, who was a bear incarnated as a woman (First Initial Response, 21 October).

Intertextuality was displayed as the legend continued:

The son of the god chose Korean Peninsula as the best place to live in the world about 3000 B. C. He needed a wife, but there was no woman there. At that time a tiger and a bear came to him to ask for becoming a woman. He said, "If you live in a cave for one hundred days eating only garlics [sic], you will become women. Yet the tiger had no patience. The bear did. Finally the bear became his wife and gave birth to their son (First Initial Reflection, 21 October).

He made connections with his personal life and values as he brought morals and values into his First Initial Reflection:

Remembering the legend, I think that my ancients probably prefer patience to power or tried to teach us the importance of having patience in life. On the other hand they might be proud of themselves, or might feel inferior to China, because their land was smaller than it. Whether or not it is true, I was proud of the long history of my country and the election by the heavenly god, when I was a child (21 October).

Again, values came to the fore in the interpretive community response:

That's our ancestor, but his uh told us we need patience. That's why uh most Korean think we have patience, or, we need patience in sitchations [sic]. It is a funny story" (Class Discussion, 28 October).

In support of the author's perspective (See Figure 10) he agreed with the author's opinion that the urban legends contain moral advice, "because I have learned moral advice and something valuable in my life" (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October). He further addressed morals and values:

. . . some legend gain credibility and a wider audience through our lives, since they have ethics and some values to disciple second generation (First Initial Response, 21 October) I also heard of many legends, which teach doing good things for others (First Initial Reflection, 21 October).

. . . legends teach us that those who steal something face to difficulty in their lives . . . legends teach us moral things." (Second Initial Reflection, 21 October). . . the most valuable thing I have learned form legends is moral. Like other children, I loved to listen to legends from my parents and adults because of interesting stories. Later I drew the moral from the stories (Journal, 4 November).

Insightful connections (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) to biblical text figured into his entertainment of morals and values:

As a Christian, I think that Israel is blessed through historical legends done by God and godly people. On the other hand, I'd like to use biblical legends for my sons' faith, wisdom and understanding" (Journal, 4 November).

He also generated expectations about alternative possible outcomes to the usefulness of legends (See Figure 10) because a legend caused him worry and guilt as a child:

Then I have another idea. Oh, the country was chosen by god. When I was a child I had a problem my conscience. (Unclear) teach the legend to our children. Later, I understand that's unreal story. But at the time when I was a child, I was so (unclear) of my conscience (Class Discussion, 28 October).

I think that a legend have two faces. One is ridiculing others. One is to encourage others also. To teach them some good things (Class Discussion, 28 October).

Insight and empathy (see Figure 10) were clearly evident in his emotional engagement, "Some make a certain person and group victims of legends" (Class Discussion, 4 November). Understanding beyond personal experience (see Figure 10) was revealed in two responses. First in the Second Initial Response:

It helps me find some valuable thought and ethics. First, I usually think about from whom and where the sources of a legend come. It helps me to be unbiased. The second thing is why a certain story becomes a legend that helps people develop their moral. Then I expand my thought to get some valuable idea and moral such as humility, intelligence, honesty, flexibility and others (21 October).

Then, in the Journal response:

When my teacher asked us to tell a family legend, I regretted that I could not tell any family legend. Now I want to make some legends for having my children to know their grandparents' lives. I also want to be a hero of a family legend; I would like to tell a Christian moral story to my descents [sic] (4 November).

Summary statement: Ike.

This student had a huge adjustment in his transition from his established reading habits while he was growing into this approach. His aesthetic responses in the first assignment showed his whole hearted participation in this new approach. Although his language was simple, Ike's well thought out responses did not reveal the difficulty which he observed that he had in reflective response. He got to a deeper meaning than the surface words. He consistently elaborated upon life experiences as he made meaning in response to the texts. It was evident that Ike enjoyed the intertextual experience within the interpretive community, and like his co-discussants, his Journal

acknowledged this broadening experience. Reading comprehension and composition, deficits at the term's outset, improved.

Ike had success experiences in other language study, too. By the end of the term, Ike's marks in New Testament Greek, a requirement for the Master of Divinity degree, were an encouragement to him in his ability to gain yet another language.

The fourth and final reader in this study had the least experience with the English language. He began his study in this class with that clear disadvantage.

### **Ivan**

#### Changes within the bounded climate.

Ivan was reluctant to sit for the comprehensive English examination. He explained to the Registrar that he had passed the TOEFL and he hoped that his formal study of English was finished. He, however, "came to my office early on 30 August and announced to me that he had prayed and that he wanted to take English" (Researcher's Log). He sat for the entrance testing after the orientation group had taken theirs. His need for instruction in reading comprehension, spelling and essay concerned me. There was so far yet to go.

As I observed Ivan, in his quiet helpful way, cultivating the friendship of newly arrived Chinese immigrants in my Sunday morning ESL class, the joy on his face showed that he would endure, not only English study, but Greek and Hebrew and other language study as well, to prepare for the cross-cultural work which had become his heartbeat. Then, as I thought of Ivan's dislike for

language study and his lifelong struggle for proficiency in his own and other languages, I wondered if this approach might provide a spark for reading enjoyment which he had never imagined.

Although he had passed the TOEFL, Ivan came to us with rather limited experience in the English language. Artista commented upon his linguistic needs being more intense than Ike's. I explained to her "that Ivan had spent his time in Argentina and Indonesia immersed in those languages and that he had spent less time in English". Also, Ike already had a command of English several years ago which enabled him to complete a Master's Degree in the States. (Researcher's Log, 10 September). Artista described him as: "... our quiet one. He is a sweet personality and he tends not to speak up out ahead of the group".

Ivan became progressively more vocal in class discussion, although he was hindered orally by his usage of Korean sentence order much of the time. On 30 September, as we discussed Crisis in Kosovo, he narrated for the class an account "about a coup in Venezuela when he was Vice Consul there, and also about an uprising there when the government doubled the price of bus fares" (Researcher Log). Ivan "was very quiet" during the discussion of A Question of Duty (Researcher's Log, 7 October). During the Suitcase Lady discussion on 14 October, Ivan told of "street people in Toronto and one experience with the poor people in Venezuela" (14 October). He did further cultural sharing in the Cat in the Bag discussion on 28 October (Researcher's Log). In the individual student discussion of Johann Gerhard Oncken, Ivan

used a theme of obedience to discuss his views on the person under study (12 November, Researcher's Log).

Interference from his first language structure was persistent. On 25 November, Artista observed:

He still retains some of the basic grammatical difficulties . . . I can see him frowning over his book . . . . . looking at me and listening to others. If he answers incorrectly and I just wait for him to think again, he does get it (Semi-Structured Interview).

My ear as an ESL teacher was showing me that, in spite of all this, Ivan was becoming more proficient orally.

When the class discussion centred upon What I Have Learned About Reading on December 2, Ivan, whom Artista had described as "the quiet one", was quite vocal as he explicated his experiences with reading throughout the semester. He began with reading strategies, which Artista had taught, and continued with his "thinking" experiences with the reader response approach:

In Artista's class I learned specific strategy. How to read it . . . very helpful. But in this class very different, I felt. . . . some hard thinking. . . . some for the making reflection. It was hard for me. . . . after reflection, writing also. It's hard. So, in this class I've learned some -- hard to read book, read more deeply with thoughtful reading. . . . after reading we . . . discuss many ideas. In this case I realized my thinking . . . is very narrow. Very limited. Also many each of the opinions is difference. . . . it's uh kind of interesting. Same text, but different idea. So its make me some of the wide in my viewpoint. . . . . It's a most different background make a different idea. This very interesting.

In this class -- I enjoyed very much, because I learned other person's uh lives through the articles. And then I have the opportunity to reflect myself on the viewpoint of them.

. . . the most things I learned in this class is to think about the situation and to make my own way to express my feeling. Or opinions.

. . . When I got the paper, I just read fast can. And then I would think about the story and then about person's life. And next week - - then Monday, I read it carefully and then I organized my thoughts. How to write. . . . In my case, just thinking about my -- my experience first and then another one -- back to a Bible passage. . . or historical background or the writer's background. . . . I want to pick some opportunities of how to thinking. Thinking way (Class Discussion, 2 December).

The assistants were conscious that Ivan had grown during the term. I agreed. I knew that his language had improved. But, most important of all, this student who had loathed language learning all of his life, had said that he had enjoyed reading! Ivan had grown, not only in his reading ability and enjoyment, but also in his class participation. The assessment on the Cox and Many grids, regarding responses in relationship to texts and tasks, revealed more about Ivan's learning experience.

#### Changes related to texts and tasks.

Analysis using **The Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p 45) showed that Ivan's most prominent aesthetic stance was a higher level 4. This response was a more concrete response than was level 5. He used story events or characters in the text as a basis for elaborating his preference, judgement or description in his making of meaning. Although I think we all use this approach, perhaps as an ESL student Ivan especially used this act of using the known as a bridge to the unknown as a useful tool for his making of meaning. The highest aesthetic level, a stance 5 was also prominent in his responses.

When texts were also under consideration within the **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992), The Trouble with

“X” and Love is Healthful received the most aesthetic responses. Transaction with these texts evidently more easily afforded Ivan the lived through experience. When task was considered, the First Initial Reflection led with three highest level (stance 5) responses. I designed this invitation to response to assist the lived through experience with the text.

**The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p 56) response analysis showed that Ivan had a prominent highest (Level 4) response. These responses indicated an understanding and belief about life. Level 3, which showed that Ivan had used analogy of himself and the world to understand the text, received all of the other responses. These levels displayed that Ivan had a deep understanding of the texts. The Cat in the Bag text received the most responses at the highest level (4): all 5 responses were this level. His responses to this text indeed had a deep personal understanding. When task was considered, Formulated Discussion Questions and the Journal , with a tally of 4 responses each, received the highest (level 4) rating. Level four responses, which showed a generalized understanding and belief about life, were dispersed evenly between the First Initial Reflection and the Second Initial Reflection. In spite of language limitation, Ivan had aesthetic responses and a deep understanding of the text. A look at some excerpts of his responses can further aid an in depth picture of his experience with this approach.

In the accounts which follow I describe Ivan’s responses to The Trouble with “X”, I Have a Dream and Love is Healthful. I began with a text which was

farther into the term than I had used with the other students, because these responses were more comprehensible than the earlier ones. In this brief synopsis I begin with examples of assessment of responses to *The Trouble with "X"*, according to the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript). Next, the **The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) instrument is used for response examples for *I Have a Dream*. Then I show examples of assessment of responses to text on the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) for *Love is Healthful*.

The levels of engagement assessment sample.

The Trouble with "X": Ivan's Response

Among the responses to the author's challenge to change one's self in order to change the situation with problem persons in our lives, Ivan's responses dealt with the problem of being offensive to others in this assignment which began on 14 October and extended for two weeks

His consciousness was acutely raised about possibilities that he might be offensive without being conscious of it: "How do we handle the problem we bother the others without our recognition?" (First Initial Reflection, 14 October). This conscious concern continued to the Journal, the final reflection. "I also certainly give other people many people many troubles. Is it a sort of a problem which needs to repent? How do I meet this situation?" (Journal, 28 October).

Cultural mores were voiced, within Ivan's pattern of consideration of others, in a formulated discussion question, "What attitude is suitable as we

recognize our action to hurt others?"(14 October). The pattern of thought of unintentional hurt to others continued in his Journal:

Obviously my wife and sons are major victims. Maybe they have much more troubles caused from me than those which I recognize. Even when they point out my bad thing, I try not to accept it as my disadvantage. I need to become more generous and less angry. I need to keep more understandable mind (28 October).

As a computer technician, he used computer terminology to give direction as he displayed insightful connection to another text:

Many people regard . . . relationship in marriage as the thing to be easy to break. The Bible that says the relationship between a husband and a wife is like the relationship between Christ and church. The marriage is related to not only the relationship with his/her spouse but also the relationship with God. The Bible teaches us that a husband must love his wife as Christ loved church to death on the cross. We need to reinstall our viewpoint about our marriage with God's instruction (Second Initial Reflection, 14 October).

His contrition regarding his unknown offenses to others continued as he extended beyond the text, (see Figure 10),

I definitely can not handle by myself these things that I hurt the others because of my bad character and habit. Therefore I pray God that I might realize my bad thing and might change myself (Journal, 28 October).

In class discussion he challenged the author's assumption (see Figure 10) when he said: "I think that it is hard to change the everybody's habit, so we need to accept the other people's habit. We . . . need some loom [sic] to understand the other peoples" (21 October).

His response displayed empathy as he showed emotions (see Figure 10): "And I also pray God the heart and mind of everyone who I had hurt might be healed by the hand of Him" (Journal, 28 October).

Ivan's responses had a pattern of showing more concern about his own offenses to others than showing his concern about how others offended him. It is of interest that he has become thankful for a bothersome person in his life:

[A Korean pastor in Venezuela] used to come to me at my working time when I had a lot of work to do. . . . used to stay in my room for several hours. . . . I thought . . . his frequent visitation was rude. . . He always sat on sofa in front of my desk and . . . read a newspaper.

Now I understand his bothersome behaviour . . . and I thank him for that because it gave me a lot of opportunities to learn the Bible (First Initial Reflection, The Trouble with "X", 14 October).

In the overall assessment, Ivan had two level 4 personal understanding responses to this text. He had one stance 5 aesthetic response to this text and four stance 4 responses. Across tasks, his deepest level of personal understanding was in task 5, the Journal. He also had a stance 5 response to I Have a Dream, with all five of his responses for personal understanding falling within the level 4 responses. This was an indication he had a deep personal understanding.

I present his response to I Have a Dream upon the Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum (Cox and Many, 1992).

The efferent / aesthetic continuum assessment sample.

I Have a Dream: Ivan's Response

In responses to this epic persuasive text, Ivan's theme involved the living of life in a justice promoting fashion. As a person who had a career in diplomacy in the two-thirds world, this text was important to Ivan. See Figure 15 for an assessment sample upon the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and

Many, 1992). In efferent response, he acknowledged the realistic responsibility for ministry to oppressed persons. His "lived through experience" with the text

*Figure 15. A five point Efferent / Aesthetic continuum (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45), I have a dream: Ivan.*

Efferent			Aesthetic	
Realism	Retelling	Both Efferent and Aesthetic	Elaboration	Focus on the Lived Through Experience
I think the ministry for oppressed people is important (Formulated Discussion Question, 11 November).	He might think "It is valuable for the sake of justice". I agree . . . (Second Initial Reflection, 11 November).	. . . I was caught two feelings. One was like listening a strong sermon, another was like being persuaded by a [sic] incendiary speaker. . . (First Initial Reflection, 11 November).	I do not my work, but God's. It is important whether I do my work or do God's work (Second Initial Reflection, 11 November).	I remember . . . I was university student . . . infringement of human rights. . . students resisted government. . . marching fighting . . . injured . . . killed themselves. (First Initial Reflection, 11 November).

(Rosenblatt, 1978) focused upon the climate at his university when students put their lives on the line for human rights. His elaboration had to do with his own personal responsibility. In the stance 3 response, which was both efferent and

aesthetic, Ivan acknowledged his reactions when he read Dr. King's treatise: the effects of a persuasive speaker.

Ivan also had a level 4 in personal understanding of the Love is Healthful text. Most of his aesthetic responses were stance 4.

The levels of personal understanding assessment sample.

Love is Healthful: Ivan's Response

I particularly enjoyed reading Ivan's responses to this text, in which his theme was the aspects of living the loving Christian life. Figure 16 shows some of his typical responses, which I have placed upon the assessment tool of **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 56). His literal meaning statement was primary and profound as he expressed the basics of community living from a Christian perspective. Each deeper level of understanding was simply and clearly written, with the deepest level of personal understanding, level 4, pinpointing the unconditional love of Jesus, expressed as He sacrificed His life for humankind. Not only does this chart show Ivan's depth of understanding, but the reflective writing demonstrates some of the growth in written expression which Ivan experienced during the term. If I were to choose an overall theme for Ivan's responses in the semester class, it would involve our need to respond to the unfathomable love of God. Ivan and the other students who participated in the study were continuously concerned about living out unconditional love in their lives. This figure could be thought of as a sample of the benevolent attitude which was in my class.

Figure 16. **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many 1992, p. 56), Love is Healthful: Ivan.

[world of text]		[applied to life]	
1	2	3	4
literal meaning	interpretation of story events	understanding of story events through analogy to self or world	generalized belief or understanding about life
God loves us. We love Him. Our community is a place where we share His love. Jesus showed us His love on the cross (Journal, 2 December).	Loving others is having special concern for them. Loving is giving. . . . for me I pray for a person who needs my love, and I can keep my mind on loving him. . . . How do we have a loving mind? (Formulated Discussion Question, 18 November).	In the beginning God made a man and a woman. He gave us a family and a community. We live in the community that He has given us. His intention is a lovely relationship among the community (First Initial Response, 18 November).	Jesus was Giver. He took the suffering, but gived [sic] the love to us (Class Discussion, 25 November). By this we recovered our eternal health from sinful status (Journal, 2 December).

Summary statement: Ivan.

At the term's beginning I had concern about Ivan's listening comprehension in addition to the other measured language needs, but he seemed to keep up with the class in this respect. After the first six weeks, I could see Ivan blossom in every facet of the responses. His writing became

comprehensible and his participation in discussion was less governed by the consciousness that his oral structure would be less than perfect. His level of understanding was the highest in the class and his aesthetic stance on his final analyzed responses had improved tremendously. His steady, patient study worked well with this approach. He had come to enjoy reading!

Since class interaction was an important part of meaning making, it is necessary to look, not only at the individual growth, but also at the class growth as a whole. This aspect of the study is addressed in the next section.

### Analysis of the Class

#### Introduction

An overarching theme for the students' response in the climate of this seminary reading class embraced an intense commitment to faith and love. Ike, for instance, credited the love of God for his physical health and euphoric countenance:

Love is healthful! I would be sick of illness and weakness, before I became a Christian. As I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, I could forgive others. I also had no guilty feeling. I was free from anyone's bothering and judgment. When I feel that someone loves me, I am happy. Therefore, I say that sensing God's love is Christians' privilege" (Second Initial Reflection, 2 December).

#### The Class

Class response upon **The Five-point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) showed a predominance of responses in the higher stances four and five. The readers were, as a class focusing on the lived through experience and elaborated upon events or characters in the texts

to show preference, judgement and description. They had joined their literary and life experiences in transaction with the texts (Rosenblatt, 1978).

When text was considered, *The Trouble with "X"* and *The Cat in the Bag* led in the highest level (stance 5) responses. The students had the most lived through experiences with these texts. These texts emphasized human nature, ethics, values, morals and human relationships, qualities and situations in which these readers had a great deal of interest. By the time we read these two texts, the students had several weeks' experience with this reading approach and they used it very naturally in their responses, but perhaps interest was a determining factor in this high aesthetic response. Although later texts received high aesthetic responses, response to these texts was a high point.

In regard to task, Task 1, the First Initial Reflection, received the most higher level (stance 4 and stance 5) responses. In this invitation to response I had particularly sought the lived through experience as students thought upon their own lives and drew parallels to situations in their own lives. Discussion also had higher stance responses. Journal tasks were the most efferent in the overall tally. I think that this configuration of aesthetic response was influenced by the original response invitations and the extended thinking time allowed for the final journal response.

Stance 4 responses, in which they aesthetically elaborated upon particular events or characters, were noticeable in Task 4, the Class Discussion and in Task 5, the Journal. In these tasks, the students tended to be a bit more

concrete as they selected story events or characters and elaborated upon them in their meaning making

An analysis upon **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) showed a predominance of levels 3 and 4 responses, an indication that the class had a deep personal understanding. When text was considered, *The Trouble with "X"* showed the deepest level of personal understanding (4). This deep level of understanding was in correlation to a high aesthetic response. All of the texts, however, stood up well in aesthetic response. As a class, there was a deep understanding of the texts while using this approach.

Regarding task, **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) assessment showed that the Journal led in level 4 responses, the deepest level of personal understanding. The Journal, as the fifth and final assignment on each text, permitted a longer incubation period for personal understanding. Formulated Discussion Questions, after two reflection opportunities, showed a deep understanding. Students reached a generalized belief or understanding about life.

Readers adapted well to this approach, not only in their responses, but in their enthusiasm and interest. The data generated in this study has helped to provide some answers to my research questions.

### **The questions**

The basic question, which I had initially:

**“How will reader response theory, applied to a class of adult readers with unique backgrounds, affect their making of meaning?”**

could be more aptly answered by using three more specific questions. Out of this basic question, I generated these three specific questions for consideration in describing the findings in this study:

1. **Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?**
2. **Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?**
3. **How have students' responses changed over time?**

In the following section I describe some of my observations in relationship to these questions.

**Question 1:** Which perspectives of reader response theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?

In examining student responses, both the textual and experiential theories were prominent.

#### The Textual Perspective.

The textual perspective was evident in the responses upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) (Figure 10) as students had deep responses. The students definitely responded differently to different types of texts as guides as they interacted with the text, dealt in intertextuality, extended beyond the text and displayed insight and empathy. They filled gaps, maintained a wandering viewpoint, dealt with negations, explored new horizons of possibilities, and worked from a theme. Some texts stimulated reader imagination better than did other texts within the variety.

Student interest in the texts seemed to have a direct influence upon response. The Trouble with "X" and The Cat in the Bag generated a more

aesthetic response than did the other texts. Since these two texts addressed general human dilemmas and the other three texts pointed to more specific situations, these characteristics could have elicited a different response.

**The Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), Figure 17, displays a compendium of samples of class responses in interaction with the text. This method of assessment showed me that indeed the students were having a rich, full, aesthetic reading experience. These classifications offered nuances of response classifications to aid the instructor in knowledge of the usefulness of the textual perspective.

The experiential perspective.

There was strong evidence of the experiential perspective in student responses, particularly since Rosenblatt includes socio-cultural considerations. Figure 18, Samples of class response on the **Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45) shows some examples of these responses. As was evidenced in the examination of individual and class responses upon the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992), students actively responded in the experiential perspective. The invitations to response were specifically formulated with the experiential perspective in mind, particularly early in the term. Students played across the entire continuum with all 5 stances. The reluctant reader and the avowed efferent reader progressed in their meaning making. Figure 19 features a **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) assessment. A deep level of personal understanding was experienced in this class, who

Figure 17, Samples of class responses on the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript).

**Interaction with Text: Transaction** (The reader's response demonstrated lived through experience of the text).

*Demonstrates reader's active engagement in filling gaps and questioning norms:*

"The man responsible for burying discarded babies earned much money. He was blind and deaf. He could not see and hear his conscience and God. He could justify before Chinese law, but not before God" (Ivan, Second initial Reflection, A Question of Duty [Wong, 1995], 30 September).

*Establishes points of contact on the landscape of consciousness:*

"It is interesting that Frank Laubach had the best intentions, yet lacked love, the very thing that kept him from succeeding. . . . Until he submitted himself to God's will". (Bob, Class Discussion, World for a Classroom [Treadaway, 1969], 16 September).

*Enriches, deepens and extends the roles of the reader in the interpretive community:*

"Do you have an idea for resolving the population problem of China?" (Ivan, Formulated Discussion Question. A Question of Duty, [Wong, 1995], 18 November).

**Intertextuality** (Connections with the Text and Beyond the Text).

*Makes connections between personal experience, characters and one's own life:*

"As parents, how can we avoid doing this to our children, giving them a false . . . impression, a false security that they are saved and aren't?" (Abe, Class Discussion, Salvation. [Hughes, 1989], 23 September).

*Draws on literacy and cultural repertoires:*

". . . the ministry for children is one of the most important fields in Christian societies. Especially how do we handle disable children?" (Ivan, Journal, A Child to Lead Us. [Kemp, 1996]. 18 November).

*Shows insightful connection to other texts:*

(Some-Christians) thought . . . diseases or physical problems are curses from sins. . . . disable [sic] children . . . result from . . . parents' sin. . . . makes problems in churches. . . . I think we need to distinguish between a physical disease and a spiritual disease" (Ivan, Journal, A Child to Lead Us (Kemp, 1996, 18 November).

**Extending Beyond Text: Risk Taking Imagination** (The reader's contributions and the text create a virtual text, using an image, a concept or a character to extend the world of the text and the reader, perhaps to create another text).

*Generates expectations about alternative possible outcomes:*

"Another thing . . . not just children . . . nowadays there are energy services with excitement. It generates a feeling. People go forward and recite a printed prayer. I have my doubts whether they are actually saved. It is not based on forgiveness. It feels good. . . (Abe, Class Discussion, Salvation, 23 September).

(Continued on next page).

*Figure 17. Samples of class responses on the Levels of Engagement (Continued).*

*Develops alternative interpretations supported with relevant textual information:*

"We need to . . . love others by understanding those who are suffering from difficult situation. . . . I want the compassion . . . Jesus had. . . . To love others is not my will, but His. (Ike, Journal, A child to Lead Us. [Kemp, 1996], 18 November).

*Thoughtfully supports the author's assumption, perspective, or style:*

"I insist that to get rid of a sense of superiority from their thoughts and feelings is the first step to solve the integration and the discrimination" (Ike, First Initial Reflection, I Have a Dream [King, 1989], 18 November).

*Thoughtfully challenges the author's assumption, perspective, or style:*

". . . how does one repair an irreparable condition . . . heal a pain only God and time can cure? . . . my mother-in-law. I have seen the millstone-weight of [her husband's terminal cancer]. I imagined her shaking a scornful fist at God and blaming Him for inflicting this pain. . . ." (Bob, First Initial Reflection. A Child to Lead Us [Kemp, 1996], 28 October).

"Anyone can meet an adversity, but some people who strive to overcome it like Dave can get out of the situation (Ivan, First Initial Reflection, Suitcase Lady, [MacLaren, 1995], 7 October).

### **Insight / Empathy**

*Demonstrates the ability to see through the eyes of one other character, perhaps the protagonist of the story.*

". . . North American society is based on getting rich quick. Can we imagine this Kosovar family dreaming of early retirement and cruise-ship holidays?" (Bob, Crisis in Kosovo [Finn, 1999], Second Initial Reflection, 28 September).

*Demonstrates emotional engagement with characters, events and texts:*

(After snubbing a beggar). This episode has haunted my thoughts many times. . . . I may have to wait until I am in God's Kingdom, but I pray I meet this fellow . . . to say I'm sorry (Bob, First Initial Reflection, A Suitcase Lady [MacLaren, 1995], 7 October).

*Reveals understanding beyond personal experience:*

". . . mechanic in Toronto. When he was ten years old, . . . ran away from . . . parents' house. He was hit by his father. . . . became a street boy. . . . used to sleep in cardboard box. . . . When I met him, . . . he had helped a charity event in the same place as . . . he use to sleep. . . . he sat . . . and talked with street people. . . . (Ivan, First Reflection, Suitcase Lady, [MacLaren, 1995], 7 October).

**Figure 18.** Samples of class response on **The Five Point Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 45).

<b>Efferent</b>					<b>Aesthetic</b>
1	2	3	4	5	
Analysis of elements according to outside structure (what was learned, literary elements, production analysis, realism).	Retelling (focus relating the storyline, telling what the story was about).	Portions of both efferent analysis and aesthetic experience of the work (primary focus using a single stance can not be determined)	Selection of story event or characters to elaborate preference, judgement description (I enjoyed it when . . . I thought it was good/funny/unfair when . . . )	Focus on the lived through experience of the literary world (the world created reading and the emotions or associations resulting from the experience.	
"Through discussion in class I am forced to consider other . . . dimensions of the story. . . . I realized how much agony and stress a lot of immigrants face" (Abe, Journal. The Laundress, 14	"Devotion towards homeland and pride in its heritage as the Icelandic hymns brought her joy, her peace (Bob, First Initial Reflection, The Laundress, 2 September).	"Difference of languages and cultures makes most of immigrants stress. . . . In my case, I enjoy singing hymns alone". (Ivan, First Initial Reflection, The Laundress 2 September).	"After the class discussion I thought about the trouble with my boss . . . in my military life " (Ike, Journal. The Trouble with "X", 28 October).	"Our production manager was off to warmer climes . . . leaving cabinet-makers under the . . . dictatorship of Attila the Hans. . . ." (Bob, First Reflection, The Trouble with "X", 14 October).	

**Figure 19.** Samples of class response on **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992).

[world of text]			[applied to life]
1	2	3	4
literal meaning	interpretation of story events	understanding of story events through analogy to self or world	generalized belief or understanding about life
Is this always true? Can we always lighten a situation ... by changing your own character? A hundred per cent always true? (Class Discussion, The Trouble with "X", 21 October).	Why was she here, when her heart was there? She never considered Winnipeg her home. ... as foreign to her as the soil that ... covered her. (Bob, The Laundress, First Reflection, 2 September).	In Venezuela I felt cultural discrimination. When constructing Panama Canal they brought in Chinese. They thought me ... "Chino" ... a low word. It is agony living in foreign country. (Ivan, The Laundress, Class Discussion, 9 September).	I would have a better relationship with him if I treated him (the bothersome kid at school) more gently in various ways. I was less flexible at that time (Ike, First Initial Reflection, The Trouble with "X", 14 October).

showed evidence of having become aesthetic readers. Their response to the use of this approach in the experiential perspective showed evidence of enabling them to meet their academic challenges. Their deep understanding was exhibited as they drew upon literary and experiential reservoirs and made meaning.

**Question 2:** Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?

There were a number of factors which influenced the climate and the responses in the classroom. In this section I have addressed the ones which were the most noticeable to me.

Fear.

On September 9, the President of the seminary and college asked me how the English class was doing. I replied, "We have much fear to overcome" (Researcher's Log). I needed to keep in mind that each student in the class had a reason for real fear as he re-entered the academic world in a new field in order to prepare for a second career. Their current emotional experiences, be they "anger, depression, frustration, shock, confusion," (Dickson, 1999, p. 66) or fear, could all be common facets of the state of their uprooted lives.

On the first day of class (2 September), Abe, a person of genuineness and integrity who hid nothing, evidenced fear on his face and in his manner. Bob, always smiling and social, was perhaps a bit too radiant. Ike seemed startled that this teacher, who had been so strictly factual in reading instruction for his TOEFL preparation, was now speaking of our own personal lived through experience with the text. Perhaps a part of Ivan's fear hinged on the knowledge that I was expecting much of the reading segment of our class time to hinge upon conversation in a language and culture in which he was still learning to converse. On that first day I tried to combat fear as I used a concrete and elementary approach to give the class a sketch of the type of reading we would

be doing and to give the initial assignment to a group of adult students who were principally new acquaintances to each other. Social growth together as an interpretive community seemed to depend upon overcoming fear. I was conscious that the students felt that they were facing a challenge far different than they had expected as they were introduced to experiential reading. Reading, as I introduced it, was more than looking for concrete facts represented in black and white upon a page.

#### Knowing why.

Since knowledge of the reason for a pedagogical approach is important to the learner (Dickson, 1998, p. 64), part of my presentations early in the term addressed the usefulness for this approach in sermon preparation. This revelation was a turning point for Ike and a practical impetus for Abe, who learned to value the broadening experience of discussion and who thought of this approach as a step "more toward sermon preparation" (Class Discussion: What I Have Learned About Reading, 2 December). The newness of it all could prove quite tiring.

#### Resistance.

The resistance of fatigue (Miller, 1999, p. 38), a regular complaint of Abe's early in the term, soon dissipated as he gained confidence and became engrossed in responding. He began to feel "okay in the classroom" (p. 33) as he began to look at himself differently as an individual and as a growing learner (Almasi, 1996), but knowing why we used this approach was important. Ivan's resistance to further formal language study, as represented in enrollment in the

course 1L3311, was dissipated before the first day of class, but uncertainties within the daily challenges had potential for hindering his progress. Uncertainty could perhaps be better endured if there were the security in knowing that this approach was not just a mental exercise, but were based on a reason for the use of such a new and different approach.

#### A safe environment.

The class always began each session as one of us lead in prayer after a moment in which we focused our thoughts upon thankfulness and upon concerns which each of us had. I experienced this part of our day as a cultivation of a safe environment for learning (Dickson, 1999, p. 66) in this cross cultural classroom. The tone of everything done in the class, in which the majority of reading time was spent on discussion, resonated Christian concern and brotherhood.

#### Cross cultural relationships.

The first class discussion period was a bit awkward. Abe was petrified and silent. He tried to introduce his prepared questions several times, but to no avail. As the ESL students brought forth the challenges of culture shock and immigration, the direction of the discussion encompassed neither Abe's life experience nor his Formulated Discussion Questions. ". . . . multiple meanings, multiple perspectives, multiple frames" (Bruner, 1996) came forth as our minds dialogued together (Miller, 1990, p. 13).

In early sessions the Canadian students in this cross cultural classroom seemed to have difficulty in being open to the Korean students. Bob voiced to Ike his uneasiness about cross cultural communication:

. . . with foreigners, we don't know how to -- I personally can't know the things that would uh interest you as far as conversation uh - you know - engaging you in conversation because I don't know - uh you know - I have some preconceived idea, not as to whether or not uh we'll be compatible (Bob, Class Discussion, The Laundress, 9 September).

The Canadians had difficulty understanding the accent of the Koreans. I would incorporate the Korean contribution as a part of my dialogue. Gradually, as the students could better understand each other and acknowledged their common humanity, the dialogue became student to student with no need for linguistic help.

#### Social growth.

Social growth together, a melding, became evidenced as an atmosphere of laughter and camaraderie developed amongst the deeper contemplation about life. For instance, when Ike spoke of his challenge in separating the military authoritarianism and the softer mode of interaction in his home, Bob drew booming laughter and conversational overlap when he smilingly queried, "What did you expect your wife to do? Salute you?" (Class Discussion, The Trouble with "X", 21 October).

Social growth happened in the discussion phase of the reading class, but discussion also affected the viewpoints of the participants as they reasoned together.

Class discussion.

Discussion, according to this analysis, was a crux of critical growth. As “the starting point for growth in critical power”, when enacted in a favourable climate (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 146), provided a “means of supporting imaginative reflection” (Miller, 1999, p. 14). Participants grew in their ability to express their thoughts orally in the discussion. Their comments revealed that they had become aware of “multiple social and cultural voices” (Miller, 1999, p. 57):

I was surprised to hear of Dr. [sic] Nance’s fear of being a visible minority in Asia. Perhaps out of ignorance, I always knew Asians to be a visible minority in Canada, yet never considered the same to be true for us in their country (Bob, The Laundress, Journal, 16 September).

Awareness of the personal lived through experience for different individuals, a new “awakening” to the “varied connections between literature” and themselves (Price, 1987, p. 3) became apparent among these participants:

Each of us has a different opinion. It’s . . . kind of interesting. Same text, but different idea. So its make me some of the wide in my viewpoint (Ivan, Class Discussion, What I Have Learned About Reading, 2 December).

In response to almost every text at least one student acknowledged the effect which class discussion had upon his viewpoint or upon recall of dormant knowledge: “During the class discussion, it reminded me of the affection of legends . . . ” (Ike, The Cat in the Bag, Journal, 4 November). Although students’ journal entries regularly mentioned the effect which the class discussion had upon their thinking, the response in Abe’s Journal changed most often after the class discussion. The themes usually broadened from an initial efferent response. For instance, his first response to The Cat in the Bag showed

skepticism about the usefulness and wisdom of using legends, "I remember as a child how adults would threaten us with dire consequences' (Abe, Second Initial Reflection, 21 October). The efferent Initial Reflection response changed to complete acceptance of their usefulness:

As I learned in class, even in Korea the legends contain moral advice. . . . Legends can be a good way of passing on moral values from one generation to the next . They do not just teach a lesson, but usually they are in such a way that they are easily remembered (Abe, Initial Reflection, 4 November).

Abe expressed a change in belief with this statement. His skepticism about the morality and usefulness of legends, which had been expressed in his first three responses, had completely changed. "As we discussed in class" was a phrase Abe often used in his Journal to introduce a viewpoint change. On four of the five responses to texts which I analysed, discussion served to change the direction of Abe's response to his final Journal entry. This new vision in the class discussion subsequent to initial responses was also regularly experienced by other participants.

These aspects of student response were brought forth in the writing assignments. They wholeheartedly filled gaps, accepted the "wandering viewpoint", encountered "negation" (Iser, 1978) and had viewpoint changes as they followed assignments which were prompted by Iser's theory. These attitudes and actions were evidenced as they accepted response invitations which principally drew upon Probst's (1992) approach of "writing from", "writing of" and "writing about" literature. These approaches were augmented with Greco's (1990) ideas about the application of Iser's (1978) theory. This practise

aided students in enjoyable meaning making. The world had a wider horizon, due to class discussion, and this horizon was enriched and recorded in their reflective writing.

### Reflection and writing.

In this mode, not only what they heard from other people, but as they wrote, they were “prompted to do additional thinking” (Miller, 1999, p. 31), about the “pooled perceptions” and experiences, which led to further reflections (pp. 34, 35). The First and Second Initial Reflections, the Formulated Discussion Questions and the Journal were each a writing opportunity which incorporated opportunities to think.

Bob, who avowedly enjoyed writing more than his classmates at the beginning of the term, had inwardly chafed at the number of writing assignments in the course. His early reflections were not as open as they were later when he learned that what he himself thought was of value:

At the outset I was discouraged by all the writing assignments we had, but interestingly enough, now I see how imperative they are. . . . [Reflection is] the thing I enjoy the most . . . it takes me the least amount of time when I put myself into that person's shoes. . . . I had quite a difficulty as I read at the outset -- giving just generalizations about life . . . versus what I personally thought. I still struggle a little bit with that because I feel that people generally care more about what they think about something than what I think and that's why for me it is easier [safer?] to just give generalizations (Semi-Structured Interview, 14 October 1999).

During the class discussion on What I Have Learned about Reading, Bob said that there was “No question! (Chuckle)” that the writing assignments were less painful at the end of the course than they had been at the beginning (2 December). Class members explained that they really needed time to think

before they wrote reflections, whether the Initial Reflections or the Journal. As they discussed this approach to reading, a form of the word “think” was used repeatedly:

I felt some hard to thinking. . . . some for the making reflection. . . .  
I learned in this class to think . . . and to make my own way to  
express my feeling or opinions. . . . I would think (Ivan, 2 Dec.).

Ivan explained the method he used for thinking and writing:

. . . and then . . . Monday . . . I organized my thoughts. How to write.  
. . . opportunity to thinking about how to catch my reflection. . . .  
thinking about my experience and Bible passage or historical  
background (Ivan, 2 December).

Although Abe declared, “. . . it makes it easier to read a text and immediately think about what it’s saying. . . .”, he also described closer reading he did in this approach, “. . . you know, you actually have to read it. . . . I’m not used to spending that much time on a little piece of -- just a little story” (2 December). “I need time to think about it” (Bob, 2 December) was a consensus of the class as they chronologized the way they thought and wrote.

There was a pattern of reading the text soon after they received it in class and then the initial reflections were written from two to six days later. The final Journal on the previous lesson was often written 13 days after the original assignment for that text. They looked upon this “time to ponder” (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 68) as an advantage to the once a week assignments which actually required two weeks to complete.

Although I did not pointedly ask them about writing in the free conversation time on December 2, it was evident that they equated writing as a thinking part of their assignments. Thomas Lux declared that “The voice you

hear when you read to yourself is the clearest voice: you speak it speaking to you" (Skeans, 2000, p. 69). As the students wrote, they were speaking in the transaction they were continuing to have with the text. "Surface reading" (Mayo, 2000, p. 75) of the text had been left behind as they enjoyed a transaction of closer reading and reflective writing. Connection was made between "literature and their world" (Gunther, 2000), p. 87). The text was open to transaction from the time they received it. The prompts in the response invitations, which became more open as the term progressed, were open to their lives. They were allowed "to delve deeper into the text, [to] look at it from different angles and [to] consider more aspects" (Kakkos, 1998, p. 56). In all of this, the class thought of writing as thinking, a crucial part of their meaning making in tasks which dealt with a variety of texts.

#### Texts and tasks.

Within this thinking context, they thought about and responded differently to different kinds of texts and to different kinds of tasks. The Trouble with "X" (Lewis, 1989), a challenge to action in human relations, and The Cat in the Bag (Pearson, 1992), a Canadian urban legend, precipitated the most aesthetic (stance 5) responses for the class. Within this response type, students had lived through experiences with these texts which involved empathic and emotional responses. The students showed a somewhat electric interest in these two texts. To me, this emphasized the importance of reader interest in a text. I interpreted the deep personal understanding which accompanied these aesthetic responses as indicative of the usefulness of this reading approach.

It was noticeable that Ivan, an ESL student with limited experience in the language, had more responses on stance 4 (10) than on stance 5 (5) on these higher aesthetic responses. He tended to choose a story event to elaborate, perhaps since this was a more concrete possibility in a second culture and language, rather than the more abstract and perhaps more emotional response of stance 5. There was also the possibility that, since Ivan had a variety of experiences around the world, he had varied life experiences to use. Abe had the most stance 1 (literal) responses (6): twice as many as each of the other students. He also had the fewest stance 4 and 5 responses (12), in comparison to 15 responses in these stances for each of his classmates. This was likely an indication of individual preference.

When task was also under consideration on **The Five Point Efferent/Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992), the class had the most higher level aesthetic responses (stance five) on task 1, the First Initial Reflection. This response was possibly due to the type of invitation to response; it was specifically designed to aid the lived through experience in the response invitations early in the term and then the invitation became more broad as the term progressed. "Have you ever . . . ?" was the basis of the early initial invitations to response. These findings indicate the importance of teacher questions in eliciting a response (Cox and Many, 1992, p. 68). Individual student response patterns followed the pattern which was prominent in the class for this task.

**The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992)

assessment for the class showed a deep personal understanding elicited from this approach. There were 48 level 4 (a generalized belief or understanding about life) responses, and 40 level 3 (understanding of story events through analogy to self or the world) responses. There were only 7 responses not in these categories. The text which received the most level 4 responses was *The Trouble with "X"*. This response could be attributed to the deep concern with human relationships which the class members manifested.

Ivan led the class in level 4 responses, an indication of deep personal understanding. Although Ivan's quietness in class was due to limited oral skills, his overall responses reflected a quite deep understanding and a strong generalized belief or understanding about life. These data can indicate to us that the quiet student could be thinking more than s/he is talking. Ike's responses indicated more level 3 (13) responses than level 4 (9). As an ESL student, perhaps it was useful to use the bridge of analogy to self and the world to understand the story events, a valid learning approach.

When task was considered on **The Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) assessment, the class had the most level 4 responses (the deepest level of understanding) on task 5, the Journal. It stands to reason that the Journal, the fifth and final assignment, should have the deepest level of understanding. Students openly used analogy of self or the world within the interpretive community. As students dealt with a text over a period of two weeks their responses took on a different nature as it became

more a part of their lives. Over the term they seemed to become more intensely expressive of their interests. Student interest seemed to permeate each response in this class.

### Student Interest.

The reader response approach, as a pedagogical method which recognizes the validity of an individual's response relationship to the text, provided opportunity for these divinity students to reflect upon their interest in values, ethics, morals and religious views. The biographical backgrounds students had shared indicated that this situation was a revolution in their educational experiences. Once the readers in this study were conscious that their linguistic and nonlinguistic experiences were recognized as valid, I could sense that they felt a freedom, not unlike sprouting wings. They could reflect upon those precepts which they considered most important as they interacted with a text and made meaning.

Under the mandate from the seminary, my syllabus and lesson plans centred upon language education, but values, morals, ethics, and religious instruction were as subconsciously present as the air in my classroom. Due to the nature of the interests, thought patterns and major field of study of my students, these features were part of the climate, and most every response. Although two members of the class were nurtured as Buddhists, they became Christians as young men. World religions were neither ignored nor degraded in the classroom, but the thought patterns and interest of the class were synonymous with those of Christianity. As a group, the readers valued service

to humankind, the reason for their matriculation at the seminary. As a way of definition for this study, ethics related “primarily to what people should or should not do in social or even legal terms”. Morality was not a prescriptive frame, but drove “much deeper, to the relationship between what people do in social settings and the inner values, beliefs and standards that lead them to particular courses of action” (Johnston, Judasz, Marken, Ruis, 1998, p. 162).

In using the types of response invitations which Probst (1992) and Greco (1990) had found useful, the pedagogical approach in this study afforded opportunity for students to address these valued facets of their consciousness. In *Writing from literature* (Probst, 1992, p. 119), readers were invited to think about an experience when they faced a choice, a situation, a barricade, a major illness, an injustice, a problem, a conflict, doubts, a handicap, a value shift, an adversity, a crisis or a decision counter to expert advice in a situation similar to the one in the text. This type of response invitation, which was used for the well received *The Trouble with “X”* text, provided pedagogical opportunity for students to address their interests in values, ethics, morals and religious views. In *Writing of literature* (Probst, 1992, pp. 122 - 124), the readers were encouraged to explore the point of view of a character in the text as they were invited to assume his/her identity, to fill holes or gaps in the story or to reflect upon silences of people encountered in the text. These invitations allowed a free exploration of the readers' interests. In *writing about literature* (Probst, 1992, pp. 124, 125), there was specific focus upon the characters' attitudes and values, as well as the ethical positions presented in the text. *The Cat in the Bag*

text, which was well received, used this type of response invitation. The students seemed to find the hole in the text which made room for their response, which centred upon the moral and ethical in which they had valued interest. I present only a few of those precepts.

Since the readers valued the equality of persons, discrimination figured heavily in responses. For instance, in response to *The Laundress*, Bob observed the attitudes in Winnipeg and turned the attention to a loving God:

Those around her knew what she did, but never knew who or what she was beyond her ethnicity. Had the "laundress" been an "heiress", would those around her have sought her out, befriended her and given her the "seat of honour"? I am thankful we serve a God who sets aside even our most despicable qualities and invites us to dine at his table (First Initial Reflection, *The Laundress*, 2 September).

Then he turned the judgement upon himself:

What are some cultural biases which deter us from integrating with other nationalities? (Formulated Class Discussion Question, *The Laundress*, 2 September).

Personally, I felt, "What are we doing individually or corporately to seek to know the 'laundresses' in our communities -- I mean, especially in Canada, this is a melting pot culturally . . . we see so many visible minorities . . . or people . . . because of their actions, though, we know that they must be foreigners. But are we integrating with them? It is one thing to accept people . . . just for themselves. I personally don't discriminate. However, if I don't reach out to them, in a way that is discrimination (Bob, Class Discussion, *The Laundress*, 9 September).

Responses addressed the ethical responsibility of the pastor:

What does it take for a pastor to have the courage to stand up against all odds for what he believes? . . . there are ways to intelligently and effectively make a stand. . . . (Abe, Formulated Discussion Question, *I Have a Dream*, 7 November).

From what I know, I believe that Mr. King, especially as a black Baptist pastor, not only had the right to stand up, but he had a responsibility to do so (Abe, Journal, I Have a Dream, 28 November).

Student responses often expressed interest in standards of living the Christian life. The attitude of Christians towards the actions of others and the unconditional love of God were addressed:

(Referring to Koreans who committed suicide in a political demonstration). Suicide is not to be with the will of God, but their life struggling for justice is beautiful before God (Ivan, First Initial Reflection, I Have a Dream, 11 November). . . . The Bible says suicide is totally wrong before God. . . . but it's according to Bible we should love everybody. (Ivan, Class Discussion, I Have a Dream, 18 November).

Lamentations over weak Christians were expressed:

What is [the] difference between the justice of the world and the one of God? It is desirable that both should be identical with God's justice. However, our society has trended [sic] toward the separation between church and world. The law of God was applied just in the limited areas. . . . this problem caused from the bended [sic] world view of Christians. Many Christians have two faces; Christian face and non-Christian one. Sunday face and weekday face. Today's Christians feel difficult to demonstrate their Christian view in the world (Ivan, Journal, I Have a Dream, 25 November).

A value upon responsibility to humanity was an abiding interest: "I think the ministry for oppressed people is important" (Ivan, Second Initial Reflection, 14 November).

In the climate of the reader response pedagogy, these students had opportunity to build upon their own personal experiences in a lived through experience as they prepared to do the work that best expressed their interests

and values. Expression of these interests was manifested in responses as students grew and changed in their responses over time.

**Question 3:** How have readers' responses changed over time?

There was a noticeable change in student response over the time period of the two weeks in which they addressed a single text. The class typically began with an aesthetic response, likely because most of the first response invitations were composed to aid the lived through experience. This first initial response displayed a high aesthetic response with a corresponding deep level of understanding. The Second Initial Response and the Formulated Discussion Questions were not as aesthetic, but the Class Discussion again had a high aesthetic response. The Journal response was the most efferent response and the personal understanding tally was at its highest in the Journal. Since the students had two weeks exposure to the text before the Journal submission this deep understanding is an indication of the value of opportunity to respond to a text over a period of time.

There were also noticeable changes over the term in which this study occurred. Abe experienced a remarkable growth in his ability to express his written and oral responses, as did Ivan. In this particular study, there is evidence that student interest in particular texts evidently affected changes in the pattern of responses. The class had a definite development in aesthetic response from the first assignment of the Laundress on 2 September, The Trouble with "X", and through The Cat in the Bag Journal assignment, submitted on 28 November. From that point the class responses were more efferent. The

high aesthetic interest displayed in the responses to Trouble with “X” and The Cat and the Bag, in which the students had latitude for imaginative lived through experiences, changed to a more efferent stance with the I Have a Dream and the Love is Healthful texts. Readers seemed more focused on an efferent response as they addressed serious human rights concerns and the need for love in the world. Concerns for the needs of the world and the value of their ethical responsibility in professional ministry were often voiced across the responses to texts. This approach to teaching reading seemed to be a helpful agenda as readers could express their interest as they responded to texts.

#### Summary and Concluding Remarks

I presented the findings on individual readers’ responses to literature, then described class responses to a variety of texts. Assessment tools included **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al, Unpublished Manuscript) (Iser, 1978), **The Five Point Efferent - aesthetic Continuum** and **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992), which drew upon Rosenblatt’s experiential theory. Both the textual and experiential perspectives were evidenced as useful. Several factors, including fear, resistance, a safe environment, cross cultural relationships, social growth, motivation, growth through discussion, reflection and writing as a thinking process and student interests were examined concerning the making of meaning, both individual and corporate.

This group were active in learning an “academic literacy” (Thompson, 2000, p. 94). In practical words, they: “raised reading and writing ability to

college level" (p. 95), in the mix of a cross cultural classroom, while responding to a variety of texts. Responses were from the assumption of a deep faith. The next chapter includes a summary, in addition to a presentation of implications and recommendations based on the findings in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The Purpose of the Study

This case study was undertaken in order to determine and to describe how adult students with diverse backgrounds respond to a variety of texts. As a guide to this study, I sought answers to the following research questions:

- 1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?**
- 2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?**
- 3. How have readers' responses changed over time?**

Near the end of the originally planned analysis, I thought it would be useful to investigate the effect of text type and task type upon the response of the readers. I also analyzed for the effect of these factors upon the student response.

Procedures

I asked the students to read a text each week and to respond by using two initial written reflections and by formulating 3 discussion questions for the class session one week following the original response invitation. The only exception to this pattern was the inaugural assignment, in which there was only one initial written reflection. After the discussion, they were asked to write a Journal entry to be submitted one week subsequent to the class discussion. Students received a new text for initial response each week, so they were preparing a journal assignment on the previous text in the same week they were giving initial response to the new text. This schedule provided opportunity

for discussion of a text each week. In this way, students responded to each text for two weeks.

I collected data from September 2, 1999 with the first response invitation through December 2, when I received the final Journal responses which were a part of the study. Interviews, observation and document collection were incorporated into the data gathering. These data included the syllabus for the course 1L3311, English Grammar, Reading and Writing, the corresponding lesson plans, my daily researcher log, questionnaires to students, students' initial written responses, student journals, class discussions which I transcribed, as well as my transcribed individual discussions with students. I also transcribed interviews which I conducted with students, with my assistants and with other persons on site who had bearing upon the student experience. This breadth of data gathering provided opportunity for a broad and deep examination of application of reader response theory within the bounded system. As a part of effective pedagogy, analysis happened during the semester. Near the end of the term the students had a recorded class discussion on What I Have Learned about Reading. Three texts were chosen for analysis for each student's response. Further analysis of documentation continued after the one semester period of contact time with the class.

Instruments of assessment included a focused study of individual responses upon the **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript), as well as **The Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many 1992). In this study I analyzed

responses from five of the 13 texts the class studied throughout the semester. The main thrust of this descriptive account narrowed to the response each student had to three texts from among the five texts. After the individual analyses, I analyzed the individual and class responses according to text and task, using the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and **Levels of Personal Understanding** across the five texts. I thought this further analysis would be particularly useful to overall curriculum planning concerning the choice of texts, to approaches in lesson planning and to application of pedagogical efforts.

### Findings

A number of findings emerged in this examination of a class of adult males in a developmental reading class in a divinity school. I have grouped the findings according to the research questions.

#### **1. Which perspectives of Reader Response Theory have been most applicable for the students in the study?**

Both the textual and the experiential perspectives of Reader Response Theory were well used in this study. Student responses fit well within the textual Iserian (1978) **Levels of Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) and within the experiential theory of Rosenblatt (1978) in the assessment upon the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** and the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992).

◆ The use of this mixture of assessment tools definitely helped me to understand what was happening in my students' reading.

The Iserian approach in the **Levels of Engagement** helped me to see more detail in how the readers' close reading and how deep thought was affecting

their response. There were many nuances of my students responses which I would not have been conscious of, except for this assessment. I found myself scrutinizing responses very carefully with this tool. This more detailed assessment fit well with the **Efferent / aesthetic Continuum** (based on Rosenblatt's 1978 experiential theory) and the **Levels of Personal Understanding**. These assessment tools seemed farther from the written data when I was ascertaining responses than was the **Levels of Engagement** because there was an overall rating for each task. The **Levels of Engagement** colour coding displayed a rainbow spectrum upon each page of student response in each task. To make the theme and pattern analysis grid it was necessary to decide the most prominent feature of the response in order to make placement on the Cox and Many grids. The **Levels of Engagement** provided vivid detail of response, while the Cox and Many grids did not. This disparity, a mix of Iser and Rosenblatt, made for a well rounded assessment.

## **2. Which factors have influenced student responses in the classroom?**

◆ Students experienced fear and exhaustion as they returned to the formal classroom to begin a second career after decades in satisfying lifework.

One student sat in silence through the first Class Discussion. After the first month, readers came to understand a practical use in their ministries for an approach which was new and strange to them. A part of the chronological agenda included feelings of social isolation in a cross cultural classroom, which was conquered in a safe environment.

◆ At the end of the first six weeks, I was aware of social growth which was happening as they indeed became an interpretive community who enjoyed the class discussions together.

◆ In the midst of easy camaraderie, they enjoyed the experiences of broadened and changed viewpoints as a result of a these class discussions.

Another growth change over time involved the easiness with which they began to approach the written responses.

◆ Development in reflection and writing over a two week period for each assignment gave them, in their own words, “. . . time to think”.

“Thinking”, for them, came to be synonymous with the reading and with the reflective writing process. Time allotted for the assignments allowed time for thinking. The initial reflection assignment in each assignment included the tasks of two initial written reflections and formulation of discussion questions for classroom discussion. These three tasks were due one week after they were assigned. The classroom discussion of the text happened at the end of this one week interval. After the discussion, the students were given one more week before the final Journal assignment for that text was due. They thought of this second week as extra time to think.

◆ Late in the term, the students observed that the text in the new preliminary assignment which they had for another text for the following week seemed to aid their thinking for the Journal entry on the first text.

Since I decided upon the forthcoming text before the class discussion of the text already in transaction each week, I thought this observation regarding the hinging of the texts was not easily explainable, but rather interesting.

◆ Different texts received different response characteristics, as did different tasks.

More higher level (stance 5) aesthetic responses were precipitated by *The Trouble with "X"* (Lewis, 1989), a human relations text, and *The Cat in the Bag* (Pearson, 1992), a Canadian urban legend which dealt with moral teachings and human nature. Since response has to do with a lived through experience in transaction with the text, it is possible that student interest affected the responses to these texts. The class reached an apex in aesthetic response with these two texts, which did not recover before the end of the study.

◆ The different backgrounds of students seemed to affect their responses.

The ESL student with more limited experience with the English language had growth in the usage of aesthetic response, using stance 4, in which he chose a story event to elaborate. This type of response could have been due to the opportunity of giving a more concrete response which stance 4 offered. The two Canadian students played the continuum and each broadened his reading stance toward the opposite end of the continuum. One reader became more efferent and the other became more aesthetic, a balancing pattern.

◆ The students' responses were definitely affected by task.

Task 1, the first initial response, was in response to an invitation which on the early assignments was especially designed to aid the lived through experience as students had transaction with the text. The class had the highest response tally in this task, which could indicate an affect due to teacher questions.

Responses to this task became less aesthetic as the assignment became more general. That is, in the early assignments I asked a "Have you ever . . ." type of

question in the first three analyzed texts, while in the later assignments I invited the students to respond with a more open “Write whatever came to mind as you read this text”. The type of response invitation, in this case, might have overridden the task type, so far as aesthetic response is concerned. Class discussion also had a high aesthetic response. Students often had an opinion change due to this interchange.

◆ The class had consistently deep **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) across the texts and the tasks.

This approach definitely made for a deep understanding of the text. The quiet ESL student had the deepest and most consistent depth of understanding. The class composite for task 1, the First Initial Reflection, showed that students began with a deep personal understanding. The third task, Formulated Discussion Questions showed a gain and Task 5, the Journal, received the deepest personal understanding rating of all the tasks, indicating an advantage of various tasks in a lengthened period of time for responding to texts. Since the Journal was the fifth and final assignment for each text, and it was due at the end of the two week period allotted for each text, the students had a longer period of time to ruminate for this assignment. A longer time for transaction with the text seems to aid a deeper understanding of the text.

◆ Student interest in service to humankind and precepts relating to values, ethics, morals and the Christian religion figured heavily in the responses.

Discrimination, pastoral ethical responsibilities, the act of living unconditional love without being judgemental, concern over weak Christians and

responsibilities to humankind were addressed routinely against a background of deep faith and providential love. Dewey's emphasis that all teaching is moral teaching was evident in student responses.

### **3. How have reader's responses changed over time?**

◆ Student responses changed over the two weeks they responded to each single text.

In the early lessons, they began with a high aesthetic response (stance 5). There was a corresponding deep level of understanding with these aesthetic responses. The second and third tasks, the Second Initial Response and the Formulated Discussion Questions were a bit lower. The Class Discussion, the third task, received a high aesthetic response. The deepest personal understanding was displayed in the Journal responses after the students had transacted with the text for two weeks.

◆ Over the term, the class began with an aesthetic response to *The Landress* on September 2 and built upon aesthetic response until later in November.

Then responses became more efferent. Student interest in a particular text and teacher questions could have affected this pattern.

◆ This approach allowed each student to address these features of life which he valued as he responded to text.

In the course evaluations which the students anonymously completed before sitting for the final examination, students acknowledged the value of this approach in helping them prepare for their new vocation. One student aptly observed, "I was stretched to insert myself into the stories and write what I saw.

It was an excellent exercise as a prelude to ministry” (Anonymous Course Evaluation submitted to Registrar) ([n.d.]).

### Implications for Teaching

◆ The theoretical mix of assessment instruments which utilized Iser's and Rosenblatt's theory lent well to deeply understanding the students' responses.

Although strict simultaneous application of all of these instruments would be laborious for daily marking, keeping these guidelines in mind could aid

assessment. Perhaps a daily use of the **Levels of Personal**

**Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) with spot checks using the **Efferent /**

**Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) and the **Levels of**

**Engagement** (Labercane, et. al., Unpublished Manuscript) at initial, midterm

and final points of time during the term could be a workable assessment

regimen.

◆ The two initial response opportunities seemed to facilitate the growth in meaning making displayed in the Formulated Discussion Questions.

These three responses, which were done over a period of a week before students were responsible for interchange in the interpretive community,

seemed to facilitate understanding. This sequencing of tasks encouraged

students to have a lived through experience, to take a faceted look at the text

and to think about it more fully before class discussion.

◆ The value of reflection and writing as a route to deeper understanding were implicated in these findings.

The unhurried approach to closure of response to a text (for this reading),

although students were also beginning to think upon their next assignment

during this extended response time, aided reflection. One student observed that having the second text, which was assigned the day of class discussion of the earlier one, helped him to journal the first one.

◆ Class discussion was an acknowledged growth experience for each of these students.

The social discomforts early in their experience together were replaced with social growth, which contributed to academic growth. They acknowledged broadened, and even changed, viewpoints from this intertextual experience.

◆ The presentation of a variety of texts, including poetry which these particular students dreaded, can open new horizons for students and introduce them to enjoyment of types of literature which they had not appreciated in past reading experiences.

◆ In tandem with the type of texts, was the type of questions which teachers ask.

The students in this study, when they came to realize that their own lives and their own personal thinking were important, came to a new appreciation for the reading experience. If a teacher consciously trains him/herself to be a co-learner and a co-discussant in the pedagogical relationship, the student has new impetus to grow in response to the text.

◆ Growth in a broader response across the **Efferent / Aesthetic Continuum** (Cox and Many, 1992) can enhance the response of readers and thus aid pedagogy.

This broader response can involve the student who is quiet, for whatever reason. Plotting the **Levels of Personal Understanding** (Cox and Many, 1992) grid can help the pedagogue to be conscious as to whether or not a particular quiet student is learning and understanding, as did the student with

English experience in this study, or if more concerted aids to understanding are needed. The ESL student might tend to have a more concrete response concerning personal understanding, or an older student might respond this way, due to a rich supply of life experiences.

This study, as well as other aforementioned studies, have pointed up the import of values, ethics, morals, and religion in the life of students. The students in this particular study appreciated the opportunity to express these thoughts. They thought upon these expressions as a cultivation of habits which they could use in their sermon preparation. The teacher who displays an openness to these types of responses can enable students to more freely respond in the mode of their deep thoughts.

#### Implications for Further Research

◆ More studies using these instruments of assessment could lead to these instruments obtaining a more established trustworthiness in the field.

In this study, the use of instruments which encompassed the two prevailing theoretical approaches to the practice of reader response theory complemented each other for assessment of response to short texts.

◆ Studies addressing their usefulness to novels, films, drama and other mediums could be helpful.

These assessment tools could also be used in a study in which a researcher takes a more specific look at specific response tasks.

◆ More studies addressing the challenge of the cross cultural reader response classroom could further aid the establishment of openness and dialogue.

Often the ESL student bends to the talkativeness of the native speaker. In such instances, the instructor could easily assume that the second language person does not have a deep understanding. Further studies of assessment, especially using the Levels of Personal Understanding (Cox and Many, 1992), in the cross cultural classroom could aid pedagogy.

◆ More studies with different types of texts and comparison of tasks across the assigned response spectrum could shed light on some of the phenomena concerning text and task which were revealed in this study.

Since the students in this study were eager to talk about their individual experiences in reflection and writing across the five assignments they had for each text, I think that a closer look at this phenomenon could produce some further enlightenment on this important “thinking” part of response.

◆ A descriptive account, formulated through instructor journaling while adapting teaching style to the use of the reader response approach, could produce a chronology of pedagogical growth which would give credence to the metamorphosis which takes place during this effort.

It could encourage other teachers who would like to explore this approach, but who might wonder if it is possible in their individual situation. This kind of documentation could aid pedagogues regarding the awareness of possibilities which they had never fathomed in their reading classrooms. The aware teacher who chronologizes the process of adjustment to the reader response approach could also include the change in student attitudes toward learning which s/he observes as the teaching process becomes closer and closer to the standards of teaching which are necessary for the reader response approach to be enacted in an effective fashion.

Closing Remarks

As I think upon these four students who came to my class because they had language needs, I enumerate the linguistic growth which I saw in each one. All of the class, who had groaned the first day of class when poetry was included as a category for their text choices, learned that reading poetry could be an enjoyable and meaningful part of their lives when this approach was used. This, and other observations which I reveal in this section, gave me reason to have confidence that their reading challenge at the seminary would be a better experience for them because they had been in this class.

Abe not only learned to read more aesthetically, he grew, over the time lapse of the course, in his ability to express what he was thinking in writing and in his ability to discuss. Abe came as an avowed efferent reader. He learned that this approach required deeper thinking, a latitude which his skimming had not granted. Early in the term he seemed to look upon reading as a thing to be hurriedly dispensed with. With time, he displayed evidence that he had learned that he could read for enjoyment as well as for facts, and that a broad spectrum of texts, including legends and poetry, could be a part of his meaning making.

Bob's reading broadened to a more efferent stance without sacrificing his appreciation for the aesthetic. As he became acquainted with this approach, which allows for the filling of gaps in the narrative, he saw parallels between it and the parables of Jesus and how this approach would aid his sermon preparation. He acknowledged that the elaboration involved in this approach

could help him to remember. He particularly grew in his ability to communicate cross culturally, both in oral expression and in writing.

Ike learned that reading did not need to be limited to the efferent stance and that his ideas could be entertained in class discussion. His life experiences took on a new validity as a result of this approach. His written and spoken language broadened from the military and business administration mode as he became more acquainted with the type of vocabulary he would be using in his seminary studies.

Ivan, although he had the least experience in the English language of all the students, displayed the deepest level of personal understanding in the analysis. His early composition was difficult to decipher, but noticeable development in his ability to write clearly. He also showed development in his ability to speak up in class in spite of interference from grammar in his first language. He acknowledged that this approach was helping him to think upon situations and to make meaning as a result. The most important accomplishment for Ivan was probably that he learned that he could enjoy reading.

Formulating a descriptive account of what was happening in my reading classroom chronicled a definite learning experience in the making of meaning for my students. It was also a learning experience for me as a practitioner. Although this report has focused upon the developmental reading of my students, I have learned much about possibilities in my own reading and pedagogy as I have taught them and as I have recorded this saga of

happenings. Reading will always be a richer experience for me for having done this study.

George Eliot observed that “No story is the same to us after a lapse of time; or rather we who read it are no longer the same interpreters” (Warner, 1992, p. 194). With each new transaction with a text, each new reading is always an adventure. It is in the hole in the text that we can find a moral principle (Hsi, n.d.). There is enjoyment in finding a (w)hole in the text!

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**APPENDIX A****AN INVENTORY OF STUDENT READING INTEREST**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

1. Since the time of your reading instruction you had in the elementary grades, which kind of specialized reading improvement instruction have you had?

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2. Do you feel a need for reading improvement? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, what kinds of needs do you have concerning help in reading?

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3. What are your easiest school subjects?

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4. What are your most difficult school subjects?

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5. What vocations are you considering?

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**PLEASE SELECT TEXTS FOR READER RESPONSE CLASS**

In this course students have a choice of stories to be read within the realm of the interests of the class. In the list below, **check at least 1 story which you consider to be of interest from each category.** If there are other categories or stories of interest which are not included, please add them. Prevalent choices will be under consideration as they apply within the instructional mandate.

**ADVENTURE**

- John Bunyan: The Tinker Hero, by B. Browne.
- Refugee Recalls Tale of Death and Horror, by P. Finn.
- Richard E. Byrd: Things That Matter by L. Watson.
- The Dirtiest Job in the World by P. Burton.

## BIOGRAPHY

- Catherine Booth: Mother of the Salvation Army, by E. Deen.  
 Charles Haddon Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers, by B. Browne.  
 George Beverly Shea: God Implanted His Song, by Treadway.  
 The Ambivalence of Abortion, by L. Francke.

## CHILDREN and FAMILY

- A Child to Lead Us, by Kenny Kemp.  
 Cowboy from Holland, by B. Hutchison.  
 EQ Vs IQ, by J. Sawyer.  
 The Softball was Always Hard by H. Bruce.  
 West Must Confront Anonymous Misery of the World's Children by M. Landsberg.

## CHURCH HISTORY/RELIGION

- Anna Bullinger: A Ministering Angel to Reformation Refugees, by E. Deen.  
 Don't Park by Your Religious Experiences, by C. Fisher.  
 Johann Gerhard Oncken: Lit the Torch of Baptist Faith in Continental Europe, by B. Browne.  
 Katherine von Bora Luther: The Matriarch of the Protestant Parsonage, by E. Deen.

## CROSS CULTURAL STORIES/FOLK TALES

- Sacrifice, Obedience and Duty, by S. Endo.  
 Salvation, by Langston Hughes.  
 The Laundress, by E. P. Jonsson.  
 White Tigers, by M Kingston.  
 Why My Mother Can't Speak English, by G. Engkent.

## HISTORY

- Grinning and Happy , by J. Kogawa.  
 Growing Up Native, by C. Gedde.  
 Sophie, by E. Carr.  
 The Year I Learned to Love a German, by M. Richler.  
 A Question of Duty, by Y. Wong.

## HUMAN PROBLEMS/CHALLENGES

- Driving with the Handbrake On, by C. Swor.  
 Hunger, by M. Helwig.  
 Jane Merchant: Her Faith Found an Answer, by Treadway.  
 On Self Respect, by J. Didion.  
 Suitcase Lady, by C. McLaren.

## HUMOUR

- Bicycles, by E. Ritter.  
 I Want a Wife, by J. Syfers.  
 My Wood, by E. M. Forster.  
 The Cat in the Bag, by I. Pearson.

## HUMAN RELATIONS

- Alberta's Famous Five, by V. Barnett.  
 Attitude: Asset or Liability? by N. Peale.

Facing Violence, by M. Kaufman.  
Selected Snobberies, by A. Huxley.  
The Trouble with "X", by C. S. Lewis.

#### MISSIONS

Frank Laubach: The World for a Classroom, by C. and R. Treadway.  
Robert Raikes: Founded Sunday School in a Kitchen, by Treadway.  
Susanna Wesley: Mother of John and Charles Wesley, by E. Deen.  
William Knibb: Emancipator of Slaves, by B. Browne.

#### NON-FICTION

It's Failure, Not Success, by E. Goodman.  
Simplifying Life, by S. Adams.  
The Firewood Gatherers, by T. Mallet.  
The Sexual Revolution's Next Goal: Marriage and the Family, by D.  
Frum  
Three Boys by John Updike.

#### POETRY

Illness, Grief and Peace, by E. Clarkson.  
Love is Healthful, by T. Gilbert et. al.

**APPENDIX B**

## A READING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(Vacca, J., Vacca, R., and Gove, M. ,1991)

1. How did you learn to read?
  
2. What home reading experiences do you recall?
  
3. What kinds of instructional activities and practises were you involved in as an elementary school child?
  
4. Which ones do you recall fondly?
  
5. Which, if any , do you recall with regret?
  
6. Which person was most influential in your reading experience?
  
7. in retrospect, what belief systems and views of reading and learning to read did your elementary school teachers seem to hold?
  
8. In your educational career were you effectively taught how to handle the variety of reading tasks you are faced with in the real world?

## APPENDIX C

### A LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT (Nance 1999, p 2, adapted from Greene 1994)

#### **Tuesday 31 August**

#### Composition Assignment

(Write on this assignment every day except Sunday. That is, on August 30 and 31, September 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). Write a literacy autobiography. Share in your story the significant happenings regarding reading and writing development in your life. Think about the meaning of literacy to all of us. Which environment encourages advancement of literacy? The following guidelines are not an outline, but as you think about your experience as a reader and as a writer, include at some point the following information:

- +The education and literacy levels of current and preceding generations of your family.
- +Your earliest remembrance of you own writing -- anything. What was it? Where did it happen? Why did it happen?
- +Your recollection of other members of your family writing. What was it? Where did it happen? Why did it happen?
- +Any other memories of writing (handwriting included) in school. Whatever you can remember is valid -- assignments, teacher comments and the like.
- +Memories of writing out of school. self sponsored writing associated with social, religious or other extra-curricular situations. Journals, letters, diaries, writing contests, awards, publications.
- +People or institutions important in your writing development.
- +Barriers to your writing development.
- +The role of reading in your writing development.
- +The role of language (including speech) in your family and social groups.
- +The role of written language in your family's social, religious and cultural practises.
- +How did reading and writing figure into your relationships with friends at different stages?
- +What was the role of libraries and bookstores?
- +What was the role of reading and writing in development of your identity?

You may include any other information important to you regarding your writing experience. If you are a bilingual/bicultural person, you should include your experience with first language writing, as you also include second language growth. if you are functionally literate in more than two languages,

include that data in your story. Keep in mind that you may revise. Really good writing is rarely fully developed in the first draft. If you are writing by hand on hard copy, skip alternate lines to allow room for editing. The essay should be several pages long, so this entire week is allowed for this assignment.

**APPENDIX D**

## TEXTS CHOSEN FOR RESPONSE ANALYSIS

**The First Text: THE Laundress**

by Einar Paul Jonsson

Translated from the Icelandic by M. P. O'Connor and T. Johnson

1. She worked as a housemaid, then as a laundress in small town Winnipeg, full of émigrés speaking every language except her own. She was Icelandic and as she worked she sang the old Icelandic hymns and songs. The songs had all her joy. They brought all her peace. She kept reaching for the language that got lost in her life. She could never speak it again, although it always measured her breath.
2. Late one summer, as she lay dying, she sang again the Icelandic hymns, sang in her mother tongue, an other tongue for us. As we lay her in a foreign grave, we, who knew no Icelandic, who knew then almost nothing of what she loved and lived by, said our prayers over her in English.

## The Second Text: The Trouble with "X" . . .

by C. S. Lewis

1 I suppose I may assume that seven out of ten of those who read these lines are in some kind of difficulty about some other human being. Either at work or at home, either the people who employ you or those whom you employ, either those who share your house or those whose house you share, either your in-laws or parents or children, your wife or your husband, are making life harder for you than it need be, even in these days. It is to be hoped that we do not often mention these difficulties (especially the domestic ones) to outsiders. But sometimes we do. An outside friend asks us why we are looking so glum; and the truth comes out.

2 On such occasions the outside friend usually says, "But why don't you tell them? Why don't you go to your wife (or husband, or father, or daughter, or boss or landlady, or lodger) and have it all out? People are usually reasonable. All you've got to do is to make them see things in the right light. Explain it to them in a reasonable, quiet friendly way." And we, whatever we say outwardly, think sadly to ourselves, "He doesn't know 'X'". We do. We know how utterly hopeless it is to make "X" see reason. Either we've tried it over and over again -- tried it till we are sick of trying it -- or else we've never tried it because we saw from the beginning how useless it would be. We know that if we attempt to "have it all out with 'X'" there will either be a "scene", or else "X" will stare at us in blank amazement and say, "I don't know what on earth you're talking about"; or else (which is perhaps worst of all) "X" will quite agree with us and promise to turn over a new leaf and put everything on a new footing -- and then, twenty-four hours later, will be exactly the same as "X" has always been.

3 You know, in fact, that any attempt to talk things over with "X" will shipwreck on the old, fatal flaw in "X's" character. And you see, looking back, how all the plans you have ever made always have shipwrecked on that fatal flaw -- on "X's" incurable jealousy, or laziness, or touchiness, or muddle-headedness, or bossiness, or ill temper, or changeableness. Up to a certain age you have perhaps had the illusion that some external stroke of good fortune -- an improvement in health, a rise in salary, the end of the war -- would solve your difficulty. But you know better now. The war is over, and you realize that even if the other things happened, "X" would still be "X", and you would still be up against the same old problem. Even if you became a millionaire, your husband would still be a bully, or your wife would still nag or your son would still drink, or you'd still have to have your mother-in-law live with you.

4 It is a great step forward to realize that this is so; to face the fact that even if all external things went right, real happiness would still depend on the character of the people you have to live with -- and that you can't alter their characters. And now comes the point. When you have seen this you have, for the first time, had a glimpse of what it must be like for God. For, of course, this is (in one way) just what God Himself is up against. He has provided a rich, beautiful world for people to live in. He has given them intelligence to show them how it can be used, and conscience to show them how it ought to be used.

He has contrived that the things they need for their biological life (food, drink, rest, sleep, exercise) should be positively delightful to them. And, having done all this, He then sees all His plans spoiled -- just as our little plans are spoiled -- by the crookedness of the people themselves. All the things He has given them to be happy with they turn into occasions for quarreling and jealousy, and excess and hoarding and tomfoolery.

5 You may say it is very different for God because He could, if He pleased, alter people's characters, and we can't. But this difference doesn't go quite as deep as we may at first think. God has made it a rule for Himself that He doesn't alter people's character by force. He can and will alter them -- but only if the people will let Him. In that way He has really and truly limited His power. Sometimes we wonder why He has done so, or even wish that He hadn't. But apparently He thinks it worth doing. He would rather have a world of free beings, with all its risks, than a world of people who did right like machines because they couldn't do anything else. The more we succeed in imagining what a world of perfect automatic beings would be like, the more, I think, we shall see His wisdom.

6 I said that when we see how all our plans shipwreck on the characters of the people we have to deal with, we are "in one way" seeing what it must be like for God. But only in one way. There are two respects in which God's view must be very different from ours. In the first place, He sees (like you) how all the people in your home or your job are in various degrees awkward or difficult; but when He looks into that home or factory or office He sees one more person of the same kind -- the one you never do see. I mean, of course, yourself. That is the next great step in wisdom -- to realize that you also are just that sort of person. You also have a fatal flaw in your character. All the hopes and plans of others have again and again shipwrecked on your character just as your hopes and plans have shipwrecked on theirs.

7 It is no good passing this over with some vague, general admission such as "Of course, I know I have my faults". It is important to realize that there is some really fatal flaw in you, something which gives the others just that same feeling of despair which their flaws give you. And it is almost certainly something you don't know about -- like what the advertisements call "halitosis", which everyone notices except the person who has it. But why, you ask, don't the others tell me? Believe me, they have tried to tell you over and over again, and you just couldn't "take it". Perhaps a good deal of what you call their "nagging" or "bad temper" or "queerness" are just their attempts to make you see the truth. And even the faults you do know you don't know fully. You say, "I admit I lost my temper last night" but the others know that you're always doing it, that you are a bad tempered person. You say, "I admit I drank too much last Saturday" but everyone else knows that you are a habitual drunkard.

8 That is one way in which God's view must differ from mine. He sees all the characters: I see all except my own. But the second difference is this. He loves the people in spite of their faults. He goes on loving. He does not let go. Don't say, "It's all very well for Him; He hasn't got to live with them". He has. He is inside them as well as outside them. He is with them far more intimately and

closely and incessantly than we can ever be. Every vile thought within their minds (and our) every moment of spite, envy, arrogance, greed and self-conceit comes right up against His patient and longing love, and grieves His Spirit more than it grieves ours.

9 The more we can imitate God in both these respects, the more progress we shall make. We must love "X" more; and we must learn to see ourselves as a person of exactly the same kind. Some people say it is morbid to be always thinking of one's faults. That would be all very well if most of us could stop thinking of our own without soon beginning to think about those of other people. For unfortunately we enjoy thinking about other people's faults and in the proper sense of the word "morbid", that is the most morbid pleasure in the world.

10 We don't like rationing which is imposed upon us, but I suggest one form of rationing which we ought to impose on ourselves. Abstain from all thinking about other people's faults, unless your duties as a teacher or parent make it necessary to think about them. Whenever the thoughts come unnecessarily into one's mind, why not simply shove them away? And think of one's own faults instead? For there, with God's help, one can do something. Of all the awkward people in your house or job, there is only one whom you can improve very much. That is the practical end at which to begin. And really, we'd better. The job has to be tackled some day: and every day we put it off will make it hard to begin.

11 What, after all, is the alternative? You see clearly enough that nothing, not even God with all His power, can make "X" really happy as long as "X" remains envious, self-centered and spiteful. Be sure there is something inside you which, unless it is altered, will put it out of God's power to prevent your being eternally miserable. While that something remains there can be no Heaven for you, just as there can be no sweet smells for a man with a cold in the nose, and no music for a man who is deaf. It's not a question of God "sending" us to Hell. In each of us there is something growing up which will of itself be Hell unless it is nipped in the bud. The matter is serious! Let us put ourselves in His hands at once -- this very day, this hour.

## The Third Text: The Cat in the Bag

By Ian Pearson

1 There are no step dancers in David and Karen Mill's living room. It is evening, but no mummers peep through the windows. Instead of sea chanteys, there is Duke Ellington on the stereo. But, despite the appearances, the relatively normal dinner party in Ancaster, Ontario, is a treasure trove of folklore. The stories come forth, and although shopping malls and automobiles have replaced castles and carriages, they are truly the stuff of legend.

2 The conversation has turned to cats, and David, a 31 - year - old businessman, recounts with glee an incident that purportedly happened in nearby Brantford to friends of his family: "Julie was getting married in the summer. She and her mother were going out to one of the malls on the edge of Brantford to buy some clothes at the last minute. En route, they ran over a cat. They knocked on a number of doors to try to find the owner of the cat, but no one was home. They figured they couldn't leave this mangled cat in the middle of the road so somehow they had to dispose of it. The only thing they had in their car that they could put this cat in was an empty Bay bag. They scraped the cat into the bag and put it into the trunk of the car. Then they continued to the shopping centre, intending to try again to find the owner on their way back home.

3 "They parked the car and, because it was a hot day, they decided they couldn't leave the festering cat remains in the hot, steamy trunk. So they put the bag on the roof of the car. They went into the mall and when they finished shopping they went for a cup of coffee in a restaurant that overlooked the parking lot. They could see the roofs of the cars and the Bay bag perched on top of theirs. As they were looking out, a large grey Cadillac cruised by and stopped in front of their car. A well - dressed woman got out and ambled over slowly and grabbed the bag, jumped back into the car and drove away to another part of the parking lot.

4 "Julie and her mother thought this was pretty funny. But a few minutes later, the woman walked into the restaurant and sat down in a booth near them. She ordered a coffee and then she peeked into the bag to see what she had acquired. She screamed and fell over backward in a dead faint. At that point, the waitress had a conniption and called an ambulance. The woman didn't revive when she was given smelling salts and slapped in the face. The ambulance arrived and the attendant said there was no problem, that she had just fainted. They whisked her away on a stretcher. Just as they were leaving, the waitress grabbed the Bay bag and said, 'Excuse me, she's left this behind.' So the last Julie and her mother saw of the dead cat was it straddling the woman's chest as she was being wheeled, unconscious, into the ambulance."

5 A fine tale, and David's listeners are amused and convinced. It has strong narrative momentum. It has convincing detail. It has wonderful irony. And it's not true.

6 The dead cat in the Bay bag is a classic example of an urban legend. Like a rumor, an urban legend is presented as the truth, contains a large

number of corroborating facts and is set in the recent past. Like a rumor, it has developed plot that often results in an ironic twist. The bare - bones information of a snake biting a customer in a store (in Vancouver, it's a furrier; in Montreal, it's a sporting goods store) is a rumor. If it is elaborated into the story of a friend of a neighbor who was rushed to hospital and now is slightly paralyzed because of the snakebite, it is becoming a legend. If the same story persists for a number of years (and the dead cat tale has been traced back to 1906), it has achieved legend status. Although they are generally believed to be true by the teller, the same tales are passed along by word of mouth simultaneously across North America -- the state of the art of apocrypha now.

7 In Salt Lake City, you can hear about the cat in the Bay bag down to its most minute details, with the prestigious Castleton's store substituted for Bay and Cottonwood Mall stepping in for the Brantford mall. Or, a few years ago, you might have heard the late Harry Chapin tell a similar story on the Tonight show. The singer told how his aunt was trying to dispose of her beloved German shepherd dog, which had died late on a Sunday night. She stuffed the corpse into a suitcase to take over to Harry's place, being unable to spend a night near the dead dog. On the subway, a man helped her with her heavy load, and then bolted away with her suitcase.

8 What is this demented mythology that we carry around in our communal consciousness like some sort of metaphysical rubber snake? It is simply the same process of human psychology that brought us Grimm's Fairy Tales and Paul Bunyan. The legends give expression to some of the innermost anxieties and concerns that persist in the face of social change.

9 The prevalence of urban legends also attests to the endurance of oral communication in the face of the overwhelming influence of mass media. Often, as in the case of Chapin's dead dog, the legends gain credibility and a wider audience through electronic and print media. "It's a relatively recent phenomenon that very much feeds off its relationship with the media," says Dr. Carole Carpenter, associate professor of humanities at Toronto's York University and a specialist in Canadian culture and folklore. "The urban belief tales rely on the media for their validity. You often hear, 'I heard it from someone who heard it on Johnny Carson.'"

10 The media generate legends. Of all media people, gossip columnists are probably the most frequent victims of urban legends. Gary Dunford of the Toronto Sun printed the cat in the Bay bag tale as a real story four years ago. "Then over three years I heard the story three more times in three different restaurants," Dunford recalls. "And each time you hear the story, it's always somebody's best friend who swears they were there."

11 Most definitely an urban legend has a clear meaning on the first listening. The dead cat warns (from beyond the grave) that theft invariably leads to punishment, in this case involving the dreaded taboo of a dead body.

12 Urban legends are not necessarily restricted to entertainment value or to any age group. Dr. Martin Lava, an assistant professor of communication at B. C.'s Simon Fraser University, who specializes in mass media and popular culture studies, explains: "We tend to think that mass culture has encroached

upon and destroyed the oral tradition. It's not so. Narrative is fun and it always involves entertainment value. But you have to look at legend telling within the permanent and enduring quality of storytelling. It is a fundamental means of education and communication, even in our urban society."

## The Fourth Text: I Have a Dream

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

1 Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

2 But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacle of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

3 In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

4 It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of honouring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of *now*. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drugs of gradualism. *Now* is the time to make real the promises of Democracy. *Now* is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. *Now* is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. *Now* is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

5 It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. 1963 is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquillity in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

6 But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirsts for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct or struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.

7 And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a small ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

8 I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

9 Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

10 I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

11 I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

12 I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

13 I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

14 I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

15 I have a dream today.

16 I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

17 I have a dream today.

18 I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

19 This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

20 This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning

My country, 'tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing:  
Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the pilgrims' pride,  
From every mountain-side  
Let freedom ring.

21 And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

22 Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

23 Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

24 But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia!!

25 Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

26 Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

27 When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

### The Fifth Text: Love is Healthful

Compiled from T. Gilbert, J. Morrison and L. Roche

1 At the heart of Jesus' ethical teaching stands the Great Commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole strength, with thy whole mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." So it had been written in the Law of the Jews, and every devout Jew repeated twice daily this precept. But by 'neighbor," the Jews understood their immediate associates--at most, the community of Jews: while by that word "neighbor," Jesus meant all mankind.

2 "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you": this Golden Rule enunciated by Jesus is the spirit in which Christians are to fulfill that commandment to love neighbors...In this, as in much else, the teaching of Christ urges people to be active in the service of God (Kirk, cited in Roche 1995, p 56).

3 Love does a soul good. Love. It does a body good. The kind of good, that is, that leads to longer, healthier, happier lives. Research from many disciplines is starting to add up to a compelling picture. Carol Malec, a researcher in the University of Calgary faculty of counselling psychology, says the findings include:

-A 1979 study that found those people with the fewest friends had mortality rates two to three times higher than those with many friends, even when influences like age, race and cigarette smoking were factored out.

-A 1987 study of people with severe chest pain found that patients who lacked regular contact with friends had significantly more coronary blockage than those who had regular contact with friends.

-A compilation of statistics that showed the death rate among widowers six months after the deaths of their wives was 40 per cent higher than the norm.

4 "There's no question about it, say Barry Bultz, director of psychosocial resources at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre in Calgary. "We know people live longer, recover quicker from illness and have a greater sense of joy and satisfaction in life when they're in supportive relationships."

5 Some of the earliest inklings of a link between relationships and longevity came from research showing that "marital status is pretty closely associated with good health for men," says Gillian Ranson, professor in the department of sociology at the University of Calgary. A possible explanation, says Ranson, is that marriage tends to put the brakes on the risky behaviors that lead to men dying at younger ages than women. "Historically, men have been less good at developing social networks than women. By being married, men are tying into the networks women have created." A poet expressed it thusly:

6 I love you, Not only for what you are,  
But for what I am when I am with you.

7 I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself,  
But for what you are making of me.

8 I love you for the part of me that you bring out:  
I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart

And passing over all the foolish, weak things  
 That you can't help dimly seeing there,  
 And for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings  
 That no one else had looked quite far enough to find.

9 I love you because you are helping me to make of the lumber of  
 my life

Not a tavern, but a temple:

Out of the works of my every day

Not a reproach, but a song...( Author unknown, cited in Morrison  
 1948, p 329).

10 One key to love's medicinal power may be "lover's high", the euphoric state produced when amphetamine-like substances, phenylethylamines are released in the brain during the excitement phase of falling in love. Similar to the endorphins thought to bring on "runner's high," phenylethylamines appear to energize the body and pump up the immune system. A recent U. S. study found that participants who reported being in love had high levels of these euphoria-producing, pain-reducing endorphins. The lovers also showed an increased level of infection-fighting antibodies produced by white blood cells.

11 While romantic love appears to promote good health, research with cancer patients seems to suggest that all social connections can have tremendous health payoffs. Elizabeth Maunsell, an associate professor at Laval University in Quebec, asked 224 women with breast cancer if they had confided in anyone in the three months after diagnosis and treatment. Seven years later, 72 per cent of the women who reported having confidantes were still alive, versus 56 per cent of the women who had not confided in anyone. The women who had two or more confidantes had a better survival rate than those who had only one, Maunsell said. The results did not change when adjusted for factors such as prognosis, treatment and age.

12 Are your relationships the kind that could lead to your living longer and healthier? Greg Fouts, professor of psychology at the University of Calgary, describes healthy relationships as those in which you can disclose who you really are--vulnerabilities and all--and be certain the other person will "give you feedback or love you just because you're vulnerable. You can't do that with your boss," notes Fouts.

13 So how does being in love or having a network of supportive friends and family help your health? "I'm not sure it's entirely understood, what happens," says Jan Koopmans, a clinical social worker at Tom Baker Cancer Centre. "We believe support helps determine stress and we know that stress affects the immune system. We certainly think there is something physiological that goes on." Koopmans wonders if part of the explanation for the healthy relationships-healthy bodies connection is that it gives an individual "that fighting spirit".

14 When Koopmans' son was two years old, he required surgery for a rare heart obstruction. In intensive care and on a respirator, he couldn't suck his thumb, hold his blanket or be held. Attempts to get him off the respirator were unsuccessful, he wasn't sleeping and "was literally dying before our eyes," say Koopmans. She asked if she could hold him, tubes and all. "The

minute he was in my arms he fell asleep...When he woke up a couple hours later, he started fighting and he was off that equipment...the next day. "To me, it was one of the most powerful examples of support and touch and how it can turn around some one from being depressed and giving up. I literally believe that saved his life" (With files from the New York Times).

15 Love is healthful! "....love the Lord .... and thy neighbor as thy self".



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