University of Alberta

Reading Between the Lines and Against the Grain:
English Language Arts and Social Reproduction in Alberta

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Theoretical, Cultural and International Studies in Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

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Fall 2012
Edmonton, Alberta

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Timothy James Beechey (1954–2011), who represented for me everything that teaching and learning are and can be; and to Bruce Keith and Zachary Keith, because no one earns a doctorate by herself.

Abstract

Alberta's 2003 High School English Language Arts curriculum produces differential

literacies because it grants some students access to high-status cultural knowledge

and some students access to merely functional skills. This differential work reflects

an important process in sorting, selecting, and stratifying labour and reproducing

stable, class-based social structures; such work is a functional consequence of the

curriculum, not necessarily recognized or intentional. The process, however, does not

occur in isolation and is in fact complementary to other social processes of

stratification. Nonetheless, this dissertation argues that by changing the curriculum,

emphasizing tactical and strategic literacy, and teaching the practice of critique, we

— teachers, students, and citizens — may interrupt the hegemonic action of the

dominant ideology and reveal a space for transformative social change.

Acknowledgements

For their numerous contributions, I would like to thank the members of my defence committee: Dr Randall Wimmer (Educational Policy Studies), Chair; Dr Alvin Finkel (History, Athabasca University), External Examiner; Dr Lois Harder (Political Science), Member; Dr Janice Wallace (Educational Policy Studies), Member; Dr Margaret L. Iveson (Secondary Education), Supervisory Member; Dr Margaret Mackey (School of Library and Information Studies), Supervisory Member; and Dr Jerry Kachur (Educational Policy Studies), Supervisor. I am grateful to Drs Kachur, Mackey, and Iveson in particular for their long-standing support, encouragement, and generosity.

> "I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks." — William
> Shakespeare

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions that Brent McKeown, Lillian Procter, Nicole Smith, Gail Sidonie Sobat, and Don Watt made to my thinking about this topic.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview:

Context and Summary of the Research Question

In discussing the pleasures of literary and aesthetic reading, literature scholar Robert Alter reflects on "a long tradition of ideas about literature as a unique repository of values and a uniquely rich vehicle of expression" (23). It is into this tradition that the discipline of English Language Arts (ELA) has strived to bring students, transmitting thereby the norms, values, and ideologies of Western culture. But teacher educator Barrie Barrell counters, "Given the variety of new media and textual events that are appearing, ELA teachers can no longer simply limit their teaching to traditional reading and writing practices" ("Epilogue" 225–26). Why these classroom teachers cannot — or must not — do so and what consequences are generated in the teaching of traditional literacy and literature are vital questions at this moment in history, as I will explain in the coming chapters.

This dissertation connects the long tradition of literary values to the dynamics of language as power by way of examining the province of Alberta. In particular, I examine the ways in which Alberta's political economy disciplines the English Language Arts curriculum: first in the constitution of that curriculum, then in the regulation of the curriculum, and finally in the legitimation of the curriculum's functioning. I argue that social class (among other indicators of difference, both marked and unmarked[1]) is produced, reproduced, and legitimated in the English

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[1] Andrew Sayer comments, "They [the struggles and competitions of everyday existence] involve not only inequalities in the distribution of material goods but the 'soft form of domination', the innumerable minor and often subtle and unintended acts of symbolic domination of everyday life, and the resistance they engender" (*Class*

Language Arts curriculum as a policy document and enacted through classroom practices that have material, political consequences. This dissertation seeks, insistently and unapologetically, to name and recognize class.[2] Drawing on the sociology of education through the lens of political economy, I examine how social class and social and economic capital are stabilized and reproduced through the teaching and learning of literature and literacy practices — and who benefits from this stability and reproduction.

At its core, this is a dissertation about fairness, because, as I will argue below, the presumed legitimacy assigned to the education system through the concept of meritocracy — adopted by and amplified in the language of 'choice' and 'preference' ushered in by neoliberalism — obscures the unfairness of a system

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96). Here he raises some of the notions of marked and unmarked indicators of and responses to class, tying these indicators to some of Bourdieu's important ideas, which I will discuss below. His remarks may also remind us of the so-called hidden curriculum, discussed in detail below, through which class practices are enacted and reinforced.

[2] Writing in 2005, Sayer observed, "For some, 'class' may seem, if not an obsolete category, one of declining relevance today, despite the widening of economic inequalities in many countries over the last twenty-five years" (*Class* 12–13). Instead, social focus has shifted to identity, or recognition of social differences such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, and a demand for institutional equality of treatment for individual differences. A consequence of this turn, Sayer explains, is that "the more everyone is discursively acknowledged as being of equal worth, the *less* the pressure to change the distribution of material goods, because the inequality of the latter is increasingly seen as a separate matter" (*Class* 64–65; emphasis in source). The distinction between class and other identities is important, however: "The poor are not clamouring for poverty to be legitimised and valued. They want to escape or abolish their class position rather than affirm it" (*Class* 52). I will return to this distinction below.

deliberately structured to produce different and distinctly unequal outcomes for students.[3] Thus I make a number of normative claims, evaluating what *is* and measuring it against what *might be*. In rooting my dissertation in the sociology of education, I am addressing both classroom teachers and those who teach them, for as Lauder, Brown, and Halsey explain in tracing the history of sociology of education, "the institutional context for the discipline had become that of teacher education" (572) already decades ago.

My research question is simple: how do the English Language Arts curriculum and instruction in Alberta's high schools interact with Alberta's political economy? The answer is anything but simple. Some of the sub-questions that follow from this line of investigation include the following:

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[3] Phillip Brown refers to this phase in the development of publicly funded education as "parentocracy," observing

> the 'third wave' has been characterised by the rise of the educational *parentocracy*, where a child's education is increasingly dependent upon the *wealth* and *wishes* of parents, rather than the *ability* and *efforts* of pupils. ... The defining feature of an educational parentocracy is not the amount of education received, but the social basis upon which educational selection is organized. ("Third Wave" 66; emphasis in source)

He continues, "those parents who can afford to buy a competitive advantage for their children [through parental selection of educational stream, school choice, private tutoring, or other home-based intervention] are increasingly likely to do so" (87). These themes are significant in Alberta, the only province in Canada where charter schooling has found some appeal (though limited) and a world-recognized leader in school-based budgeting; I will return to these ideas below.

・ Does the structure and substance of students' experience in the high school

English classroom contribute to the stability of Alberta's political culture and

economic stratification?

・ What kind of ideological work does differential English instruction,

including enriched programming such as International Baccalaureate and

Advanced Placement, perform?

・ What mechanisms and practices exist for students (and their teachers) to

resist and critique the dominant social organization?

To answer these questions, I build on the founding concepts of critical literacy and

draw from Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus, distinction, and capital, as well as

using the methods of critical discourse analysis and close reading to push the

curriculum document so that I can reveal its contradictions and interpret their

consequences.

The idea that ideology is transmitted through schooling is well established.[4]

In a liberal democracy such as Canada, that ideology includes norms of competition,

individualism, inequality, and hierarchy, understood from a classical Marxist

perspective as class structure and from a more contemporary perspective as

stratification. Despite the rise of the welfare state — with its goals of greater social

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[4] I use the word *ideology* here and below in the Marxist senses of both false

consciousness and the idea-set that each class fraction retains to explain its

situatedness (Grossberg 176). See my detailed explanation of the term in Chapter

Two, as *ideology* is a key term in this dissertation. Note that in my understanding

ideology, although mystifying, may be perceived and critiqued: it is possible to

describe, analyze, and resist ideology while yet being formed by (and constrained by)

it.

equality through economic redistribution — in the post-war era, deep, structural

social and economic inequality persists. In this dissertation, I use the province of

Alberta to examine a specific instance of persistent reproduction of social and

economic inequality in a jurisdiction that is unique and distinctive.

I have chosen the province of Alberta as my locus of study because of its

bratty, contrary, ornery status in Canada and the world.[5] Today, despite the recent

economic downturn, it is arguably one of the world's wealthiest jurisdictions; yet

little more than a century ago, Alberta was mostly aboriginal land, and within living

memory, Alberta was completely bankrupt. Alberta is popularly represented as

having a largely rural population base (when in fact more than 50 percent of its

residents live in Edmonton and Calgary, its two major cities[6]) and is well known for

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[5] Gerald Friesen describes Alberta as

> the noisiest province in English-speaking Canada. It is the tempestuous —
> and slightly smaller — brother or sister who is not going to be hushed, thank
> you very much. It has money in its pockets and it's going to make its opinions
> heard. If it loses the money, it's probably your fault. And it will get it back,
> and more, and you'll probably want some when that happens. Significantly, it
> will share its good fortune. It is headstrong but generous, and it does care
> about others in the family. And remember, it will pipe up, uninvited and
> unrepresentative though its message may be, so take with a grain of salt its
> claim to represent the entire West. That sounds like a cultural identity, an
> imagined community distinct from its neighbours, and a functional region,
> too. ("Defining the Prairies" 22)

These descriptions of Alberta as a young upstart, loudmouth province will become
more relevant below.

[6] According to the provincial government, the population of Alberta is estimated to be
3,632,483 (Government of Alberta). The population of Edmonton, the capital city, was

its strongly conservative political culture (when in fact many of its citizens do not

support the current governing party or do not vote at all[7]). Alberta's reputation in

Canada and internationally is largely the stuff of myth, a story that is told and retold

by media-savvy political leaders and the reportage of powerful interests. Most

importantly, as I will argue, Alberta's governing party, the Progressive

Conservatives, itself makes both its ideological and its economic interests explicit in

its politics and its policy-making — and a curriculum is, among other things, a policy

document. As I will insist below, educational policy is social policy.

In these early years of the new millennium, it may seem perverse to engage

this way with the English Language Arts curriculum. Alberta arguably has some of

the world's best language-learning results: "In 2006, the Province scored slightly

ahead of Finland in the PISA tests, making it the top-performing school system in

the world" (Whelan 185; see also OECD). At the time of writing, Alberta is leading

Canada's provinces in recovery after the global economic downturn in 2007–10, with

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782,439 as of April 1, 2009 (City of Edmonton). The population of Calgary was

1,065,45 (City of Calgary). Other major urban areas in Alberta include Fort

McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat.

[7] In his discussion of the change in popular support for the Alberta Progressive

Conservatives from 2001 to 2004 (the period relevant to my dissertation), Dennis

Soron notes,

> While retaining a commanding majority in the legislature, the Tories lost
>
> thirteen seats overall to opposition parties and saw their share of the popular
>
> vote drop by almost 15 percent from 2001. ... In absolute terms, he [Steve
>
> Patten, whose data Soron is discussing] notes, when we combine the party's
>
> smaller share of the popular vote with the substantial decline in overall voter
>
> turnout, Klein's Conservatives actually received about 210,000 votes less in
>
> 2004 than in 2001 — a 33 percent fall in active support. (66)

comparatively low unemployment, relatively high average household incomes, and an overall comfortable standard of living. The curriculum seems to be producing literate, successful workers: what is to contest? I will argue that what *seems* is not what *is*.

Further, many English teachers believe (for so they may have been taught) that their subject represents a way to transcend gender, class, race, and background; they might even position themselves on the progressive side of pedagogy. Such faith is invested in the humanizing potential of the text, the belief that exposure to "great works" inspires the human soul. This view, however, assumes that reading, writing, and teaching literature are politically neutral — or even politically progressive — acts. As I will argue below, however, pedagogy — even progressive pedagogy, despite its best intentions — is merely another iteration of a long liberal-humanist tradition unless that pedagogy is grounded in the praxis of structural transformation. That is to say, severed from a political commitment to social justice and social transformation, the teaching of English is just nice liberalism, yoked to the biases and inequities that position implies.[8] Michael Apple concedes, "Seeing the world in more political ways, through the eyes of the oppressed, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for social transformation. But it is a beginning" ("Politics of Race" 108). This dissertation, however, argues for a break with that tradition, advocating instead for transformation through an understanding of the ways in which curriculum, executed through pedagogy, legitimates inequality — and how teachers and students may evade, resist, and speak back to such ideological action. English teachers need only find the political will to teach to transgress, to teach to transform.

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[8] Andrew Sayers quips, "class inequality would not be acceptable if only the dominant classes were nicer!" (*Class* 200).

Few teachers, I realize, enter the profession with the intention of oppressing students or reproducing the social hierarchy; in fact, many teachers would observe tremendous recent progress in developing inclusive classrooms and culturally diverse schools. Yet such observations, I would contest, reflect the insidious work of ideology, for they convey a common-sense understanding of the social organization of schooling. As Ira Shor reminds us, "People who don't exercise critical thought retreat to 'common sense' as their way of seeing and knowing" (*Critical Teaching* 62), and as Roland Barthes underscores, "The foundation of the bourgeois statement of fact is *common sense*, that is, truth when it stops on the arbitrary order of him who speaks it" (*Mythologies* 155; emphasis in source).

Ideology works through a process of mystification, which asks us to accept as natural that which is produced and reproduced in the interests of the dominant and powerful. Dominant structures then legitimate the work of ideology: actions, values, belief systems, and individual life outcomes. We can see an example of this ideological work in the way in which what schools say about students and what schools actually value about students diverge importantly: "Diversity is fine *as long as* students can speak standard English, write a persuasive essay, and pass the standardized tests" (Short and Burke 37; emphasis in source). If students cannot meet these outcomes, they are "unsuccessful" and that failure is the fault of the individual student, not a failing of the system. The system has acquired legitimacy, nested in a social belief in meritocracy — the equality of opportunity, communicated in the discourse of standards, excellence, and choice[9] — which teachers, students,

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[9] Richard Johnson describes equality of opportunity as "historically a bourgeois claim against aristocratic privilege" (110); today the term is used to signal that social (class) position is a matter of choice and effort, not luck or structural privilege, an interpretation I will contest below.

and parents have been conditioned to trust produces fair outcomes, despite that

students do not enjoy equality of condition. The work of education, then, means that

the teachers, who — despite their personal politics — must evaluate students'

success and failure, perform a conservative, reproductive social function. The

sociology of education seeks to struggle through mystification to identify real

practices and structures that perpetuate social injustice.

I am not arguing that the English Language Arts curriculum *in itself* creates

political stability. Education is far reaching and English is a near-universal subject

in Alberta schools, but there are more factors in play than just exposure to certain

texts and teaching practices. However, drawing from and building on Gramsci's

notion of hegemony, I argue that the high school English Language Arts curriculum

both communicates and constitutes an inconsistent, hegemonic message; that the

explicit and implicit outcomes of the curriculum reinforce and reproduce Alberta's

class structures; and that the curriculum, teaching practices, and interpretative

community of English teachers in Alberta both stabilize and are made stable by

Alberta's larger political climate.[10] Education in Alberta is state sponsored, as is the

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[10] Gramsci uses *hegemony* to refer to two linked concepts: first, the idea of
domination by one class fraction, and second, the idea that this domination persists
through the consent of those who are dominated. Hoare and Smith observe that the
state retains "coercive power" to enforce the compliance of those who do not
voluntarily consent to be dominated (12). Hegemony operates through a resilient
strategy of cooptation, undercutting the demands of the dominated by acceding to
some of those demands (although never to a degree sufficient to alter the
fundamentally unequal structure of society)(Showstack Sassoon 202). The
contradiction between dominating and consent enables hegemony to operate less
through force than through influence and complicity. As Anne Showstack Sassoon
explains,

curriculum taught in Alberta schools; in a liberal democracy such as Alberta, the mechanisms of the provincial state operate in the interests of capital. Thus, I am arguing that the English Language Arts curriculum at once reflects and misrepresents both the history and mythos of Alberta and the ideological aims of global neoliberalism, distorting both in the interest of class stability.

English Language Arts is a ubiquitous experience in Alberta schooling, for here, as elsewhere, "there is a widespread inclination to view the acquisition of the ability to read and write as inherently connected with cognitive development" (Stephens 13). And indeed, Edmonton Public Schools affirms, "Literacy skills are increasingly essential in supporting each child's success. ... Competency in literacy lays the foundation for each student's future" (Edmonton Public Schools 2). From their first days of kindergarten to the diploma exams they write at the conclusion of ELA 30-1 or 30-2, students receive continuous training in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing. A new English Language Arts curriculum was introduced in Alberta in 2003, containing explicit elements of academic streaming posed in the diction of choice and self-selection. In addition, schools throughout Alberta offer enriched programming such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement. Language teaching and literature are particularly effective

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> What a dominant, hegemonic ideology can do is to provide a more coherent and systemic world view which not only influences the mass of the population but serves as a principle of organization of social institutions. (202)

In this way, dominated group can be seen to acquiesce to their domination as their protests may be taken up (and often commodified) by the dominant group, thus making resistance much more challenging. Gramsci considers the concept of hegemony throughout his work, but particularly discusses it in the essay "State and Civil Society" (210–76).

vectors for ideological transmission, and the curriculum — through streaming, literature selection, and accommodation — helps to transmit and reinforce the norms and values of a state heavily invested in the ideological status quo.

Written texts are among the most powerful and enduring mechanisms human beings have to transmit our valuable and valued knowledge. Written language represents an extension of speech and of memory; it is a lasting record of language, learning, and culture. The study of book history teaches us that writing and reading are powerful, almost mystical, skills. Consider Western iconography: we regularly see the great personages of Western history represented carrying or consulting a book. The book is the repository of knowledge, history, law, lineage, and "truth." Texts may exist for political, aesthetic, persuasive, informative, educative, or entertainment purposes; their existence and effects may be enduring or ephemeral; but they are almost always socially significant objects.

Referring to the early modern regulation of texts, Roger Chartier observes

the importance given to written matter and to the objects that bore writing by all the authorities who intended to regulate behaviour and fashion minds. Hence the pedagogical, acculturating, and disciplining role attributed to the texts put into circulation for a wide readership; hence also the controls exercised over printed matter, which was subjected to censorship to eliminate anything that might threaten religious or moral order. (*Order* 20–21)

The Western invention of moveable type, establishing the age of print, divided texts and readers according to privilege and access. Looking at the evolution of print culture through the eighteenth century, Chartier remarks,

Two motifs were indissolubly linked: the idea that the lower orders rejected

written culture because they saw it as an instrument of domination and a

threat to the social fabric, and the idea that the educated resisted

appropriation by the vulgar of knowledge that had been theirs exclusively,

hence also of the keys that gave access to that knowledge. ("Practical Impact"

164)

A nexus of troubled relationships among books, readers, and authorities thus

emerged, the echoes of which we still perceive today in literature and literacy

studies.

The rise of capitalism and the rise of print literacy are deeply entwined

phenomena. Print became ubiquitous in the mid nineteenth century in the aid of

capital interests: literate workers have fewer accidents, tend to adopt other middle-

class–sanctioned norms and behaviours, and are easier to stratify than are illiterate

workers. Literacy became near universal by the mid twentieth century, by way of

public education, producing an increasing number of readers for an expanding

market of books, newspapers, and magazines (made faster and cheaper by high-speed

presses and wood-pulp paper) and assisting in consumer communications through

advertising (a process accelerated by the arrival of radio and television).[11] By the late

twentieth century, near-universal literacy had produced workers who were also ever-

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[11] We must remember, however, that state-sponsored education may be read as a
form of subsidy to capital interests, as state-sponsored education carries the cost of
producing workers who come to work already trained in the appropriate behaviours,
values, attitudes, and aptitudes.

increasing consumers, a logic necessary to and consonant with globalization, which
requires increasingly specialized and commodified forms of literacy.[12]

Today, by means of technological developments that separate us radically
from several thousand years' precedent, written language appears in a variety of new
forms: we have extended the idea of text beyond the book-object to include media

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[12] Barrell briefly explains this history:

> In the past, high school diplomas have signified that the bearer could
> complete a set curriculum, arrive on time, sit for long periods, move about
> independently within a highly structured environment, pass standardized
> test and do whatever was required to satisfy the rules and regulations of a
> large institution. For a century or more economic and industrial
> requirements have kept public schools riveted to established traditions and
> have dictated normative patterns of organize and instruction. Now pressured
> by the realities of globalization, corporations are requiring different skill sets
> and work attributes. ("Epilogue" 222)

These normative patterns, and graduates' adherence (or failure to adhere) to them,
reflect the work of the (largely) hidden curriculum, transmitted particularly through
English language arts courses, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five. Barrell
continues:

> Transnational corporations have an insatiable need for flexible knowledge
> workers and thinkers. These workers need to come armed with the 'new ELA
> basics' — an understanding of teamwork, a command of multiple literacies,
> an ability to use the power of digital technologies to solve a variety of complex
> industrial problems and an understanding of integrated text
> communications. ("Epilogue" 222)

I will develop a discussion of the situation of Alberta graduates in a global context in
Chapter Seven.

such as photography, film, video, video games, internet sites, and other physical and digital formats. The consequence of this change, Barrell argues, is that "Survival reading and writing competencies are no longer enough for effective participation in the economic and social mainstream of the nation" ("Epilogue" 224). Yet, despite the shift to highly visual, largely screen-based communication and learning, written communication — and the teaching of reading and writing — remains crucial:

> Far from suggesting that we need no longer pay attention to these forms of literacy, we feel strongly that writing will remain the preferred form of the cultural and political élites, so that an equitable curriculum must pay the greatest attention to writing for the reason of 'access' alone. (Johnson and Kress 13)

Thus, from the ostensibly humanizing and creative practices of reading and writing has emerged a gap — a vulnerability — that has been and continues to be exploited by the interests of power: those who understand language as a mechanism for social organization and social control, those who determine *who signifies* and *what means*. That gap represents the gulf between those who understand and enjoy the benefits of full literacy and those whose literacy is partial, functional, and vulnerable to manipulation.

Although it is often identified with liberal progressive culture, or even bohemian counter-culture, the study of language — and of literature in particular — tends to be immensely conservative. Neil Postman observes,

> Language allows us to name things, but, more than that, it also suggests what feelings we are obliged to associate with the things we name. Even

more, language controls what things shall be named, what things we ought to pay attention to. Language even tells us what things are things. (*End* 84)

High school English, then, with its focus on the reception, expression, and manipulation of language, represents a curricular location where highly valuable, codified knowledge is transmitted — knowledge that may identify, discipline, and reward the student's class origins and employment trajectories. English is a requirement for graduation (at least, for non-Francophone students) and the key to post-secondary study. Thus, what goes on in the high school English classroom involves a complex web of power relations, determined well beyond the conscious awareness of an individual student or teacher. But the effects of these power relations are far reaching and significant; as Cherland and Harper observe, "Those who cannot and will not affiliate with the school's literacy practices (and the society's) pay the cost in their material lives" (126). In this dissertation, a close reading of Alberta's new English Language Arts curriculum provides the focus for an extended discussion of the ways in which literary texts and social texts reproduce and re-entrench a culture of disparity.[13]

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[13] Methodologically, I am drawing on several disciplines to conduct this discussion and make these claims, including philosophy, social theory, and the sociology of education; and while this discussion is highly abstract, it is rooted in pragmatic analysis and practical application. I am taking up the 2003 English Language Arts Curriculum document — in a sense an ordinary policy document — as having more than an empirical existence but rather producing materially real, identifiable effects. This view of the curriculum document as a socially productive, rather than inert, text embraces postmodern views of texts as "forms of representation which actively construct and do not just reflect reality" (Threadgold 344). Significantly, however, I retain the critical-realist view that while the text and its effects may construct (and be socially constructed as) ideas (see Hacking), they are materially real and enacted

I argue here that the curriculum produces differential literacies. As I will discuss in the following chapters, true literacy refers to the ability to question: to speak the language of critique and be fluent in the language of dissent. This idea was introduced by Paulo Freire and has been advanced by theorists like Ira Shor, Peter McLaren, bell hooks, and James Paul Gee. While formal literacy is the goal of most educators, true literacy is a process of conscientization: coming to awareness of the false consciousness transmitted by dominant institutions and individuals (see Freire *passim*). This dissertation examines how the range of knowledges, skills, aptitudes, behaviours, and practices taught in the high school English Language Arts classroom helps — or hinders — students to make sense of the texts of their lives in the province of Alberta.

In Chapter Two, I survey the bodies of literature that inform my analysis, interpretation, and discussion. In Chapter Three, I discuss the methods I have used in this dissertation, including my key terms, my theoretical framework, and the tools of textual analysis I have selected. In Chapter Four, I review the history of Alberta from the arrival of Europeans until the end of the Klein administration in December 2006. In particular, I consider how the myth of Alberta adversity circulates and contributes to a common-sense understanding of economics, politics, and social values. In Chapter Five, I analyze the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum document and consider the disjuncture between what it announces and what it produces. Through the curriculum document itself, the accommodation strategies of enriched classroom experiences of International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement, and the de facto canon of Alberta high school reading, the curricular experience of English Language Arts not only produces various strata of future

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in detectable ways in students' lived experiences. See Chapter Three for a full discussion of my research method.

workers but invites students to be complicit in their class trajectories. In Chapter Six, I discuss the concept of reader formation and the production of personal and institutional literacies.[14] English Language Arts represents a set of social practices designed to reward those who adopt middle-class norms and values, in particular those of the professional–managerial class; it prepares students to encounter texts as functional, aesthetic, or persuasive products and commodities, devoid of material history or situated production. Here I also begin to discuss strategic and tactical literacies as forms of resistance. In Chapter Seven, I discuss and analyze the consequences of the differential literacies produced by the 2003 curriculum, extending my reading of educational policy as social policy and furthering my discussion of the possibility of resistance; and in Chapter Eight, I present a range of recommendations for overturning the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum in the context of a greater social good.

While the claims and conclusions presented in this dissertation may be to some degree controversial, even radical, they cannot by themselves overcome tenacious social organization. A better understanding of the interaction between English Language Arts and other mechanisms of social reproduction, however, may contribute to a more thorough understanding of the larger policy implications of curriculum and therein the possibility of change. In a setting shaped by market forces and the belief in individual rationalism, English Language Arts may be experienced as if students are consumers — as if they have no agency beyond consuming — but there is an alternative. Rather than producing graduates-as-

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[14] As James Gee remarks, "of course, the goal of learning to read in school is eventually to be able to read texts written in 'academic language' (the language of the content areas in school)" ("Opportunity" 28).

workers, graduates-as-consumers, the teaching and learning of language and literature can produce graduates-as-citizens — as readers of the world and subjects of history.

Thus, I am arguing that it is possible, with understanding and commitment, to resist the work of ideology. In positing the need for and the tactics of resistance, I claim a position as a sociologist of education: "the work of sociologists of education should be part of the wider democratic debate.... In essence sociologists of education may constitute a disruptive but necessary voice in democratic debate" (Lauder, Brown, and Halsey 580). I do so because I believe that "transformative social justice learning will take place when people reach a deeper, richer, more textured and nuanced understanding of themselves and their world" (Torres 2).

Alberta is Canada's most aggressively neoliberal and neoconservative province; what we observe here today could become the future elsewhere in the fracturing, geographically insensitive logic of transnational capital. At the same time, very specific conditions have brought Alberta to this moment. The specific experiences of students in Alberta may not be generalizable to other jurisdictions, but it is my hope that the conclusions to be drawn from my findings may be used by other researchers to further their own thinking about the dense relationships woven through schooling, social class, politics, economics, and moral life. This dissertation speaks with the hope that if we understand how political economy interacts with educational policy, we can disrupt and dismantle these structures to create a more just, fair, and inclusive society.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This dissertation explores how social class and social capital are stabilized and reproduced through literature and cultural literacy in Western culture, and applies this understanding to the specific setting of contemporary Alberta. The primary research problem is to investigate the inter-relationships between Alberta's high school English Language Arts curriculum and the persistence of social stratification, of which Alberta's dynastic political culture is a trenchant symbol. Several bodies of literature inform this investigation, including the sociology of education, curriculum theory, English literary theory and criticism, and theories of reading and readers. These discipline areas inform my sense of the shape and scope of the research problem, coming as I do from a background in both English literature and the sociology of education.

This literature review surveys the significant theorists and theories that underpin this investigation. Over the course of this review I identify the historical situatedness of the issues facing Alberta students as they enter their English Language Arts classrooms. Through its curriculum, the Alberta state confronts both the historical forces that have shaped the enterprise of education — and in particular language and literacy teaching — and the economic forces of globalization and neoliberalism that influence the life chances of the province's citizens.

Sociology of Education and Critical Pedagogy

Sociology refers to the study of human societies and group processes, one of many modernist attempts to apply the scientific method to human topics. Emile Durkheim is generally identified as the founder of sociology (Collins 37–46). Durkheim defined sociology as the study of "social facts": demographic events like births and deaths, and systems such as education, law, and religion (Wotherspoon, *Sociology* 5). From this perspective, society is "real" because it exists before our individual births, continues after our individual deaths, and, while we live, shapes our interactions with others, who are similarly shaped and influenced in their own existence (Wotherspoon, *Sociology* 5). Durkheim is generally associated with the theory of structural functionalism, a perspective that argues that each element in a society contributes to maintaining balance and stability in that society. It is the role of social institutions to socialize members of that society into the appropriate roles and attitudes required by its needs. When a structure is no longer socially relevant or useful, it is reformed or discarded. In taking up this perspective, Durkheim looks back to Auguste Comte, the philosopher of positivism.

Talcott Parsons advanced Durkheim's ideas, with a particular focus on schooling. Parsons argues that schools exist not only to transmit knowledge but to socialize and stratify students to prepare them for the lives they will lead after leaving school. In its conservative form, functionalism is tightly knit to tradition and sharply limits social mobility; in its liberal form, functionalism is often promoted as equality of opportunity. As the sociology of education took a critical turn, however, equality of opportunity and the related concept of meritocracy have been critiqued as ideologies that advance the interests of the dominant class by reproducing hierarchies of power and resources in the guise of ability and achievement.

Another key figure in early sociology is Max Weber, whose work also took up social reproduction but from a very different point of view. Weber's early work concentrated on the sociology of religion, but his pivotal text, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), connected his analysis of Christian religious thought to economics and social power. In another key text, *Politics as a Vocation* (1920), Weber theorized about political economy, including his now well-known notions of the state's monopoly on authorized violence and of the relationships between status and power. Status refers to one's degree of esteem or prestige within the community — one's social power (akin to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital) — while political power refers to one's ability to influence political activity, albeit not necessarily one's direct involvement in political life. Weber also refers to class, but unlike Marx's use of the term (based on the ownership of specific kinds of property), class for Weber refers to the individual's relationship to the market as a whole — to one's wealth or ability to shape the market to one's desires.

In the aftermath of the late 1960s, sociology began to examine some of its organizing assumptions. In the sociology of education, increasing numbers of scholars grew disillusioned with structural functionalism and positivism. Thinkers such as Weber and Marx began to attract attention for offering alternative explanations of social organization and analytical approaches to evidence. One of the most important texts to emerge in this critical turn was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), written by Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire. This text arguably marks the beginning of critical pedagogy, a discourse that concentrates more on classroom practice and social justice than on social processes, but retains a deep root in the sociology of education.[1]

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[1] Although his work does not fit neatly into my overview, I would be remiss not to mention Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist whose *Prison Notebooks* (trans. 1971) has contributed to modern Marxist analysis. In particular, Gramsci's notion of

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (and a series of subsequent texts exploring and developing similar themes, such as *The Politics of Education* [1985], *Pedagogy of Hope* [1992], *Pedagogy of Freedom* [1998], and *Pedagogy of Indignation* [2004]) examines the relationship between literacy education and oppression. The text fuses Marxism, liberation theology, and anti-colonial discourses in a compelling message of hope and possibility. Freire argues that conventional pedagogy — the system he refers to as banking education — reproduces the roles of oppressor and oppressed because spoon-fed, rote education inhibits critical thinking. When the people (for Freire, Brazilian peasants) begin to think dialectically as teacher–students, they will discover true literacy and will be able to read the social structures that oppress them. They will then possess the tools and the knowledge to oppose these structures and change them.

In his books and in his numerous collaborations with others, Freire has contributed two pivotal concepts to education discourse: conscientization (the process of coming to understanding, breaking free of false consciousness) and education for transformation. In his radical claims for revolutionizing education, Freire joined a substantial history of progressive educators, reaching back at least to John Dewey. In fusing progressivism with Marxist analysis, however, Freire demonstrated the critical tools required for progressives' excavation and reclamation work.

On the heels of Freire's first book came another landmark text in the critical sociology of education: Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis' book *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976). This text argues that public education is not the great equalizer that many believe it to be; rather, it reproduces and retrenches inequality generation after generation by replicating the structures of the workplace in terms of

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the "organic intellectual" (from his essay "On Education") reminds us of the transformative potential of an aristocratic or "liberal" education.

hierarchy, authority, and autonomy. Modern education has been yoked to the needs of capitalism:

> Education in the United States plays a dual role in the social process whereby surplus value, i.e., profit, is created and expropriated. On the one hand, by imparting technical and social skills and appropriate motivations, education increases the productive capacity of workers. On the other hand, education helps defuse and depoliticize the potentially explosive class relations of the production process, and thus serves to perpetuate the social, political, and economic conditions through which a portion of the product of labor is expropriated in the form of profits. (Bowles and Gintis 11)

To explain these mechanisms, Bowles and Gintis drew on the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure; much of the subsequent criticism of their text referred to the deterministic nature of their analysis. Although now largely surpassed by texts that offer a more nuanced, less deterministic Marxian analysis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* represents an important development in North American sociology of education.

Another early text in this discourse was Michael W. Apple's book *Education and Ideology* (1979), which opened up the analysis of education to the relationship between culture and power. Like Bowles and Gintis, Apple works from a Marxist perspective. His concentration is two-fold: an examination of what schools actually teach (i.e., the hidden curriculum) and what ideological work such teaching performs, and a meditation on what might be done in schools to intervene in this process. *Education and Ideology* was followed by *Education and Power* (1982), in which Apple refined and developed his earlier thinking. This text, written as neoliberalism began

to come into focus, found an audience with scholars and teachers disillusioned by the reformed-oriented, incremental process of educational and social change.

Building on the kinds of analysis provided in these texts, Peter McLaren published his compelling text *Life in Schools* (1989). Part memoir, part primer, part manifesto, this text examines the lived effects of the hidden curriculum in Canadian and American classrooms. Throughout the 1990s, McLaren refined his ideas, often collaborating, like Freire, with others. One of his notable collaborators has been Henry Giroux, whose groundbreaking text *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling* (1981) positions critical pedagogy in opposition to the political economy of education and various radical political philosophies. Another important voice belongs to Ira Shor, whose book *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* (1980) applies Freire's concepts of critical literacy and conscientization to a First World context in New York City and who later collaborated with Freire. Thus did a literature of critical pedagogy begin to form.

However, as critical pedagogy became an authorized discourse, it faced challenges not only from conservative and traditional positions but also from feminism, post-colonialism, and postmodernism. Elizabeth Ellsworth's widely referenced essay "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy" (1992) charges McLaren and Giroux with perpetuating elitism and domination, arguing that their sophisticated analyses and neologism-laden jargon exclude most classroom teachers — presumably the audience McLaren and Giroux are trying to reach. Jennifer Gore, bell hooks, Patti Lather, Kathleen Martindale, Jane Tompkins, and many other scholars contributed similar critiques, and critical pedagogy rapidly fractured into numerous recognition-based discourses, some more radical than others.

Recognizing the cultural turn in the 1990s and early 2000s, scholars have recently begun to return to class as a method for explaining the persistence of (and, in fact, exaggeration of) inequality, poverty, and violence. Erik Olin Wright's collection *Approaches to Class Analysis* (2005) investigates class as a concept and vector of inequality. While he is neither a critical pedagogue nor a political economist, Pierre Bourdieu's work with his concepts of habitus, distinction, field, capital, and doxa — articulated in many articles and his books *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977, with Jean-Claude Passeron), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) and *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993) — has been exceptionally influential in the critical sociology of education. Recently, Meredith Rogers Cherland and Helen Harper have attempted to gather and reconnect various strands of critical literacy pedagogy and practice as advocacy research. Their book *Advocacy Research in Literacy Education: Seeking Higher Ground* (2007) makes an effort to remind disparate practitioners of their common critical roots and their shared emancipatory goals. The emphasis on praxis as research connects Cherland and Harper to the sociology of education, searching both to understand the social processes of literacy education and to change them.

The notion of praxis connects the sociology of education to one material enactment of education policy: the work of curriculum. We may understand curriculum as an expression of state policy or as the lived experience of teachers and students. We may also understand curriculum as the unrealizable gap between the declared goals of a document and their manifestation in a range of social institutions, including but certainly not limited to classrooms, families, workplaces, academia, and the media. Or curriculum may represent — particularly for students — an absence, a lack, an other, or an opportunity. It is through praxis that curriculum theory may

inform the sociology of education and that critical pedagogy may shape the future of curriculum development.

Curriculum Theory

This dissertation explores the ways in which social class and social and economic capital are stabilized and reproduced through literature and cultural literacy. The particular text of Alberta's high school English curriculum provides the focus for an extended discussion of the ways in which texts reproduce and retrench social structures. From the literature they read to the writing they produce, the curriculum they receive to the final examinations they sit, students receive subtle and not-so-subtle messages about their ultimate destinations in life. To critique a curriculum, the researcher must situate its local practices in the larger context of curricular writing and theorizing.

Curriculum is more than a large set of goals and objectives: it is a catechism of the knowledge that a particular society deems valuable and worthy of transmitting to future generations. It represents the institutional architecture that determines whether a child succeeds or fails in the enterprise of schooling. The curriculum as delivered is the purview of the classroom teacher. The curriculum as designed and written, however, is the responsibility of policy writers and consultants. Curriculum as written is "a *structured series of intended learning outcomes*. Curriculum prescribes (or at least anticipates) the *results* of instruction. It does not prescribe the means .... curriculum is concerned with *ends*..." (Johnson, Jr. 130; emphasis in source). Curriculum policy is importantly tied — sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively — to curriculum theory. Therefore major policy documents

such as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), introduced by George W. Bush, or Alberta's *English Language Arts (Senior High)* curriculum document (2003) must be read alongside curriculum theory.

Curriculum theory as an area of education theory and research informing governmental, school, and classroom policy is a twentieth-century development. Of course, as long as there has been schooling — formal or informal, private or public — there has been an assumed sense of the order or flow of the topic or topics to be studied.[2] In medieval education, one undertook first the trivium — grammar, rhetoric, and logic — and then the quadrivium — arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. In the tradition of trades and guilds, one began as an apprentice, studied under a master to become a journeyman, and eventually, with time, patience, and experience, might become a master himself. With the rise of mass education in the nineteenth century, however, and with the subsequent organization of teachers' colleges and universities whose function it is to prepare teachers to teach, questions of *what* to teach and *when* became a matter of academic interest. Philip W. Jackson identifies Harold Rugg as one of the "founding fathers of what is today called the field

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[2] *Curriculum* derives from the Latin root *currere*, meaning "to run." *Curriculum* in Latin may refer to a racing course or a racing chariot, diction that gives rise to interesting metaphorical implications. Patrick Slattery, for instance, observes a problem in contemporary curricula that derives from the word *curriculum*:

> *Currere* is derived from the Latin infinitive verb that means 'to run the racecourse.' ... The modern curriculum development rationale has truncated the etymological meaning and reduced curriculum to a noun, the racecourse itself. Thus generations of educators have been schooled to believe that the curriculum is a tangible object, the lesson plans we implement, or the course guides we follow, rather than the process of running the racecourse. (56)

of curriculum" (4), but most practitioners more readily identify John Dewey as the first major figure in the field.

John Dewey was a progressive, one who argued for student-centred learning. In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) he proposes that learning emerges organically from the child's experiences in the world. Dewey did not necessarily argue against the concept of standardized subject matter; rather, his innovation was in arguing that the learning should involve "moving from the child's expertise out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies" (Dewey in Jackson 6). *Experience and Education* (1938), a much later text, refines these ideas, but insists that the problem for education remains "the place and meaning of subject-matter and of organization within experience" (Dewey 20). Dewey firmly situates this pedagogy in modernity. Traditional education, he argues, will not prepare children for adulthood and more sophisticated learning; but neither will progressive education that is not rooted in both a philosophy of experience and a structured program of subject-matter: "The way out of scholastic systems that made the past an end in itself is to make acquaintance with the past a *means* of understanding the present" (78; emphasis in source). For Dewey, curriculum and pedagogy are vitally entwined.

Franklin Bobbitt was the one of the earliest education theorists to concentrate solely on curriculum development. His book *The Curriculum: A Summary of the Development Concerning the Theory of the Curriculum* (1918) calls upon schools to deliver a structured and predictable series of learning experiences across a range of subject areas, in order to prepare students for the lives and work they will pursue as adults in the modern, industrial world. Bobbitt's concept of curriculum is scientifically oriented and rational: to produce workers for the roles available, education must offer explicit training in socially desirable knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Bobbitt's concept of curriculum as "the entire range of

experiences, both directed and undirected, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual; or ... the series of consciously directed training experiences that the schools use for completing and perfecting the unfoldment" (Bobbitt in Glatthorn et al. 4) has a clear vocational focus but also recognizes the hierarchy that differentiates workers from owners, labour from management. Bobbitt's work represents the beginnings of the efficiency approach to curriculum.

Ralph Tyler's *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949) has been exceptionally influential on postwar curriculum development and writing.[3] His text offers a highly structured approach to education delivery, aimed at curriculum developers and writers, policy workers, and administrators. Tyler identified four key questions that must underscore all curriculum planning and development:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (1)

As with Bobbitt's text, Tyler's principles adopt a positivist approach to education: evaluation must be quantifiable and should demonstrate mastery, and objectives must be explicitly and measurably tied to outcomes. This form of instrumental or technicist curriculum development — what Aoki refers to as "ends–means concerns"

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[3] So influential was Tyler's thinking that "Tylerism" emerged as an adjective to describe the method outlined in his principles.

("Interests" 29–32) — receded somewhat in the early 1970s but has been retrenched in recent back-to-basics and curriculum-standards discussions.

Building on Tyler's principles, Benjamin Bloom published his *Taxonomy of Education Objectives* in multiple volumes: *Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* in 1956 and *Handbook II: Affective Domain* in 1964. The *Taxonomy* was "intended to provide for classification of the goals of our educational system" (Bloom 1), shows readers how to prepare curriculum objectives that make specific and measurable objectives, and explains the value of building curriculum around objectives. Bloom argues that learning is a hierarchical psychological process that may be broken down into discrete, predictable steps. Students move from rote, iterative learning to increasing levels of sophistication involving judgement, discernment, analysis, and abstraction. Bloom's taxonomy has been tremendously influential, shaping the practice of curriculum writing and instructional design for decades (see, for instance, Lorin Anderson et al., eds.; Gronlund; Wiggins).

A clear continuity of technicist thought runs from Bobbitt to Tyler to Bloom (in fact, Bloom dedicated his *Taxonomy* to Tyler, "whose ideas on evaluation have been a constant source of stimulation to his colleagues in examining, and whose energy and patience have never failed us" [Bloom v]). Despite updating, the rational–technicist impulse to produce accountability through quantifiable, measurable, and demonstrable outcomes remains a pillar of instructional design: "the major premise behind Bloom's original work still remains intact" (Brown and Green 33). Today, the clear articulation of educational objectives and outcomes is a taken-for-granted element of curriculum development and instructional design. Specific, measurable, demonstrable, and attainable outcomes are normally written for each unit of instruction, articulating clear and predictable standards for student assessment and achievement.

In the late 1960s, curriculum began to move in more child-centred directions once again, and new approaches to curriculum emerged. Although progressivism as advocated by Dewey was in retreat, education was affected by the dramatic social change brought about by the civil rights movement, second-wave feminism, anti-colonial discourses, and other rights-based advocacy; certainly, Paulo Freire's work, discussed above, was influential in this movement. Subsequently, William Pinar has emerged as a leader in the reconceptualist approach to curriculum studies. Under the umbrella of reconceptualism we find Max van Manen, who has brought a phenomenological orientation to curriculum and pedagogy, and Ted Aoki, who has advanced an inspirited approach to curriculum. Patti Lather, Linda Briskin, and Deborah Britzman have brought various themes of feminism into curriculum discourse; George J. Sefa Dei has pleaded for anti-racism curriculum; and David W. Jardine and C.A. Bowers have been among those advocating for an ecological, Earth-first approach to curriculum.[4] The success of student-centred, anti-technicist learning has been uneven, however, and by the mid-1980s, as neoliberalism gained a footing in North America, a new wave of education reform had begun.

Third-wave reform rejects both the traditional liberal model of education as the great social equalizer and the progressive model of education as a means to achieve social justice; instead, it views education as a commodity and the institution of the school as an instrument for personal investment and advancement. The third wave appeals to brute competition clothed in two distinctly different motives: the expansion of market choice and the achievement of individual excellence. Curriculum

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[4] Importantly, however, Nancy Fraser has spoken out against the presence of identity claims in education, arguing that the most revolutionary changes in schooling will arise from the equitable and fair redistribution of resources, not from recognition.

once again becomes largely instrumental, serving the needs of the businesses that receive students after graduation. Education, in this view, is predominantly an instrument of economic policy.[5]

Of course, curriculum writing is never a politically neutral process. Eliot Eisner identifies six ideological orientations toward curriculum theorizing and writing: "religious orthodoxy, rational humanism, progressivism, critical theory, reconceptualism, and cognitive pluralism" ("Curriculum" 306). What Schrag calls the "manifest curriculum ... is often visible in documents such as textbooks and curriculum guides that describe (in order of magnitude) single lessons; course syllabi; sequences of courses to fulfill graduation requirements; and examinations that evaluate the success of students, teachers, and programs" (277). But curriculum also has a shadow side — the hidden curriculum — referring to the student's ability or failure to conform to the tacit behaviours, attitudes, and expectations of teachers, administrators, and employers. Since the nineteenth century, education has been the responsibility of the state — a social good the state delivers. But as Althusser points out, education is an ideological state apparatus, one of the social structures that

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[5] Third-wave curriculum reforms were part of a much larger movement toward the privatization of education that includes school vouchers, charter schooling, school-based budgeting, corporate–community partnerships, and other business involvement in schooling. Third-wave reform also engages other themes of neoliberalism, including teacher accountability for student performance, site-based performance benchmarks, and curriculum differentiation based on a family's economic and social resources. Such issues are not normally addressed in manifest curriculum but may rather be communicated through the school's positioning of itself, its faculty, and its programming in its advertising and marketing, and through community discourses such as newspapers and other media, think-tank reporting (e.g., the Fraser Institute's annual school rankings), and parental involvement, such as parent advisory groups.

reinforce hegemony. Peter McLaren explains, "curriculum reflects the interests that surround it: the particular visions of past and present that they represent, the social relations they affirm or discard" (172). Curriculum is written by those who hold power. Michael W. Apple, mentioned above, is also a curriculum scholar; his texts *Education and Power* (1982) and *Ideology and Curriculum* (1990), for instance, examine the ways in which streamed or tracked education and the action of the hidden curriculum produce inferior learning experiences for some students, thereby reinforcing social hierarchies and inequality. In this way, curriculum becomes a mechanism of social control:

> the curriculum is itself part of what has been called a selective tradition.
> That is, from that vast universe of possible knowledge, only some knowledge
> gets to be official knowledge, gets to be declared legitimate as opposed to
> simply being popular culture. (Apple, *Power, Meaning* 11)

Students rarely think about curriculum, although they are shaped by it; rather, they think about content: "Why do we have to read Shakespeare?" "When will I use algebra after I graduate?" "Why must I study a foreign language?" Students are forced to acquire knowledge that they are unable to make relevant to their lives; as McLaren points out, this positivist model of mastery is a political manoeuvre:

> The dominant curriculum separates knowledge from the issue of power and
> treats it in an unabashedly technical manner; knowledge is seen in
> overwhelmingly instrumental terms as something to be mastered. (188)

Students accumulate ordained knowledge to greater or lesser degrees. Those who demonstrate that they possess desirable knowledge — those who have the right cultural capital, to use Bourdieu's term — tend to succeed in school and after; those whose knowledge is outside the dominant interest — whose knowledge can be dismissed as folklore or subculture — tend to achieve much less.

The formal process of identifying which students will have access to what knowledge is referred as streaming (in the United States, more commonly as tracking). Jeannie Oakes' book *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* (1985) is an early entry into the critical analysis of student-ability grouping. Streaming consolidates the control of knowledge by grouping students on the basis of their likely post-graduation trajectories: for instance, "vocational" versus "academic," or "applied" versus "pure." Streaming, particularly in the senior grades, is a highly contentious issue, as Reba Page remarks: "Whether secondary schools should provide different courses of study to different groups of students is a defining question of curriculum theory" (197).

Curriculum may also be premised on the belief that there is a single right answer to any question, and invests the teacher (the agent of authority) with control of that answer. The contemporary exercise of curriculum, then, attempts to produce a regulated, more or less uniform experience of schooling. Thus are the bounds of knowledge imposed by curriculum "inextricably related to issues of social class, culture, gender, and power" (McLaren 193) and evaluated by high-stakes testing of learners' performances. As Johnson and Kress observe, "Pedagogies of conformity, joined with curricula which do not engage with the representation world in its existing form[,] cannot hope to foster innovation, creativity, ease with change. A conservative curriculum asks for conformity, and the competent performance of stable skills" (12). We may or may not believe that the ability to analyze the elements

of a literary short story, a Shakespearean drama, or a long poem is more important than the ability to read a bestselling novel, to appreciate a hit film, or to understand an advertising message; but in fact these are related, albeit distinct, skills. Importantly, they call upon a critical faculty that may oppose the interests of an authoritarian, expertise-driven elite. As I will argue below, a new approach to language and literacy curriculum demands a dialectical, *both/and* strategy: classical, canonical skills *and* local, student-focussed skills of text making and interpretation.

English Literary Theory and Criticism

Scholars of political economy recognize that capitalism is subject to its own contradictions, to magnification and devastation, to the potential, constant risk of collapsing under the weight of its construct. The rise of publishing — that is, the mass production of distribution of texts — is co-extensive with the rise of capitalism; indeed, some commentators would join the two inextricably. This dissertation examines one of the integral mechanisms of social reproduction — literacy — within the context of literature teaching, itself a product of capitalism and laden with theoretical and ideological connotations.

In his book *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848–1932* (1983), Chris Baldick explains that the formal study of English literature *as literature* is a comparatively new discipline, emerging in the nineteenth century alongside mass public education. He also notes that "It would seem that the study of English Literature is accepted by most of its practitioners as a 'natural' activity without an identifiable historical genesis. With some qualification, the same goes for the discourse — literary criticism — which dominates the subject" (*Social Mission* 3).

Matthew Arnold is generally identified as the founder of modern English literary criticism, although the study of English-language literary texts[6] was only one aspect of Arnold's broader interest in education, which he perceived as a civilizing tool. In advocating for "the best that has been thought and said in the world," Arnold argued for a form of universal education through literature that would allow anyone who made the effort to experience the transcendence of art.

The language arts were part of classrooms long before Matthew Arnold, however. Baldick reminds us that long before the universities and "even before Aristotle ... criticism and literary theory began among the fifth-century Greek Sophists as a body of knowledge that was to be taught, principally as a set of rhetorical models and skills. The academic study of literary texts continued for several centuries in the form of Rhetoric" ("Literature" 87); and Naomi Baron refers to "the traditional lower-school English curriculum of grammar, spelling, penmanship, and literature" (149). But Arnold made his comments at a propitious moment: Britain needed a tool to enforce its empire. Explicit instruction in English literature not only had the instrumental value of teaching the masses to read — a desirable development for employers who needed a semi-skilled work force — but also, "If you can prove that a nation's language has a long and distinguished history, that history becomes an argument for the stability and longevity of the political

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[6] Throughout this document, when I refer to "English" texts, I am referring to texts presented in the English language, regardless of the citizenship of the originator. The study of English literary texts certainly had its origins in British literature, but American schools were teaching American-authored texts several decades earlier (minus the critical apparatus, of course). Over time, the term has also come to encompass, albeit never unproblematically, literature produced in other English-speaking territories.

system governing the nation's speakers" (Baron 118). Thus the teaching of English literature has been from its inception an instrument of political control. (The teaching of American-written literature in English had similar goals and results in the United States.)

As Terry Eagleton explains, by the twentieth century English was taught as the poor man's classics course: instead of reading Latin and Ancient Greek texts, students read from the "great canon" of English literature (embellished in the United States by a healthy dose of American-born writers and, more recently, in Canada by Canadian writers). Lofty ideals and rhetorical stylings were taught by demonstration: merely by being exposed to "great" texts, students would learn both important cultural lessons and the distinctive registers in which such lessons are presented — at least, those students would who were receptive to such ideas. The "discipline" of language was particularly effective for keeping the instrumental classes satisfied. It provided them access to images of a nobler life, while its mystified, elevated language, which they were unable to write, kept them in their place. Their role was merely to be told what a text was and meant, and to reflect back their acknowledgement of the text's power. (It is certainly significant that Alberta's 2003 curriculum declares exactly this aim in its opening paragraph: "One aim is to encourage, in students, an understanding and appreciation of the significance and artistry of literature" [Alberta Learning, *High School* 1].) This exchange of reading and writing — referred to today by teachers as literary expository composition — was informed by theory developed by a rapidly rising class of English literature professors and professional critics.

Formalism emerged out of Modernism, the period beginning in roughly 1890 and extending to roughly 1940.[7] Modernism is a period marked by turmoil, most obviously World War One, but also by the emergence of psychology, the increasing industrialism of Western nations, the rise of women's suffrage and the first wave of feminism, and the clash of political philosophies. Modernism is built upon Romantic ideas of individualism and inspiration. T.S. Eliot, one of the leading poets of High Modernism, was also one of the leading proponents of formalism. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot develops his impersonal theory of poetry. According to Eliot, great art achieves its greatness through its simultaneous connection to and novelty within the Tradition — the literary canon. The artist reveals nothing of himself or his emotions in his work (Eliot's is a distinctly masculine tradition), but rather signals the appropriate response in the reader through a fusion of form and diction. Eliot's subsequent influence as critic (his critical volume *The Sacred Wood* (1920) was followed by *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), among other works) and editor, and his impersonal and highly detached view of art, influenced the New Critics of the 1940s and 1950s, connecting Modernism to critical practices of the post-war period. New Criticism remains the dominant style of literary analysis and interpretation taught in North American high schools today.

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[7] I am using Modernism (with a capital) to refer to the concept of literary modernism, a self-conscious reaction against Victorianism and complementary to modernism in art, music, and architecture. Although there are obvious connections, with this term I am not referring to the larger concept of modernity — often associated with the emergence of discourses around freedom, equality, and social justice — which arose a couple of centuries earlier.

I.A. Richards was a contemporary of Eliot. Richards' version of formalism, called Practical Criticism, urged purely textual exegesis, stripped entirely of authorial, social, and historical context. Literature (and by extension the discipline of studying literature) was thought to be apolitical; although a text may refer to a specific historical event, its "greatness" transcends such mundane concerns as political or economic interests — and if it does not do so, the work is perceived as flawed, an artistic failure. In this approach, there is also no place for the reader's prior history, biography, or identity either. F.R. Leavis, another contemporary of Eliot, did for the novel what Eliot had done for poetry: "Leavis brought the novel into the amazing professionalization of the study of English as it had started in the 1920s" (Bertens 20). It was during this same period, as Practical Criticism and the New Critics were attempting to remove the author and the reader from the perfection of the text, that Louise Rosenblatt began arguing against the excision of the reader's response from meaning in literature, as discussed below.

Meanwhile, rough contemporaries of Eliot, Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe and Charles Sanders Peirce in the United States, were establishing a parallel tradition in semiotics and structuralism. Saussure's text *Course in General Linguistics* (ca. 1915) introduces some of the key concepts of semiotics, including the notion of the sign, signifier, and signified; the concept of *parole* versus *langue*; and an understanding of language as relational and arbitrary rather than as fixed and absolute. Peirce contributed some complementary ideas, such as the representamen, object, and interpretant, and symbol, icon, and index. Out of these initiating concepts developed structuralism, and later post-structuralism and deconstruction.

Structuralism is similar to formalism in its insistent interest on form rather than content. Roland Barthes' essay "The Structuralist Activity" (1963) presents textual analysis as an activity — a process rather than a product. Barthes explains

this process as "not man endowed with meanings, but man fabricating meanings," ultimately yielding "Homo significans" (Barthes, "Structuralist Activity" 173). Over time Barthes moved into post-structuralism; his assertion of the reader's interpretive function in "The Death of the Author" would come to be pivotal to the idea of reader-reception theory and the notion of reader formation.

Another figure identified with structuralism is Mikhail Bakhtin. In his association with Russian Formalism, and particularly in his text *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin contributed several concepts that have become key to contemporary literary criticism: polyphony, heteroglossia, dialogism, chronotope, and carnival. These concepts examine discourse as a performative structure, multiple, contrary, competing, and sometimes subversive — key themes for many postmodern literary theorists. Julia Kristeva is also identified as a structuralist; her essay "Stabat Mater" (1974) gestures at the genre boundaries her text threatens to rupture, while her books *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980), *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) explore the psychoanalytic forces at play between the subject and language. Kristeva coined the term "semanalysis" to describe this emergent form of signification.

In literature, post-structuralism may be used as an all-encompassing term, including everything after Derrida (Davis and Schleifer 210). Many movements that might be identified as postmodern elsewhere were at least initially identified as post-structuralist in literary theory. Many of these critical perspectives arose out of the social turbulence of the 1960s and took a political stake in literary criticism. Some of the key critical perspectives include feminist criticism, post-colonialism, materialist and historicist criticism, and queer theory.

Feminist criticism emerged out of liberal-feminist politics but soon fractured into an array of more nuanced perspectives: "feminism can no longer be accurately described as a theory.... Rather, feminism should be understood as a discourse: a discussion of multiple related ideas" (Tolan 319). In the Anglo–American tradition we find Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics* [1969]), Elaine Showalter (*A Literature of Their Own* [1977] and *The New Feminist Criticism* [ed. 1985]), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic* [1979], *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* [eds. 1985], and *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* [3 vol., 1988–94]), and Toril Moi (*Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* [1985]), among many others. These figures advanced various phases of feminist criticism through phallocentric criticism, gynocriticism (the recovery of women's texts and literary history), and increasingly sophisticated, identity-based feminist textual criticism.

In the French Continental tradition are Luce Irigaray (*The Speculum of the Other Women* [1974] and *This Sex Which Is Not One* [1977]) and Hélène Cixous ("The Laugh of the Medusa" [1976], among other works). Irigaray was a disciple of Lacan; her work re-appropriates Freud for feminist purposes. Cixous advanced the concept of *écriture feminine*, famously arguing that women write with the body, including breast milk and blood. Feminists of colour and post-colonial feminists include bell hooks (*Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* [1984]) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty ("Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" [1991]), both of whom argue against the dominantly white, middle-class bias of academic feminism and for a more inclusive, non-racist practice.

Post-colonialism was not solely a feminist concern, of course. Post-colonial criticism was particularly influenced by Frantz Fanon's Marxist-tinted book *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Edward Said's work *Orientalism* (1978), and Homi K.

Bhabha's collection *Nation and Narration* (1990). So informed, this perspective interrogated the work of colonialism in displacing local narrative and story, and the work of post-colonial writers in writing back to empire. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) and Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995) have also been influential in this discourse.

Materialist and historicist criticism was influenced by the Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies as well as by Marx and Engels. Raymond Williams' texts *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and *Culture* (1981), among others, offered a less deterministic, more nuanced view of the relationships between political economy and material culture. Terry Eagleton's germinal work *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) makes a compelling case for understanding literature studies as a conservative ideological apparatus. Donna Haraway's essay "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1985) offers an ironic and playful materialist critique. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean's text *Materialist Feminisms* (1993) and Rosemary Hennessy's text *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (1993) both reflect a cultural turn in political criticism, arguing more for recognition than for redistribution.

Queer theory, led by texts such as Michel Foucault's groundbreaking *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976) and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), continues to offer a substantial critical discourse. Other texts, such as Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), are finding renewed interest as larger social texts continue to press identity and rights claims.

In the wake of the world events since 2001, however, many of the more oppositional, skeptical positions in post-structuralist and postmodern criticism have retreated. In *Who Killed Shakespeare? What's Happened to English Since the Radical Sixties* (2001), a melancholic contemplation of the fate of English literature studies, Patrick Brantlinger points to Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" claim and the larger context of capitalist triumphalism as proof that Matthew Arnold's impetus toward transcendence through literature is unrealizable: "whether history ends because of the triumph of liberalism-capitalism or because of the demise of metanarrative carries the same meaning: the affirmation of the economic-political-social status quo, if not as the best of all possible worlds, then as the only possible world" (196). This retreat has enabled more traditional theorists, advocating more formalist-influenced methods, to advance once again. Mark Edmundson's text *Why Read?* (2004), for instance, offers a rationale for close reading practices that is also a quiet critique of post-structuralist and postmodern theorists: "A fundamental qualification for teaching literature should be the view that great books are worth studying, and because of the salutary effects that they can have on life. Why would a student wish to study with anyone who didn't think as much?" (101). After more than a century of striving for transcendence through the airy realm of literature, we might wonder why indeed. Is the reason, as Baldick offers, that "critical valuation persists inescapably" ("Literature" 94) or is it that the study of literature involves much more than formal analysis and aesthetic appreciation? As I will discuss below, literature reflects an ideological tension, and the study of literature may be at once hegemonic and subversive.

With the rise of public schooling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, English (or in lower grades, language arts) established itself as the basis of all other learning. Certainly, the skills of reading and writing underlie other school

subjects (a reading stance Louise Rosenblatt refers to as *efferent*; see below), a

position that has given English an academic primacy that may mask its other

interests. Eliot's elitist tradition remains alive and well, however. In his sweeping

survey *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994), Harold Bloom

explains, "literary criticism, as an art, always was and always will be an elitist

phenomenon. It was a mistake to believe that literary criticism could become the

basis for democratic education or for social improvement" (17). Aidan Chambers,

among others, has challenged this perspective:

> ... literature itself isn't élitist. People make it so by a deliberate act of
>
> deprivation. If you do not believe in the importance of the literary act — or if
>
> you see that it is powerfully important and don't want other people to have
>
> that power — then you do not make financial or environmental provision for
>
> it, you do not build an education system that places it at the centre, you do
>
> not make sure that literature in speech and print is cheaply and easily
>
> available. (*Booktalk* 6)

Literature and literacy are highly contested — both conceptually and practically —

and the contest produces material differences in readers' life experiences.

Literacy in schools is often taught in a truncated manner, left at the ability to

"read" without the underpinning of critical skills to build meaning. That is to say,

some students are taught to consume text without a context. Such training leaves

these students technically literate — having the functional skills to read and write —

yet critically illiterate — lacking the analytical skills required to engage with text in

a transformative way. The discrepancy is necessarily political.

Reader Formation and Reader-Response Theory

Reader formation refers to a nexus of concepts and applies the critical function of literary theory to the larger whole of the world as text. It signals the dynamic of reader–citizen and the authoring agents of politics, economics, and power. Students confront Alberta's English Language Arts curriculum as a crucial moment in their reader formation. Their experience in the classroom may determine whether they are disciplined by text or emancipated, whether they become resistant readers or uncritical consumers of dominant media products.

Literacy rests at the core of any language curriculum. It refers to more than just the technical ability to read; it also involves the ability to build meaning from text. But literacy is still more than a composite knowledge of grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules, and more than a passing acquaintance with representative great texts. In becoming literate, a reader develops the ability to receive and interpret cultural signifiers and to create meaning relevant to a particular historical situation, a set of skills referred to as cultural literacy:

> Cultural literacy lies above the everyday levels of knowledge that everyone possesses and below the expert level known only to specialists. It is that middle ground of cultural knowledge possessed by the 'common reader.' (Hirsch 19)

As Winterowd explains, cultural literacy ties the individual into a larger community through shared knowledge: "reading depends on cultural knowledge, and one gains that knowledge through understanding — and hence, in effect, joining the literate

culture" (98). Thus, literacy is about making sense of the world around us; it is about making meaning that is relevant to both the individual and the community at large.

One of the most important writers in the theory of reader reception is Louise Rosenblatt, whose book *Literature as Exploration* (1995) was originally published in 1938. In it she argues that reading is a transaction between text and reader; the reader brings meaning and association to the text, which has no inherent meaning until the reader brings it to life. Rosenblatt postulates a continuum of reading stances, from the most technical and impersonal *efferent* experience to the most enthralling and intimate *aesthetic* experience. Regardless of where it falls on the continuum, all reading is particular, situated in time, place, and setting. Working from this transactive stance, Rosenblatt rejects post-structuralist claims that meaning is elusive and endlessly deferred; rather, she argues that a reader matures into his or her reading stance, guided by previous teaching and previous interactions with literature, and grows increasingly competent to judge the significance of literature.

Reader-response theory arose in the early twentieth century, influenced particularly by the young science of psychology but also by concepts taking hold in other social sciences such as anthropology and sociology. Reading was traditionally perceived to be a passive activity. Words are printed on a page and are perceived by a reader, who receives meaning through a continuous and seemingly uncontested interpretative channel. New theories and practices in semiotics and the social sciences, however, have revealed active interpretation involved in reading both text and social practices. Although initially slow to catch teachers' interest (because of the strength of Practical Criticism and the New Critics), reader-response theory has gradually taken hold. Today most English Language Arts teachers teach a blend of formalist critical technique and reader-response interpretation because "a single

theoretical vision tends to dominate the teaching of literature until it is replaced by another" (Appleman 4). This point is significant because, as Holly Virginia Blackford explains,

> How children themselves produce meaning is a particularly crucial area of
> study because child readers are, by definition, colonial subjects of a genre
> that is controlled by layers of adults and adult institutions (writers,
> publishers, marketers, critics, bookstores, libraries, educators, parents, and
> producers and marketers of commercial products and multimedia
> adaptations) .... (3)

In order to overcome this subaltern position, young readers must engage actively, critically, and authentically with text. Some strands of reader-response theory have adopted Freire's notion of critical literacy as an element of transformative pedagogy.

Various themes in reader response — the interaction between reader and text, the reader's stance relative to the text, the reader's reading history — might be articulated in the larger concept of reader formation. Reader formation refers to the numerous and variable influences that position the reading subject relative to the text, the discourse, the discipline, the teacher (if present), and other readers. It is a concept that interrogates how the reading subject is brought into being.

In the post-war period, as an element of much larger social currents, the first literature written deliberately and exclusively for an adolescent and teenage audience was published. There is controversy over which author established the genre, but there is no question that books such as *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton (1967) and *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume (1970) were radically different in tone, presentation, narrative construction, and subject matter

than the literature that preceded them. Books like these, and many thousands of other published since, are grouped loosely under the rubric "young adult" (YA). For those teachers who do not — and, in many cases, will not — teach these texts, YA texts are often identified as "high-interest, low-vocabulary" with little depth or substance. Certainly there are YA texts — particularly serial texts — that reflect strong genre conventions, predictable plots, flat characters, and pedestrian writing, as do many books intended for an adult readership. But there are also YA texts that deliver the nuanced characterization, deep and complex structural presentation, thematic significance, and literary figuration that we expect in canonical texts. The Alex Award and Margaret A. Edwards Award, the William C. Morris Award, the Michael L. Printz Award, and the Young Reader's Choice Awards all recognize outstanding achievement in this still-emerging body of literature. There is also a wide and dynamic body of critical literature discussing the field of YA texts.

YA literature may be read and analyzed using the same criteria and techniques as other literature. The barrier erected between serious YA and other "literature" taught in high school English classrooms, however, reflects a matter of acquired taste — what Bourdieu calls distinction. Teachers' suspicions of YA texts (and even more so of the emerging range of graphica; see below) reflects the fracturing between so-called high-brow (high-status, generally artistic) culture and low-brow (popular or mass, generally commercial) culture, a vital division in twentieth-century class construction, according to Janice A. Radway in *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (1997; see also Day; Storey). The unarticulated, uncritical assumption that certain texts or genres lack literary values betrays the internalization of middle-class norms and raises vital questions about class, habitus, and the circulation of knowledge and power.

Aidan Chambers, for example, also an established writer in the genre, argues in *The Reading Environment* (1991) that teachers and librarians are vital in aiding adolescent and teenage readers to find, read, enjoy, and reflect on all kinds of texts. This help may be given by providing a range of texts to meet readers where they are according to interest, maturity, ability, and background. He also encourages the creation of reading communities by inviting readers to share texts, their responses to texts, and the critical and promotional apparatus around texts (such as reviews and previews). Most importantly, teachers must accept and legitimate students' reading likes and dislikes.

Like Chambers, Daniel Pennac argues in *Better Than Life* (1994) that secondary-aged readers are poised at a crucial moment in their reader formation. All too often, punishing and pedantic practices steal the pleasure from reading, changing children who love to read and be read to into teens who hate reading — especially anything they are required to read for English class. Reading becomes purely instrumental under these conditions: "everyone reads because they know they're supposed to" (Pennac 86). Pennac has been hailed for producing the Reader's Bill of Rights, an attempt to wrest reading from pedagogy and resettle it in the reader's interests. Regrettably most parents and teachers — and for that matter, most students — perceive reading as a necessity — part of scholastic success, part of career advancement, part of one's social obligation to be a well-informed citizen — and not as a pleasure or a power in itself.

In Canada, Sheila Egoff stands as an authority on children's and YA literature, demanding high standards for the genre. Her texts *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature* (1996; with Gordon Stubbs, Ralph Ashley, and Wendy Sutton) and *The New Republic of Childhood: A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English* (1990; with Judith Saltman) survey and

contextualize both children's and YA literature itself and the larger critical discourse that has emerged around this literature — a discourse Egoff was integral to developing.

Jack Thomson's *Understanding Teenagers' Reading: Reading Processes and the Teaching of Literature* (1987) adopts reader-response theory as a way of understanding how high school students read and interact with text. Thomson ties reader-response theory to a larger critical tradition, however, casting back to the establishment of English literary criticism in education and critiquing the notion that "doing English was morally fine and made you a better person" (11). Holly Virginia Blackford's *Out of This World: Why Literature Matters to Girls* (2000) looks specifically at gendered reading response, surveying girls eight to sixteen about how they use text. Blackford argues that text structures fantasy and imaginative play; it is through narrative that girls try on scenarios and make sense of their world. Michael Cart's *From Romance to Realism: 50 Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature* (1996) surveys YA literature itself, arguing for its relevance at a moment when the pragmatic value of education in general, and literature in particular, was under scrutiny. Marc Aronson's *Exploding the Myths: The Truth About Teenagers and Reading* (2001) examines YA in the context of larger social shifts in North America, including the rise of digital literacy and continuing changes in teens' families and communities.

Roberta Seelinger Trites writes about the ideas of power — physical, social, economic, and political — that YA readers experience in YA texts. Her book *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000) speaks to the feelings of powerlessness, alienation, and fear many adolescents feel as they grow from children into adults and fully enter the dominant power structure, and considers how YA literature enables readers to make sense of and struggle

within their own worlds. In a more critical vein, Jack Zipes examines the

commodification of children's and YA literature, arguing against the universal

consumption of such texts. He argues that the ubiquitousness of textual experience

— such as seeing the *Twilight* movies after reading the series or buying toys derived

from films, television series, and music — are hegemonic acts that interpellate

readers into consumerist behaviour and extinguish the critical thinking function of

literary studies.

Importantly, these issues also reflect Freire's concerns in *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed with true literacy. Freire's work in Brazil with peasants introduced them

to literacy through a dialectical method, engaging reflection and action. Freire

observes, "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak

a true word is to transform the world. ... To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to

change it" (*Oppressed* 68–69; emphasis in source).

The topic of reader formation engages many other issues beyond what

students read for school and for pleasure. One crucial topic to do with adolescent and

teenage readers in particular is censorship: which texts they are permitted and

forbidden to read. Ken Donelson and Alvin Schrader have written cogently on

preparing for and responding to censorship issues in schools — in Alberta, a vital

topic because of the way in which community standards may dictate what is taught

in an English Language Arts classroom and because of Alberta's continuing history of

attempting to censor texts. The American Library Association, the Canadian Library

Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Book and Periodical

Council also offer substantial resources.

Most of today's students' textual experiences will occur outside of the

classroom, much of it in a non-print format. Gail de Vos observes that graphic novels

and other graphic forms, such as manga and comics, offer possibilities for inclusive

literary experiences that strictly verbal text cannot match (although Clare Snowball notes that "the reading level of graphic novels [is] about that of *Time* magazine, young adult novels, and many adult best sellers" [43]). In *English Teaching and the Moving Image* (2004), Andrew Goodwyn discusses the use of film, both as an adaptation of a print text and as a free-standing text in itself, as a crucial element of contemporary textual analysis. Samuel Crowl explores the popularity of recent film interpretations of Shakespearean texts in *Shakespeare at the Cineplex: The Kenneth Branagh Era* (2003), a valuable resources for high school teachers because many of these films end up in high school classroom either on their own or as complements to the play texts. In *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (2006), John Golden encourages high school teachers to use documentary film and fact-based television as texts for understanding rhetoric and building media literacy and critical-thinking skills.

Sherman Young probes young readers' resistance to print:

For anyone brought up with a twenty-first century digital mindset, the printed book is an anachronism; books are everything that the new media technologies are not. There is no motion, there is no noise. There is no way to interact with the characters or the story. There is no-one else involved. Reading is a solitary experience. You can't talk back. It's just you and the words on the page. And all you can do with those words is read them; apparently there is no other way to engage. (66)

Capturing this shift to twenty-first century literacies, Margaret Mackey has discussed the literacy requirements of gaming and other digital formats (206–14). Video games and other electronic screens provide today's students with alternative

literacies that are based in print conventions but simultaneously explode these

conventions in applications such as texting, instant messaging, blogging, hypertext,

and collaborative writing tools such as wikis and Google docs.

The concept of these emerging, multiple literacies is vexed, however. Many

cultural authorities, including classroom teachers, bemoan the loss of language

standards and the impending death of the book because young people appear not to

be reading — or at least, appear not to be reading the proper texts. Yet as Young

reminds us,

the interactivity of a book is invisible. ... It's not that young people can't

concentrate for long periods of time ...; it's not that they don't read (they do,

it's just not printed books); it's not that they don't write (texting counts, as

does blogging and email); it's not that they're not interested in ideas (or at

least any less so than any other younger generation); it's just that books

aren't sufficiently attractive. (65)

One of the vital concepts we should take from postmodern literary theory is that any

text may be read for its gaps and fissures, for its absences as well as its presence. It

is not only from books that students learn to read, and thus it is not the texts in

themselves that we must consider. Rather, it is literacy practices that matter.

The textual strategies we teach, both explicitly and tacitly, bear importantly

on who receives what knowledge and how learners use that knowledge. Readers may

be receptive or resistant, present in the text or absent from it, identified with the text

or alienated by it. Literacy teaching — and eventually literary teaching, or the

teaching of cultural literacy — may be an inherently conservative force or, as Freire

suggests, may be politically empowering. It refers not only to the processes of

training students how to form symbols into written language and decode written language into meaning — that is, writing and reading — but also to the selection of texts, the critical skills taught for responding to text, the affirmation (or lack thereof) of students' own reader formations, and students' fluency in writing, speaking, and representing their own and others' texts.

Throughout its infinity of texts, the English language displays a stunning range of dialects, yet students are taught to read and write one preferred, standard dialect: the dialect of power. I will argue below that students must be able to operate — critically, resistantly — within this dialect. If they are unable to receive and manipulate it, they become vulnerable to the machinations of power through text and representation. It is thus in building resistance, the ability to read critically, that the potential of English language arts teaching resides.

Concluding Thoughts

This survey of relevant texts and figures has situated my research question in an interdisciplinary space. Writing from within the foundations of education enables me to draw together disparate discourses in an effort to assert the pertinence of and need for my study. Certainly some recent texts have examined education from the perspective of political economy; Harrison and Kachur's collection *Contested Classrooms: Education, Globalization, and Democracy in Alberta* (1999), for example, looks specifically at the effects of neoliberalism on Alberta's students, teachers, and communities. But no other writer has located a political economy critique in Alberta's English classrooms. Similarly, there is certainly a vast literature of English Language Arts pedagogy, and also a wide-ranging literature of critical, oppositional,

and radical pedagogies, including feminist-, post-colonial-, LGBTQ-, and race-inflected perspectives. There is even an overlapping literature of critical English pedagogy, such as Janet Alsup's essay "Politicizing Young Adult Literature: Reading Anderson's *Speak* as a Critical Text" (2003) and Ted Hipple et al.'s essay "Teaching the Mock Printz Novels" (2004), although often the "critical" in this discourse is more aligned with rational critical thinking than with praxis-informed critical realism, such as Helen Harper's work with adolescent girls' reading and writing. And while there exists an immense body of English literary criticism and theory, much of it discussing canonical texts, these discussions are generally too abstract to connect to the local action of curriculum and classroom practice. My research question thus probes the competing and complicit discourses of several fields to inform a real and immediate problem; and equally takes from these discourses ideas and themes that may have value and reach beyond this place to effect real-world change.

Chapter 3: Method

The investigation undertaken in this dissertation necessarily transgresses disciplinary boundaries and draws upon a range of methods, some of them used only rarely in education research (Gall, Borg, and Gall 634). With its roots in the sociology of education, this dissertation explores education and its inter-relatedness with reproduction of social stratification in Alberta in three ways: through the lenses of history, literature, and philosophy. I am attempting to project a possible future through an understanding of where we have been in the last decade and where we are now. To understand this moment, we must retain and examine the past, a concept that in Alberta is both remarkably brief and impressively durable. Gerald Friesen notes that "Cultural history borrows from anthropology and literary theory. It moves beyond exclusively economic and social explanations of past events to ask how groups of people perceive meaning and communicate values" ("Imagined West" 196). This dissertation engages practices of cultural history but also fuses them with methods and techniques from philosophy and sociology to produce a multiply layered, interdisciplinary text that is rooted in the philosophy of critical realism, the practices of textual analysis, and the tools of historical materialism.

To understand Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum and its relationship with Alberta's larger political economy, I use close reading and critique to examine a variety of texts from governmental, institutional, commercial, popular media, and scholarly sources. Using comparative history, a research method consistent with my philosophical position as a critical realist and with my theoretical position as a materialist feminist — and supported by analytical techniques

appropriate to critical textual exegesis — I illuminate the larger political consequences of Alberta's social signifiers: a grammar of Alberta's political economy.

The sociology of education asks questions about social phenomena in schools; critical sociology asks in whose interests these social phenomena occur. Educational policy studies asserts that interests may be coded in social texts (social documents and social discourses) as well as in sociological phenomena. For this reason, a sociological approach is necessary and appropriate for examining the issues of schooling and social reproduction in Alberta. Humans tend to act according to social forces far larger than themselves. They compete; they struggle. Those who have power tend to want to retain it; those who lack power tend to want to gain it. Sociology helps us understand, analyze, and critique these social forces; and critical sociology seeks not only to explain these forces but to change the world in which this struggle occurs, in the name of social justice.

This dissertation makes an original contribution to research as a theoretical statement, empirically informed by secondary literature and deep-structural analysis of text. As my literature review demonstrates, there is vital work to be done in this space. We possess considerable theorizing on curriculum, have developed a substantial discourse on social reproduction through education, and can read extensive work on critical, oppositional, and radical pedagogy. Somewhere in the development of progressive pedagogy and the press of identity claims, we have lost sight of class (this upshot is not necessarily surprising, though, since much work in identity claims is rooted in progressive liberalism). As Andrew Sayer comments, however, "The retreat from class was not merely illogical but decidedly untimely, for it coincided with the rise of neoliberals to legitimate class inequalities" (*Class* 52). I

seek to re-insert class and structural analysis into the discourse of curriculum and educational policy, localizing the discussion in one of Canada's most remarkable and most contrary provinces.

For most scholars of the sociology of education, it is a given that social structures affect schools. It is also a given that schools play an integral role in social reproduction — that is, in the reproduction of class stratification and hierarchy. What is less clear is the *how* — the specific mechanisms of social reproduction — and the consequences of those mechanisms. My research question — How does English Language Arts curriculum and instruction in Alberta's high schools interact with Alberta's political economy? — has not previously been addressed, yet it is vital to gaining a fuller understanding of Alberta as it exists in this moment. I take my impulse from Ian McKay's method of scholarly "reconnaissance" — the tactics of "obtaining information of use in the lengthy war of position" (1); and indeed, some of the key informants of my theoretical work — Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, and Pierre Bourdieu — speak directly to the idea of engaging with power in order to understand it. If we understand the practices that promote political stability and social stratification, we are better equipped to interrupt these processes.

The first chapter of my discussion focusses on the history of Alberta from pre-contact to the election of Ed Stelmach in December 2006. In this section I use historical–comparative research to reveal some of the key values, beliefs, tensions, and contractions in play in the Alberta context. Toril Moi reminds us that "we all use the same language but that we have different *interests* — and interest must here be taken to mean political and power-related interests which intersect in the *sign*" (*Sexual* 158; emphasis in source). Historical–comparative research enables me to develop a context in which to apply social semiotics and critical discourse analysis to the reading of various social texts.

The second chapter of my discussion deconstructs Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum document. Here I draw on critical discourse analysis, close reading, social semiotics, and other tools of textual analysis to interrogate the values and ideologies underlying the apparently neutral surface of the curriculum. Britzman reminds us that "to act as if meanings are stable is to already undermine the more difficult work of social change" (62); therefore, I seek to destabilize assumed meanings in the curriculum document to reveal what rhetoric masks. My approach to textual analysis reveals norms and practices through which social structures are reproduced and social beliefs are transmitted; it also exposes the gaps and silences through which critique, resistance, and transformative change remain possible.

The third chapter of my discussion focusses on reader formation, interpretive communities, instructional practices, and the politics of literacy by examining literacy and the language arts as social practices. In this section I extend the historical–comparative method to survey the differential effects of textual and cultural literacy. Through this reading I am able to examine the hegemonic and emancipatory potential of texts. The purpose of this approach is to identify sites of resistance and irruption, and to search for emergent counter-discourses among teachers and students. As I argue, it is insufficient simply to teach students about high-status and low-status texts and dialects and to affirm the validity of students' literacy practices (see Fairclough 534–38). Rather, if we hope to effect social progress, teachers must teach critical literacy as a strategy of resistance embedded in collective struggle, not as an individual choice.

Throughout this dissertation I use critique as a crucial tool. Critique offers a speaking position that is necessarily self-reflexive; critique is "not judgment but explanation" (Ebert, "Red" 812). Materialist discourses depend on the immanent critique of material structures; by adopting the tactics of critique, I extend

participation in my scholarly and personal exploration to others who struggle

because "[c]ritique ... is that knowledge-practice that historically situates the

conditions of possibility of what empirically exists under patriarchal-capitalist

relations of difference ... critique disrupts that which represents itself as what is, as

natural, as inevitable, as the way things are" (Ebert, "Red" 810). Callinicos notes that

"Critique arises when there is some internal conflict in the whole, when society is

divided against itself" (247); in the discussion that follows, I will demonstrate that

Alberta, ever contradictory and defiant, is ripe for critique and rich in social fissures

to mine. In my analysis and conclusion, I use critique to expose as constructed the

logic of neoliberalism, which has been portrayed as natural; critique is also integral

to the strategy of tactical literacy I propose. It is in critique that I situate hope as I

offer my recommendations for curriculum change.

Key Terms and Definitions

In this dissertation, drawing as it does on the disciplines of history,

literature, and philosophy in addition to the discourse of the sociology of education, I

use many terms in particular ways. I have defined my key terms here; within my

discussion chapters, I have augmented my understanding of these terms by drawing

in others' conceptions of their meaning and implications.[1]

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[1] I realize that such definitions are deeply troubled, particularly for readers for whom
language is provisional. While I recognize that signs are slippery and that each user
brings her own nuances to definitions, my intent here is to outline my basic
understanding, amplified — and at times contested — by references to other writers

1. **Capitalism**: The term *capitalism* refers not to a single entity but to a series of phases of development associated with the mobility of fluid property (capital) and a more or less free labour market. By extension, capitalism also refers to the state's framework of laws, regulations, policies, and rights that make regions friendly to capital-based business practices. The basis of the system is money, "the single most important, though not the only, source of power in a capitalist society" (Barrow 15–16).

As an economic system, capitalism advances through the dynamics of supply and demand of commodities — that is, the logic of the free market. The system turns on two key ideas. One is profit: the ability to produce surplus value from the development, manufacture, sale, and movement of goods and services. Profit accrues to the party that owns the means of economic production, be that a shop, a factory, a business, or a corporation, and not to the workers who produce the goods/services. This arrangement leads to the second key idea: private ownership. Because the means of production are not held in common (socially) but are rather controlled by individuals or small groups, only the owner receives the material benefits of ownership. Surplus thus becomes a private good rather than a social good, and the market, rather than society as a whole, determines the individual's economic well-being. One makes a profit by supplying what the market currently demands; those whose goods and services are not in demand may be unable to make a profit and must find ways to reduce costs to prevent capital loss.

Capitalism may also be understood as the form of social organization that separates people into class strata or fractions based on their ownership of or

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and other contexts. We must remember that while meaning may be contingent, it is not unlimited; see Freeden 109.

nearness to the means of production. Clarke explains, "from the Marxist perspective, capitalism is essentially a system of class conflict and one where class interest and identities are formed and forged in the social relations of production" ("Capitalism" 24). Those who do not own the means of production must sell their labour to those who do. Having to work for another, often performing labour abstracted from the goods or services produced, produces alienation for the worker, making work impersonal and exploitive rather than immediate and fulfilling. As well, because they do not own the means of production, workers are vulnerable to shifts in the market and to owners' needs to reduce or eliminate costs to protect profits.

States support capitalism by introducing laws and policies to regulate workers, labour, property, and ownership. While the Western economies are all nominally capitalist, their positions relative to the interests of capital versus the interests of citizens characterize them as liberal or social democracies: Canada versus Norway, for example. Forms of capitalism may, of course, exist in totalitarian states as well, such as in 1930s Italy and Germany, 1970s Chile, and contemporary China. Thus, through their policy frameworks, states may moderate or liberate capitalism and its effects. For instance, in the 1940s through the 1970s, in response to economic theories, the demands of various social movements, and the consequences of two world wars, Canada took ownership of many national resources and services and adopted social policies that reduced citizens' exposure to the cycles of the market. Since the 1980s, however, with a resurgence of capitalist demands, Canada has privatized many of these same resources and services and adjusted social policies to leave more of its citizens vulnerable to the actions of capital.[2]

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[2] Capitalism has a troubling relationship with public education. Public education provides a state subsidy to capital by training future workers; because of this close relationship between school and work, businesses often wish to bend curriculum to

As both an economic theory and a system of social organization, capitalism today is the dominant Western ideology. We must, however, keep in mind that its localized practices make it situationally distinctive and often deeply contradictory. Rather than one grand, over-arching capitalism, we must recognize "a multiplicity of ideologies that speak capitalism in a variety of ways for a variety of capitalist subjects" (Fiske 309).

2. **Class**: I understand the term *class* in a traditional, Marx-derived sense to refer to one's social position relative to the means of economic production. The Weberian perspective, which in some ways complements and extends the Marxist sense (and in other ways conflicts with it), explains that "Classes affect life chances for individuals

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their interests and regularly criticize student preparation for the world of world. Education functions more broadly, however, to stabilize society by assessing and directing students to the appropriate stratum of work. Clyde W. Barrow outlines the process:

> The objectives of big business have been achieved by constructing a stratified system of unequal educational opportunity that sorts out students by class background and then channels them to private industry with the appropriate skills and normative values. Thus, the rise of public education and education policy are seen as a 'human resource' development strategy in which state allocations of human resources reproduce the existing social order while creating the symbolism of equal opportunity. (Barrow 43–44)

Public education is expensive, however, and because it is state sponsored, it is paid for through public funds, i.e., taxes, a cost businesses would prefer not to carry. Capital interests often seek to privatize public education and in the last few decades, amid calls for school reform, have made various advances into public schools. (Private schools, funded by the individual and privately operated, do not pose the same problems for capital.)

— the probabilities of social and occupational mobility; of educational access and achievement; of illness and mortality" (Clarke, "Class" 40). In the twenty-first century, such understandings are necessarily inflected with considerations of one's assets and wealth, that is, one's economic status; level of education and relative social autonomy; and various norms, values, and behaviours identified with particular social positions. In this understanding, class is not merely economic but also cultural and political.

Gary Day explains this idea very simply — "In very broad terms, the word 'class' refers to divisions in society" (2) — providing a helpful base from which to build. Richard Ohmann takes the discussion a step further:

> Is class an identity? I think yes. It is a complex and powerful identity, a script you act out daily, a bundle of habits and feelings and ways of relating lodged deep in your psyche and broadcast by your talk and conduct. It is not instantly visible like race and gender. But neither is it easy to revise or conceal.... (11)

Ohmann's comment reflects the cultural, or identity-based, understanding of class, one that may resonate with the lay or common-sense descriptors of class. Sayers remarks,

> Popular ideas about the nature of class embrace a chaotic mix of phenomena including not only occupation and wealth but matters such as accent, language, taste and bearing that sociologists would generally treat as secondary. They also tend to include inequalities that many sociologists would see in terms of status rather than class. (Class 70)

However, as Erik Olin Wright observes, "The *word* class is deployed in a wide range of descriptive and explanatory concepts in sociology, just as it is in popular discourses, and of course, depending upon the context, different *concepts* of class may be needed" (2; emphasis in source). For the purposes of this dissertation, the economic sense of class – by which I refer to one's relative position in the economy that determines one's life chances and one's "control over labor effort" (Wright 26), as well as the relative position of one's family — is dominant.

In Canada, like the United States but quite unlike England, we tend to think of ourselves as being free of class, yet most people recognize that power and privilege remain concentrated in the hands of a small number of people — an elite or upper class. Most Canadians also comfortably refer to themselves as middle class, although the traditional hallmarks of the middle class — such as the ownership of property or relative level of income — are increasingly less relevant to position or status. For this reason, I prefer Gramsci's term "instrumental" class, rather than working class. Instrumentality — that is, being "of use" to capital — captures the relationship of labour and service jobs to economic and political interests (representing a much wider swath of today's working people and their labour conditions) more effectively than does the heavily loaded concept of "the working class."

3. **Critical**: In positioning myself as a critical theorist, I engage an oppositional, normative tradition, which understands the term *critical* to refer to social critique that is both grounded in social action and directed at transformative change and social liberation. My particular understanding of the term is inflected by the philosophy of critical theory advanced in the mid twentieth century by the Frankfurt School, an outlook buttressed by critical realism. Andrew Bowie explains, "Critical

Theory analyses why that [modern] society develops in the ways it does, tries to show

how it can negatively affect people's ability to think critically about their actions and

evaluations, and suggests ways of thinking about positive alternative to the existing

state of society" (189). In this commitment to moving beyond social analysis to social

change, critical theory reveals its roots in historical materialism.

A critical orientation to education research and policy studies is rooted in

praxis: a dialectic of mindful action informed by engaged theory. The critical

perspective identifies inequalities in the social world and seeks to understand how

human being could be improved through transformative pedagogy. Critical

orientations operate by attempting to make apparent those elements of social and

political organization that tend to be hidden, naturalized, or taken for granted;

materialist critical orientations use critique as a tool for revealing underlying

interests, beliefs, values, assumptions, and ideologies. Working in a critical discourse

means working toward social change that will disrupt existing power relations to

bring about social transformation and greater social justice.

4. **Critical Literacy**: When I use the term *critical literacy*, I am building on the

work of Paulo Freire, who understood literacy to be an entwined process of reading

the word and the world. As Cherland and Harper observe, many other senses of

"critical literacy" exist (23–25); my use of the term refers to a commitment to radical

social change and social justice, not to liberal progressive claims for individual

recognition and benefit.[3] Again, my understanding is informed by the philosophies of

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[3] Ira Shor comments, "to be for critical literacy is to take a moral stand on the kind of
just society and democratic education we want" (Shor, "Critical Literacy" n.pag),
clarifying that moral and political commitments are engaged by this position.

critical theory and critical realism. Hicks explains critical literacy practice as "teaching actions that draw on listening, watching, feeling, and understanding" — an important amplification of the language arts to become more reflective and empathetic — because "We can only change the world we *see*" (in Cherland and Harper 208; emphasis in source). Some of the key sources and influences in this orientation include Michael W. Apple, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, bell hooks, and Peter McLaren.

5. **Curriculum**: Curriculum may be understood in several distinct, albeit overlapping, ways.[4] When using the term *curriculum*, I am referring to a range of texts and practices that intersect in a student's experience in an English Language Arts classroom. First, it may be understood as an element of the Alberta government's larger policy framework; this framework includes the government's own political orientation, its regional interests, its participation in national and international discourses and standards (see, for instance, Willms, *Vulnerable* 277–303), and all the mechanisms and organizations that inform this framework. Second, curriculum refers to the specific documents that detail texts, standards, requirements, expectations, and outcomes for students, parents, and teachers; these documents include the *English Language Arts (Senior High)* curriculum document itself, the authorized resources lists, and periodic publications such as diploma

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[4] Reba Page observes, "Curriculum can be variously conceived and studied: as a syllabus or lesson plan, as the teacher's stated purposes or his/her classroom behaviours, and, socioculturally, as emergent in teacher and student negotiations" (202). This explanation privileges a pedagogical understanding, which, while valid, is also limiting. My sense of curriculum extends further to the state-based production of declared, standardized outcomes for a course of study.

examination response exemplars, released exam topics, and curriculum handbooks. In this sense, curriculum may also refer to the instructional methods — the means by which these documents are presented in the classroom.

Third, curriculum is the lived experience of the classroom — the studied texts, the classroom activities, the evaluation practices, and the goals of teachers and students — as well as the local practices that surround this experience, such as department- and school-level decision-making, district policies, and the wider community's common-sense understanding of what it means to study English Language Arts. While this practical experience is shared by teachers and students, both have very different, sometimes conflicting, views of this lived reality.

Finally, curriculum also resides in the disjuncture between the curriculum as prescribed in Alberta government documents and the curriculum as enacted in individual teachers' classrooms. This disjuncture also includes the effects of curriculum, such as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes/aptitudes with which students leave their studies and the further pursuits their studies enable (e.g., post-secondary participation, job readiness). This gap is sometimes referred to as the hidden curriculum, and while it may in itself be difficult to identify, its effects are not.

All four of these areas are significant to my discussion. However, because I have taken a conceptual approach to my research question and am not observing teachers, students, or classrooms directly, the third sense of curriculum will be the least treated. Rather, I have examined the historical sociology of the English Language Arts curriculum within the context of Alberta. Thus my emphasis is on the second aspect of curriculum — the declared curriculum document — and is informed by the larger policy framework in which the document is nested and by the effects the document produces. In this sense I am treating *curriculum* as a real, rather than

ideal or abstract, artifact that produces significant material consequences, and my usage reflects this understanding.

6. **Ideology**: Terry Eagleton observes that "Nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology.... because the term 'ideology' has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other" (*Ideology* 1) and then proceeds to enumerate sixteen historically situated ways of understanding the term (1–2). I understand the term *ideology* from a Marxist perspective to refer to two entwined concepts: false consciousness and class consciousness.

At a basic level, ideology refers to a set of ideas and beliefs that we use to explain and make sense of our experience of the social world. It encompasses our political orientations and ethnic and religious traditions, as well as our exposure to new and challenging perspectives and practices; in this sense, "Ideologies ... map the political and social worlds for us" (Freeden 2), providing a sense-making rubric for our individual and collective existence.[5]

But these ideas, beliefs, perspectives, and practices come from somewhere, and at this point the commonplace sense of ideology meets a more specific meaning. Marx explained that "the ideas of the ruling class were the ruling ideas" (Freeden 6); that is, the beliefs and practices of the powerful produce real effects that structure

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[5] Freeden embellishes this idea:

> Ideologies ... interact with historical and political events and retain some representative value. But they do so while emphasizing some features of that reality and de-emphasizing others, and by adding mythical and imaginary happenings to make up for the 'reality gaps.' (106)

That is, they are highly mutable and contingent — that is, historical.

social relations and are reproduced over time. Ideology in this sense represents

society to itself through a "double inversion" (Larrain 220). Structural inequalities

come to be understood as right and natural; these inequalities harden into classes.

Class consciousness (that is, one's awareness of one's relative position in the social

order) produces false consciousness (a faulty or distorted view of the social order),

and false consciousness informs class consciousness; in a sense, ideology is a state of

mind (Barrow 28). This interaction enables ideology to become self-productive: it

adapts and reshapes itself according to its historical situation, which it both shapes

and is shaped by. Thus Marx's statement, "Life is not determined by consciousness,

but consciousness by life" (qtd in Davies 146), meaning we come to our ideas from our

material circumstances and not vice versa.

Gramsci adds to the Marxian understanding the concept of hegemony, or

ideological consensus, through which the dominant group gains consent for its

position through contestation of particular ideas and practices: "ideology is always a

matter of work. It cannot be understood in terms of one dominant ideology, for it is

always an ongoing ideological struggle" (Grossberg 177).

Althusser adds further to the theory of ideology with the notion of the

ideological state apparatus. As Grossberg explains, "ideology is always embedded in

the actual material practices of the language use of particular social institutions"

(177). From this perspective, ideology interpellates or "hails" us as subjects,

producing social effects and reproducing the social order as we recognize ourselves

and others through ideology's calling us into being. Thus, "ideology is both something

that happens *in* us and *to* us. Inasmuch as it is in us, we are not fully conscious of its

effects" (Freeden 30; emphasis in source). Yet we can become more conscious of its

effects through the practice of critique, enabling us to perceive more clearly through the distortions of ideologies how the world might be otherwise.[6]

7. **Language Arts**: Following the broader trends of the discipline and the specific guidance of Alberta's curriculum documents, I understand the term *language arts* to refer to a web of six distinct yet related skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. Further, the term *English Language Arts* refers to the specific program of study of these skills during students' high school years, while the term *English language arts* (note capitalization), or simply *language arts*, refers to the general study of skills derived from the use of verbal communication.

8. **Literacy**: For the purposes of this dissertation, I adopt a basic definition of *literacy* as the ability to produce meaning from symbols. In traditional definitions, literacy refers to the skills of reading and writing; I will argue that these skills, however, are situational and social, and that literacy is not "a purely psychological skill, or set of skills, the same for every individual of every race, gender, ethnicity, and class" (Cherland and Harper 155). The traditional sense of literacy is laden with rhetorical and ideological weight. I understand my simple definition of literacy to be drawn from and expressed through individual *literacy practices*: specific, localized manifestations of the language arts that have immediate relevance within one's lived reality.

In the twenty-first century, the traditional sense of literacy is no longer sufficient for students' success. Barrie Barrell notes, "Where in the past literacy

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[6] Ideology has also acquired a derogatory sense of dogmatic, unthinking orthodoxy to a particular political position. I avoid this sense of the term in this dissertation.

connoted a singular ability to critically and intellectually engage the world, now the term has been expanded to multiple ways of engagement" ("Technology" 243). Bringing a critical sense to the term, Barrell continues: "Secondary school students are now expected to 'read' not only books, but also the world and to evaluate and respond to an ever expanding variety of texts" ("Technology" 243). Regardless of the textual form, however, literacy depends on the translation of culturally situated abstraction to create meaning — the ability to "read."

9. **Literature**: I use the term *literature* to refer to written texts that are culturally privileged above other texts on the basis of genre. These texts are perceived to have an integral artistic value that elevates their social worth above other forms of text (such as policy manuals, advertisements, or e-mail messages); they may be referred to as "the great books" (see McLaren; Eagleton, *Literary Theory*; Edmundson). Literature usually, although not exclusively, includes creative works such as novels, plays, and poems, which use language figuratively and comment more or less seriously on aspects of human existence.

There is class bias apparent in this understanding of this term. In the classroom, literature is clearly segregated from popular texts such as genre-based and serial novels, from visual texts such as comics and graphica, and from non-print texts such as video games. Having a taste for literature is perceived to be a marker of distinction (see Radway, *Feeling*); and one of the explicit outcomes of English Language Arts teaching is "to encourage ... an understanding and appreciation of the significance and artistry of literature" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1). But postmodernism has made the notion of literature problematic. Everything — or nothing — is potentially literature (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 1–14) because all texts

are readable, demonstrate rhetorical gestures, signify.[7] In the discussion that follows, I will trouble the distinction between literature and other forms of text in the English Language Arts curriculum.

10. **Neoliberalism**: As I use the term, neoliberalism refers to a revisiting and reconfiguration of the values of classical economic liberalism — the unfettered market. As David Harvey explains, "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2). It is driven by finance capital and accelerated by global markets and instantaneous digital transactions. The neoliberal perspective favours business-oriented state policy, and its values emphasize independence and individualism; it is characterized by "the unmistakable tendency towards the concentration, centralization, and internationalization of capital" (Knuttila and Kubik 152). Rhetorically, neoliberalism argues that the state should be small and sharply limited in its power; instead, individual rationalism as expressed through the logic of the market should drive social, personal, cultural, and corporate needs and provisions. Practically, however, neoliberalism depends on a strong, centralized state

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[7] Aidan Chambers remarks, "Partly, the view that literature is élitist and good only for certain kinds of clever people comes from our over-valuing of particular kinds of literary works — those that tend to be lengthy and very complex in a self-consciously intellectual way — and a devaluing of short and apparently simply, less cerebral work" (*Booktalk* 6). I will return to Chambers' perspective in my discussion of multiliteracies and social literacy practices.

that is willing to structure policy, law, and governance to the advantage of corporate interests.

Neoliberalism fiercely opposes the welfare state (often called "the nanny state" by its detractors) and employs social institutions for individual, rather than collective, good. For instance, according to neoliberalism, one should use the law to advance her personal advantages and protect her individual rights — particularly her consumer rights. Similarly, one should use the school to acquire social and educational capital, not merely for the intrinsic "use value" of learning (Sayer, *Class* 106–11). Services that benefit individuals in this way should be privately provided, not state provided; the term *structural adjustment*, referring to the privatization of formerly state-delivered social services such as health care and education, is associated with neoliberalism, particularly through the work of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Neoliberalism is complementary to, and at some points overlaps with, neoconservatism. A key characteristic that distinguishes these positions is the issue of morality. Neoconservatives are socially conservative, adhering to "traditional" values including patriarchy, social hierarchy, authoritarianism, militarism, nationalism, and protectionism. Neoliberals, while often in sympathy with social conservatism, recognize individual rights claims, such as equal rights for women or same-sex marriage, on the basis of appeals to social institutions such as the law, particularly if the market may benefit in some way from such claims. As Phillip Brown observes, "The potential conflict among the Right has so far been limited because despite their ideological differences both groups serve the political and material interests of the powerful and privileged" ("Third Wave" 73).

11. **Rhetoric**: I understand the specific use of the term *rhetoric* to refer to the study of language dedicated to its use, and an understanding of its use, in appealing and persuasive forms. Rhetoric in this sense connects today's screen-based, hyper-media environments to the millennia-old tradition of oratory, based on two elements. First, rhetoric makes appeals to audiences based on logos (reason), pathos (the emotion evoked in the audience), and ethos (the reputation or authority of the rhetor); second, rhetorical forms are organized around the canons: memory, invention, delivery, style, and arrangement. Today's public relations practitioners and professional writers, using both classical and contemporary interpretations of rhetorical schemes and tropes, continue to draw on the appeals (content) and the canons (form) for persuasive and aesthetic power.

Rhetoric may also be understood in a general, derivative sense to refer to any human discourse, particularly in relation to power (politics and commerce), while the popular sense of rhetoric refers to language that emphasizes stylishness over substance. My discussion generally reflects the more particular understanding of the term.

12. **State**: At its most basic, the term *state* refers to "a *sovereign political territory*" (Barrow 24; emphasis in source). It is also the "substantial apparatus of government clearly separate from the person of the ruler" (Hindess, "State" 337). Clyde W. Barrow emphasizes the abstract, almost mystical, sense of the word: "the state is a state of mind that scholars call *legitimacy*. The legitimacy of a state is ultimately expressed in people's willingness to comply with decisions made by the state apparatus, and, if necessary, risk their lives defending the common territory of the state" (Barrow 25; emphasis in source). From a Marxist perspective, the state represents "the institution beyond all others whose function it is to maintain and

defend class domination and exploitation" (Miliband 464); and Weber reminds us

that in the modern world the state's defining feature is "an effective monopoly of the

legitimate use of force" (Hindess, "State" 338). In short, the state is an

epiphenomenon of modern governance, simultaneously protecting and generating

liberal rights and producing real, material effects.

A key challenge to our understanding of state is to identify the particular

functions or phenomena included in the concept, for what matters in a theory of state

is not only what the state *is* ontologically but what it *does* practically. A state may be

more or less socially active, or interventionist, depending on its political strategy or

ideology. Historically, Knuttila and Kubik remark, "the very emergence of capitalism

as an economic system required an active and interventionist state to establish the

necessary preconditions for the emergence of the market as the dominant force in

shaping society" (145). With the rise of neoliberalism, however, the state in many

jurisdictions has retreated to a "strong but limited" form (Parekh 199), establishing a

favourable terrain for the operations of the market and the mobility of capital, and

reducing the social claims of citizens. While Keynesianism led to grudging acceptance

of the idea that "state intervention in the economy is both legitimate and essential

during periods of crisis" (Knuttila and Kubik 149), the recent global economic

downturn has signalled that state intervention is now more ideologically charged and

vulnerable to attack from the entire political spectrum — particularly if the

intervention channels money to corporations rather than to workers or state projects.

Parekh explains that, in a liberal democracy such as Canada,

the state's main task is to maximize individual liberty consistently with that

of others. This is best done by establishing a regime of rights, especially to

life, liberty, and property, the three fundamentally shared human interests

[in liberalism]. The state cannot protect these rights unless it is strong

enough to make its will prevail over all other social agencies. (199)

In the context of the Alberta provincial state, the state apparatus interacts with that

of the Canadian federal state, producing a state within a state. While the respective

areas of jurisdiction and levels of responsibility are outlined in the Canadian

Constitution and other legal/governmental documents, in the everyday world the

interests of these states are subject to political and practical interpretations that

frequently overlap and may even apparently clash. Rhetorically the federal and

provincial states may seem to conflict, but practically they are complicit in protecting

elite interests, at the level of the capitalist class if not individual capitalists.

As "the instrument of the ruling class" (Miliband 465), the state is influenced

by the very rich and the very powerful (Barrow 13–50). These elites influence the

action of elected government and bureaucracy, executive administration, the

"coercive subsystem, consisting of the military, police, judiciary, and intelligence

agencies," and the "ideological subsystem, consisting of schools, universities, and

government-financed cultural and scientific organizations" (Barrow 24–25). In the

example of Canada and Alberta, their local, specific interests may compete but are

ultimately resolved at the level of social and economic policy, which either state may

produce and which is regulated by the discipline of capital (Barrow 30–45).

Like the market, the economy, and many other highly abstracted concepts of

modern life, the state is the product of the actions of people: it does not have its own

agency. Thus, when Bourdieu and Wacquant observe "Far from being — as we are

constantly told — the inevitable result of the growth of foreign trade,

deindustrialization, growing inequality and the retrenchment of social policies are

the result of domestic political decisions that reflect the tipping of the balance of class

forces in favour of the owners of capital" (n.pag), what they are outlining is the decision-making process in which some people protect the interests of some people against the interests of other people. Although this explanation is obvious when we stop to consider it, it is in fact rare that we in education stop to consider the real people behind the actions and functions of the state, which shapes so much of what we do in classrooms and with students. Yet we should remember John O'Neill's point: "The state is not an alien force in our lives. Rather, the state is merely our own will to achieve together what we have no chance of accomplishing on our own" (8). The state, then, is an apparatus of governance that is always contested, and in that struggle exists the possibility for a different form of governance under different social organization. In this dissertation, I tend to use *state* to refer to the basic sense of the apparatus of modern governance, but my conflict-theory underpinnings are rarely far from the surface.

Throughout, where necessary, I have further expanded or narrowed definitions of crucial, specific terms. In doing so I wish to reflect the complex (and sometimes contradictory), polyvocal nature of sociological work.

Overall Conceptual Framework

I have adopted the historical–comparative method for my contextual research. Historical–comparative research is "the most relevant research method for explaining and understanding macro-level events" (Neuman 294) such as the formation of regional movements, the development of political ideologies, or the

sources of attitudes and beliefs. This method has a long and distinctive pedigree, including such names as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber (Neuman 294). It is also appropriate to this level of investigation because under the terms of the Canadian constitution, responsibility for education is a provincial, not a federal, matter; the province as a comparative unit is an appropriate measure. While there are many commonalities across the country (and in Western educational systems in general), it is reasonable to expect to see distinct features of each province in curriculum documents; a historical–comparative method reveals and highlights these distinctions. At the same time, this approach complements my philosophical and theoretical stance. As Freire observes, "To think of history as possibility is to recognize education as possibility" ("Dialogue" 397).

To bring the salient features of social texts and processes into focus, I draw upon social semiotics. Semiotics provides tools for analyzing structures in language, looking beyond the literal into the figurative, rhetorical, and stylistic. It is a system for decoding texts to understand both their communicative function and their political underpinnings. Social semiotics insists that the social and historical context is integral to meaning-making (semiosis): "Meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process, never simply imposed inexorably from above by an omnipotent author through an absolute code" (Hodge and Kress 12). Language is inherently social and therefore engages issues of politics, economics, ethics, and power: "Social semiotics cannot assume that texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action, and their effects in the production of meaning" (Hodge and Kress 12). Chandler observes that "The selectivity of any medium leads to its use having influences of which the user may not always be conscious, and which may not have been part of the purpose in using it" (3). Yet from

the perspective of social semiotics, no utterance is innocent — that is, no human expression, written, spoken, or represented, is free of subjectivity, bias, or ideology.

Social semiotics examines discourses for their interestedness, looking for ideological alignment and hegemonic activism in the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic content of texts. Importantly, Pierre Bourdieu has observed that communicative structures — social perceptions — empower people (as well as organizations and bureaucracies) to realize the world: "Symbolic power is the power to make things with words" ("Social Space" 23). In an investigation of political economy such as mine, symbolic power and actual power are both vested in governmental discourse. Semiotics is therefore a vital instrument for tracking the movements of power.

I use semiotics alongside critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis refers to "ways of analysising language which addresses its involvement in the workings of contemporary societies" (Fairclough 1); it is a tool that arises more or less contemporarily with neoliberalism (Fairclough 12). I draw on critical discourse analysis as an occasional refinement to my larger textual analysis, for "[w]hereas semiotics is now closely associated with cultural studies, content analysis is well established within the mainstream tradition of social science research" (Chandler 8). Given the comparative cultural–historical method of my analysis, semiotics is a more apt, albeit underused, instrument for this investigation (Gall, Borg, and Gall 634), but I turn to critical discourse analysis where it is helpful for "critical discourse analysis says that it is in language that we can see the construction of social identities and individual minds" (Cherland and Harper 190). As Fairclough affirms, critical discourse analysis "is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary" (3); "it is not just descriptive, it is also normative" (11); and, more fittingly for the

work I am undertaking here, critical discourse analysis is "social analysis with a focus on the moment of discourse" (Fairclough et al. 5).

Both social semiotics and critical discourse analysis apply linguistic and hermeneutic tools of meaning-making to specific social contexts (such as primary documents and secondary popular texts such as newspapers, magazines, films, advertising, and websites) and read them for both their overt and their latent messages. Reading texts closely, I examine basic (and in some cases not so basic) features of linguistic expression; structural, logical, and permissible message formations; and contextual signifiers of register, tone, position, and rhetoric that may both contribute to and elude political reckoning. Two of the key theorists informing my use are Julia Kristeva and Norman Fairclough.

Chandler notes that "A social semiotician would also emphasize the importance of the significance which readers attach to the signs within a text" (8). My study concentrates on Alberta curriculum documents and, where appropriate, compares these documents with documents from other jurisdictions. A curriculum is not merely a course of study but a policy instrument through which larger ideology is manifest. These documents are written for a range of audiences: external authorities, such as bureaucrats from other jurisdictions and other branches of government; parents and perhaps students themselves; and practising professionals — that is, classroom teachers. Thus, these documents are multiply layered with contested meanings, preferred readings, rhetorical effects, and truth claims. The vital question is, whose interpretation is privileged?

Application of Method to Primary and Secondary Documents

The discussion of the research problem begins with a historical–comparative examination of Alberta. In this section I approach Alberta's history not as a historian but as a semiotician, reading it to discover a context through which to understand social relations in modern Alberta for, as Conrad and Finkel remind us, "history is the study of the past, but the past is a slippery concept" (xxi). Using diverse primary and secondary texts, I investigate the history, economics, and politics of Alberta within the "Prairie West," beginning with aboriginal prehistory and moving through the colonial period of Rupert's Land under the protection of the Hudson's Bay Company. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities and following Gerald Friesen's thesis of communication technologies in the role of nation-building (*Citizens and Nation*), I examine Alberta's creation as a province in 1905 and issues of early governance. Importantly, I concentrate on the political legacy of the Liberal, United Farmers of Alberta, and early Social Credit parties. I will examine in particular Alberta's default in 1936 and its subsequent effects on Alberta's relationship to federalism.

Alberta's fortunes changed markedly in the wake of the Second World War. Oil was discovered at Leduc in 1947, almost immediately shifting Alberta from a have-not to a have province and subtly altering its political economy. In the wake of the election of Peter Lougheed's Progressive Conservatives in 1971, Alberta enjoyed unprecedented wealth, yet maintained the paternalism and social conservatism engendered by nearly forty years of Social Credit rule. With the end of the oil boom in the early 1980s, Alberta's economy contracted sharply and political discourse began to shift toward neoliberalism, already entrenched in Britain and the United States. Ralph Klein's election as leader of the Progressive Conservatives in 1992 marks the

pinnacle of neoliberalism. Through the 1990s and into the new century, the provincial state has grown increasingly socially conservative (despite adopting a strongly individualistic, pluralistic discourse of personal choice and responsibility) alongside its somewhat contradictory rhetoric of fiscal conservatism.

In the second discussion chapter I undertake a close reading of Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum. This document, unlike previous curricula, situates the streaming of English students' academic and vocational outcomes as a function of choice. The questions "What knowledge should be taught?" and perhaps "When should that knowledge be studied?" reflect the usual interests of curriculum writers. A question not traditionally asked by curriculum writers — and one that should be — is "*Whose* knowledge is of most worth?" (Apple, "Curriculum Voice" 526; emphasis in source). This question becomes especially pertinent in matters of English Language Arts because the program is universal in English-language high schools and its effects cross disciplines.

In the third discussion chapter I undertake a historical–comparative survey of readers and writers. Reading and writing are unique technologies, and the rise of print culture in the late fifteenth century is closely yoked to the rise of capitalism. This section examines what we know about adolescent and teenage readers and writers today, and how these subjects are positioned in postmodern consumer culture. Building on the idea of multiliteracies (the notion that literacy is situated and dynamic), I examine the concepts of technical literacy, cultural literacy, critical literacy, illiteracy and aliteracy as social literacy practices. I also explore some of the problematics of alternative and emerging literacies and the ways in which young people's multiple literacies are disciplined by power. Popular discourses surround and frequently criticize the competencies traditionally transmitted through English Language Arts instruction, such as grammar, spelling, reading comprehension,

expressive composition, and critical thinking (see, for example, Clark; David Foster Wallace; Lynch). Contemporary moral and professional panics around issues of literacy — such as gender differentials in literacy, declining literacy in the wake of emerging technologies, and declining conformity to linguistic standards — bring pressure to bear on classroom teachers and, eventually, on policy-makers. By decoding and critiquing these texts, I examine the larger, subtextual political philosophies in play.

Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum, rooted in individualism and competition, is underpinned by a rationalist, rhetorically based tradition that sorts and selects students for particular futures. Importantly, choice (not grades, student aptitude, or teacher recommendation) is signalled as the determining factor in which course sequence students pursue, an attempt to make invisible the "distinction" of certain kinds of personal capital (what Bourdieu refers to habitus) and the actions of the hidden curriculum. From their earliest days in school students are brought into the norms of reading and writing. By the time they reach high school, their achieved and inherent abilities have set students on trajectories that will eventually determine their earning power, their professional status, their social inclusion, and their position in the social field.

Such a gap between the surface presentation and the deep structure of curriculum makes answering questions of what knowledge to study and whose knowledge to value very complicated. In public discussions of language standards, language mechanics, and literacy, we can see disjunctions among what classroom teachers do, what the curriculum requires (particularly as teachers and students are disciplined by the diploma exam), and what the public (in particular business) claims to want. Using social semiotics and critical discourse analysis, I examine the declared outcomes, rhetorical outcomes, canonical outcomes, and political outcomes of the

curriculum document and other documents associated with it. Where appropriate, I have also drawn in comparable documents from other jurisdictions, including Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This reading reveals the impulses of the state in the classroom, underscoring processes of social production and reproduction but also signalling opportunities for critique, rupture, and hope.

Role of the Researcher

My overall philosophical framework is critical realism. By *critical realism* I refer to the branch of philosophy that argues there exists some absolute truth, but our access to this truth and its scope or reach is limited, if not impossible. This philosophy is firmly rooted in the material and the structural. Critical realism informs my theoretical orientation as a materialist feminist. This orientation refers both to the socialist–feminist tradition, which considers how women are affected by the relations of production, and to Marx's notion of historical materialism, which perceives human action as the motor of historical progress. This position is also inflected by cultural materialism, which speaks back to structure through cultural artifacts such as language, enabling human agency, such as Raymond Williams' notion of "practical consciousness," "a way of thinking and acting in the world that has material consequences" (Landry and MacLean 5).

My orientation to the historical sociology of education (in Foucault's sense of a history of the present) takes a critical pose informed by a range of oppositional and resistant discourse. I have positioned myself as a critical theorist because I am interested in issues of social justice. I believe the world as it is currently structured is unequal, with numerous forms of bias and disparity. In seeking social justice, I seek

a fair redistribution of resources and an end to violent and destructive practices such as rape, racism, genocide, torture, persecution, and ecological exploitation. Toward this end I have personally participated in political struggles against sexism, racism, homophobia, poverty, imperialism, and other forms of oppression. As a feminist and neo-Marxian, I recognize the objection the critical stance poses for some. However, in my view, "we may have to be critical of practices and the ideas behind them in order to explain them and their effects" (Sayer, "Valuing" 57). My critical orientation is informed by the belief that through critique we connect our own lived realities to those of others who are also describing their experiences, not merely to compare and understand these conditions but to change them through recognition and struggle.

Out of my theoretical investigation I have recommended education policies that I believe will lead to greater social and economic equality among Albertans of all backgrounds, regardless of their origins. Education is only one of a range of socializing institutions, and is today in many ways an increasingly undervalued and under-supported one. Changing the English Language Arts curriculum in itself will not change society; the policy recommendations I offer are necessarily limited by the larger social will. But I offer them in a spirit of hope that change remains a possibility.

Discussion of orientation and methodology

Because I have written a conceptual, theoretical dissertation, my orientation and methodology may be subject to particular scrutiny. A conceptual dissertation may be vulnerable to methodological or theoretical cherry-picking — that is, the writer may be tempted to choose texts, perspectives, or sources opportunistically,

without attention to methodological rigour, theoretical integrity and congruence, or context. Ethically, however, a writer must not avoid acknowledging those whose perspectives disagree with hers. A vital element of the intellectual tradition requires the writer to identify and engage with opposing points of view, not only those voices who chime in for "her side." It is the balance of authorities, evidence, and logic that makes a text more or less compelling.

The word *text* derives from the Latin words *textus* (tissue) and *texere* (to weave). In the making of cloth, there is both warp and weft, the directional strands intersecting to form a strong and durable fabric. That fabric may display patterns, colours, texture, and weight representative of its constituent threads; but it must hang together, must cohere, and must stand up to inspection and wear. A dissertation, like any text, weaves together perspectives and positions. Some counter-commentary is expected. And indeed, in making my argument, I have worked inductively, developing and refining my theory as evidence emerges from the texts themselves. Thus I have chosen analytical methods that I believe are congruent with my philosophical and theoretical orientations. That is to say, these methods are adequate to the tasks to which I have put them and in combination produce an accurate assessment of my topic from my standpoint and history; they are therefore appropriate tools for an empirically informed theoretical dissertation.

Critical realism

Critical realism is a philosophical position that argues that the world exists independent of human consciousness of it. The claim for external reality is necessary in order for us to make knowledge claims about the world, for if nothing exists

outside of our own subjectivity, then there is no way for us to make claims about it. In making the claim for external reality, critical realism stakes its territory as anti-idealist and anti-empiricist; it provides "*a model of scientific explanation which avoids both positivism and relativism*" (Robson 29; emphasis in source). One of the leading philosophers identified with critical realism today is Roy Bhaskar.

Critical realism insists that "Science or the production of any kind of knowledge is a social practice" (Sayer, *Method* 6); it therefore engages both epistemology and ontology. Because it insists on a material basis for knowledge claims, "Realism can acknowledge values in a way not open to positivists, who claim their activities are value-free. And because there is a reality to which reference can be made, there is a basis for choice among different theories" (Robson 33–34). Thus, critical realism enables epistemological pluralism, allowing the researcher to make claims of fact, claims of concept, and claims of interpretation.

Critical realism has its roots in natural science but may be applied to social science as well, recognizing that natural phenomena are substantively different from social phenomena (Robson 35). When applied to the social sciences, realist methods must be adapted to recognize human agency and historical situatedness. As Robson explains,

> Realism permits a new integration of what are usually referred to as subjectivist and objectivist approaches in social theory. ... The new integration argues that social structure is at the same time the relatively enduring product, and also the medium, of motivated human action. ... [For example,] social structures such as language are both reproduced and transformed by action, but they also pre-exist for individuals. They permit

persons to act meaningfully and intentionally while at the same time limit the ways in which they can act. (35)

The nature and direction of causality are crucially important to critical realism. For realist researchers, "Causality ... embraces not only powers and mechanisms, but also their stimulating, releasing and enabling conditions" ("Causality" 58). The researcher must engage dialectically with the evidence to understand and reveal the complex interconnections among theoretical concepts, social practices, social effects, and material reality.

Ian Hacking provides an example of the way in which critical realism connects ideas to the material world:

Ideas do not exist in a vacuum. They inhabit a social setting. Let us call that the matrix within which an idea, a concept or kind, is formed. ... The matrix in which the idea of the woman refugee is formed is a complex of institutions, advocates, newspaper articles, lawyers, court decisions, immigration proceedings. Not to mention the material infrastructure, barriers, passports, uniforms, counters at airports, detention centers, courthouses, holiday camps for refugee children. You may want to call these social because their meanings are what matter to us, but they are material, and in their sheer materiality make substantial differences to people. Conversely, ideas about women refugees make a difference to the material environment.... (10)

The critical realist, then, apprehends social phenomena as real, observable by their effects if not directly: "Social phenomena such as actions, texts and institutions are concept-dependent. We therefore have not only to explain their production and

material effects but to understand, read or interpret what they mean" (Sayer, *Method* 6).

Despite these methodological considerations, critical realism is resolutely "a philosophy not a substantive social theory" (Sayer, *Method* 4). It engages social critique — "understood as a theoretical genre that both thematizes and seeks to surpass the limits set by prevailing social relations" (Callinicos 5) — through immanent critique, making it "a developing or dialectical process" ("Critical Realism" 100). And despite its insistence on realism, it "is more in the line of descent of critical theory, which in its programmatic statement ... had as its goal not 'simply an increase of knowledge as such' but 'emancipation from slavery', than of the realist tradition in mainstream philosophy" ("Critical Realism" 99). Most importantly, critical realism positions itself as emancipatory without choosing a particular political identification: "It seeks rather to assist in promoting a triplex emancipatory helix encompassing philosophy and social theory, empirically based research and a rich diversity of social movements on a planetary scale" ("Critical realism" 105). It is thus an appropriate underpinning to critical and social-justice perspectives.

Materialist feminism

Materialist feminism, sometimes referred to as feminist materialism, describes an orientation of feminism that draws on historical materialism as a method for understanding and explaining social processes and effects. Hennessy and Ingraham explain it thus: "The tradition of feminist engagement with marxism emphasizes a perspective on social life that refuses to separate the materiality of

meaning, identity, the body, state, or nation from the requisite division of labor that undergirds the scramble for profits in capitalism's global system" (1).

The label "materialist feminist" — versus socialist feminist or Marxist feminist — is controversial, however. Valerie Wayne's treatment of the evolution of the term nicely distinguishes some of the points of argumentation between new historicism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, and feminist materialism. During the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many feminists adopted Marxist orientations but encountered tremendous resistance in ideological orthodoxy and the recognition of women's specific oppressions under capitalism (as well as of oppressions unrelated to capitalism). Feminist materialism emerged out of frustration and invention: "Given this failure and the insufficient development of marxist feminist theoretical work, [Annette] Kuhn and [AnnMarie] Wolpe pursue[d] a materialist feminism that particularly addresses the sexual division of labour, in the hope that their work [would] transform marxism and contribute to a marxist feminist" (Wayne 6). Others followed Kuhn and Wolpe's lead, and by the late 1980s a strong body of materialist-feminist criticism, particularly in literary theorizing, had emerged.

One significant issue that has separated Marxist and materialist feminists is that of patriarchy, or male domination, and the confidence that resolving unequal relations of production will resolve the subordination of women. As Wayne compactly explains, "Their [feminists'] use of the word 'materialist' therefore signals a focus larger than traditional marxism, while they sustain and extend its critique of history and literature" (6), in keeping with the material basis of critical realism. The troubled position over male domination resonates with feminist standpoint theory, which argues that "like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male

supremacy" (Hartsock 463). Women's experience of the world, particularly under capitalism, which exaggerates the effects of patriarchy, produces a doubled consciousness, "a double or split self-image for women" (Ferguson 47), that yields a different subjectivity. Materialist feminism insists that women's doubled consciousness and women's particular relationship to the means of both production *and* reproduction demand a critical method that does not subsume women's experiences into a general category of capitalist oppression. That is, "Feminist theorists must demand that feminist theorizing be grounded in women's material activity" (Hartsock 478).

The rise of postmodernism diminished much of the early impetus of feminism, reducing it from a collective emancipatory struggle to a series of individualistic, identity-based rights claims. As Landry and MacLean put it, "Postmodernism calls feminism into question" (1). They continue: "the material conditions of women's oppression, and hence women's political interests, are themselves historically specific and therefore cannot be framed in terms of gender alone" (12). As social criticism took a cultural turn, some materialist feminists began to approach their work using cultural, rather than historical, materialism. In the late 1990s, however, Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham attempted to re-identify, recuperate, and resituate materialist feminism as "anti-capitalist feminism" and to minimize or erase the fine positional distinctions:

> The names for the knowledges that have emerged out of the intersection of marxism and feminism in the past thirty years vary — sometimes designated as marxist feminism, socialist feminism, or materialist feminism. These signatures represent differences in emphasis and even in concepts, but all signal feminist critical engagements with historical materialism. (4)

As the anti-feminist backlash proceeded through the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, shored up by capitalist triumphalism and postmodernism, interest in feminist materialism as a critical strategy waned. However, political economy is once again gaining ground in academic and popular discourse, particularly since the global systems crisis emerged in 2007–08. Class and collectivity are once again a vector of analysis, and critique continues to be a productive strategy for exploring fissures in the edifice of global capitalism.

Thus, although the fashionable cachet of the label may have passed, materialist feminism itself continues to be a valid and vital critical orientation: "Simply put, historical materialism is emancipatory critical knowledge" (Hennessy and Ingraham 4), and materialist feminism is feminist historical materialism.

An important criticism of structurally based methods such as materialism and historicism is that they may over-emphasize structure and leave little explanatory power for individual agency (see Layder). An investigation of social structures need not inherently or necessarily overwhelm the concept of agency; rather, it becomes the researcher's role to recognize, understand, and explain the complex ways in which structure and agency interact on the group and individual level. Both critical realism and feminist materialism attempt to connect the particular to the whole.

Historical–comparative research

Historical–comparative research is an unobtrusive method appropriate for document- and policy-based research questions. It allows the researcher to use

history to inform present situations and to suggest future solutions; through its careful, close reading of social content as text, it allows researchers to draw new conclusions about past events, overturning the common-sense understanding such events may acquire; to comprehend the present in novel ways by including voices and perspectives that may previously have been silenced or misrepresented; and to bring the local present and future into sharper focus by comparing and contrasting sometimes widely disparate practices and processes. What makes historical–comparative research distinctive is "a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison" (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 6).

The phases of historical–comparative research are somewhat recursive. Once the research topic has been determined, the researcher begins to investigate primary and secondary documents for evidence, confirmation and refutation, and direction. The texts themselves, whether they are government records, personal interviews, academic histories, popular books and magazines, or social customs and beliefs, reveal a fuller picture of the context of the research question. Theory may emerge organically from the texts themselves, informing and refining the research focus and sometimes redirecting the topic or angle (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 4). The researcher must remain open-minded and not be quick to dismiss evidence or misread significance; she must also be prepared that some evidence may be partial at best because certain human phenomena leave only traces (Neuman 297–99). Findings are gradually sifted into a narrative response to the research question, out of which story may arise possible answers, some conclusions, some further directions for future research, and more questions. However, as with all research, the ultimate success of historical–comparative research depends on dissemination: the findings and analysis must be shared with others.

The data sources in historical–comparative research are textual: oral, literary, visual, or social. As Robson observes, "Whether unintended outcome or intentional creation, the 'things' that people produce provide opportunities for the real world enquirer" (347). Primary documents reflect the stuff of life: "The letters, diaries, newspapers, magazines, speeches, movies, novels, articles of clothing, photographs, business records, and so forth from people in the past that have survived into the present" (Neuman 303). These documents may be published or unpublished, public or private. Secondary documents reflect prior analysis: "the dozens of books and articles specialist historians wrote on specific people, places, or events" (Neuman 307). Organizational record-keeping (what Neuman terms "running records" [304–05]), oral histories, and personal interviews may support either primary or secondary documents, contextualizing events and filling in details that may not have been captured at the time. The limitation of such texts is their subjectivity; they are limited by people's individual memories, attitudes and beliefs, and knowledge (Gall, Borg, and Gall 659–60).

Historical research studies people, places, and events in an effort to understand historical and social processes. Different types of historical research have different emphases, however; some types emphasize the "what" of the past, while some types emphasize the "how" or the "why." Historical–comparative research attempts to understand the causal processes of history. From a Marxian perspective, history does not simply happen to people; people are active makers of history, albeit not in the conditions of their choosing. Comparative–historical research examines the patterns of human action that form across cultures and time, and uses the contrasts and similarities that emerge as points of understanding and explanation.

A weakness of this method is the partial nature of the historical record. The researcher cannot know everything about the past, and events and individuals are

not necessarily accurately or reliably represented. The researcher must also be careful not to assume a causative relationship when one may not exist and, because social phenomena are complex, must be sure to identify as many factors in play as possible, so as not to misunderstand or misrepresent historical effects (Neuman 315). Most importantly, the researcher must not assume universality — that people are the same across all times and societies — and must acknowledge local specificity and inconsistency (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 9–10; Gall, Borg, and Gall 663–65). By making explicit her values and philosophical orientation, however, the researcher can at least acknowledge, if not overcome, these limitations (Robson 72; Gall, Borg, and Gall 661–62).

Social semiotics

Semiotics refers to "the study of sign systems, in particular, the study of how objects (e.g., letters of the alphabet) come to convey meaning and how sign systems relate to human behavior" (Gall, Borg, and Gall 632). The discipline arose out of the simultaneous work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, both of whom were trying at the beginning of the twentieth century to articulate the structure of language. Social semiotics builds on Saussure's original concept of the sign to interrogate how codes of signifying are dynamically formed by, and in turn inform and organize, social processes.

Daniel Chandler explains that "It is by *combining* words in multiple ways that we can seek to represent every particularity of experience" (10; emphasis in source). While this concept might seem to point to the infinite range of human experience and therefore assert the priority of the individual, it places the

construction of meaning in the social realm: experience becomes meaningful only when it is expressed in a collective, communal way. Otherwise, experience is merely solipsism and physical response. Although humans can communicate through many systems — images, colours, sounds, and non-verbal signals to name only a few — "Language is almost invariably regarded as the most powerful communication system by far" (Chandler 9). Social semiotics recognizes that language mediates social existence and that language, while representational, has real effects; as Skaar explains, "Social semiotics stresses the social, not the systematic, premises for the production of signs" (37).

Social semiotics refers not only to the semiotics of language as language but to the semiotics of what people do with language: how language is used to produce political, economic, and cultural effects. Language is inherently social; without others, without community, we have no need to organize consistent sounds, patterns, symbols, and rules. But the effects of language must also be read, for language is not merely functional but is regulated by power. As speakers, writers, audience members, and people in the world, we know there are dominant discourses; we know there are various registers and purposes for these registers; we know there are standard and "dialect" forms of language. We also know that language has real effects: for instance, when a police officer shouts "Stop!" that utterance engages a complex matrix of legal, political, and cultural institutions. Bringing a critical lens to both the signifying system itself and to the processes in which it operates allows us to examine the real, material effects of language and its products.

Importantly, social semiotics argues that language is real in a critical-realist sense: language is representational but it produces real effects. Hodge and Kress maintain,

a practical semiotics should have some account of the relationship of semiosis

and 'reality', that is, the material world that provides the objects of semiosis

and semiotic activity. Unless semiotics confronts this relationship, it can

have no relevance to the world of practical affairs ... and it cannot account for

the role of semiotics systems in that world. (23)

Neither Saussure nor Peirce portrayed the sign as material, but today "Semioticians

must take seriously any factors to which sign-user ascribe significance, and the

material form of a sign does sometimes make a difference" (Chandler 52). Some

postmodernists, including Derrida, attempted to rematerialize the sign by "stressing

that words and texts are things" (Chandler 54), but we must keep in mind the

distinction between the socially constructed real and the ontologically real: words

and things may be real in different ways (see Hacking 1–34). Social semiotics insists

that neither social text nor the material world can be read in isolation; rather, it is

their entwined effects that produce the regimes of power that reproduce social

processes and hierarchies.

Concluding Thoughts

My research stance recognizes not only that social texts are partial and open

systems, and often contradictory, but that the researcher herself is subjective and

may hold contrary and sometimes incompatible ideas. This recognition is not a

diminishment of or a weakness in the research methodology; rather, it is an

acknowledgement of the messy process of theoretical work, which must remain open

to competing explanations and unique features of place, person, and history. Rather

than being mechanistic and deterministic, such an approach is organized but flexible, resilient but not unwavering. I believe that the diverse yet complementary strengths of critical realism, feminist materialism, historical–comparative research, and methods of discourse analysis offer powerful mechanisms for understanding and explaining the complex elements of my research question.

Chapter 4: Alberta Past and Present:

The Production of a Provincial Mythology

The history of Alberta has been variously presented and represented over the last century (see MacGregor, Palmer with Palmer, van Herk, Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and Takach, among others). It is the "Last Best West" of Sir Clifford Sifton's immigration program; the birthplace of both the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Reform Party; the home to Canada's only state-owned bank and the only Canadian province ever to have defaulted on its bonds; a vital part of Canada's bread basket and the putative centre of its Bible belt; the repository of the world's second-largest oil reserves and the first Canadian province to open a food bank (Finkel, *Social Policy* 304); a land of rednecks (Takach) and mavericks (van Herk) — all neatly circumscribed by Canada's only provincial firewall. Much like the United States, to parts of which Alberta is often compared, Alberta has an enduring, deeply rooted mythology that functions to legitimate its political leadership and to discipline its non-conforming citizens. This chapter explores the history and political economy that have produced Alberta's persistent, pernicious provincial mythology.

The territory we now identify as Alberta has been inhabited by various First Nations groups for at least 11,000 years and possibly longer. French- and English-speaking Europeans first arrived in the eighteenth century, initially through the fur trade with various aboriginal nations and then through settlements in Hudson's Bay Company and North-West Company trading posts and forts. Immigrants began to arrive en masse after 1885, in the wake of the Métis uprising that culminated at Batoche (Saskatchewan) and the driving of the Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Craigellachie (British Columbia). Alberta and Saskatchewan were created

in 1905, the last provinces to come into being.[1] Both were deliberately carved from Rupert's Land (later the North-West Territories), "an enormous territory stretching from Labrador through the shield and the prairies and into the Arctic tundra in the West" (Swainson 62), as a hinterland intended to provide the raw materials for the increasing industrialization of Central Canada: "It was the national policy of the day to develop the West, for the development of the West was the key to national development" (Morton 15).

In 1955, W.L. Morton proposed that the history of the Prairie provinces might be divided into three periods: "The first may be called the colonial period from 1870 to 1905. The second is the agrarian period from 1905 to 1925, and the third the utopian period from 1925 to the present" (13).[2] The period 1870 to 1905 — between the establishment of Manitoba as a province and Saskatchewan and Alberta as provinces — stamped an important character on the territory that ultimately became Alberta. With the advantage of several decades' perspective over Morton, I will argue that, in Alberta, history after 1905 may be better understood through the eras of Alberta's political dynasties: the Liberals, 1905 to 1921; the United Farmers of Alberta, 1921 to 1935; the Social Credit, 1935 to 1971; and the Progressive

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[1] Newfoundland entered confederation later (in 1949) but was a well-formed society with hundreds of years of independent colonial history long before it was a province of Canada. Even today its social history is shaped by its economic history.

[2] As Gerald Friesen remarks, "in Canada, region matters a great deal" ("Defining the Prairies" 24). Alberta is variously referred to as a Prairie province and as part of the Prairie West, among other labels. These labels may be useful for some purposes, but it is important to remember that Alberta's history, economics, and politics are distinct from those of Manitoba (which was established as a province decades earlier) and Saskatchewan (which experienced very different immigration patterns).

Conservatives, 1971 to the present.[3] In many ways, through the administration of the

UFA and Social Credit, the agrarian period lasted in Alberta until at least the late

[3] To date, Alberta has had fourteen premiers leading the various parties of Alberta's
political dynasties, as follows:

- Liberal (appointed): Alexander C. Rutherford: September 8, 1905–May 26, 1910
- Liberal: Arthur L.W. Sifton: May 26, 1910–October 12, 1917
- Liberal: Charles Stewart: October 13, 1917–August 13, 1921
- UFA: Herbert Greenfield: August 13, 1921–November 23, 1925
- UFA: John E. Brownlee: November 23, 1925–July 10, 1934
- UFA: Richard G. Reid: July 10, 1934–September 3, 1935
- Social Credit: William Aberhart: September 3, 1935–May 23, 1943
- Social Credit: Ernest C. Manning: May 23, 1943–December 12, 1968
- Social Credit: Harry E. Strom: December 12, 1968–September 10, 1971
- Progressive Conservative: E. Peter Lougheed: September 10, 1971–November 1, 1985
- Progressive Conservative: Donald R. Getty: November 1, 1985–December 14, 1992
- Progressive Conservative: Ralph P. Klein: December 14, 1992–December 14, 2006
- Progressive Conservative: Ed Stelmach: December 14, 2006–October 7, 2011
- Progressive Conservative: Alison Redford: October 7, 2011–present

I have chosen to close my discussion on Alberta politics at the end of the Klein era —
that is, when Ed Stelmach won the Progressive Conservative leadership campaign
and became premier of Alberta — because of global events that begin in 2007. The
consequences of the collapse of finance capital in the United States in 2007–08, the
global economic downturn in 2009–10, and uncertainty in various European
economies are still unfolding and are less directly relevant to the curriculum
document officially introduced in 2003.

1940s; and the utopian period of the welfare state did not fully arrive until the early

1970s, and then lingered only briefly.

The Missing Narrative: Alberta's Aboriginal Fact

Before discussing the colonial period of Alberta's history, I must refer to a

history that is largely absent from this dissertation: that of Alberta's aboriginal

peoples. This dissertation concentrates on the political economy of Alberta long after

contact between aboriginal groups and Europeans traders, explorers, and settlers

had occurred. It is important to recognize, however, that the history of the people

who originally inhabited the land that became Alberta, although largely outside the

scope of this dissertation, is still a significant factor.

The absence of the aboriginal voice in this portion of the discussion (I will

return to it in Chapter Seven) does not signal that aboriginal communities are

unrecognized or unimportant here: quite the contrary. Aboriginal people, and other

groups disproportionately affected by Alberta's and Canada's state structures, are

vital to this discussion. The popular representation of Alberta's aboriginal history —

the notion that "Natives ... were savages; like the wilderness, they had to be

separated from unredeemed nature and inducted into the marvels of the

industrializing, urbanizing civilization" (den Otter 194) — is in many ways

perpetuated in the logic of the Alberta curriculum. By sketching an outline of pre-

1905 aboriginal history, I hope to suggest a context for the aboriginal voice, from

which I will defer — but certainly not ignore — some of its claims.

Olive Patricia Dickason divides aboriginal "pre-history" into several periods:

"early big-game hunter" (as far back as 17,000 to 5,000 BCE); "plains archaic" (5,000

BCE to common era); "plains woodlands" (250 BCE to 950 CE); and "plains village" (900 to 1750 CE) ("Reconstruction" 15–19). Although the land has been continually inhabited for millennia, the peoples who have lived here have changed over time. Today, when aboriginal groups refer to themselves as First Nations, "they are also asserting their right, as nations, to self-determination and laying claim to an [sic] historical existence stretching back to a period preceding the European invasions and well before the emergence of most European nations" (Hindess, "Nation" 234–35). Yet such claims are in themselves highly problematic, given the dramatic shifts in "traditional" territories and habitation patterns both pre- and post-contact, and invested as these claims are in a Western understanding of rights, law, ownership, and justice. That said, all North American aboriginal groups, whether nomadic or sedentary, had developed complex and diverse societies, encompassing a range of social organization and a rich oral tradition, by the time of European contact.

The political economies of aboriginal peoples were also complex and highly dynamic. Theodore Binnema argues that long before Europeans made contact, sophisticated patterns of trade, diplomacy, and warfare shaped aboriginal economies; these patterns were furthered or limited by environmental factors such as animal populations, plant distribution, drought, fire, and climate. John S. Milloy observes that the Mandan–Hidatsa trading region on the southeastern plans represented "a high point in plains economic organization. It was the home of a native trade system which was in existence prior to the European fur trade and then adapted well to the introduction of European goods" (*Cree* 41). Initially, the presence of European goods influenced these patterns only minimally; but as the Europeans themselves arrived, traditional economies shifted and new alliances were formed.

Early contact between Europeans and western aboriginal groups occurred primarily through the Cree and Assiniboine. Milloy asserts, "It was the Cree who

decided who would and would not receive goods from the Europeans" (*Cree* 16).

Originally inhabitants of the Hudson Bay basin, the Cree began to extend their range

west and south, eventually dividing in Alberta and Saskatchewan into Plains and

Woodland groups based on their economies and use of local resources (see Ray,

Indians). The Assiniboine, originally inhabitants of what is now southwestern

Ontario, northern Minnesota, and southeastern Manitoba (Ray, *Indians* 5), began

pressing north and west slightly before the Cree migration (Dickason, *First Nations*

171). The Cree and Assiniboine moved onto the lower boreal forest, the parkland and

the prairies alongside and slightly in advance of the early Europeans, acting as

intermediaries between traders and various aboriginal groups, and displacing many

of the peoples from their historical territories as the Cree and (to a lesser degree in

Alberta) Assiniboine advanced.

Contact also occurred, albeit much more indirectly, through the aboriginal

peoples of what is now the south-central and southwestern United States, when the

Spanish introduced horses into Mexico. Horses moved north through the southwest

plains and along the Rocky Mountain corridor, reaching the northwestern plains by

the mid seventeenth century. The dynamics produced by the shifting power between

groups with horses (in the Alberta region, primarily the allies of the Blackfoot

Confederacy) and groups with guns (in the eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries, primarily the Cree and their allies) significantly altered the territories and

ranges of aboriginal groups prior to 1870 and established political rivalries that may

continue to generate hostility even today.

Daniel Francis observes that "the fur trade was a unique economic system"

(75), neither purely capitalist nor purely collectivist. While it unquestionably

exhausted the natural resources of the prairies and parklands, in its early stages the

fur trade unduly exploited neither Europeans nor aboriginal groups. Rather, in

building trading relationships with Europeans, aboriginal groups continued to apply tactics of diplomacy, influence, and warfare as necessary to fulfill their own subsistence needs and cultural practices. Francis notes that "until quite recently it was fashionable to emphasize the dependence of Indians on the traders" (78), but scholars have now begun to recognize the strong interdependence between traders and aboriginal groups that emerged as the aboriginal economy changed in response to the social, political, and environmental effects of the fur trade. As an example, we might consider the various roles the Cree played in the establishment of trading posts in Alberta, the establishment of a complex bison-based food-processing economy, and the shifting alliances and geographical situations of other Alberta tribes (see Colpitts; Milloy, *Cree*; Ray, "Great Plains").

By 1870, however, the major period of the fur trade was coming to a close and the bison were nearly extinct. Aboriginal groups across the west began to approach the Canadian government for treaties, which had already been negotiated elsewhere. The *Indian Act*, passed in 1876, established the federal government's paternalistic and particularistic approach to "managing" Canada's aboriginal population and set in place a deeply troubled relationship that remains today. Treaties Six (1876) and Seven (1877) opened the west for European settlement, and with the signing of Treaty Eight (1899), the lands that would soon become the province of Alberta came under the control of the government of Canada.

Thus began a period of isolation, hunger, disease, poverty, and social subjugation, which most observers would argue persists today and the social consequences of which are traumatic and far reaching. Often confined to reserves and always closely regulated by law, the aboriginal peoples of Alberta have until recently been largely silent and invisible, especially in schools. Aboriginal education — which for most of the settlement period has meant "schooling for assimilation" or education

of Indians" rather than "education *by* Indians" (Hampton 9) — is a particularly vexed

matter, with academic issues of absenteeism, underachievement, failure, and

dropouts — alongside wider-reaching social issues such as racism, violence, abuse,

and poverty — being acute for aboriginal communities, as I will discuss below.[4] The

colonial legacy suggests that what appeared to be "best" for aboriginal peoples more

than a century ago might somehow be relevant to aboriginal peoples' current needs,

desires, or capabilities — where they are today and what they are capable of

achieving. As I will discuss in coming chapters, one cultural location where this

legacy pertains is in the English Language Arts classroom.

The Colonial Period and the Young Province

As the previous section has just outlined, from its earliest European history,

and even as an aspect of aboriginal history, Alberta has been exploited for raw

resources, establishing what in classical economics may be referred to as a

rudimentary primary economy. The fur traders formed productive trade relationships

with the First Nations of northern Alberta, and according to Palmer, "The fur-trade

era was a period of equality between whites and Indians" (19). Swainson argues that

the strong Métis presence that emerged from the early relationships between

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[4] Hampton observes, however, that given the goal of educating to assimilate, "The
failure of non-Native education of Natives can be read as the success of Native
resistance to cultural, spiritual, and psychological genocide" (7). For more detailed
discussion of residential schooling and its legacy, see Milloy, *Crime;* for further
discussion of the prospects for contemporary Aboriginal education policy, see
Paquette and Fallon.

aboriginal peoples and Europeans produced a different power relationship in Alberta than in either eastern and central Canada or the United States (62–64); it is perhaps this difference that prevented Canada from engaging in the genocide of its First Nations to the degree that the United States did.[5]

The federal government began to take an interest in the region shortly after confederation:

> In 1870, the Dominion of Canada acquired the territories known as Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territories. These regions were combined and the resulting area was named the North-West Territories. ... In 1882, to facilitate the administration of the region, the North-West Territories was divided into four Provisional Districts: Assiniboia, Athabasca, Saskatchewan and Alberta. (Perry and Craig 12–13)

The economic potential of this vast region was quickly recognized. The Palliser Expedition of 1857–60 had reported fertile regions favourable for agriculture

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[5] Dickason observes that the young federal government's limited finances and restricted autonomy may also have discouraged Canada from declaring outright war against the western aboriginal peoples (First Nations 260). It is further important to remember that a strong missionary presence was felt throughout the region beginning in the nineteenth century, with the Oblates predominant in the north and various Protestant missions across the south. See Chalmers and Chalmers, eds.; Dickason, *First Nations*; Huel; Wetherall. In its declared policies, Canada preferred to encourage "civilization" through religion and schooling rather than exterminate the aboriginal peoples. Note, however, that some commentators have identified the introduction of Christianity and forced attendance of First Nations children at residential schools as a form of cultural genocide, as destructive as the Indian Wars of the American nineteenth century (see, for example, Milloy, *Crime).*

alongside the arid, uninhabitable stretches of the southern prairie. The North-West
Mounted Police (later the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) were established in 1874
to control the lawlessness of the Canadian frontier, in particular border incursions
from American traders and hunters. Treaties Six (1876), Seven (1877), and Eight
(1899) had confined First Nations peoples to widely dispersed reserves, and the bison
had been effectively exterminated, leaving the land open for settlers. The national
railway — an incentive to lure British Columbia to join confederation — was
devouring federal resources, and the maturing industrial economies of Central
Canada required new markets to continue their expansion. The North-West was
ready for settlement, and thus, Alberta and Saskatchewan were "imagined" into
being (see Benedict Anderson; Friesen, "Interpreting").

Settlers faced the prospect of joining confederation with anxiety. According to
Swainson, "The early history of the Canadian West is characterized by dependence
and exploitation. The area and its resources were controlled from outside, for the
benefit of several distant centres, whose relative importance changed from time to
time" (61). Questions of regional autonomy and representation circulated in
newspapers and local debates, as the first territorial government was not
representative but monarchical and executive (through the Lieutenant Governor in
Manitoba in conjunction with the federal government in Ottawa). These anxieties
were ultimately justified, as Swainson explains: "for the West annexation to Canada
involved the confirmation of colonial status" (72). While industrial capitalism was
advancing in Central Canada, the Prairie West remained a proto-capitalist
environment, subject to governance "very much like a crown colony, until full
provincial status was granted" (Perry and Craig 14). Colonial status lingered even
after Alberta was declared a province: its first premier, Alexander C. Rutherford, was
appointed by the federal Liberals to uphold their national, economic interests

(although this position was affirmed by a provincial election in November 1905 [Perry and Craig 18]). The double colonization of Alberta has left scars on the provincial psyche, perpetuated as an element of the provincial myth for political reasons, as I will explain in subsequent chapters.

Alberta came into being on September 1, 1905, through the passage of the *Alberta Act*; Premier Rutherford was appointed the next day. Although created at the same time as Saskatchewan, Alberta, being further west and largely barricaded from British Columbia by the Rocky Mountains, was less settled, had a smaller population, and was less politically mature.[6] Edmonton, incorporated as a city in 1904, was provisionally named capital of Alberta in 1905, a status finally confirmed in 1906, setting in motion a continuing rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary. As Stelter notes, "Calgary got the transcontinental railway, Edmonton the provincial capital and the university. Calgary chanced upon Turner Valley and became the centre of the oil industry" (4).[7] More than a century later, the rivalry remains entrenched in Alberta's political culture: "Since Alberta's first oil strike occurred at Turner Valley in 1914 near Calgary, that city developed the financial and administrative expertise for the industry, and it retained control even after much bigger strikes later occurred near Edmonton" (Voisey 331).

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[6] Saskatchewan had held a seat of political power in the Territories since 1876, when "the settlement of Battleford was selected as the seat of governance; the site for the capital was moved to Regina in 1882" (Perry and Craig 13).

[7] Stelter misrepresents history slightly in this quotation. The University of Alberta was built in 1908 on land in the City of Strathcona, across the river from Edmonton. Amalgamation between Edmonton and Strathcona did not occur until 1912.

The first provincial government was Liberal, in keeping with the federal government of the time; the Liberals retained power in Alberta for sixteen years. Premier Rutherford's government was in debt, however, almost immediately upon taking office, as its first job was to underwrite the development of a booming young province. Between 1905 and 1914, immigration soared. Agricultural yields were strong, ranching was profitable, and the coal branch was highly productive. This period saw the establishment of the University of Alberta and Alberta Government Telephones, the extensive construction of highways and public buildings across the province, the extension and enhancement of basic education, and the development of social services such as hospitals and asylums. The government also attempted to underwrite the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway, a rail line that was intended to link Edmonton to the North and that ultimately led to the Liberals' defeat in the 1921 election, when the debt incurred and the allegation of corruptions proved too troublesome to overcome. World War One did not entirely stall the economy, although Alberta businesses were not directly engaged to supply the war effort, but it did frustrate access to capital markets (Boothe and Edwards 59–84).

To finance such immense growth, the province had to rely on external lenders, predominantly American and English banks, as well as funders in Ontario and Québec (Ascah 4–11). Alberta was booming, but its ability to raise provincial funds was limited, and the government faced repeated difficulties trying to keep the provincial budget solvent. An enormous debt accumulated, and even a century later Liberals in Alberta are remembered as spendthrifts and wastrels (although this reputation is connected to perceptions of the federal Liberal party as well).

A crucial element of the colonial legacy in this period was the issue of resource development. When Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta became provinces, the federal government withheld the transfer of mineral rights, as they

were a significant source of federal revenue. These rights were regained only in 1929

(in 1930 for Saskatchewan), after prolonged legal and political struggle. By this time,

however, the young province was carrying a heavy debt associated with its rapid

growth and development; it was only in the 1950s, after acting on the discovery of oil

at Leduc in 1947, that the province gained control of its debt and could use its

resource revenues to expand provincial services and benefits.

Another crucial concept relevant to this period is that of the provincial state.

As the issue of resource development demonstrates, the division of responsibilities

between the federal government and the various provincial governments leads to

antagonistic, sometimes acrimonious state-within-state relationships. Keith

Brownsey observes that

> Provincial governments recognized — no matter their ideological persuasion
> — that the state was a necessary component in the creation of markets.
> Beginning in the 1920s the Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and
> Manitoba under the guidance of Progressive or farmers governments, began
> the construction of the modern administrative state. (25)

As a strictly agrarian province, Alberta would be unable to escape the poverty of its

founding. Ascah explains that "Before the Leduc oil discovery and the OPEC oil

embargo, the economy of Alberta was heavily dependent on the production and

marketing of grains. In 1929, nearly 40 percent of provincial income was derived

from the activities of the independent commodity producer and wage labour hired by

the farmer" (54). The provincial state of Alberta in particular embraced the notion of

actively developing the economy by creating a favourable climate for business

through legislature, financial incentives, and low corporate taxation — even when

the government's ideological position should belie such market intervention: "Simply

put, it was generally accepted that the provincial state — if not the national state —

played a crucial role in creating and maintain economic prosperity" (Brownsey 25).

This style of state activism worked by attracting foreign (mostly United States-based)

investment to the petroleum sector, as Alvin Finkel points out: "By the end of the

period of Social Credit rule in 1971, the oil and gas industries directly accounted for

almost 40 per cent of all value added in the province" (*Phenomenon* 100). During the

Conservative era, as explained below, the state took further steps toward

interventionist economic development, to the point of nearly extinguishing the state

apparatus in the interests of corporate development.

From these beginnings Alberta forged not only its political economic state but

its cultural identity — its provincial mythology — informed by values of stoicism,

resilience, resistance, independence, and individualism. With each succeeding

political era, the provincial character has grown more focussed and more refined,

until today it is more of a stereotype — a myth, an explanatory shorthand — than a

reality.

United Farmers of Alberta, 1921 to 1935,

and Social Credit, 1935–1971

The rise of the United Farmers of Alberta to political power demonstrates a

shift from the colonial mentality toward populism. The 1920s and 1930s were an era

of radicalism internationally, but the UFA was inconsistently radical, much more

consistently populist. As Carl Betke points out, farmers are not labourers in the

traditional sense: they are small business owners and have more in common with the

professional–managerial class than with the working class (162–63). As such, a UFA government could only ever be progressive and reformist, not radical or revolutionary. Finkel notes that while "the United Farmers of Alberta formed the most important reformist organization before the Depression" (*Phenomenon* 18), in the 1930s the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation's ties to both the UFA (which grew increasingly conservative once in power) and the Canadian Labour party eventually encouraged many reformers and radicals to align themselves with what they perceived to be the grass-roots organization of Social Credit (18–35).

The UFA was elected in a thorough overturning of the legislative assembly, winning thirty-eight of sixty-one seats (The Legislative Assembly Office and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 77–87). The first win reflects not only the disgrace represented by the Liberals' awkward handling of the Alberta and Great Waterways rail line, but also discontent with federal–provincial relations and growing political consciousness among the electorate. The UFA's popularity was grounded in the social gospel, which was a reform movement, not a movement for revolutionary social transformation. Takach notes, "although the social gospel movement sparked a farmers' revolt, it was an urban creation of universities, civil servants and clerics, spread by city-based presses and preachers, and targeting exploitation by corporate overdogs rather than the capitalist system itself" (140).

The UFA period has been identified by some writers as Alberta's first flirtation with leftist or socialist politics; the early Social Credit era is sometimes identified — usually by those outside Alberta — as a further leftist moment. However, "socialist" is a very unstable term, particularly in the early twentieth century (McKay 37–40, 72–77). The popular understanding of "socialism" in North America came not from the writings of Marx and Engels but from the work of Herbert Spencer, who positioned "socialism" as social evolution, informed by

Darwin's theories of ecological evolution. The origins of the UFA are collectivist but arguably not socialist in a Marxist sense: "In 1909, farmers across Alberta joined together to create a co-operative that would improve conditions for agricultural producers and bring modern conveniences to rural areas" (UFA). UFA members and supporters sought grassroots-driven solutions to regional issues, resisting the imposition of national, federally driven policies. The UFA sought local improvement and was strongly community-oriented, but these characteristics do not indicate solidarity with international socialist movements.

As a government, the UFA was saddled with the debt accumulated by the Liberals and therefore obligated to be fiscally conservative, cutting back on many of the Liberals' programs. The UFA did continue to invest in schools, particularly high schools; health, including a sanatorium for victims of tuberculosis and mental hospitals; and highways, particularly the highway linking Calgary to Edmonton (Boothe and Edwards 99, 102). The UFA was also, however, the sponsor of Alberta's *Sexual Sterilization Act* (1928), informed by the dubious theory of eugenics, which sought to reduce social ills by preventing those deemed "unfit" from reproducing. Perhaps these contradictions in governance may be explained through social gospel theory, but they do not reflect the structural, material change and economic redistribution demanded by Marxist socialism.

Like the UFA, the Social Credit party was elected in a thorough overturning of the legislative assembly, winning fifty-six of sixty-three seats in the 1935 election (The Legislative Assembly Office and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 119–33). Alberta's Social Credit — another populist protest movement — was rooted in the economic theories of British engineer C.H. Douglas, but given a particular Prairie twist by party leader William Aberhart; as Finkel notes, "the left-wing drift of the membership did not always have a resonance within the government, despite the

reformist thrust of the Aberhart administration" (*Phenomenon* 51–52). Social Credit

had emerged in Alberta in the early 1930s and was popularized through Aberhart's

weekly radio broadcasts in which he preached a fusion of Christianity, Social Credit,

social gospel, and his own vision for change.[8] The 1920s had been a difficult period

for the young province: immigration was minimal, numerous farms and homesteads

failed, and the UFA cut back on social benefits such as mothers' allowances and

unemployment relief (Boothe and Edwards 100). By the beginning of the Depression,

many Albertans were struggling with poverty and debt; they were receptive to the

concept of local redistribution and Aberhart's glowing resentment of the "Big Shots"

of Central Canada.

From its earliest days in power, Social Credit was frustrated in its

relationship with the federal government. Significantly, the federal government did

not intervene to prevent Alberta from defaulting on payments to creditors on April 1,

1936, thereby allowing Alberta to become "the first, and only, provincial government

in Canada's history to default on the principal of a maturing obligation" (Ascah 63);

and many of Social Credit's proposals for economic reform were quashed for being

ultra vires: beyond the jurisdiction of a provincial government. As Takach notes,

however, the founding of the Alberta Treasury Branches in 1938 promoted local

banking and investment (70), and the jurisdictional battles between Alberta and the

federal government delayed bank foreclosure for many families, allowing them to

remain on their farms and in their homes until the economy improved with the

coming of World War Two (Palmer with Palmer 268–70).

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[8] According to Perry and Craig, "At the height of his popularity, Aberhart's following

was estimated at 300,000 listeners weekly" (412), with an audience not only in

Alberta but across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and the northwestern

United States; Finkel agrees with this figure (*Phenomenon* 29).

William Aberhart died in 1943 and was succeeded by his protégé, Ernest Manning, who was the first graduate of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute and who continued Aberhart's *Back to the Bible Hour* radio broadcasts after his death (Perry and Craig 452, 472). By that time, the Social Credit party was practising social credit in name only: "With the realisation that the [Alberta Treasury Branch] system was far from supplanting Dominion currency and bank credit and with the rapidity of economic recovery after 1939, most of the original social credit features of the program, including the consumers' bonus, were dropped by 1943" (Boothe and Edwards 169). After the discovery of oil in Leduc in 1947, the Alberta government shifted its focus from purported social redistribution and local economism (through social credit) to increasing economic liberalism and social conservatism. Finkel explains this shift:

> By the mid-1950s ... the Social Credit government recognized that it did not need federal funds. It soon realized that it also did not need social credit. It had oil; who could ask for anything more? Its earlier convictions that the new age of technology guaranteed that not everyone could be employed, and that therefore employment income could not generate sufficient purchasing power to keep the economy booming, disappeared. In its place came the 'social conservative' philosophy that the unimpeded marketplace was indeed generally the guarantor of prosperity for the many. While the social conservative philosophy bore some resemblance to the old Social Credit philosophy — in its emphasis, for example, on devolution of power and in its opposition to socialism — it was marked more by big business economic liberalism than the anti-big-business populism that inspired the early Social Credit movement in Alberta. ("Social Credit" 46)

Even in its earliest iterations, the Social Credit party was not socialist or progressive;

indeed, in many ways, it was conservative and even reactionary. Aberhart's populism

reflects the hierarchical, anti-bureaucratic, anti-state structure of a strongly

traditional society, and Social Credit under the leadership of Ernest Manning

furthered these attitudes — even while extending generous social benefits under the

Alberta Bill of Rights (1946) — buttressed by faith in market logic and a fierce

ideological commitment to individualism.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, thanks to petroleum revenues, Alberta grew

into a "have" province, after decades of being a "have-not" province. Under Manning,

however, the province also "saw an increasingly evangelical Christian stamp put on

conservative appeals to the patriarchal family, conformity, sobriety, and sexual

restraint" (Harrison, "Making the Trains" 121). Manning's ideological leadership

cemented a provincial cultural identity that echoed frontier values of self-reliance,

individualism, autonomy, and independence:

> Alberta had changed. It had become rich and could not accept that a portion
>
> of its new oil revenues was being redistributed to help provinces that
>
> remained poor. While a degree of social credit rhetoric of the early days still
>
> popped up from time to time from within the Social Credit government after
>
> 1955, and certainly within the party, it bore no relationship to the reality of
>
> the Social Credit administration's goals. The Manning government in the
>
> 1960s felt quite alone, among provinces generally as well as among Western
>
> provinces, in its opposition to the welfare state consensus of the post-war era,
>
> a consensus that, in the pre-petroleum period of its life, Social Credit seemed
>
> to welcome. This government, I would argue, is best understood not as a

government motivated by social credit ideology or western alienation, but as a government motivated by social conservative and rich-province thinking. (Finkel, "Social Credit" 46)

While Social Credit would still refer to Alberta's colonial legacy when it was politically advantageous to do so, Albertans' preferred cultural memory was of a province that had struggled and won — had overcome the rapacity of the international banks, the indifference of the federal government, and the dominance of Central Canada.[9] The populist rhetoric that had been so effective with a largely rural population, however, had considerably less attraction for an Alberta whose demographics were changing rapidly: "The most noticeable aspect of the transformation of Alberta was its change from a predominantly rural society of farmers to an urban society with a greatly increased service sector" (Peter J. Smith 282). A new era was beginning, although the political economic effects of the change were not as significant as they might appear.

The Progressive Conservatives, 1971 to Present

The Progressive Conservative era began as an urban backlash against the social conservatism of late Social Credit. Peter J. Smith observes, "The Progressive Conservative breakthrough came in the cities" (285), because, as Jonathan Murphy

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[9] Harrison and Laxer characterize this outlook thus: "If we pull together we can defeat the 'enemies' and return Alberta to prosperity and its natural state of grace" (5).

explains, "The small town values of Social Credit conflicted with the needs and mores of a growing urban business class" (316). Peter Lougheed, the new leader of the party, invited young, mobile, middle-class Albertans to break with their rural past and become part of a cosmopolitan, forward-looking province — and part of the larger social currents then sweeping across Canada. The late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of tremendous social change and social optimism. Lester B. Pearson had passed the *Medical Care Act* in 1966, granting Canadians universal health care; that same year, the Canadian Pension Plan came into effect, assuring retirement-age Canadians that they would not be impoverished in their old age. Post-war economic strength supported extensive government investment in infrastructure, colleges and universities, culture and heritage, and citizens themselves.[10]

Lougheed's urbanity spoke to a generation that was ready for change. His appeal was successful: the Progressive Conservatives won forty-nine of seventy-five seats in the 1971 election (The Legislative Assembly Office and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 263–76) and a resounding sixty-nine of seventy-five seats in the 1975 election (The Legislative Assembly Office and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 279–96). Under Lougheed's leadership, the Progressive Conservative party committed to modernizing and diversifying the Alberta economy: "Diversification would be achieved in part, Lougheed explained, through encouraging investment from extra-provincial sources, through Government support for local business and through the development of a skilled workforce" (Perry and Craig 526). The focus of

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[10] Jonathan Murphy notes that "Until the late 1960s, Alberta spent a considerably smaller proportion of its budget on social welfare than its neighbours. ... Alberta did, however, accept federal assistance for social programs through the 1966 Canada Assistance Plan Act, although it united with others to eliminate clauses establishing minimum standards for welfare benefits" (316).

governance also shifted, from small-town, agrarian populism toward free-market

statism: "While Social Credit emphasized social development, the Lougheed

government emphasized economic development with the state as a strong actor"

(Peter J. Smith 286).

From 1973 to 1980, high oil prices contributed to Alberta's already

prosperous resource income, enabling the government to develop and support

provincial culture and show the province to the world: "Just as the economy

flourished so did a renaissance in cultural activity. ... Art and culture were in and the

State had the money to pay for it" (Melnyk 257). During this period, the Alberta

Foundation for the Literary Arts, the Alberta Art Foundation, the Alberta

Foundation for the Performing Arts, and the Historical Resources Foundation were

established; the provincial parks system was expanded and enhanced; and high-

profile events such as the Commonwealth Games (1978) and Universiade (1983), as

well as an opulent provincial diamond jubilee (1980), were hosted. It was also during

this period, in 1976, that the Alberta Heritage Trust Fund — in effect a savings

account for the provincial bonanza of resource revenues — was established.

The focus of the Lougheed administration was highly strategic, aimed at

supporting the petroleum economy. Lois Harder observes, "the growth of the state

was fuelled by the needs of oil producers, the various service industries that the oil

and gas sector supported, and the increasingly affluent members of the middle class

whose work allowed them to benefit from the province's growing prosperity" (21).

Ostensibly, this prosperity was fuelling economic diversification. The precarious

nature of this diversification was realized, however, in the early 1980s, when the

spiralling cost of oil, in combination with other factors, led to a worldwide economic

downtown.

What many Albertans remember about this period is the National Energy Program. The NEP, introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1980, was a strongly federalist bill intended to protect Canadians in Central and Eastern Canada from rising energy costs by managing the price of oil. In effect the policy required Canadian producers to sell oil to Canadians at substantially less cost than they could have received on the open world market, and redistributed resource revenues through a complex tax formula. As Canada's primary oil-producing region at the time, Alberta was financially harmed by this policy, and the NEP became a focus for Albertans' political anger.[11] The quintessential Alberta bumper sticker, "Let the Eastern bastards freeze in the dark" — a quotation famously attributed to future premier Ralph Klein (then mayor of Calgary) — suggests provincial response to the NEP. Lougheed used reaction to the NEP for political strength, drawing on history to foster feelings of alienation and betrayal:

> Both Social Credit and the Progressive Conservatives under Lougheed shared the perspective that Alberta was an exploited hinterland of central Canada. Social Credit had fought eastern capital and Ottawa, and the Lougheed Tories had strongly defended provincial interests against the federal government and sought to create a more independent capitalist class and diversified economy. (Peter J. Smith 302)

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[11] There are, of course, other interpretations of the effects of the NEP. Harrison and Laxer, for instance, remark, "But this [the National Energy Program] did not explain why Texas and Louisiana were hit with the same devastating oil bust at the same time" (7).

But diversification in the wake of the worst economic depression since the 1930s was a challenge for which Alberta's petroleum-based economy was unprepared. The price of oil continued to drop, and by 1985, when Lougheed retired from office, the province was experiencing significant revenue declines for the first time in decades.

The economic depression of the early 1980s was a shock for Albertans who had forgotten — or never known — the provincial history of poverty:

> Before the great oil discovery at Leduc in 1947, Albertans were poor. They were raised on the frontier myths of self-reliance, rugged individualism, and low taxes. They were the only Canadians who did not gradually adjust to paying more taxes for enhanced health, education and social services through the 1960s and 1970s. With oil revenues gushing in at the equivalent of an 18 percent provincial sales tax before 1986, Albertans did not have to pay for the high level of services they got. It was a painless way to create a welfare state. (Harrison and Laxer 8)

After 1981, personal and business bankruptcies were frequent, housing foreclosures became commonplace, and people began to leave Alberta in search of better economic opportunities elsewhere in Canada. Lougheed's successor, Premier Don Getty, attempted to control the provincial budget through spending cuts, but cuts could not keep pace with oil-revenue losses. As McMillan and Warrack identify, deficit spending in Alberta had been systemic from the 1970s on (136-42) but was exaggerated after 1986: "Provincial government General Revenue Fund and Capital Fund debt went from almost zero in 1986 to $18.5 billion (or $7,100 per person) in 1994" (142; see also Taft 42–44; and Gibbins 121–23).

The end of the early Progressive Conservative era reflects a pivotal moment in Alberta's history. The Lougheed and Getty administrations represent a socially and fiscally liberal period, a moment when another Alberta was briefly possible. Initially, Harder comments, "The seeming ease with which wealth was accumulated during this period [the 1970s] could be used to support the view that systemic inequality could be alleviated by working harder, pulling up one's bootstraps, and taking advantage of the opportunities of a booming economy" (21). But also during this period, "the government's small 'l' liberal inclinations also opened up space for a more inclusive and tolerant society — the beginnings of what conceivably might have evolved into a genuinely pluralistic society and political system had they been given time to find root" (Harrison, "Making the Trains" 121). Perhaps if the boom had lasted a few more years, Alberta might have matured politically and been able to make more substantial structural change on behalf of its citizens, and Canadians overall.

But Alberta was not alone in recovering from the recession of the early 1980s. Around the world, the doctrine of neoliberalism was already changing the relationship between state and citizen, as seen in Thatcher's United Kingdom and Reagan's United States. The Getty government could have chosen many ways to change the provincial budget when it found itself facing rising debt: increasing Albertans' personal or corporate income-tax rates, introducing a provincial sales tax, or reducing the level of subsidies to the oil and gas industry (for comments on the magnitude of spending in this era, see Taft 44–49; or McMillan and Warrack 136–442). The government could have pursued localized diversification rather than opening the province's forests and agricultural processing to multi-national ownership. It did not. Instead, neoliberalism gained a foothold in Alberta.

The central points of neoliberal logic — that government should be small and support the interests of business; that market forces should organize social interest; and that individual choice should determine social policy[12] — resonated with the provincial mythology, which had been recently revived in response not only to the NEP but also to the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (1991) and ongoing constitutional debate such as the Meech Lake (1987) and Charlottetown (1992) accords. David E. Smith notes,

> These events [resource development and taxation] confirm in the minds of
> westerners the image they have of an "imperial" federal government which,

[12] As explained in Chapter Three, the fusion of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, both of which feature regularly in the Alberta political landscape, is ideologically complicated. The neoliberal advancement of individualism and equality of opportunity must sometimes confront neoconservative values of traditional family structure and social hierarchy. However, neoliberalism is rapidly hegemonic, opportunistic, and pre-emptive; it overtakes and accommodates its opposition almost immediately by asserting the validity of individual rights claims and seeking to acknowledge these claims through both judicial-legislative responses and market responses. Such responses may be in some ways counter to the claims of neoconservatism, but at other points the interests of both neoliberalism and neoconservatism overlap productively, as Michael Apple explains:

> The 'private' is the sphere of smooth running and efficient organizations, of
> autonomy and individual choice. The 'public' is out of control, messy,
> heterogeneous. 'We' must protect 'our' individual choice from those who are
> the controllers or the 'polluters' (whose cultures and very bodies are either
> exoticized or dangerous). Thus, I believe that there are very close connections
> between support for neo-liberal visions of markets and free individuals and
> the concerns of neo-conservatives with their clear worries about standards,
> 'excellence', and decline." ("Politics of Race" 112)

when the need arises, will sacrifice their interests and patrimony in the name

of national unity but, in reality, for the good of central Canada. This is the

distribution of power that westerners believe exists. (48)

When Getty, a consistently weak leader, stepped down in 1992, the stage was set for

yet another transition, this one with significant implications for Albertans as

citizens.

Neoliberalism Comes to Alberta

The second era of Progressive Conservative reign in Alberta — beginning in

late 1992 with the election of Ralph Klein to the leadership of the Progressive

Conservative party and thus as premier of Alberta — is significant to the interests of

this dissertation because this is the period that immediately precedes the

development of the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum. Although Harrison and

Laxer insist that the Klein era represented "the large-scale social re-engineering of a

province's political culture to conform with the demands of moral conservatism and

the neo-liberal agenda of the global corporations" (3), I will argue that much of this

work was facilitated by effective media manipulation and the mobilization of

Alberta's provincial mythology.

According to Peter J. Smith, the conditions for Klein's neoliberalism were

rooted in the Getty era: "The provincial government responded [to the collapse of the

price of oil in 1986] by becoming in effect 'the midwife' of globalization, transforming

the provincial spending and administrative apparatus as part of an effort to conform

to the perceived demands of a global economy" (278). The Klein administration's first

budget was a relentlessly ideological document that enacted exactly the principles of

neoliberalism — so much so that other administrations, most notably Mike Harris's

Conservative provincial government in Ontario, looked to Alberta for guidance and

leadership.[13]

Klein first promised to cut, and then significantly cut, funding to health,

social services, education, culture, tourism, municipalities, infrastructure, provincial

services, and the public face of government. According to Klein and his ministers,

Albertans had been living beyond their means for too long and would have to get

used to less government service — and to less government, too. Albertans were

apparently swayed by this message, as the Progressive Conservatives won fifty-one of

eighty-three seats in the 1993 election (The Legislative Assembly Office and the

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 379–99). But Klein was just getting started.

Peter J. Smith observes, "The 1994 budget represented a radical attack on

the province's deficit and government structure, and a redefinition of the role of

government in society. ... The 1994 budget represented, above all, an attack on the

welfare state and the programs it provides: education, health, and social services"

(297). During the next few years under Klein, the Alberta government privatized the

retail sale of alcohol, registries, provincial campgrounds, and various other

government services. It rolled back wages at provincially funded institutions,

including schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and jails; and pursued an

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[13] At roughly this time, there emerged in Canadian publishing a wave of popular
social-policy books (generally critical), analyzing the neoliberal "revolution"; Ralph
Klein, and Alberta, was at the centre of many of these texts. See for example Laird,
Slumming It at the Rodeo: The Cultural Roots of Canada's Right-Wing Revolution;
Lisac, *The Klein Revolution*; and McQuaig, *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and
Other Canadian Myths*.

aggressive program of downsizing through layoffs, cutbacks, and early-retirement incentives. It closed or repurposed hospitals across the province, including the notorious demolition of the Calgary General Hospital. It restructured labour relationships, particularly those for women workers, by shifting many positions from full to part time and others from in-house to contract-based employment; it also introduced numerous boards, agencies, and community groups to increase surveillance (under the guise of accountability) of various kinds of workers, such as teachers, health-care professionals, and front-line public servants. Brownsey claims that "the period of the 1990s and into the 2000s saw the Klein Conservatives systematically dismantle Alberta's state apparatus" (25).

Significantly, the government also decreased its own democratic, accountable governing by holding fewer sittings and shorter sessions of the legislative assembly. Instead, more legislative decision-making happened at the cabinet level and within ministries than in the legislature. As Brownsey notes, "Because Alberta's legislature sits so few days — less than any other provincial assembly in the country — there is no opportunity for debate, scrutiny, or any other activity associated with a healthy parliamentary system" (33): and "the premier has an unusual amount of power. ... many decisions are made with little or no consultation with cabinet or caucus" (28). Again, however, Albertans apparently approved, electing the Progressive Conservatives to sixty-three of eighty-three seats in the 1997 election and to an astonishing seventy-four of eighty-three seats in the 2001 election (The Legislative Assembly Office and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 401–20, 423–41). In these and many other ways, detailed in numerous sources (see, for just a few examples, Harder; Harrison and Kachur; Laird; Laxer and Harrison; McQuaig, *Shooting the Hippo)*, the Klein administration dramatically reorganized Alberta society.

Or did it?

Adopting imagery of the frontier, the pioneering spirit, rugged individualism, and stalwart endurance, Klein connected his government's version of neoliberalism to Alberta's provincial mythology. Klein ignored the history of the Lougheed administration and instead sketched a lineage back to the nostalgic, rural ethos of a simpler time: the "traditional" values of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence. In an amazing sleight of hand, he managed to implicate as Other the Progressive Conservative administrations of Peter Lougheed and Don Getty, and to conjure an enemy — the debt, allegedly accumulated by "special interests" such as teachers, nurses, social workers, academics, artists, and others who could not put the interests of ordinary, hard-working Albertans before their own (often unionized) self-interest — against which to rally the populace.[14]

Like William Aberhart and Ernest Manning before him, Klein was highly skilled with media. A former reporter, he knew how to work with journalists, and with the establishment of the Public Affairs Bureau, his administration was able to manipulate Alberta's media exceptionally. Media occupy a complicated space in contemporary western society. Their purported role, from an Enlightenment perspective, is to function as a fourth estate, representing the public interest and holding the state, the church, and the judiciary — or in today's world, the government, big business, and powerful individuals — to account. From a contemporary perspective, however, the relationship between media and government

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[14] Trevor W. Harrison, William Johnston, and Harvey Krahn discuss the history and hegemonic strategy of "special interest" labelling. The special interests they identify include "organized labour, environmentalists, ethnic minorities, First Nations, welfare recipients, and women's groups" (82).

is rather closer: "they [media] provide the main conduit through which government discourse reaches the citizenry" (Denis 270).

Over the course of the twentieth century, media have entered into an increasingly troubling relationship with economic interests, whether advertisers or corporate ownership (or both). Increasingly, media uphold, rather than critique, the interests of government, corporations, and other powerful parties. Individual journalists may be outspoken, but media companies are businesses and must be profitable to remain in business. Much as libel chill can stifle the critique of powerful individuals, the withdrawal of provincial government advertising revenues (which contribute substantially to local media outlets' budgets) can intimidate even the harshest critic into silence. Of course, if individual journalists and media owners are politically aligned with the government ideologically, then the work of government is even easier.

A further complication, outlined by Shannon Sampert, was that "A convergence of media corporations began taking place in Canada in the early 1990s, to which Alberta was not immune" (40). In particular, Sampert comments on the diminution of the legislative Press Gallery, which by 1999 had diminished to twenty-two reporters (across all outlets), down from forty-two eight years earlier; and of these twenty-two, only fourteen were active members (Sampert 42). Between the loss of newsroom jobs and the trimming of the Press Gallery, "Not only [were] there fewer reporters, there [were] fewer experienced reporters, editors, and columnists available to question the Klein government's slick and pervasive messages" (42). The Public Affairs Bureau, a communications arm of the Premier's Office that reached into every provincial department, "became primarily a centralized mechanism by which the Conservatives attempt to control political debate" (Brownsey 30) through skilled public relations, media manipulation, and frank spin. Journalists, caught between

corporate interests and an ever-increasing workload, were at the mercy of the Public

Affairs Bureau.

In Alberta, foreign-owned oil companies drive the provincial economy, and

government invests extensively to serve their corporate interests. If particular

conditions — such as reduced public spending, decreased wages and wage

expectations, and a compliant workforce — are in the corporate interest, then

government must adjust the political climate to business' liking, using government

policy and government communications as instruments of social change. Thus, in

numerous ways — by muzzling editorial boards and shutting out various reporters,

by financially intimidating outlets into favourable or non-critical coverage, or by

preferring outlets with a similar attitude toward neoliberal reform — the Klein

administration harnessed media to further its goals.

The Klein administration ended in December 2006, when Ralph Klein retired

from politics and Ed Stelmach was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative

party and premier of Alberta. Recall, however, Alvin Finkel's characterizing of

Alberta under late Social Credit: "motivated by social conservative and rich-province

thinking." Recall also W.L. Morton's term "utopian period," referring to the rise of the

welfare state. The Klein administration did not so much transform Alberta as slip it

back in time, to an era before the memory of Lougheed's welfare state, before citizens

made demands of government. As O'Neill explains more generally, "What is peculiar

to the current concept of global capitalism is its attempt to invent for itself a return

to a history that never existed, that is, to a time when the market was free of the

state and civic encumbrances" (115). By drawing on a mythological iteration of

Alberta's history to legitimate his own government's actions, Klein left Stelmach with

a paternalistic administration that has, as much as possible, evacuated the provision

of government services to the community and the market — just as Social Credit had

done in the 1950s and 1960s — leaving resilient, resourceful, maverick Albertans to struggle on alone.[15] The same administration is responsible for the English Language Arts curriculum explored in this dissertation.

As I will explain in Chapter Five, there is continuity between the Klein administration and the curriculum — not unexpectedly, because education is an integral aspect of the state. The curriculum too depends on mythology for its success. In the case of curriculum, the myth is that of education as the great meritocratic elevator that rewards the deserving. The successful Albertan student must not only connect the Alberta myth of individualism to the education myth of elevation; the student must also conform to these myths or risk failing — academically, economically, and socially. As I will argue below, too many Albertan students are failing.

Internalizing these myths — what I might call the ideology of the common-sense story of success — the student, already constructed by prior schooling, chooses

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[15] We should recognize the various forms of "history" that may be evoked. First, there is what I have called "actual" history: the facts of human interaction at a particular geographical location in a particular era, organized by particular social relations; these facts must be understood as being at once connected to larger social moments and unique to these agents and circumstances. This is the history that academic historians attempt to reconstruct. There is also the text of history as communicated and reproduced, in popular texts and in social memory. We might call this form historiography, the analysis of the *representation* of what happened. There is further the personal, psychological experience of history, as perceived by those who live through it and as they interpret and retell it; this form is deeply subjective. All of these competing narratives, more or less "real," combine to produce a social myth, evoked to effect political work. As I will discuss below, myths function hegemonically, staking a claim for the common-sense, preferred understanding of the social world. Myth is an important aspect of the mystification of social relations in Alberta.

a path through English Language Arts courses. As I will explain in Chapter Five, however, the myth of education as social elevator contains a contradiction, which is also embedded in the English Language Arts curriculum itself.[16] Education, for some, fulfills its promise as a way to get ahead in the world. Schooling is, however, an imposition on the student: it requires adherence to a set of behaviours and attitudes — the hidden curriculum — that underpin the student's academic experience; and these required behaviours and attitudes reflect the beliefs and expectations of the dominant group.

Reflecting on the roots of Canadian public schooling, Bruce Curtis notes that

The conditions of universality in the public were the conditions of bourgeois hegemony. Access to this realm of harmony and equality, and treatment in it, depended upon the student's adoption of behavioural traits with a specific content, and also upon the visible adoption of signs of a particular orientation to this sphere. This, of course, is precisely mediation; respect for private property became respect for the teacher in the educational domain. 'Respect for others' came in practice to be seen as personal cleanliness, punctuality, orderliness. ... Educational practice contributed to the construction of

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[16] Bruce Curtis observes that such contradictions are integral to the structure of a stratified society:

But capitalist societies exist on the basis of a range of social contradictions whose maintenance is continuously problematic. General rights to property, formal equality before the law, citizenship, are the practical bases for substantive propertylessness, inequality, political exclusion and subordination. (369)

bourgeois hegemony by normalizing particular forms of character and
comportment. (370–71)

Historically, some students were expected to fail to adopt and demonstrate these traits; when they did so, their failure might be attributed to issues of class. Curtis continues: "Educational failure became individual social failure, and in this way class differentiation has come to be defended as an individual characteristic rather than opposed as a form of social violence" (374). Not much has changed in more than a century. Today, if a student is unsuccessful in dealing with the imposition of either the hidden curriculum or the overt curriculum, the failure is situated in the individual (the agent) — in her/his lack of motivation, intellectual ability, or cultural readiness — rather than in the school or the system (that is, the social construct of schooling).

The shadow side of the education myth obscures what Gramsci identifies as "the dualistic nature of education, a process which can be at once an instrument of social control and a force for liberation" (Green, *Education and State* 98). It is this duality that I will explore in Chapter Six as the reason we may hope, through struggle, to interrupt the process of hegemonic social reproduction and change the world.

Writing in 2001, historian Gerald Friesen asked rhetorically,

What is the most profound defining moment of Albertans' relations with the rest of Canada in the last three generations? I suggest it is their response to the National Energy Policy during the 1980s. What would Albertans pick out

as the most important public policy decision to affect their lives in the last

thirty years? I suggest the so-called Klein Revolution of 1993 to 1997. What

do Albertans see as a collective birthright? Lower taxes than other Canadians

pay? What is the archetypal story encountered by visitors from other parts?

How about the 'amazing true inspirational testimonial,' told by someone who

heard it from someone who knew the person, wherein a former gasfield

worker or restaurant employee begins knitting toques or moulding fudge in a

basement or garage and, before you can turn around, is worth a million,

maybe two? ("Defining the Prairies" 21)

The reason Alberta's provincial myth endures — the reason the "amazing true
inspirational testimonial" is so persuasive — has to do with narrative. As Neil
Postman explains, "The purpose of a narrative is to give meaning to the world, not to
describe it scientifically. The measure of a narrative's 'truth' or 'falsity' is in its
consequences: Does it provide people with a sense of personal identity, a sense of a
community life, a basis for moral conduct, explanations of that which cannot be
known?" (*End* 7). Alberta's provincial myth functions as narrative, to provide identity
and direction even to Alberta newcomers — and it is also highly effective, as Terry
Eagleton observes: "Ideology ... is always most effective when invisible" (*Ideology*
xvii).

The evocation of Alberta's mythological values of rugged individualism, stoic
endurance, resourcefulness, and independence invites the populace to embrace a
largely uncontested narrative of Alberta history, a narrative articulated in the
interests of those telling the story, for

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them;
> simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and
> eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an
> explanation but that of a statement of fact. (Barthes, *Mythologies* 143)

As De Neufville and Barton add, "One need not believe a myth to be literally true to take its message as true. Myths express ideas and emotions which resonate in their listeners" (183). Even though Albertans' *actual* history is much more collectivist than individualist, much more activist than stoic, much more conformist than maverick, the *myth* makes a better story.

Harder notes that

> Alberta's neoliberal state has developed an impressive arsenal of techniques
> and strategies to displace politics from the provincial state, but ... the
> imposition of neoliberal policies and techniques of governance [is] also subject
> to contestation and negotiation. ... Indeed, despite its intention, the provincial
> government has regularly been forced to maintain a role for the state in
> protecting the extra-economic well-being of its citizens. (150)

One lesson Alberta history can show us is that when Albertans change governments, they do so decisively and absolutely. In this lesson is hope that a new Alberta government may arise, and with it may develop a new relationship between citizens and state.

Concluding Thoughts

Alberta today is a troubling jurisdiction. It is no longer rural, but it is still governed — and largely perceived by the rest of Canada — as if it were. Like a spoiled child, it continues decades later to nurse the insults of the 1936 default and the 1980 National Energy Program, and remains hostile to the rest of Canada (much like Québec, although for vastly different reasons — and of course Alberta is vigorously anti-French). In so many ways, Alberta remains the hinterland it yearns not to be.[17] Its petroleum economy continues to provide a high standard of living for many Albertans and, through Canada's federal transfer-payment system, for Canadians overall; but the oil and gas sector, like forestry and agriculture, is a primary, resource-extraction economy. Alberta's resources still tend to be sent elsewhere for value-adding. Certainly there has been diversification in Alberta since

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[17] In 2005, Trevor Harrison described Alberta as "a resource hinterland to the United States" ("Introduction" 17), acknowledging that Alberta remains in effect the colony it purportedly wishes not to be, although the colonizer has changed. More recently, McKenna reported,

> Canada is exporting more commodities priced in cheap U.S. dollars to developing countries — oil, iron ore, wood pulp, copper, fertilizer and the like. At the same time, the country is exporting relatively fewer value-added manufactured products to the United States and other more advanced economies. ... Canadian policy makers talk a lot about making Canada a knowledge-based economy. But at times it appears Ottawa is content with the more traditional role of hewer-of-wood and drawer-of-water. (n.pag)

Like other Canadian provinces, Alberta, still a largely resource-based economy despite eagerly adopting neoliberalism and globalization, continues to have a problematic relationship with world economies.

the 1950s, but arguably much of it has been narrowly focussed on support for the petroleum economy.

Alberta's history — aspects of which are distorted, exaggerated, or ignored completely in the continuous renewal of the provincial mythology — has become the legitimating agent of the provincial government. On Thursday, February 24, 2011, for example, the Honourable Lloyd Snelgrove delivered the Alberta budget for 2011–12. In his closing remarks, he said,

Mr. Speaker, as I look at my parents today, I can't help but recognize that we Albertans have been given an opportunity and a quality of life available to very few in this world. It didn't happen by accident. It was the hard work of generations of Albertans that has made this province what it is today and the foresight of successive governments in creating the framework of fiscal strength and flexibility that allows us to continue building for tomorrow even during difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, this budget remains true to the pioneering spirit and values that made this province what it is today. It shows confidence in our people and in our future. It sets us on a path to join together with all Albertans to build a better Alberta. (59)

When Alberta resists a federal decision, the provincial government evokes again the tyranny of Ottawa the colonizer and animates again the values of autonomy, independence, individualism, and distinctiveness. Alberta's history in fact reveals a very different relationship to power. Alberta's creation as a province was informed by explicitly economic interests, and from its earliest existence as a political entity it has been marked by economic liberalism. Alberta history may have produced a strongly

anti-elitist ethos, but instead of embracing egalitarianism and collectivism, Albertans as a group appear staunchly individualistic. Yet as Takach quips, "Individuality is trumpeted to the moon, while on the ground, conformity is orchestrated carefully, quietly and ruthlessly" (335).

The myth of the maverick Alberta is especially problematic because of its apparent naturalness, the ease with which we find affirmation of its claims: to the common-sense experience of many Albertans, the provincial myth *seems* to be true, so it must *be* true. As Roland Barthes observes, this logic reflects "the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature" (*Mythologies* 129). This apparent naturalness signals the explicit, deliberate, and protracted constructedness of the Alberta mythology — built, as examples in this chapter have shown, by political interests for reasons of power and drawing on the media for support and reinforcement.

More than a century after joining confederation, Alberta has considerable political ground still to explore. As Harrison observes, "One tradition [in Alberta] is that of one-party rule, revolving around a strong party leader. Only four parties have ever governed in Alberta.... The effect of this tradition ... has been to prevent the development of a sufficient number of strong, independent political sites within which a pluralist system of democracy can thrive" ("Making the Trains" 119–20). One tradition Alberta lacks is being consistently socially liberal and politically open-minded. During the late Social Credit era, under the leadership of Ernest Manning, Alberta positioned itself as socially conservative, banning books, censoring movies, regulating social action, endorsing fundamental Christian values, and otherwise behaving as a paternalistic, authoritarian state. During the early Progressive Conservative era, Alberta positioned itself as more socially liberal, embracing the arts, social advocacy, and cosmopolitanism. During the late Progressive Conservative

era, since the first collapse of booming resource revenues, fiscal and social

conservatism has had to share a home with economic liberalism and the re-

affirmation of individual rights claims, including (grudgingly, inconsistently) the

rights of racial minorities, same-sex couples, and economic immigrants.[18] What

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[18] More recently, as the developed world has moved into a "post-neoliberal" era, we

can observe attempts, within Alberta and globally, to recuperate some remnants of

the former welfare state, reconditioned to make redistribution more attractive to

contemporary political outlooks because "redistributive arguments based on

conceptions of need, altruism, and social rights have lost credibility" (Midgley 4).

Such efforts are described by the label "social investment state," in which

governments position spending as a form of investment in citizens, the dividends to

be paid for years in the future through greater employment, reduced reliance on

social safety nets like unemployment insurance and social assistance, improved

health and wellness outcomes, and overall greater social cohesion and reduced social

exclusion (Bernard and Boucher; Jenson and Saint-Martin). Social investment states

argue that "social policy should be 'productive,' rather than distributive and

consumption oriented" (Jenson and Saint-Martin 86). What is notable about the

social investment state is that it capitulates to the lingering demands of

neoliberalism by continuing to insist that a person's life chances are a private,

individual matter: "a social investment state should emphasize equality of life

chances. This involves *distribution and redistribution of opportunities and

capabilities more than of resources*" (Jenson and Saint-Martin 91; emphasis added).

As well, responsibility for the delivery of social goods is shared among government,

the corporate sector, non-profit and voluntary providers, and the family, instead of

being vested with the state and funded through economic policies such as taxation

and transfer payments (Campaign2000.ca; Jenson and Saint-Martin; Midgley).

Organizations such as Campaign 2000, which has the expressed goal of ending child

poverty, now find that they must engage in strategic partnerships with corporations

to fund programs and services that were formerly government responsibilities, and

there is a strongly moralizing bent to many groups' work, reminding us perhaps of

the concept of the "deserving" poor of earlier eras (see Finkel, *Social Policy*).

Education is closely implicated in the social investment state: "Widening access,

Alberta has never been is genuinely socialist, in the sense of confronting and

overturning the structures that produce material difference.

Friesen, referring to Gramsci, notes, "an elite exercises power in society by

shaping the cultural context within which everyone operates" ("Imagined West" 196).

As I will argue in the chapters that follow, the specific political economy of Alberta

has interacted with the curricula of Alberta's departments of education over the

decades, and in particular in the production of the 2003 English Language Arts

curriculum. Curriculum is embedded in a set of social relations and is produced by

specific economic factors: not neutral, not accidental. History — a set of social

relations in the context of political economy — has produced the Alberta I inhabit

today and the English Language Arts curriculum that today's high school students

encounter.

This curriculum, cloaked in language of choice and rational decision-making,

both informs and is informed by Alberta's neoliberal cultural context. As Peter J.

Smith explains,

> One of the objectives of the Klein government has been to encourage
>
> Albertans to alter their expectations of government.... Albertans have had to

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higher standards, and the expansion of tertiary education are part of the official

mantra believed to deliver opportunity, prosperity, and justice" (Brown,

"Opportunity" 381). What the shift to the rhetoric of social investment means for this

dissertation is a return to the view of education as a form of human capital with an

expectation of a return on the investment: "National economic goals are still inviolate

and education is instrumentally geared towards these ends" (Green, "Education"

196); drawing on the discourse of finance, this rhetoric speaks not of social goods to

be shared but of social loans to be repaid with interest.

become more self-disciplined, more self-reliant, and willing to conform to the

demands of the global market. (303)

The 2003 English Language Arts curriculum is a functional, rhetorical curriculum

explicitly designed to produce streams of workers with varying critical-thinking skills

and consumers of various kinds of media, including new media. This emphasis on

mass-media consumption is not accidental in a province whose leaders have

depended on radio and television — and more recently on sophisticated public

relations campaigns — to communicate with Albertans about economics, society, and

government policy.

In Chapter Five, I will demonstrate through close reading and critical

discourse analysis that Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum, prepared

under the aegis of the Klein administration, explicitly and deliberately produces

competition, accommodation, and stratification: key elements of neoliberalism that

perpetuate social inequality in Alberta.

Chapter 5: A Close Reading of the 2003 Curriculum

Having reviewed the context in which the 2003 Alberta English Language Arts curriculum was produced, in this chapter I undertake a close reading of that curriculum to reveal both what it says and what is *not* said. Here close reading — a typical tool of literary analysis — is informed by the practices of critical discourse analysis to read against the grain of the curriculum document. Through my examination of the document's gaps and silences, I will demonstrate an alignment between the streamed program of studies and the neoliberal ethos of its creation — an alignment that produces significant material effects for students. Although at a practical level the curriculum is a document — an instrument of policy — at a semiotic level the curriculum represents the striations of power and annunciation of symbolic violence.

Former Alberta premier Ralph Klein has stated publicly that his administration had no plan for dealing with Alberta's boom between 2001 and 2006 (Fekete), and this claim may be true on a large scale. However, whether deliberately or serendipitously, one of the costliest and further-reaching ministries — the Ministry of Education — has been preparing Alberta's graduates since 2001 (when the pilot phase of the new ELA curriculum began) for the Alberta they will graduate into: an Alberta where intellectual and physical labour are segregated experiences, and where the vocational and academic streams are now more deterministic than they have been for decades.

In Alberta, the newly constructed English Language Arts classroom (formerly just English) represents a specific departure point for secondary students.[1] Here they move beyond basic literacy — the basis of their education to this point — and into one of two streams of study.[2] Thus streamed, they will either add cultural literacy to

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[1] The shift in naming, which occurred with the launch of the new curriculum, reflects a shift in focus, echoing larger tensions within the discipline of English: from a subject that transmitted the literature and culture of an empire to a subject that attempts to reduce language and text to matters of mechanics and process.

[2] In the interests of clarity, I note that there exists a further stream of study for students experiencing extraordinary difficulties with language and literacy: the -4 stream. Introduced in 2006, these courses — referred to as Knowledge and Employability English Language Arts 10-4, 20-4, 30-4 — have as their "core responsibility ... to foster and strength the development of language" (Alberta Education, *Knowledge* 3). Superficially, this program of study is similar in structure to that for the -1 and -2 streams, and the general outcomes echo those in the -1 and -2 streams. On closer investigation, however, the subpoints under the general outcomes are fewer and much more basic than those in the -1 and -2 streams (Alberta Education, *Knowledge* 9–36). More importantly, these courses do not qualify a student to leave high school with a diploma (see Government of Alberta, *Guide* 86): only ELA 30-1 or ELA 30-2 may be presented for diploma credit. Relatively few students are enrolled in the -4 stream, and many of those who are require further academic intervention for a variety of behavioural, intellectual, and medical reasons. (Significantly, aboriginal students are singled out in the curriculum preamble with the explanation "Knowledge and Employability courses serve to facilitate positive experiences that will help Aboriginal students better see themselves in the curriculum" [Alberta Education, *Knowledge* 9], a statement that certainly says something about how Alberta Education views the aboriginal community, although what exactly it may mean is beyond the scope of this dissertation.) Because students cannot complete a high school diploma using these courses, I will exclude this stream from further discussion.

their existing language skills, engaging critical thinking and opening the door to further, high-status studies; or they will affirm practical, technicist literacy, fulfilling the needs of employers and the functional communication requirements of the workplace. Such streaming is by no means accidental, either. Reba Page argues that "teachers restrict knowledge to control 'trouble'" (207), and — as I will demonstrate below — controlling students' claims to literacy importantly limits their personal, educational, and economic trajectories.

English language arts — a contemporary iteration of the grammar and rhetoric studied by the cultural elite in eras past — is the underpinning requirement for graduation and post-secondary study in Alberta, as elsewhere. It is central to achievement in other academic subjects because expressive and receptive language skills underpin learning in all fields.[3] The six language arts — reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing — encompass skills vital for success in the modern world, particularly in the emerging "knowledge economy," in which service jobs dominate and economic growth depends on the exploitation of research and intellectual property. Alberta's current English Language Arts curriculum divides language learning into vocational and academic streams, emphasizing "communication for pragmatic purposes" and "career development directions" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6). It is a curriculum that transmits consistent, albeit

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[3] The curriculum document itself says,

> While students learn about language in all subject areas and in contexts outside of school, English language arts teachers have a central role in language learning because of their focus on language, its forms and its functions. It is the English language arts teacher who helps students develop and apply strategies for comprehending, responding to and creating a variety of texts in a variety of situations. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 2)

contradictory, hegemonic messages, that domesticates resistance among Alberta teachers and students, and that helps both to produce and to reproduce Alberta's class structure and capitalist ideology.

Alberta, like other capitalist economies, requires an extensive state apparatus to organize and defend the interests of capital. Organized, state-sponsored public schooling, as Andy Green discusses, emerges through state formation to confirm the legitimacy of existing social structures. Adopting a classical Marxist perspective, Green explains, "the state represents the interests of the dominant class as a universal interest. ... The universality of the state is an illusion, but it is a necessary illusion for those classes seeking hegemony over subordinate classes" (*Education and State* 89). From this perspective, the state is necessarily, inherently politically active in the interests of capital (albeit in sometimes contradictory ways), and formal education is thus an instrument of economic policy as well as a matter of social policy, as I have noted above. Curriculum, then, is not only educational policy but government policy: highly political, and in no way neutral. In the case of Alberta, a petroleum state, the well-being of transnational investors and the maintenance of a business-friendly environment — including pliant workers, structural adjustment to social programs, and financial incentives to business — is critical to a robust economy. Louis Althusser noted decades ago the tight relationship between the state and education, identifying the school as the most important Ideological State Apparatus:

> the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of established order, i.e., a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers.... In other words, the school (but also other State institutions

like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how,' but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice.' (132–33)

Thus I will argue that the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum in Alberta is employed instrumentally in the interests of the provincial state, serving the needs of the businesses that receive students after graduation by teaching them the "know-how" of Alberta's neoliberal ideology, in addition to the more overt lessons of literature, literacy, interpretation, and evaluation. Importantly, I must observe that the reading of the curriculum document I present below is *not* the preferred reading: it is a historically situated and highly resistant reading. Other readings are of course possible.

Starting Points: The Sociology of Education

To put it simply, "Schooling matters" (Davies and Guppy 2). Contemporary society is increasingly organized around schooling, engendering the sense that "more and more social problems ... have educational solutions" (Davies and Guppy 3). The sociology of education, an area of specialization within the larger discipline of the foundations of education (alongside the history and the philosophy of education), acknowledges that education is a key institution of modern societies and seeks to understand how education is structured, how it functions, and what consequences it produces.

The nominal purpose of schooling is to socialize young people to the norms and values of their larger culture by transmitting the knowledge the culture deems

valuable. How this socialization is accomplished and what it signals is a matter of perspective. There are, broadly speaking, two major traditions: functionalism, following the sociological tradition of Emile Durkheim and widely popularized in North America through the writing of Talcott Parsons; and conflict theory, deriving from the philosophy and materialist analysis of Karl Marx. Recently the ideas of Max Weber have become more common in discussions of the sociology of education, bringing another perspective to the analysis of the social fact of schooling. Although they are in many ways complementary to the conflict theories of Marxism, Weber's theories examine the world in ways that are more resonant since the rise of postmodernism (Collins 81–92). Durkheim, Marx, and Weber "offer competing visions of social structure and of social dynamics, as well as of the relation between the collective and the individual or of social psychology" (Wexler 9).

Within these visions exist many variations. Human capital theory, for example, traces the relationships between schooling and work. This approach owes an intellectual debt to Durkheimian sociology but with a more individual focus than Durkheim adopted. On the conflict side, there are political economy theorists, such as Michael Apple, who interpret social structure and reproduction through the relations of production; and critical pedagogues, such as Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, who argue for liberatory education through critical literacy. Theories of the sociology of education may adopt a feminist, anti-racist, pro-environment, or other orientation within their larger perspective. Content from other schools of sociology has also influenced the sociology of education: for instance, the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose theories of habitus, doxa, educational capital, and social capital have inspired many scholars.

As a conflict theorist, I understand the function of schooling to be sorting and selecting: identifying students for particular roles in the capitalist society and

structuring their passage through the education system to produce a limited set of trajectories. As Bowles and Gintis explain, "schools produce workers" (10). This function occurs both through the announced curriculum and through the hidden curriculum, an assimilation or rejection of middle-class "values of conformity, competitiveness, deferred gratification, obedience to authority, and adjustment to success and failure" (Wotherspoon, *Sociology* 19). I also understand schooling to be predicated on the manufacturing of scarcity: education is a finite resource that must be rationed and competed for, and only those students who "deserve" access to it (however "deserving" is determined) should have it. At the same time, those students who have the economic and social means to gain admission to highly desirable education thereby protect their families' investments in them and conserve their status.

Therefore, only some students have access to high-status knowledge, by which I mean the knowledge that leads to university and potentially to well-paid, secure employment and relatively high social status. Post-graduation success is regulated by achievement — grades — in the K–12 system and is necessarily competitive; after all, there can be only so many "smart" kids, and there are only so many top marks to go around. Competition for the resource — and biases built into the system through class, race, gender and other markers of difference — produces unequal results called stratification. Bowles and Gintis, some of the first critics of capitalist schooling in America, explain:

> Schools foster legitimate inequality through the ostensibly meritocratic manner by which they reward and promote students, and allocate them to distinct positions in the occupational hierarchy. ... Schools foster types of personal development compatible with the relationships of dominance and

subordinacy in the economic sphere, and finally, schools create surpluses of

skilled labor sufficiently extensive to render effective the prime weapon of the

employer in disciplining labor — the power to hire and fire. (11)

A touchstone of my analysis, then, is the question, Who benefits? Conflict theorists of

the sociology of education seek to understand in whose interests particular processes

or policies operate. From this perspective, power circulates as a dynamic social force,

as those who have power seek to retain it and those who want power seek to gain it.

A substantial literature exists in the sociology of education about the ways in

which schools and teachers contribute to maintaining differences between social

classes. Historically, Green demonstrates, national school systems arose in the

nineteenth century to protect the interests of the dominant classes, whether those

interests (which vary from nation to nation) were nationalism, class discipline, class

consolidation, or economic liberalism (*Education and State* 26–75). Today we know

that children and youth growing up in families with lower socio-economic status tend

to do less well in academic pursuits, are less likely to complete secondary school, and

tend to be less successful when entering the labour market than those from more

advantaged backgrounds (Willms, *Vulnerable* 1, *passim*; see also O'Neill). In

examining the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum, I am tracing both in

whose interests the document has been produced and in whose interests specific

kinds of graduates are produced. If "the curriculum undertakes the creation of

consciousness" (Berlin in Shor, "Critical Literacy"), then I argue that the Alberta

curriculum produces a consciousness of differentiated school outcomes, in effect

constructing as -1 or -2 quality — that is, as high-status or low-status learners — the

students who eventually graduate from the program and take their place in Alberta's work force.[4]

Reading the Curriculum: What It Says

From its opening lines, the 2003 Alberta English Language Arts curriculum declares its economic interests, positioning teachers as the agents who control access to finite resources. The first sentence of paragraph two reads,

An appreciation of literature and an ability to use language effectively enhance students' opportunities to become responsible, contributing citizens and lifelong learners while experiencing success and fulfillment in life. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1)

With the invocation of "opportunities," students are explicitly positioned as market subjects: "responsible, *contributing* citizens" whose "success and fulfillment" are integrally tied to — if not synonymous with — economic achievement in a capitalist society — much like the familiar "pursuit of happiness."[5] The document continues:

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[4] I recognize that there are also students who do not complete ELA 30-1 or 30-2 and therefore are not graduates (because successful completion of a 30-level English Language Arts or French Language Arts course is a requirement for graduation). Although their experiences of high school language arts are significant, their reasons for not completing high school, and thus those experiences, are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[5] Seeing these lines in isolation, readers may not perceive the key diction of neoliberalism. However, after almost a decade under the Klein administration,

> As strong language users, students will be able to meet Alberta's graduation requirements and will be prepared for entry into post-secondary studies or the workplace. Students will also acquire employability skills: the fundamental, personal management and teamwork skills they need to enter, stay in and progress in the world of work. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1)

Having initially declared that the aims of English Language Arts instruction are "to encourage ... an understanding and appreciation of the significance and artistry of literature" and "to enable each student to understand appreciate language and to use it confidently and competently" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1), the curriculum explicitly ties the outcomes of literary study to future economic achievement.

The last sentence of the second paragraph presents a curiously ambiguous direction: "Senior high school students must be prepared to meet evolving literacy demands in Canada and the international community" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1). If we focus on the passive construction *must be prepared*, we may to wonder about the lack of agency in the sentence. Does the sentence imply that students should prepare themselves for the "evolving literacy demands" of the globalized workplace, or does it imply that teachers are obligated to prepare students for these "evolving literacy demands"? In this context, "evolving literacy demands" refer not only to the ability to perform research with the assistance of technology and the ability to consume text in a variety of print, broadcast, and digital formats, but also to the preparation to use language arts skills in a variety of workplace applications,

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Albertans in 2003 were very familiar with these and other, similar words and phrases. See Harrison 2005; see also Harvey.

regardless of the workplace.[6] No matter how we read this sentence, if a student is unsuccessful in meeting the "evolving literacy demands" of the workplace, that failing is personal and individual, not structural or ideological, as the curriculum explains in subsequent pages.[7]

The curriculum next explains why it is important for students to study literature: "The study of literature allows students to experience, *vicariously*, persons, places, times and events that may be far removed from their day-to-day experiences" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1; emphasis added). The invocation of "appreciation" in the second paragraph of the document has already appealed to the liberal-humanist tradition of literature as the key to an enlightened life: "This tradition aims at the nurture of civic leaders, cultivated people whose combination of eloquence and virtue would enable them to direct society through persuasion rather than force" (Schrag 271).[8] Eagleton notes, however, that the liberal-humanist tradition has also been particularly effective at keeping the instrumental classes

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[6] The lines also imply that somehow the future is known to someone (other than the student), although who that knower may be is not clear.

[7] Readers may also wonder why Alberta high school students should be concerned about global evolving literacy demands. As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, Alberta has consistently ranked at the top of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores. As they are citizens of one of the wealthiest provinces in one of the world's wealthiest countries, Alberta students' ability to compete with workers globally is a concern for the mobility of capital, not for cultural literacy.

[8] Note, however, as I will discuss below, that the appreciation of literature is emphasized in -1 stream, while the -2 stream emphasizes popular, functional texts and mass-media documents.

satisfied. It grants readers access to images of a nobler life, presented in mystified, elevated language, while maintaining the economic status quo:

> The actually impoverished experience of the mass of people, an impoverishment bred by their social conditions, can be supplemented by literature: instead of working to change such conditions ... you can *vicariously* fulfill someone's desire for a fuller life by handing them *Pride and Prejudice*. (Eagleton, *Literary* 23; emphasis added)

Satisfaction of the desire for a better life may be achieved "vicariously" (as the curriculum document itself suggests), without dismantling the inequities of capitalism or removing the stratification of society; such a result is certainly aligned with liberal and neoliberal philosophy. Historically, English studies have proved a valuable mechanism for social control. Reason, order, status, and hierarchy are values transmitted in much canonical literature, values that the lower and middle classes have been taught to recognize and internalize (although nonconformity, resistance, and independence are also values in some canonical literature). Alberta's new curriculum moves no distance beyond this history, a fact that should be unsurprising, based on Alberta's neoliberal context:

> The conservative face of the new appears in its function as a mechanism whereby oppositional modes of thinking are sutured into the prevailing regimes of truth in order to maintain a particular symbolic order. The discourse of the new can serve to anchor emergent modes of thinking in traditional categories that help support rather than disrupt the prevailing social order. In this way, the discourse of the new operates conservatively to

tame counterhegemonic ways of making sense which threaten the coherence
of the social imaginary. In its conservative manifestation, the appeal to new-
ness serves as a guarantor of repetition, an articulating instrument whereby
the preconstructed categories that comprise the symbolic infrastructure of
the social imaginary are sustained through moments of historical crisis by
their dissimulation in the guise of the new. In this way the appeal to the new
serves as an instrument of hegemony, working to reproduce the subjectivities
that will be adequate to capital's extending markets and to elicit consent to
the ways things are. (Hennessy 103–04)

Despite its appeals to new technology, new pedagogical approaches (e.g.,
metacognition), new media, and the new literacy demands, the current Alberta
curriculum represents a mechanism by which the elite can learn and teach how to
manage opposition.

The curriculum document continues:

Literature invites students to reflect on the significance of cultural values
and the fundamentals of human existence; to think about and discuss
essential, universal themes; and to grapple with the intricacies of the human
condition. *The study of literature provides students with the opportunity to
develop self-understanding.* (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1; emphasis
added)

As Peter McLaren points out, literature bears a great cultural load:

These works are revered as high-status knowledge since purportedly the force of history has heralded them as such and placed them on book lists in respected cultural institutions such as universities. Here literacy becomes a weapon that can be used against those groups who are "culturally illiterate," whose social class, race, or gender renders their own experiences and stories as too unimportant to be worthy of investigation. That is, as a pedagogical tool, a stress on the great books often deflects attention away from the personal experiences of students and the political nature of everyday life. Teaching the great books is also a way of inculcating certain values and sets of behaviors in social groups, thereby solidifying the existing social hierarchy. (186)[9]

From a historical materialist perspective, the study of literature — whether of the great white traditional canon or of the more recent, more gender- and race-inclusive alternative canon — promotes the interests of power to maintain stability in the relations of production.[10] Canon formation — the assigning of value to "literature" —

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[9] Of course, not teaching the great books also enables their conservation and protection by interested groups.

[10] Some scholars may insist that there are some texts that do not "deserve" critical interest, that are not "worthy" of critical attention or interpretation. They will rationalize their exclusions on the basis of academic focus and curriculum, finite resources of time and money, pressures of genre and relevance, and many similar arguments. What such exclusion demonstrates, regardless of rationalization, is that textual evaluation is based on taste; it is an acquired preference, disconnected from any essential qualities of a text itself. Therefore it is political, constructed, and remediable.

is a conservative strategy of valuing the past and reinforcing tradition by preserving

received values and attitudes. In making functional claims on behalf of the study of

literature on the heels of its various economic claims, what the curriculum

establishes is a form of "self-understanding" inflected by a student's distinction (or

lack thereof), educational and social capital, and recognition of her place in the

workplace. In other words, stratification — explicit sorting and selecting — is at

work in this curriculum.

In Alberta, English Language Arts is organized in two streams "to

accommodate a diverse range of student needs, interests and aspirations" (Alberta

Learning, *Senior High* 5).[11] Having identified a long list of ways in which the streams

(in the curriculum referred to as "sequences") are similar, the document explains,

"There are, however, important differences between the two course sequences. ... In

general, differences between the two course sequences correspond to differences in

student needs, interests and aspirations" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6).[12] What

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[11] We might ask how "diverse" a range of students may be accommodated between
only two streams (supplemented in some systems by enhanced instruction through
International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programming). I would
counter that real diversity might be better accommodated in mixed classrooms, as I
will discuss below.

[12] The language of choice, individual interests and preferences, and self-direction
continues throughout the document. For instance, when explaining minimum
requirements for text study and text creation, the curriculum notes, "Using these
minimum requirements as a guide, jurisdictions and schools are free to specify
additional requirements as best fits the needs, interests and aspirations of their
students and the expectations of their local communities" (Alberta Learning, *Senior
High* 10 and 11). The introduction to the curriculum underlines this idea, stating,
"Jurisdictions and schools are encouraged to increase requirements for text study
beyond these minimum requirements, as time permits, when such extension would

this breezy appeal to "interests and aspirations" (and elsewhere "choice" and "preference") ignores is the longer-term consequences of students' choosing: the

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meet the needs, interests and aspirations of their students and the expectations of their communities" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 8–9). Elsewhere, explaining how the source sequences are populated, the document notes, "Teachers need to understand the differences between the two course sequences in terms of their students' needs, interests and aspirations to ensure that appropriate placement occurs and to accommodate student differences within each course when the classroom is blended" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7). The document continues,

> Local jurisdictions will continue to group students for instruction to meet their needs and the needs of the local community. Some schools may choose to group students by past achievement, according to Grade 9 results, or by teacher evaluation of course sequences appropriateness, according to Grade 10 results within the first two weeks. Some schools will offer separate English language arts courses at each grade level. Other schools may choose to offer a blended English language arts course at each grade level and to differentiate instruction to meet student needs, interests and aspirations within the blended classroom. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7–8)

In her article "When Martha Met Goliath: Feminists and the State in Alberta," Lisa Lambert outlines how the Klein administration attempted to intercept a feminist discourse by shifting its departmental language from "violence against women" to "family violence." Lambert's analysis finds that this manipulation of language "places all responsibility on the shoulders of individuals" (42). I would argue that a similar ideologically driven manipulation of language is present in the ELA curriculum. (Whether the curriculum writers themselves intended this manipulation is quite another question and beyond the scope of this dissertation.) Readers may also note that the quoted passages give schools explicit permission to create "split" classes, in acknowledgement of the needs produced by the shift to school-based budgets, another legacy of Klein-era structural adjustment.

streams in no way produce equal paths for student futures. The curriculum acknowledges this point, observing,

> Since the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence provides for the study of text
> at a variety of different levels of sophistication, to meet the needs of a more
> diverse student population in terms of student aspirations and abilities,
> students who aspire to post-secondary education, but not necessarily to
> careers related to the English language arts, may register in this course
> sequence. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7)[13]

This statement is intensely misleading: regardless of what "careers related to the English language arts" may be, this stream is not appropriate for any student seeking university admission, whether in a faculty of arts, science, education, or business. The document mentions this issue in passing, commenting,

> Not all post-secondary institutions, however, accept ELA 30-2 for entry. In
> general students who plan to attend a post-secondary institution, regardless
> of their specific career aspirations, need to familiarize themselves with the
> entry requirement of the institution and program they plan to enter. (Alberta
> Learning, *Senior High* 7)

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[13] It is worth noting that the corollary of stating that the -2 stream suits "a more diverse student population in terms of student aspirations and abilities" is that the -1 stream suits a less diverse — or more exclusive — student population. Not saying so is a rhetorical tactic referred to as enthymeme, or the absence of part of the argument.

Here the document shifts responsibility for program selection to the individual again, without providing the crucial piece of information — information that was widely known when the curriculum pilot was completed in 2003 — that Alberta's universities do not accept ELA 30-2 for admission to any university program.[14]

Having established that the outcomes of the programs of study are distinct, the curriculum also identifies differences within the streams:

> In terms of student needs, there are different expectations for students in each course sequence. For example, in relation to the study of texts, standards vary according to *the complexity of the materials and the development of reading skills*. Generally, *these standards are lower for students in the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence*.... This example illustrates that differences in student needs may be related to the degree of independence demonstrated and the level of skills acquired. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4; emphasis added)[15]

No educator would deny that students present individual differences. These differences may have less to do with individual ability, however, and more to do with the student's background, as the sociology of education reminds us. We need to

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[14] Note that ELA 30-2 is accepted for admission to some programs at Grant MacEwan University (formerly Grant MacEwan College), but only to certificate and diploma programs, not to baccalaureate or university-transfer programs.

[15] Again, notice that the document identifies "these standards are lower for students in the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence": what it does not say — but clearly signals — is that standards are higher for students in the -1 stream.

remember that students do not arrive at school as autonomous beings; rather, they come with histories and different degrees of preparation for the many tasks of schooling. Davies and Guppy observe that,

> Education systems long have channelled students into different types of schools and programs based on a belief that not all students can benefit from the same curriculum. ... Students in upper tiers are exposed to advanced mathematics and great literary works, while those in lower tiers focus on the rudiments of literacy, numeracy, and practical workplace skills. (91)[16]

On the social fact of stratification in Alberta and other Canadian provinces, Krahn and Taylor find that

> social background continues to play a significant role in the course-selection choices made by 15 year-old high school students. Specifically, students' academic placement in grade 10 math, science, and english [sic] courses was found to be strongly related to their parents' education and family income. Young people from more advantaged families were more likely than those from families where neither parent had a postsecondary education and where family incomes tended to be lower to be taking the type of math, science, and

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[16] Davies and Guppy go on to ask, "How much stratification should exist?" (91). The question of how much stratification should exist — or whether it should exist at all — is a matter of philosophy. As a materialist feminist, as a neo-Marxist, I believe that stratification is produced in the social dynamic — that it is a social construct and thus is changeable.

english [sic] courses that would keep all their postsecondary options open.

(n.pag)

Their findings echo those of Jeannie Oakes from more than twenty years earlier. After surveying 297 classes in 25 schools, Oakes found that "the students who are the least advantaged experience a diminished quality of schooling" (*Keeping* 197); the continuity from Oakes to Krahn and Taylor is not accidental. The Alberta curriculum thereby signals that it resonates in the context of Alberta's political economy and transmits its norms and expectations. By suggesting that "student needs, interest and aspirations" can be met by programs of study that produce different outcomes — through the pacing of instruction, the complexity of materials, and the skill level learned — the curriculum document signals its awareness of the communicative context of its own production: Alberta's political economy. Using tactics complementary to the norms and expectations of neoliberalism, it subtly directs students to socially constructed outcomes.

The curriculum document continues:

To provide comparison for the same specific outcome, students in the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence are expected to understand the subtle nuances and symbolic language found in increasingly sophisticated literary texts. To do this successfully, these students are expected to develop close reading skills in order to understand contextual elements and subtext. In addition to developing reading comprehension skills, students in the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence may need to develop or improve critical and analytical reading skills. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6)

Read another way, this statement explains that students in the -2 stream receive

limited instruction in critical thinking, while expectations for critical thinking in the

-1 stream are high.[17] The reason students in the -1 stream "need to develop or

improve critical and analytical reading skills" is that these are the high-status skills,

the skills required for success in university. Since students in the -2 cannot pursue

university education, they do not need — or at least need much less developed —

critical thinking skills.[18]

Similarly, students in the -2 stream are positioned as entering the stream

with reduced abilities and leave with comparably lesser experiences. One telling

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[17] But notice that the expression "critical thinking" is referred to only once in the
entire curriculum document (of sixty-six pages), where the curriculum asserts that
"Critical thinking, learning and language arts are interrelated" (Alberta Learning,
Senior High 2).

[18] Michael Freeden, however, remarks rather dryly that even the much-vaunted
notion of "critical thinking" may be something of a ruse. Having argued that young
children are socialized to be conservative — that is, to respect tradition, to defer to
authority, strength, and power, and to keep to their position within the family
hierarchy — he notes,

> A few societies attempt to resocialize their young at a later stage and
> encourage them — within carefully confined limits — to challenge authority,
> to promote social equality, and to be wary of some hierarchies; in short, to
> think critically for themselves. But even in such societies, the outcome is only
> the establishment of a few pockets of people disposed to realize those liberal
> precepts. (Freeden 48)

Freeden thus exposes the contradiction between the commonplace "critical thinking"
and the engaged practice of critique, to which I will return in later chapters.

demonstration of the differences in the streams has to do with students' facility with sentence construction and mechanical control. The document says,

> students in the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence ... are expected to *demonstrate proficiency* with sentence construction and to be able to *review and revise texts in progress* to correct common sentence faults, such as the comma splice, run-on sentences and unintended sentence fragments, by the end of ELA 10-1. ... An additional expectation for ELA 20-1 and 30-1 is that students are expected to use punctuation and rhetorical structures in a unique way to create effect. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4; emphasis added)[19]

General mechanical control in writing is an important outcome. The addition of stylistics to the outcome for the -1 stream, however, offers those students access to more powerful, more sophisticated communicative tools — for both their expressive and receptive abilities — than those in the lower stream receive. The document continues,

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[19] In my professional experience as an instructor in the Bachelor of Communication Studies and Bachelor of Applied Communications in Professional Writing programs at Grant MacEwan University, where a mark of 65% in ELA 30-1 is a requirement for program admission, I observe that many students do not demonstrate "proficiency with sentence construction" or the ability to "correct common sentence faults." I teach two required courses in English grammar — at a baccalaureate level — to bring students to a minimum "professional" standard of competence in these and other matters.

On the other hand, students in the 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence ... are

expected to *develop* sentence construction skills and to be able to *detect and*

correct common sentence faults, such as run-on sentences and unintended

sentence fragments, over the three years they are enrolled in senior high

school. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6; emphasis added)

Not only are the expectations for student learning in the -2 stream lower; the

expected level of accomplishment is also lower. The curriculum document explains,

"These examples illustrate that differences in *student need* between the two course

sequences may also be related to differences in the *length of time needed* and the

degree of difficulty involved in learning the skills" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6;

emphasis added). But this claim seems disingenuous in context.

If "student need" were the criterion by which the course sequences were

organized, we should see students in both English 10/20/30-1 and 10/20/30-2

mastering the same skills on a different timeline. Perhaps English 10/20/30-2 would

be delivered as three full-year, ten-credit courses in recognition that some students

need more time and attention to understand certain concepts (particularly, as I

would argue, as the students have been constructed as having weaker language-arts

skills in their schooling prior to high school and enter the sequences already

stratified). Or perhaps we would abandon streams altogether and organize instead

"heterogeneous" (Oakes, *Keeping passim*) classes so that all students would receive

similar experiences. Instead, the streams are delivered on the same timeline and

diverge explicitly on content and outcomes. The standards are indeed "lower for

students in the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence": so much lower that students

in the —2 sequences cannot gain admission to Alberta universities. Perhaps some

Alberta students are not "interested" in attending university or do not "need" to do

so; but with credentialism driving competition for employment (Davies and Guppy 57–58), the "choice" to pursue the -2 stream excludes these students from many post-secondary and workplace options — or else requires that the students upgrade, likely at their own cost, later in life.[20] Positioning students' prior academic preparation and post-graduation status as a "need" or an "interest" shifts the continuation of structural inequality to a matter of rational, individual decision-making rather than a matter of government policy. This shift, evoking the ethos of rational-choice theory, or instrumental rationality, is closely aligned with neoliberal thinking.

Another example demonstrates that the streams are separated on content and status rather than academic needs or student interests. The curriculum document says,

These differences between the course sequences in terms of the emphasis on texts that students will study and create *may appeal to student interests when they make the decision* to take a particular course sequence. Students who are interested in the study of popular culture and in real-world contexts may prefer to take the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence. Students who are interested in the study, creation and *analysis* of literary texts may prefer

[20] It is also possible for students to change streams — to move out of the -2 stream and into the -1 stream or vice versa — before graduation. The routing of such change is guided by the policies of individual jurisdictions. In general, the preferred route is to go into 10-1 after completing 10-2 or into 20-1 after completing 20-2; students who complete 30-2 and wish to complete 30-1 are strongly encouraged to complete 20-1 before attempting 30-1. Students moving into the -2 stream, however, may move directly into the next grade-level course. A student's ability to move into the -1 stream depends on high and consistent achievement in the -2 stream; students may move into the -2 stream when they are unsuccessful in the -1 stream.

to take the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7; emphasis added)

This statement again implies that the streams have equal outcomes and selection of sequence is controlled by student choice or preference, an implication that is false. As readers will learn as they move deeper into the curriculum document, the key content is distinct between the streams, and the outcomes are completely different. Many students — perhaps most students — are interested in popular culture. The -2 stream will not teach them about "the study of popular culture" but may offer them the opportunity to study the *products* of popular culture, in the form of popular Hollywood films and consumer magazine articles as texts.[21] Note also the implication produced by the shift in focus in the description of the -1 stream: students in this

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[21] Then again, it may not offer such an opportunity, either. In a survey of Edmonton, Alberta, high schools, Mackey et al. found tremendous persistence in the "canon" of texts used in Grade Ten classrooms:

> The decade from 1996 to 2006 was a time of rapid transformation in contemporary media. However, such changes are reflected only to a limited extent in our findings. It comes as little surprise that traditional print genres such as novels, poetry, plays, and short stories still form the core of the curriculum, with film serving as the main non-print medium. Computers and the Internet are used in the classroom, but in a traditional role of tools to support learning rather than as texts in their own right. (Mackey, Vermeer, Storey, and DeBlois 45)

These findings are consistent with research on persistent text lists in other jurisdictions, and there is no reason to assume that Alberta's grade eleven and twelve classrooms include a greater proportion of newer or more accessible, popular culture texts or multimedia texts such as websites, television shows, or video games.

stream will study high culture (literary texts) rather than (low-brow) popular culture.[22] Again the curriculum makes its aims of stratification clear. Further, note the presence of "analysis" in the -1 stream. This term refers to critical thinking, a crucial skill in today's media-saturated world. Only some students — high-status students — will be taught the tactics to parse the rhetorical manipulation of the cultural industries. The rest, it seems, are being taught simply to consume the products of these industries.

The curriculum document makes this idea explicit in the next paragraph:

> Student interests will directly influence their future aspirations for post-secondary study as well. Since the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence provides a more in-depth study of text in terms of textual analysis, students who aspire to careers that involve the development, production, teaching and study of complex texts need to register in this course sequence. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7)

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[22] Jane Gallop notes:

> The literary academy takes as its central purpose the transmission of a culture superior to 'popular' culture. Literary criticism has traditionally tried to determine what is superior and to help the general reader, the student, appreciate those higher things to be found in literature. A central piece of the ideology of the literary academy is the belief that the artist is not only a craftsman but wise, a superior human being. ("Institutionalization" 65)

As I will continue to argue, despite its appeal to liberal humanism, English studies was originally and remains a class-based, class-biased project centred in conservatism, elitism, and the cult of individual genius.

Once again, the "need" that motivates students to pursue the -1 stream is the admissions requirements of the universities — not student preference, choice, or aspirations. If the curriculum does not make this point, however, it cannot be held accountable for the consequences of students' decisions. Student life-outcomes are thus resolutely the responsibility of the student and her/his family.

Expectations for Text Study and Text Creation

One of the two places in the curriculum document where the differences between the streams are made clear is on the pages that explain "two important sections — Minimum Requirements: Text Study and Minimum Requirements: Text Creation" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6). Reading, viewing, and listening to texts and writing about, speaking about, and representing texts are the essential skills of English language arts, so these distinctions are important. The minimum requirements also explain the "emphasis given to particular forms of texts that students will study and create. These distinctions provide assumptions about differences in student interests for each of the two course sequences" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7),[23] distinctions echoed in General Outcomes 2 and 4.[24]

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[23] The idea the curriculum is trying to express here is unclear: I am unsure how the distinctions "provide" assumptions. Perhaps what this phrasing means is that the distinctions are "based on" assumptions about students' interest. Whose assumptions these are is also unclear.

[24] The documents *English Language Arts 30-1 Information Bulletin* and *English Language Arts 30-2 Information Bulletin* both provide an examination "blueprint" that demonstrates how the general outcomes are reflected in various diploma-

The distinctions in the streams are clear:

> In terms of the emphases on texts that students will create, differences occur
> in the types of responses that will be generated. While the ELA 10-2, 20-2,
> 30-2 course sequence places a greater degree of emphasis on the creation of
> *personal responses to contexts* (elements present in any communication
> situation), the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence places a greater degree
> of emphasis on the creation of *personal responses to texts*. Further, the ELA
> 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence places a greater degree of emphasis on
> critical/analytical responses to *literary texts*, while the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2
> course sequence places a greater degree of emphasis on critical/analytical
> responses to *print and nonprint texts other than literary texts*. (Alberta
> Learning, *Senior High* 7; emphasis added)

The curriculum thus makes plain its assumptions about levels of student
sophistication and ability. The -2 stream emphasizes personal expression, not
cultural understanding, while the -1 stream emphasizes critical engagement with
culture and literature, clearly distinguished from other print and nonprint text
forms. Students in the -1 stream are being taught high-status knowledge, as a single
sentence from the curriculum demonstrates:

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examination tasks. General Outcomes 2 and 4, and in a few instances General
Outcome 3, are represented on Part A, while only General Outcome 2 is represented
on Part B (see Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-1* 9, 29; Government of Alberta,
Bulletin 30-2 6, 26).

in the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence a greater degree of emphasis is given to the study of essay and Shakespearean plays, while in the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence a greater degree of emphasis is given to the study of popular nonfiction (news stories, feature articles, reviews, interview and other forms of informative and persuasive text, including technical writing) and feature films. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7)

The study of Shakespeare — a writer so significant to English literature that his work is often treated as its own genre — is optional for students in the -2 stream. Students in the -2 stream study popular and technical prose, as well as functional forms such as résumés and application letters. Students in the -1 stream study the essay — a carefully crafted rhetorical form used for centuries to describe, inform, and persuade — in all years of study, with an expectation that they will be exposed to a range of styles, eras, and voices. This list summarizes the major differences between the streams in terms of texts studied:

- In ELA 30-2, a feature film is required; in ELA 30-1, either a feature film or a modern play is required.
- In ELA 20-1, a Shakespearean play is required and a modern play is encouraged; in ELA 20-2, either a modern play or a Shakespearean play is required.
- In ELA 30-1, a Shakespearean play is required and a modern play is encouraged; in ELA 30-2, either a modern play or a Shakespearean play is required.
- In ELA 10-2, popular nonfiction is required, with a variety of popular nonfiction texts required in ELA 20-2 and 30-2; in ELA 30-1, popular

nonfiction is required, having been encouraged in ELA 10-1 and 20-1.

(Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 10)[25]

This list reveals the conservation or rationing of high-status cultural knowledge. In the -1 stream, students are required to study Shakespeare and are likely to study modern drama (*The Glass Menagerie* and *Death of a Salesman* are common choices); a practical teacher can fulfill the "encouragement" to include a feature film by showing a modern adaptation of the Shakespearean play (e.g., Kenneth Branagh's or Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet*, Roman Polanski's *Macbeth*, Baz Luhrmann's or Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*, etc.) or of the modern play. Some students in the -1 stream — particularly those enrolled in enriched programming such as International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement — may also have the opportunity to view live theatre. At the same time, it is unlikely that students in the -2 stream will study Shakespeare other than as a film adaptation (again, fulfilling two requirements with a single text); whether they do or not is up to the classroom teacher. With large class sizes, restricted budgets for buying books, and challenging classroom-management issues, teachers have little incentive to introduce a text as complicated as a Shakespearean play to students whose overall curricular outcomes do not support its introduction. (Similarly, it is less likely, because of classroom-management issues

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[25] According to Alberta Learning, the term *encouraged* means the classroom teacher shall decide whether to include this component in her syllabus; *required* means the component is tied to one of the five general outcomes of the curriculum. Similarly, the term *emphasis required* refers to "response and form categories that should be emphasized in a course. Students should create a variety of text types or styles within the categories that are emphasized" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 11), and *a variety required* means "students should study a variety of forms and styles within the specified text form" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 10).

and behavioural concerns often associated with students in the -2 stream, that these students will see a Shakespearean or modern play performed as live theatre.)

The list also reveals the positioning of all students — but particularly -2 students — to be consumers of mass-media products such as Hollywood films, newspapers and magazines, and radio and television. The curriculum document explains that "Popular Nonfiction includes news stories, feature articles, reviews, interviews and other forms of informative and persuasive text" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 10) — cultural commodities that, unlike literature, are largely ephemeral and rapidly consumed and replaced.

A variety of short stories and poetry are required at all levels of study, but because "standards vary according to the complexity of the material and the development of reading skills" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6), students will not read the same texts at the same level (that is, a text that a student might read in 10-1 may not be read until 20-2 or 30-2, if at all, by another student; the appropriateness of a text for each stream is suggested by the *Alberta Authorized Resource List: English Language Arts Grades 10 to 12* and by classroom teachers' own professional experiences and judgement). The differences in term-by-term expectations, although individually seemingly small, accumulate to produce very different exit expectations for graduates.

Similar distinctions in expectations occur for text creation. The streams are generally similar in their expectations, although the emphases differ. In the -1 stream, emphasis is required on personal responses to texts; in the -2 stream, emphasis is required on personal responses to contexts. In ELA 20-1 and 30-1, emphasis is required on critical/ analytical responses to literary texts; in ELA 20-2 and 30-2, emphasis is required on critical/ analytical responses to "other print and nonprint texts" — that is, not literature (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 11). Both

streams produce "**a variety of print and nonprint <u>forms</u>**" (Alberta Learning 11; emphasis in source), although the document notes that "Informative and Persuasive Forms" include reports in 10-2 and proposals in 20-2. Again, however, the expectations for standards for text creation vary.

Thus, while students in both streams get a range of reading/viewing and writing/responding experiences, those in the -2 stream are being explicitly directed to more immediately practical, workplace-oriented writing and consumer-based reading and writing, while those in the -1 stream are being clearly and deliberately exposed to high-status culture. In a society that depends on a clear distinction between labour and management, the different outcomes between the streams can be read in various ways.

First, we must consider the status associated with the kinds of texts students study. Newspapers, magazines, technical reports, and popular fiction are ephemeral objects, generated primarily as products of capitalism. Beginning with the publication of maps and exploration journals in the early modern era (annotating the exploitation of the New World), evolving into newspapers and magazines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and continuing with the rise of pulp periodicals and mass-market paperbacks in the twentieth century, certain categories of texts have possessed a pragmatic, often vulgar, commodity function. Such texts stand in sharp contrast to "literature," a category applied to texts whose aesthetic and ideological qualities enduringly appeal to and reflect the dominant taste.

The issue of status is amplified by further language study and production after graduation, for those students who do not go immediately to work. In colleges, students study and treat language as communication, emphasizing its pragmatic functions, particularly in the workplace. In universities, students study language as literature, emphasizing its rhetorical and ideological functions, and then respond to

it in stylized ways, divorced from considerations of practical application. In such scenarios, both groups lose.

A further issue is the work of the hidden curriculum, the mechanism by which students' ability to conform to class ideals is measured. We must consider how well the presentation of the curriculum appeals to class norms and values. For the middle class, aesthetic and cultural study is normative and valuable; so too is an emphasis on self-expression, creativity, and originality. For the instrumental classes, aesthetic and cultural study may be perceived as frivolous, uppity, or wasteful; rather, the norms of conformity, efficiency, and class solidarity may weigh importantly in dominated-class households, where school may also be the least of the residents' concerns.[26] The distinction of outcomes through the content of texts studied and created is vitally linked to issues of status, however, not choice. Perhaps one of the most innovative features of this curriculum is that it reconfigures the hiding of the hidden curriculum, imbricating outcomes with individual decision-making and leaving it to students and families to parse the significance of their "choosing."

Considering General Outcomes 2 and 4

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[26] Regrettably the topic is beyond the parameters of this dissertation, but consideration might extend to how students who are insufficiently prepared for a stream are affected by shifting class values within that stream. A small but significant literature exists discussing the experiences of academics who come from working-class backgrounds, a body of research that might provide a thematic foundation for further explorations at the high-school level.

Having examined the expectations for textual study and creation, which refer to reading/viewing (and to a lesser degree listening) and writing/responding (and to a lesser degree speaking), I now shift my focus to consider the element of the program of studies that the curriculum document itself emphasizes: General Outcomes 2 and 4. First, it is in these outcomes that the streams differ: "the specific outcomes that support General Outcomes 1, 3 and 5 are exactly the same for students in ELA 10-1 and 10-2, for students in 20-1 and 20-2, and for students in ELA 30-1 and 30-2" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4). Second, General Outcomes 2 and 4 make up the majority of course time, whereas General Outcomes 1, 3, and 5 together "constitute approximately one third of the entire program of studies" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4). Most importantly, General Outcomes 2 and 4 correlate to the emphases of the diploma exams: comprehension and written response. Here are the outcomes in full, including the specific outcomes for each general outcome:[27]

General Outcome 2: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively.

— 2.1 Construct meaning from text and context

· 2.1.1 Discern and analyze context

· 2.1.2 Understand and interpret content

· 2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge

[27] "General outcomes are broad statements identifying what students are expected to demonstrate with increasing competence and confidence from the beginning to the end of the program. ... The specific outcomes are statements identifying the component knowledge, skills and attitudes of a general outcome" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 8).

· 2.1.4 Use reference strategies and reference technologies

— 2.2 Understand and appreciate textual forms, elements and techniques

· 2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and

content

· 2.2.2 Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects

— 2.3 Respond to a variety of print and nonprint texts

· 2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu

· 2.3.2 Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance

of print and nonprint texts

· 2.3.3 Appreciate the effectiveness and artistry of print and nonprint

texts (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 21–36)

General Outcome 4: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and

represent to create oral, print, visual and multimedia texts, and enhance the

clarity and artistry of communication

— 4.1 Develop and present a variety of print and nonprint texts

· 4.1.1 Assess text creation context

· 4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium

· 4.1.3 Develop content

· 4.1.4 Use production, publication and presentation strategies and

technologies consistent with context

— 4.2 Improve thoughtfulness, effectiveness and correctness of

communication

· 4.2.1 Enhance thought and understand and support and detail

· 4.2.2 Enhance organization

· 4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice

· 4.2.4 Edit text for matters of correctness (Alberta Learning, *Senior*

High 45–61)

As I will clarify below, although these General Outcomes are the same for both the -1

and the -2 stream, important distinctions in the subpoints of the specific outcomes

ensure that students in the streams have distinct learning experiences, consuming

and producing different qualities of texts and acquiring identifiably different

literacies.[28]

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[28] For the sake of comparison, I have listed General Outcomes 1, 3, and 5 here:

· General Outcome 1: "explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences";

· General Outcome 3: "manage ideas and information";

· General Outcome 5: "respect, support and collaborate with others" (Alberta

Learning, *Senior High* 8).

Discussion later on that page situates these outcomes notably:

Approximately one third of the specific outcomes included in each course are

organized under General Outcomes 1, 3 and 5. Approximately one third are

organized under General Outcome 2, and approximately one third are

organized under General Outcome 4. It is important to note, however, that

the general outcomes are interrelated and interdependent; each is to

be achieved through a variety of listening, speaking, reading,

writing, viewing and representing experiences. (Alberta Learning,

Senior High 8; emphasis in source)

This distribution of specific outcomes across the program of study reinforces —

unsurprisingly — the significance of literacy in the overall ELA curriculum. It also

underscores, however, that certain socialization (knowledge, skills, and attitudes),

demonstrated through student self-management and student interactions with

others, must also be explicitly assessed by the classroom teacher. Here, then, we can

Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives refers to a hierarchical system, developed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956, for classifying learning outcomes within the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.[29] Bloom's taxonomy is the standard by which curriculum developers express expectations for student performance and learning. Outcomes do not dictate how the classroom teacher will deliver curriculum content, but they do make the standards for student assessment and achievement clear and accountable.

According to Bloom's taxonomy, learning should be organized hierarchically, with some information and experiences being foundational and some reflecting capping or mastery. At the base of learning is knowledge, which refers to facts, concepts, terms, definitions, and similarly specific, discrete pieces of information. Building on this base is comprehension, which involves the ability to understand and interpret basic knowledge. Beyond comprehension comes application, the ability to apply prior knowledge in novel situations and to solve problems. In the higher strata of the taxonomy are analysis (the ability to identify the constituents of something and relate or organize these pieces), synthesis (the ability to draw knowledge together into a plan, solution, system, or proposition), and evaluation (the ability to discern quality based on a thing's development, logic, value, or purpose). The higher

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see at one level the potential for class-based norms to be evaluated in all five General Outcomes. And because, I will discuss below, the diploma examination can evaluate these outcomes in only a limited way, Alberta Education has clarified that teachers are responsible for ensuring that General Outcomes 1, 3, and 5 are appropriately assessed in the classroom.

[29] I will confine my discussion to the cognitive domain, as the affective and psychomotor domains are not especially relevant to a discussion of high school-level language arts.

strata involve increasingly abstract, theoretical thinking, while the lower strata

involve basic, sometimes rote or technical, knowledge.

Associated with Bloom's taxonomy are long lists of verbs, familiar to

curriculum writers and instructional designers, that signal how learning will be

demonstrated for specific educational objectives (Gronlund 27–31). For instance, to

demonstrate knowledge of multiplication, a student may *memorize* multiplication

tables; or to demonstrate knowledge of grammar, a student may *analyze* the

structure of a sentence. As students mature and study increasingly sophisticated

material, the verbs used to describe their cognitive processes advance on the

hierarchy: from *identify* to *distinguish* to *interpret* to *criticize* to *categorize* to

appraise, for example. The "illustrative verbs" (Gronlund 113–22) signal a great deal

about course developers' expectations for student learning, both in terms of students'

prior knowledge and preparation and in terms of course-level outcomes.[30] Some

typical verbs from the lower strata seen in the Alberta English Language Arts

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[30] In their revision to Bloom's original concepts, Anderson et al. have shifted to a two-dimensional model (5) that draws together specific knowledge and specific cognitive processes: "the verb generally describes the intended *cognitive process*, and the noun [phrase, that is, the object of the verb] generally describes the *knowledge* students are expected to acquired or construct. In our formulation, then, we used 'cognitive process' in place of 'behaviour' and 'knowledge' in place of 'content'" (12; emphasis in source). They explain that the precision of their revised language reflects nuanced thinking about content — "we use the term *knowledge* to reflect our belief that disciplines are constantly changing and evolving in terms of the knowledge that shares a consensus of acceptance within the discipline" (13; emphasis in source) — and the larger shift from behaviourism to cognitive science within educational literature: "cognitive psychology and cognitive science have become the dominant perspectives in psychology and education. We can make better sense of the verbs in objectives by using the knowledge gained from cognitive research" (14).

curriculum document include *define*, *describe*, *explain*, *identify*, *recognize*, and *review*; while some typical verbs from the upper strata seen in the curriculum document include *analyze*, *assess*, *compare*, *examine*, *relate*, *revise*, and *select*. In Appendix I have listed, side by side, all the subpoints of General Outcomes 2 and 4 for ELA 10-1, 10-2, 20-1, 20-2, 30-1, and 30-2, highlighting the main verbs in each point for the purpose of comparing the sequencing, complexity, and relativity of the outcomes across the streams.

I have concentrated on these outcomes because "Combined, these specific outcomes constitute approximately two thirds of the program of studies" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6) — a substantial majority of class time. As I will explain below, the verbs listed in the -1 stream subpoints often, although not absolutely, signal a higher level of educational objective than those listed in the -2 stream. Given that the course streams are intended for learners with different aptitudes and abilities, the differences in the verbs are not surprising. However, the verbs for the -2 stream signal overall lower cognitive processing than those for the -1 stream, and even differences that appear subtle are in fact significant, particularly as the general outcomes are nested within multiple specific outcomes and develop in conjunction with the other general outcomes. As I will demonstrate, the differences in the outcomes signalled by these verbs help to produce not only different educational outcomes for students in the two streams, but students with dramatically different literacies, thinking skills, and preparation for graduation. In Alberta, these different literacies and the language in which they are communicated is particularly pertinent as "Today's terminology is driven by the current emphasis on school improvement through standards-based education" (Anderson et al. 18).

In several cases, the verbs for specific outcomes are the same for the -1 level of a course as for the -2 level of a course (for example, outcome 2.1.2h is the same for

10-1 and 10-2, as is 4.2.3c, among others). This point does not mean that the learning outcomes are the same, however. Students in the streams are reading, viewing, and listening to different kinds of texts with different emphases (particularly in responding to text versus responding to context) and are responding to text in different forms; so, for example, in objective 2.1.1d ("identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text"), students are not evaluating the same texts for the construction of meaning even though the objective is the same in both streams. Similarly, in outcome 4.2.2d, the expectations for students are the same at 10-1, 10-2, 20-1, and 20-2 ("assess relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and strengthen relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts") and at 30-1 and 30-2 ("apply the concepts of unity and coherence to ensure the effective organization of oral, print, visual and multimedia texts"); but because students in the two streams produce different kinds of responses to different kinds of texts with different emphases, the outcomes are not truly comparable.

It is also necessary to recognize that where the verbs are the same at a higher level of study (particularly 30), the preparation at a lower level of study may be different and thus students in different streams cannot achieve similar outcomes. For example, in objective 2.1.1b, the outcomes for 30-1 and 30-2 are very similar ("analyze elements or causes present in the communication situation surrounding a text that contribute to the creation of the text" and "analyze elements present in the communication situation surrounding a text that contribute to the creation of the text" respectively), but the outcomes for 10-1 and 20-1 ("use features found within a text as information to describe the communication situation within which the text was created" and "describe how societal forces can influence the production of texts") are notably more sophisticated than those for 10-2 and 20-2 ("identify features of a

text that provide information about the text" and "explain how a text can be studied to understand the context — or aspects of the communication situation within which the text was created"). With dissimilar preparation at lower levels, students will necessarily demonstrate different learning and levels of achievement of the same outcome at the more senior level, if only because the tasks students are asked to perform to demonstrate learning (particularly for the purposes of summative evaluation) will be designed with awareness of students' earlier preparation.

Another important consideration is the complete outcome, not just the verb alone. Although the verbs themselves may be the same in some specific outcomes, their direct objects vary importantly. For example, subpoint 2.1.1c lists "*explain* the relationship between text and context in terms of how elements in an environment can affect the way in which a text is created" as the 30-2 outcome and "*explain* how understanding the interplay between text and context can influence an audience to appreciate a text from multiple perspectives" as the 30-1 outcome. The additional layer of analysis captured in the word "how" makes the -1 level of this outcome significantly more sophisticated and complex. In another example, subpoint 4.2.4c lists "*know* and *be able to apply* spelling conventions independently or with the use of a handbook or other tools, such as a list of spelling strategies or rules" as the 30-2 outcome and "*know* and *be able to apply* spelling conventions consistently and independently" as the 30-1 outcome, signalling much higher expectations for independence and maturity in writing ability in the -1 stream. As a further example, subpoint 4.1.2c lists the 30-1 outcome as "*select* an effective medium appropriate to content and context; and *explain* the interplay of medium, context and content" while the 30-2 outcomes is only to "*select* an effective medium appropriate to content and context, and *explain* its use" — again signalling an expectation for more developed critical thinking and analytical skill in the -1 stream.

In many cases, the verbs for the specific outcomes differ significantly, particularly at the 30 level. For instance, contrast the complexity of *analyzing* the relationships among controlling ideas with that of *describing* these relationships (2.1.2b); *summarizing* the plot of a narrative with *retelling* it (2.1.2c); *describing* tone with *identifying* it (2.1.2e); *assessing* communication strategies with *explaining* them; *adapting* presentation strategies with *developing* them (4.1.4b); *assessing* the organizational components of a text in progress with *reviewing* them (4.2.2b); *creating* a rapport with an audience with *developing* a repertoire of strategies for doing so (4.1.4d). In some cases, outcomes are slower paced in the -2 stream (e.g., the outcome of a subpoint at 10-1 might be the outcome at 20-2 in the same subpoint; see 4.1.3g and 4.1.4b for examples), so that students simply do not achieve the same degree of sophistication as students in the -1 stream do. In other cases, however, the subpoints are consistently different between the streams (see 2.1.2b, 2.1.2c, 2.1.2d, 2.1.2e, 2.1.2f, 2.1.2g, 2.1.3c, 2.2.1a, 2.2.2a, 2.2.2b, 2.2.2e, 2.3.1b, 2.3.1d, 2.3.3a, 4.1.1d, 4.1.4a, 4.2.1c, 4.2.3a, 4.2.4d, 4.2.4e for examples).

The expectations for learning in the -1 stream are generally higher: the outcomes are often more developed and more complex, and they sometimes refer to elements of literary analysis (e.g., satire, archetypes, motif) not mentioned in the -2 stream. Some typical comparisons include *explain* (-1) versus *describe* (-2), *assess* (-1) versus *describe* (-2), *use* (-1) versus *recognize* (-2), *explore* (-1) versus *identify* (-2), and *understand* (-1) versus *know* (-2). The higher expectations are also correlated with critical thinking, shown in high-level verbs such as *assess*, *analyze*, *adapt*, *revise*, and *reflect*, which most often appear as 30-1 outcomes.

There are also a few unique subpoints. Subpoint 2.1.3d ("classify the genre/form of new texts according to attributes of genres/forms previously studied") is not taught in the -2 stream at any level. Readers may wonder why applying prior

learning to the task of classifying texts (that is, identifying their genre) is
unnecessary for students in the -2 stream. Similarly, subpoint 4.2.4j ("explain why
certain communication situations demand particular attention to correctness of
punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction") is taught only in
the -2 stream. Readers may wonder why students in the -1 stream do not need to
explain these issues. Finally, subpoint 4.1.2e ("depart from the conventions of oral,
print, visual and multimedia texts, as appropriate to purpose, audience and
situation") is taught exclusively to 30-1 students. It is certainly significant that
matters of advanced stylistics are taught only to one group of students and not to the
other.

  The use of Bloom's taxonomy as a tool for analysis reveals that the learning
outcomes for the -2 stream fall more consistently into the lower scales of the
hierarchy while the learning outcomes for the -1 stream fall more consistently into
the higher scales of the hierarchy. Thus, despite rhetoric to the contrary, this
curriculum does not reflect students' "interests" or "preferences," but rather
students', parents', and teachers' ability to recognize the code transmitted by the
curriculum. The literature read in the streams is significantly different (and often
notably easier at the -2 level), and the outcomes demonstrate significantly higher
expectations for textual analysis, understanding, and manipulation at the -1 level.
What an analysis of General Outcomes 2 and 4 reveals is that, for all their apparent
similarities, the streams may be distinguished by content. Differential content
implies that there is knowledge that certain students simply do not need to know,
and the reason for this unequal distribution is inherently political.

  To be clear, I do not mean that the curriculum writers have deliberately
aligned themselves politically with the Alberta government and created a document
that perpetuates inequality. I cannot know the curriculum writers' intentions, and

much of what the curriculum purports to do is, at least on the surface, pedagogically defensible and even innovative within its context. It is not unusual to offer differential instruction to students, and the writers have taken care to keep the streams comparable in many ways. The curriculum writers may have been responding practically to the conditions of classrooms they and their colleagues have worked in personally, informed by their lived realities as teachers interacting with students in the day-to-day; we must remember that this is another, equally valid, sense of curriculum.

Just the same, the curriculum does produce inequality and in doing so reproduces the larger structural inequalities that mark Western states in general. Although presumably unintentional, this result is still functional; and more significantly, it is not recognized as either accidental or deliberate by most of the teachers who use the curriculum, because the production of inequality through the work of education is an issue that classroom teachers rarely, if ever, interrogate. Such interrogation is the realm of sociology of education, with its theories of state, concerns about ideology, and dense theoretical foundations; this realm is all but irrelevant to the teacher whose success in the classroom depends on accountability to principals, parents, and the public at large and whose interests are largely confined to the emergent and immediate. It is for this reason that I address this dissertation to both classroom teachers and the scholars who teach them: to make explicit a local instance of systemic, structural reproduction and to encourage both teachers and teacher–scholars to reflect on, and then perhaps act on, the deep and persistent implications of their work in classrooms.

My critique, then, is aimed at the institutional structures around the curriculum-as-document and the curriculum-as-lived-experience: at the curriculum as educational and economic policy. From this perspective, the differential outcomes

of the curriculum document are not accidental but predictable and necessary. Differential instruction in itself is not an issue as long as the ultimate outcomes of all instruction are comparable; and differential outcomes are not necessarily an issue in themselves as long as student outcomes are equitable and do not interfere with students' social equity or opportunity. As my analysis above has demonstrated, however, they do; and that finding is the crux of my argument.

The curriculum, situated as it is, receives students who have already been stratified long before they arrive in the high school classroom. So stratified, students cannot enjoy the myth of equality of opportunity because they do not enjoy the reality of equality of condition. Thus the common-sense response of the curriculum to the practical realities of student difference in the classroom necessarily perpetuates those differences — not fatally or irretrievably, but in a sufficiently determinant way that only the exceptional student — or the critical teacher — will defy her/his class trajectory. In doing so, this defiant student represents the exception that proves the (ideological) rule: if only a student works, struggles, and strives hard enough, he or she can "make it" in this world. It is from this analysis that I come to claim that the work of the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum is inherently, necessarily, political: it works to support the hegemonic interests of the dominant class fractions.

Fitting the Curriculum to Evaluation

Alberta, like many jurisdictions, uses standardized examinations to produce accountability from its teachers and schools. The diploma examinations, begun in January 1984, were a reinstitution of the province's departmental exams, high school exit examinations that had been discontinued in the 1970s. Diploma exams currently

account for fifty percent of a student's final mark in an academic course, such as

Math, Physics, or English Language Arts. The English Language Arts diploma

exams are administered in two parts. Part A is a written-response exam, and Part B

is a multiple-choice reading comprehension exam. The examinations are written in

the last few weeks of the term in which a student takes ELA 30-1 or 30-2.

A curriculum represents a program of study that moves a student from a

state of not knowing to a state of knowing, or from a state of reduced ability to a state

of increased ability. As a final and substantial evaluation of a student's

accomplishment in the -1 or -2 stream, the diploma exam should be closely tied to the

general outcomes of the curriculum. This section of my argument discusses whether

the diploma exam captures students' learning experiences in the -1 and -2 streams,

which outcomes are emphasized, and which language-arts skills are evaluated.

The ELA 30-2 Diploma Exam Part A asks students to produce three written

responses. The first is a response to a visual text: "The Visual Reflection Assignment

asks you to **reflect upon and support your ideas and impressions** regarding a

photograph, illustration, drawing, poster, advertisement, or other visual text"

(Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 4; emphasis in

source). The second is a response drawing on a character or persona from text

studied:

> The Literary Exploration Assignment requires you to read a short selection of
>
> fiction or nonfiction that serves to illustrate one possible dimension of the
>
> topic. You must discuss a character from literature or film that you have
>
> studied in English Language Arts 30-2. You may choose to write about more
>
> than one character and from more than one literary text. (Education Program
>
> Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 5–6)

The third response is a sample of practical writing: "The Persuasive Writing in Context Assignment is a practical writing exercise. The assignment describes a hypothetical, real-world situation involving a proposal that requires a response in the form of a speech or a letter. You must either **accept** or **reject** the proposal" (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 7; emphasis in source). Combined, the three responses should give exam markers a view of the student's achievement of General Outcome 2: "Comprehend literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia forms, and respond personally, critically and creatively" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 20). When the exams are marked, evaluation standards range from excellent, proficient, and satisfactory to limited and poor (and in certain categories to insufficient) (Government of Alberta, *Information Bulletin 30-2* 10–11, 15–18, 22–23).[31]

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[31] These standards are defined elsewhere. In *Examples of the Standards of Students' Writing: English Language Arts 30-2*, the "scoring categories and criteria" are broken out and described for "ideas and impressions" and "presentation" for Assignment I; for "thought and support," "form and structure," "matters of choice," and "matters of correctness" for Assignment II; and for "thought and support" and "writing skills" for Assignment III (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 56–63). The descriptor for "Excellent" in "Thought and Support" is defined thus:

> An insightful understanding of the topic is demonstrated. The student's ideas are perceptively explored. The literary example is related effectively to the student's ideas. Support is precise and effective. (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 58)

In contrast, the descriptor for "Poor" in the same category is defined as

The ELA 30-2 Diploma Exam Part B requires students "**to demonstrate reading comprehension skills without the use of a dictionary or thesaurus**" (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 8; emphasis in source). This requirement is explicitly linked to General Outcome 2 and to General Outcome 4: "Create oral, print, visual and multimedia texts, and enhance the clarity

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An implausible conjecture concerning the topic may be suggested. The student's ideas, if present, are irrelevant, incomprehensible, or unexplored. The literary example is absent or unrelated to the student's ideas. Support, if present, is overgeneralized or of questionable relevance. (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 58)

This category is one that may be evaluated as "insufficient," meaning "The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment" or "The writing is so deficient in length that it is not possible to assess **Thought and Support**" (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 58; emphasis in source).

More tellingly, the descriptor for "Excellent" for "Writing Skills" is defined thus:

The selection and use of words and structures are effective. This writing demonstrates confident control of correct construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 63)

The descriptor "Poor" in the same category is explained thus:

The selection and use of words and structures are ineffective. This writing demonstrates lack of control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 63).

In Chapter Six I discuss the concept of Standard Editing English, to which these descriptors gesture.

and artistry of communication" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 44). The ELA 30-2
student guide notes,

> Your critical reading and thinking skills — understanding of vocabulary,
> appreciation of tone and literary and rhetorical devices, understanding of the
> purpose and effect of a text creator's choices, and appreciation of human
> experience and values reflected in literary texts — will be assessed at the
> level of challenge appropriate for graduating English Language Arts 30-2
> students. (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 8)

The examination is thus structured to be accountable to the curriculum that informs
it.

The 2010–2011 ELA 30-1 Diploma Exam Part A asks students to produce two
written responses. The first is a personal response to literature: "The Personal
Response to Texts Assignment requires you to explore a given thematic topic in
response to texts provided in the examination booklet. Texts will include visual
text(s) and any combination of poetry, fiction, and/or nonfiction" (Education Program
Standards and Assessment Division, *30-1* 5). The second is a critical response to
literature:

> The Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment asks you to
> demonstrate your understanding of a literary text (or texts) that you have
> studied in detail in your English Language Arts 30-1 course. The assignment
> is a further exploration of the topic introduced in the Personal Response to
> Text Assignment. You will be asked to write about how the topic is reflected
> in the ideas developed by the text creator. You are expected to write a

thoughtful, well-developed composition in which you synthesize your thinking about both the topic and your interpretation of your chosen text. Your composition will be assessed on the basis of your ability to express your understanding of the literary text, to relate that understanding of the text to the assignment, and to support your ideas with evidence from your chosen text. (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-1* 7)

As with students' responses on the 30-2 exam, these responses should give exam markers a view of the 30-1 student's achievement of General Outcome 2. Again, when the exams are marked, evaluation standards range from excellent, proficient, and satisfactory to limited and poor (and in certain categories to insufficient) (Government of Alberta, *Information Bulletin 30-1* 17–18, 21–25).[32]

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[32] As noted above, these standards are defined elsewhere. In *Examples of the Standards of Students' Writing: English Language Arts 30-1*, the "scoring categories and criteria" are broken out and described for "ideas and impressions" and "presentation" for the "Personal Response to Texts Assignment"; and for "thought and understanding," "supporting evidence," "form and structure," "matters of choice" and matters of correctness" for the "Critical/Analytical Response to Texts Assignment" (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 57–63). The descriptor for "Excellent" in "Thought and Support" is defined thus:

Ideas are insightful and carefully considered, demonstrating a comprehension of subtle distinctions in the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are perceptive and illuminating. (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 59)

The descriptor for "Poor" in the same category, however, is defined as "Ideas are largely absent or irrelevant, and/or do not develop the topic. Little comprehension of the literary text(s) is demonstrated" (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 59).

The requirement for the 2010–2011 ELA 30-1 Diploma Exam Part B is effectively the same as for 30-2: "**to demonstrate reading comprehension skills *without* the use of a dictionary or thesaurus**" (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-1* 9; emphasis in source). Again, the student guide for ELA 30-1 makes accountability to the curriculum explicit:

> Your critical reading and thinking skills — understanding of vocabulary; appreciation of tone and literary and rhetorical devices; understanding of the purpose and effect of a text creator's choices; and appreciation of human experience and values reflected in literary texts — will be assessed at the

Importantly, this category is one that may be evaluated as "insufficient"; the evaluation is explained in detail:

> **Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality.**
> Assign insufficient when
> • the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Thought and Understanding and/or Supporting Evidence **OR**
> • no reference has been made to literature studied **OR**
> • the only literary reference present is to the text(s) provided in the first assignment **OR**
> • there is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 59; emphasis in source)

As I have argued above, despite what the curriculum may claim about the similarity of the -1 and -2 streams, reality resides in the enactment of the curriculum, made concrete here in the contrasting requirements of the diploma exams and in the descriptors for student assessment. Although the categories are superficially similar, the expectations are necessarily different because the students' preparation has been so different; and from these differing expectations and assessments arise major differences in post-graduation trajectories.

level of challenge appropriate for graduating English Language Arts 30-1

students. (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-1* 9)

Again, unsurprisingly, the examination is structured to be accountable to the

curriculum that informs it.

However, in comparing the differences in the Part A exams, we can see in

high relief the vast difference in expectations and abilities for graduating students

produced by ELA 10/20/30-1 and ELA 10/20/30-2. It is also valuable to compare the

texts presented for comprehension in the Part B exams. In English 30-2, "you will

read selections from a variety of texts, such as poems and songs, essays, drama

(including television or radio scripts or screenplays), short stories, novels, and visual

texts" (Education Program Standards and Assessment Division, *30-2* 8).[33] In English

30-1, "you will read selections from a variety of texts, such as fiction, nonfiction,

poetry or song, visual texts, Shakespearean drama, and modern drama (including

television or radio scripts or screenplays)" (Education Program Standards and

Assessment Division, *30-1* 9).[34] Even in these basic guidelines, provided to assist

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[33] Classroom teachers receive slightly more detailed information:

> **Text types** include excerpts from **extended texts** — novels, book-length
> nonfiction, modern and/or contemporary drama (including television or radio
> scripts or screenplays) — and **shorter texts** — poetry (may include songs),
> short stories, visual texts (including photographs, advertisements, posters,
> cartoons, photographic compositions), persuasive, personal, expository,
> biographical, and autobiographical essays, and popular nonfiction (including
> news stories, feature articles, reviews, interviews, technical writing).
> (*Information Bulletin 30-2* 2; emphasis in source)

[34] Again, classroom teachers receive slightly more detailed information:

students with exam preparation, we can see the clear distinctions in the levels of preparation, types of knowledge, and sophistication of knowledge expected between the streams. The differences identified in these passages also imply that because -2 students (presumably, although perhaps not actually) lack the skills and interest to comprehend sophisticated "literature," they equally lack the skills to express their ideas — an implication borne out elsewhere in the curriculum, as discussed above, by the differences in the kinds and emphases in written responses required for -2 students.

I must emphasize that this construction of differences between the -1 and -2 streams is a fallacy rooted in the yoking of reading and writing — to say nothing of the pejorative assumptions about the sophistication of -2 students' thinking. That is, when the curriculum says that "standards vary according to the complexity of the material and the development of reading skills" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6), it implies that because students in the -2 stream are reading "easier," popular texts rather than literature, their written responses should also be easier and personally oriented rather than "difficult," analytical, and expository, as in the -1 stream. We must remember that reading and writing are distinct skills; and while reading widely and often *may* improve a student's writing skills, only writing frequently, with

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Text types include excerpts from **extended texts** — novel book-length nonfiction, modern and/or contemporary drama, and Shakespearean drama — and **shorter texts** — poetry, short story, visual texts, persuasive, personal, expository, biographical, and autobiographical essays, and popular nonfiction. (*Information Bulletin 30-1* 3; emphasis in source)

A comparison of the details above to those in the previous note underscores the differences between the streams.

regular feedback and insightful guidance, *does* improve writing skills (see Graves, 1994; Graves 2003; Graves and Kittle, 2005).

If we compare the kinds of questions asked in the Part B exams, we can see similar kinds of distinctions. As noted above, the Part B exam is a timed reading-comprehension task: within two and a half to three hours, students read a selection of texts and answer multiple-choice questions about them. Below I have analyzed two released exams, both from January 2006; released exams are available to teachers and students (and others, through the Alberta Education website) to assist with exam preparation.

The readings on the 30-1 Part B exam include an excerpt from the novel *Fellow Passengers*; an excerpt from Shakespeare's *Richard III*; the poem "What Are Years?"; a photograph by Stephen Ferry accompanied by a brief news item; the magazine article "Cracking the Genetic Code"; the op-ed piece "Biotechnology Advances Set to Become Huge Global Issues"; a cartoon by Clay Bennett; an excerpt from the play *The Man of Destiny*; and the poem "Only Child" (Alberta Education, *Released 30-1* 1–26).[35] The readings on the 30-2 exam include an excerpt from the essay "How to Tell Good Guys from Bad Guys"; the poem "Beneath Our Feet"; an excerpt from the play *Leaving Home*; an excerpt from the novel *The Englishman's Boy*; an excerpt from the magazine article "Always at the Ready"; the poem "Pluck"; a

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[35] Of the 30-1 texts, only two — the poem "Only Child" by P.K. Page and the article "Cracking the Genetic Code" by Robert Sheppard — are Canadian. Although the op-ed "Biotechnology Advances Set to Become Huge Global Issues" was published in a Canadian newspaper, its author, Francis Fukuyama, is American. This proportion defies the curriculum's own prescription that "Text selections will reflect the minimum one-third Canadian texts requirement" (Alberta Education, *Released 30-1* 48).

photograph with an accompanying soft-news profile; an excerpt from the short story "Water"; an excerpt from the magazine article "Women Engineers: Dismantling the Myths"; and a (fictionalized) draft of a short, student-written speech (Alberta Education, *Released 30-2* 1–22).[36] When we compare the literature presented for analysis on these exams, we can see some common points and some important points of divergence. On both exams, students encounter everyday texts such as newspaper articles and documentary photography. Students read prose and poetry and must respond to visual and verbal texts on both exams. However, students taking the 30-1 exam must respond (as promised) to a Shakespearean play — a canonical text — as well as to a play by George Bernard Shaw, also a canonical text; students taking the 30-2 exam must respond to a play by Newfoundland playwright David French, a more difficult text to argue as canonical, particularly outside of Canada. There is more poetry and drama on the 30-1 exam and there are many more popular texts on the 30-2 exam. The written texts on the 30-1 exam are also more sophisticated, are pitched at a higher level of diction, and make greater use of literary devices than those on the 30-2 exam. Adopting Bourdieu's vocabulary, we can identify the relative cultural capital displayed in each exam — obviously much greater in the 30-1 exam.

From the same set of released items, I have chosen four questions from each exam for comparative analysis, two from the first quarter of the exam and two from the last quarter of the exam. These are the questions from the 30-1 exam:

3.   Mr. Donner regarded junior partners' mistakes as

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[36] In the 30-2 list, all but two texts are Canadian, the exceptions being "How to Tell Good Guys from Bad Guys" by American author John Steinbeck and the poem "Pluck" by Scottish author Eva Dobell. Obviously, this proportion far exceeds the minimum requirement of curriculum.

A. personal offences

B. character weaknesses

C. irresponsible blunders

D. unavoidable annoyances

...

12. Mowbray's unrestrained praise for the King in lines 17 to 19 reveals

Mowbray's desire to

A. prove his integrity

B. conceal his evil nature

C. hide his pompous nature

D. convey withheld honours

...

63. That the child tolerated his mother's influence is conveyed in the

phrase

A. "those long weeping slumbers" (line 2)

B. "she was / there" (line 2–3)

C. "suffered her eagerness" (line 9)

D. "a long / adventure in the country" (lines 14–15)

...

69.   The phrase that captures the complexity of the boy's attitude toward

        his mother is

        A. "the air about them — hers and his —" (line 4)

        B. "sometimes a comfort to him, like a quilt" (line 5)

        C. "Like every mother's boy he loved and hated" (line 46)

        D. "Without my mother's help..." (line 53) (Alberta Education,

        Released 30-1 27, 29, 45, 46)

These are the questions from the 30-2 exam:

3.   In lines 60 to 66, the writer describes the girl in a typical Western

        movie as being

        A. innocent and dull

        B. overly emotional

        C. extremely sensitive

        D. passionate and clear

...

12.   In context, "darkness" (line 15) represents

        A. evil

        B. death

        C. anger

        D. despair

63.   The writer has developed her ideas **mainly** through the use of

A. statistics

B. examples

C. argument

D. accusation

...

69.   Jordan should add an apostrophe before the final 's' in the word

A. societys (line 26)

B. attitudes (line 26)

C. girls (line 28)

D. engineers (line 29) (Alberta Education, *Released 30-2* 23, 25, 39, 41; emphasis in source)

By comparing these questions, we can see reinforcement of the hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy. The skills required to respond to the sample 30-1 questions are complex, abstract, and sophisticated, involving interpretation, judgement, and assessment. Those required for the 30-2 questions are more basic, involving knowledge, recognition, and correction.

Accountability is an important aspect of contemporary schooling, in Alberta and elsewhere. The extra-examination documents to which I have referred above — the *Examples of Standards*, the *Released Items*, and the *Information Bulletins* — demonstrate a clear bureaucratic commitment to accountability by identifying precisely how the exams relate to the curriculum and thus to larger government policy. The *Examples of Standards* refer only to the Part A (written) exams. They cross-reference each marking category on the exam to the general outcomes and

provide detailed rationales to explain how Part A responses are evaluated. As the documents explain, standards are used to teach exam markers what to do and to ensure consistency: "The sample papers and the commentaries were used to train markers to apply the scoring criteria consistently and to justify their decisions about scores in terms of each student's work and the criteria" (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 1; Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 1). This training is important, the documents continue, because "the standards must remain consistent for each scoring session in the school year and, similarly, from year to year" (Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-1* 12; Government of Alberta, *Standards 30-2* 12). The *Released Items* provide a "blueprint" of the Part B (multiple-choice) exam. They cross-reference individual questions to the general outcomes and identify the percentages of students who answered the items correctly. The *Information Bulletins* repeat and condense much of the numerical and technical content from the previous documents (including "blueprints" for each exam), reinforcing teachers' perception of the validity and reliability of these instruments.

Thus a positivist logic can be seen at work. Everything about the exams is standardized and numerically defensible; the scientific rationalism of the extra-examination documents reads almost as defensive. The accountability is part of the larger ethos of neoliberalism, however. The system of schooling must demonstrate to taxpayers that they are getting good value for their tax dollars and that the system is fair. Both ideas uphold the principle of meritocracy — equality of opportunity. The bureaucrats who oversee the curriculum, and by extension the teachers who deliver the curriculum, must consistently demonstrate that the exams are impeccable and irreproachable — that is, flawless and blameless. If a student is unsuccessful in English Language Arts, the failure is, by dint of evidence, with the student, not with the curriculum or with the instruments used to assess the student's learning. In this

manner, the logic of state-sponsored schooling shifts responsibility for inequality to the individual and away from the institution of education or government.

The differences I have highlighted in looking at the exams themselves are to be expected: despite claims to the contrary, ELA 10/20/30-1 and ELA 10/20/30-2 are distinct streams. What is important, however, is that the diploma exams do not measure accountability for the complete experience of the English Language Arts program, but predominantly and explicitly account for those elements of the curriculum where the -1 and -2 streams diverge.[37] As I identified earlier in this chapter, that divergence occurs in General Outcomes 2 and 4; and as I will discuss in Chapter Six, these outcomes are explicitly tied to issues of reader formation — that is, to the construction of the literate subject. The problem I wish to highlight is that the streams produce distinct experiences for students. Only some students are being taught the kinds of high-stakes knowledge that will allow them to participate in the powerful forces of middle-class socialization through the accumulation of economic, cultural, and social capital. In keeping with the larger forces of neoliberalism at work in Alberta, this curriculum demonstrates a movement away from the long-heralded equality of opportunity and toward an overt elitism: while some students get technical literacy, others students gain cultural ascendancy.

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[37] The *Information Bulletins* do remind teachers about these limitations, commenting, "Because many types of assessment are suited to classroom situations only, teachers should ensure that their assessment of student progress reflects the full *Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts*" (Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-1* 1; Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-2* 1).

International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement,

and Issues of Accommodation

A further gradation in the distribution of high-status (i.e., university-admissible) knowledge occurs through the existence of enriched streams of English Language Arts: International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement. The knowledge transmitted in these streams is further rarefied — that is to say, it signals much greater cultural capital than does the mainstream curriculum — but more importantly, and more accurately, it also reflects the aristocratic tradition of education. In that reflection, however, exists potential and hope.

The International Baccalaureate (IB) was founded in Switzerland in 1968 as a mechanism to produce a mobile qualification for international students. The program is now globally available; in 2009–10, Canada had 288 schools offering IB, 40 of them in Alberta (International Baccalaureate Organization, *Canada* 1–2).[38] IB emphasizes in-depth, challenging content that conforms to but also extends the provincially required curriculum. It is available in various subject areas, underpinned by a course in the theory of knowledge and structured to require students' independent study. IB English is offered as a two-year program taken in Grades 11 and 12 (with a pre-IB year in Grade 10); the program emphasizes literary appreciation, close reading, and canonical literature, with a focus on world literature in translation.

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[38] Note that IB programming may be offered at elementary (called the "Primary Years Programme") and junior high (called the "Middle Years Programme") as well as at high school, so the number of sites in Alberta encompasses more than high school locations (International Baccalaureate Organization, *Canada* 1).

Advanced Placement (AP), a newer introduction to Alberta, is an American program tailored to enhancing students' success at college and university; its programming emulates the content and structure of a first-year college or university course in the high school curriculum, and the program emphasizes rigour, depth of knowledge, and student motivation. Like IB, AB programming is available for a range of subjects. AP English is a three-year program that emphasizes vocabulary development, rhetoric and stylistics, and canonical texts, with a focus on creative composition beyond the traditional expository essay (College Board, *English* 7–9).

These enriched programs are offered atop the prescribed Alberta curriculum; that is, the classroom teachers who deliver these enriched courses must not only fulfill the requirements for the English Language Arts program of study but must also fulfill authorized supplementary requirements for IB and AP. Students in these enriched streams have the option to write IB/AP exams (in addition to the required diploma exams) and may be able to use their IB/AP experience to bypass first-year English courses when they arrive at the university.

Admission to IB and AP is usually restricted to high-achieving students. Generally, a minimum mark is set for admission to these courses (e.g., a mark of 80 or better in ELA 9). Teachers may also be able to recommend students to IB/AP based on professional recognition of student aptitude or potential.[39] Most significantly, however, students and their parents may select the stream for the student, not on the basis of aptitude or achievement but on the basis of accommodation.

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[39] It is important to keep in mind that gifted students from backgrounds of poverty, particularly if the student is of an non-European ethnicity, are infrequently identified for gifted and enriched programming; see Stambaugh and Chandler.

In this context, accommodation refers to a liberal tactic that uses rights claims to support individual advancement. In the case of IB and AP, accommodation protects the family investment in the student by enriching the student's cultural, educational, and social capital and by isolating the student from others who lack the requisite capital. Accommodation by way of IB and AP is then a form of academic segregation that amplifies the effects of the student's background prior to entering high school. As Davies and Guppy remind us, "higher SES families produce more of the kinds of skills that schools reward" (140). Following this line of thinking, students who conform to and excel at what schooling requires may press the right to be offered something beyond what "regular," less-conforming students may have.

In Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta's major cities, most high schools offer either IB or AP; one, Jasper Place High School in Edmonton, offers both. Increasingly schools in suburban areas and Alberta's smaller cities are also offering IB and AP programs.[40] If we look at Edmonton Public Schools in particular, the availability of the enriched streams is part of a larger policy of "choice" in which individual schools within the district compete with one another to offer programming, specializations, and amenities to attract students and their parents. With school-based budgeting in Alberta, student numbers dictate school funding, so attracting more students is vital; IB and AP programming form part of a school's larger competitive strategy. Further, the accommodation offered by IB and AP assures families that the capital invested in their children will be retained and will increase over time.

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[40] We may note, however, that these programs are not presently available in rural schools, once again setting up a divide between urban (and suburban) and rural Albertans.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with enriched programming per se. The International Baccalaureate, for instance, states as part of its mission that "The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (International Baccalaureate Organization). As I noted above, IB and AP look back to the aristocratic tradition of rigorous, wide-reaching education, steeped in critical inquiry: an education that prepares students to accomplish and to lead. IB and AP programs offer outstanding learning opportunities that should be available to all students — but are not. Instead, these programs have become a choice-driven mechanism for identifying and rewarding the "smart" students competing for access to the closely rationed resource of high-status university education.

Students who might benefit from enhanced streams may not "choose" to register in an enriched stream, either because their marks may not reflect their aptitude for this kind of study; because their families may not know about such opportunities or may not push for access to them; or because, through the work of the hidden curriculum, such students have been constructed since their earliest schooling as "lower-stream" students. That is, their behaviours (such as classroom disruption, absenteeism, failure to turn in assignments, and even course failure) signal to teachers the lack of the right kind of habitus — suggest a student who will disrupt and delay the achievement of the other students, who does not *deserve* this kind of education. These classroom behaviours may obscure actual learning strengths (and deficiencies) and may again amplify the effects of students' backgrounds (their habitus, their personal capitals). Enhanced streams, then, pose a particular risk to hopes for social equality, in that they attribute to individual agency aspects of accomplishment that are vested in institution and structure.

I am not arguing that the enriched streams are elitist in themselves, but I do contend that these streams have been taken up more effectively by those with resources to recognize and use them than by those in dominated positions. When enriched programs like IB and AP are exploited for individual advancement, they function in the interests of and to the benefit of the elite. Katy Smith identifies this risk clearly:

> Respecting young people's gifts, talents, and aspirations may justify providing some settings in which intellectually bright young people work together to master skills and content that some of their classmates may not be ready for. However, we must examine carefully the expectations for the work that students do in such settings. We must be ever wary of conflating students' work and their worth as human beings.... If we are teaching that becoming an 'honours student' means standardization and separation, then our work thwarts rather than augments the democratic process. (502–03)

Working on the other end of the spectrum, Page contrasted the classroom management and teaching styles of a teacher who worked with both students in an enriched stream and students in a "lower-track" program. She discovered that the students in the lower track were initially engaged in the same topic as the students in the enriched stream, but teacher behaviour and student reaction in the lower classroom quickly foreclosed the deep, critical probing that continued in the higher classroom. Page noted that when the teacher simplified the content, some lower-track students attempted to connect their own lived experiences and observations to these ideas and to grapple with more sophisticated understanding. These attempts were interpreted as defiance, and the teacher shut down the conversation — the same kind

of conversation he had earlier been encouraging with the enriched-stream students. Page concludes:

> the curriculum is not simply the topics and activities transmitted by a teacher... Instead, it is a sociocultural construction whose meaning centres on questions of knowledge, power, and the prerogatives of age in on-going negotiations between teachers and students. ... Thus, the lower-track 'circus' is not an automatic 'cycle of prejudice' caused by tracking, students' intellectual and behavioural deficiencies, teachers' insensitivity, or inevitable sociocultural conflict. It is a *situated production* in which teachers use curricular knowledge to accomplish institutional shared norms of control, while students also draw on the school culture and use knowledge to make an 'effort.' (218; emphasis in source)[41]

As I have argued above, the streaming of the -1 and -2 sequences already demonstrably produces stratification. I raise the issue of enrichment to point out that, through accommodation, IB and AP undercut the liberal notion of equality of opportunity by reinforcing the practical reality of inequality of condition. At the same time, though, the existence of this enriched stream offers a model of what education can be: the kind of education *all* students should receive. I will return to the issue of enrichment below when I discuss my suggestions for overturning the curriculum in the interests of greater social justice.

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[41] Of course, not all teachers "use curriculum knowledge to accomplish institutional shared norms of control": some teachers try to resist the hegemonic work of the institution and even try to teach resistance. Page does not, however, identify possibilities for teachers' resistance.

Concluding Thoughts

How do students end up in the -1 stream or the -2 stream? According to Alberta Learning,

> A variety of characteristics, such as family backgrounds, learning experiences, peer relationships, learning styles, and the accompanying changes involved in making the transition to Grade 10, can influence a student's placement and success in a course. (*Senior High* 7)

This simple statement belies the language of "choice" and "preference" engaged in the document's earlier pages: the individual student is not determining her own path through the ELA streams. Rather, reading these characteristics, we can see class, educational capital, and social capital mobilized under different names to explain the sorting process that leads to "placement and success." Yet this document, unlike previous curricula, situates the streaming of English students' academic and vocational trajectories as a matter of choice and agency, not as a matter of policy or institutional structure. Again, my claim does not mean that previous curricula were not also streamed; they were.[42] The 2003 curriculum, however, positions streaming as a matter of personal preference and satisfaction.

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[42] The curriculum immediately previous to the current document described English 10/20/30 (comparable to the ELA -1 sequence) as the academic stream and English 13/23/33 (comparable to the ELA -2 sequence) as the vocational stream. The shift in 2003 at the level of teachers and students in classrooms has likely been minimal, but

I am not arguing that the production and reproduction of social stratification is conscious or deliberate on the part of either classroom teachers or the curriculum writers. On the contrary: I have argued that this occurrence is naturalized and mystified by notions such as equality of opportunity and individual choice and preference, conditioned by the neoliberal ethos in which the curriculum was developed. As Patricia Hinchey observes,

> most teachers don't perceive themselves as helping to build mental cages for their students. Quite the contrary: the rhetoric of schools and teachers most often centers on all students attaining their unique potential as human beings. In an odd sort of paradox, schools insist on uniformity and control as a means of creating conditions in which every student can learn, can achieve his or her own potential. And yet, that insistence undermines the frequently professed goal of student empowerment. (Hinchey 27)

It is for this reason — this unconscious undermining of student attainment — that my dissertation addresses both classroom teachers and those who teach them at the university. I wish to offer a critical stance from which to interrupt the process of naturalization — to make this process "strange" and thereby open it to critique. Carlos Alberto Torres reminds us that "transformative social justice learning will

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the rhetorical shift is enormous — and ideological. The elevation of individual choice, preferences, and identities produces a rhetorically constructed form of equality that may mystify real social relations. Andrew Sayer comments, "the more everyone is discursively acknowledged as being of equal worth, the *less* the pressure to change the distribution of material goods, because the inequality of the latter is increasingly seen as a separate matter" (*Class* 64–65; emphasis in source). The 2003 curriculum provides a local, concrete example of such ideological discursive work in action.

take place when people reach a deeper, richer, more textured and nuanced understanding of themselves and their world" (2). If teachers understand that education cannot be neutral — that schooling is a crucial and powerful component of the state and as such necessarily operates in the state's interests — then they may understand more fully how they themselves are implicated in the action of the state. Teachers who strive for social justice and transformation may then teach in a critically engaged manner, perhaps reflecting their personal values and beliefs: teaching consonant with the transformative potential of learning.

The explicit aim of this curriculum is to create future workers: it "emphasize[s] career development directions" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6). Significantly, however, the dynamic of the document signals the kinds of workers it will create: some of high status and some of low status. Such hierarchy is necessary, of course, in an economy that depends on disposable, manipulable labour. As Richard Sennett remarks, "In the 'skills society' many of those who face unemployment are educated and skilled, but the work they want has migrated to places in the world where skilled labor is cheaper. So skills of quite another sort are needed" (84). What we must consider is that, through the "choice" model advanced in the rhetoric of the curriculum, Alberta's future low-status workers have not only been positioned as the agents of their own exploitation (from having made poor choices that limit their position in the workplace) but have been encouraged to enjoy their exploitation through the study of texts that (supposedly) bring them aesthetic and vicarious pleasure. Rather than providing a bridge to greater cultural literacy, literature and popular texts will fulfill their aesthetic desires without changing their material conditions.

According to the tenets of neoliberalism, students (or more, correctly, their parents) are customers of the education system and as such are always right to

demand accountability for their tax dollars and accommodation for their unique

needs — including access to exclusive forms of knowledge. Presumably, students and

families may also choose *not* to demand accountability and accommodation, and if

they do so, they live with the consequences of that choice. But underpinning these

claims to the right to choose is a troublesome inequality, as O'Neill identifies:

"*children's equality* before the law, in the health system, in the education system,

and in the employment system is determined by *family inequality* in those systems"

(44; emphasis in source). The "choice" to take the -2 stream rather than the -1 stream

(or IB/AP), then, may be something of a rigged contest. And while it is not absolutely

determinant or fatal, the choice certainly constrains the graduate's future choices.

What I have argued in this chapter is that, as students move through their

high school English Language Arts courses, the -1, -2, and IB/AP streams themselves

accelerate and accentuate the differences between the streams. By the end of English

30-1 or 30-2, something larger than the learning of literature and composition has

occurred, something that persists beyond high school graduation. Johnson and Kress

observe, "Pedagogies of conformity, joined with curricula which do not engage with

the representational world in its existing form[,] cannot hope to foster innovation,

creativity, ease with change. A conservative curriculum asks for conformity, and the

competent performance of stable skills" (12). What they have described as a

conservative curriculum is compatible with the neoliberal curriculum that is

Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts program of studies. Its reliance on evaluation

and accountability, and its persistent evocation of choice and individual

responsibility, may also mute the ability of students, and their teachers, to speak

back to the curriculum. What the document represents, then, is a curriculum of

domination: "the ability to control the activities of others" (Wright 107). If students

and families do not recognize the linguistic structures that shape their destinies — if

they literally cannot read between the lines of the curriculum text and its rhetoric —

then the re-inscription of class and power will continue.

In Chapter Six, I will examine two features of literacy that influence

students' abilities to recognize and understand how language as a technology shapes

our selves and our society. I will consider reader formation — the construction of the

literate subject — and multiliteracies, which engage multiple forms of texts and

knowing. As I will explain, rather than the *either/or* of the current curriculum, *all*

Alberta students in the twenty-first century deserve a *both/and* literacy.

Chapter 6: Multiliteracies and the Language Arts

as Social Practices

Having examined Alberta's recent English Language Arts curriculum, which produces a literacy of social value for students in the -1 stream and a literacy of social utility for students in the -2 stream, in this chapter I will discuss the language arts as social practices, using my concept of reader formation to refer to the processes by which individuals develop literacy and the concept of multiliteracies to refer to the various textual fluencies students bring to the classroom.

Literacy is at the root of any language arts curriculum. It refers to more than just the technical ability to read; it also involves the ability to build meaning from text: "The final goal of reading is not merely to derive information from a text efficiently but to be able to evaluate that information — in other words, to read critically" (Winterowd 99). As I will argue in this chapter, readers are formed through their experiences of various kinds of texts, including the teaching of these texts, and education can produce many kinds of literacy, including critical literacy. I will also argue that critical literacy is not in the interests of the state — and in particular not in the interests of Alberta as a provincial state within a state.

The definition of literacy is itself a deeply political issue.[1] Literacy is "not an autonomous, neutral technology, but rather is culturally organized, ideologically

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[1] Here I provide a "programmatic" (rather than "stipulative" or "descriptive") definition of literacy, according to Israel Scheffler's classification of scholarly definitions. See Roberts 30–32. Through the series of approaches to defining literacy, I seek to underscore the contested (and thus ethical and power-based) claims to the term's meaning.

grounded, and historically contingent, shaped by political, social, and economic forces" (Woolard and Schieffelin 65). A reductive understanding of literacy refers to the individual psychological ability to relate alphabetical symbols to the sounds of human speech and to the concepts transmitted through spoken language — in effect, being able to read and write.[2] A person who possesses this competence sufficiently to perform basic actions of everyday life (buying groceries, riding the bus, observing traffic signs, etc.) is said to have functional literacy. The International Adult Literacy Survey identifies three literacy categories: prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy (Willms, *Literacy Skills* 10–11). These categories reflect the ability to read, the ability to recognize the genre and format of a document, and the ability to use textual information to compute or solve a problem.

As a person acquires a more confident grasp of the skills of translating symbols into meaning — through using increasingly sophisticated forms of texts and through producing texts in speech, writing, and other communicative forms — she or he grows more literate and can participate more fully in the social processes of language. Kramsch comments, "to be literate means not only to be able to encode and decode the written word, or to do exquisite text analysis; it is the capacity to understand and manipulate the social and cultural meanings of print language in thoughts, feelings, and actions" (56). What Kramsch means is that literacy is not

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[2] The elision of reading and writing into a single form of literacy oversimplifies the relationship between these skills. Historically, many people (particularly women) have been taught to read without being taught how to write, or have been taught to write their names without having been taught how to read. Literacy is also a skill that diminishes without practice, so people who were once able to read and/or write may lose the ability if they lack the resources to practise reading and writing regularly.

strictly a psychological, individual process; it is also a social practice, inflected by the reader's material situation: "*literacy* is understood as social action through language use that develops us as agents inside a larger culture" (Shor, "Critical Literacy" n.pag; emphasis in source).

Literacy, then, is more than a composite knowledge of grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules, more than a passing acquaintance with representative great texts, as primary and secondary language arts courses might seem to signal. We live in a literate culture: "not a place in which literacy is simply *available* but in which literacy *matters* to a significant portion of the population" (Baron 9; emphasis in source). The shared signifiers of literacy allow us to transmit meaning through space, time, and context. In becoming literate, a reader develops the ability to receive and interpret cultural signifiers and to create meaning relevant to a particular historical situation, a set of skills that may be referred to as cultural literacy.[3] This form of literacy ties the individual into a larger community through shared knowledge (such as cultural allusions, details of regional dialect and usage, identifiable settings and situations, and relevant textual styles and forms) that is socially and locally situated: "the individual language learner is a social being. Intelligence and reading ability are social activities that people accomplish together. They are not skills or traits given to individuals" (Cherland and Harper 180).

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[3] E.D. Hirsh popularized the concept of "cultural literacy" in the late 1980s, referring to a numerable set of culturally specific facts — such as the dates of particular events in American history and the significance of particular names and places — that enable readers to make sense of many of the texts they encounter. While I recognize Hirsh's work, my own sense of cultural literacy, as discussed below, is much broader and not restricted to middle-class tastes and education.

Cultural literacy underlines the fact that literacy is a social practice because "*all language acts are transactional*, a speaker or writer transmitting a meaning through the spoken language or a written text to a hearer or readers" (Winterowd 116; emphasis in source); for such a transaction to occur, knowledge must circulate socially and situate the learner within a community. As Braun observes, for instance, "Being able to write coherently within the various technological formats available to them [teens] is a skill that is important today and that demonstrates reading and writing literacy in the technological age" (6); she goes on to attack the validity of concepts of literacy rooted in school performance that strip away personal, social, and economic contexts. Similarly, Chambers notes that "Literature — words in prose or verse which have for their purpose not the communication of fact but the telling of a story through the use of the inventive imagination in their employment ... — springs from our common humanity" (*Booktalk* 6). Thus, a full sense of literacy refers to the practice of making sense of the social world around us; it involves receiving and producing meanings that are relevant to both the individual and the community at large.

When cultural literacy develops resistance — when the reader of the world-as-text begins to question why the social world is structured as it is — the work of critical literacy has begun. As I explained in Chapter Three, critical literacy has its roots in critical theory and other Maxian-derived and oppositional discourses. Shor explains that "critical literacy is language use that questions the social construction of the self" ("Critical Literacy" n.pag). Freire refers to this work as true literacy: reading the word and the world. True, or critical, literacy reflects both a resistant reading stance and the ability to question social structures. Freire explains the power of such literacy by observing, "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (*Oppressed* 68). Knoblauch and Brannon extend this notion importantly: "Critical

literacy, the intent of a critical reading and writing pedagogy, entails an understanding of the relationships between language and power together with a practical knowledge of how to use language for self realization, social critique, and cultural transformation" (152).

Critical literacy begins with an act of conscientization — the gradual coming to awareness of false consciousness or ideology. The basic tool of conscientization is critique, a form of critical thinking that resists the subtle machinations of dominant culture and explores the gaps in social logic to understand and explain material structures. Ebert notes, "critique disrupts that which represents itself as what is, as natural, as inevitable, as the way things are" ("Red" 810). She continues, "critique is not judgment but explanation" (812). Through critique, students may begin to compare their lived realities to those represented in the texts of the social world and to compare their social experiences to the experiences of others. This shift in consciousness may alter a reader's stance toward social texts (in the world-as-text) from passive to active and from silent to responsive: "A pedagogy of critique views education as initiation into a mode of response — and response requires reception rather than consumption" (Ruitenberg 349).

Critique contributes to conscientization by helping the reader to reveal what is socially masked, what goes unspoken or unremarked. Hennessy observes, "A major requirement of the cultivated citizen is that she not 'see' the historical conditions that make possible her position in the world" (9). Freire and Macedo concur, referring to false consciousness as "the social construction of not seeing" and explaining "if you cannot see it, you cannot name it" (387). Obscuring the real is an ideological strategy to maintain the status quo; as Briskin explains (referring to specifically feminist strategies), "The goal of non-sexism (or non-racism or non-classism) reflects a belief embedded in liberalism that discrimination is somehow incidental to the system — a

result of prejudice — and that good attitudes and intent can erase that discrimination and make gender, race, and class irrelevant, especially in the classroom" (452–53). What Briskin means is that if we do not name inequality, or other forms of bias, we can pretend it is unimportant, and the nuances of the hidden curriculum and other social injustices perpetuated by silent, subtle bias may continue unnoticed, unchecked. As Hennessy remarks, "Too frequently learning about human diversity means celebrating or appreciating 'difference' rather than acquiring the critical frameworks to understand how and why social differences are reproduced" (11). This is the reason that critical literacy matters.

As I argued in Chapter Five, the differential literacy shaped by the -1 and -2 streams produces social inequality — stratification — in the guise of choice. Readers who have developed critical-literacy skills, however, may be able to perceive the interests at play in the curriculum and offer resistance:

> these possibilities function to revitalize an understanding of the pedagogical scene as a crucial site of political struggle. For that is where the skills and knowledge of critical reading can be developed and, more important, passed on to students to engage in elsewhere. (Watkins 555)

As much as we pay lip service to the concept of critical thinking, Western curricula rarely teach true critical thinking, rooted in critique and material analysis. By restricting opportunities for students, and graduates, to engage in critical thinking (particularly in collective settings), curricula contribute to the maintenance of the state's status quo. Although Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum mentions critical thinking, in the small number of places where it appears in curriculum it supports outcomes for students in the -1 stream: the students who need

it least to change the conditions of their material situation.[4] The question is how a student is assigned to either the -1, the -2, or the enriched stream of English Language Arts. I have argued that, through reader formation students are constructed for -1, -2, or IB/AP classrooms.

As I use the term, "reader formation" refers to the processes of becoming a reader: both the skills-based experiences of making meaning from symbols (including both understanding diction, punctuation, syntax, and other mechanical conventions of written language and possessing language experiences on which to build textual and cultural literacy) and the specific history of an individual reader — a reader biography — that shapes the reader's taste, selection practices, and reading trajectories and affects the reader's production of meaning. Very simply, readers are formed through their exposure to texts of various kinds.[5] That is, reader formation

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[4] In fact, there is some question whether critical literacy, based on critical thinking, can be successful at all with high-status students. See, for example, Allen and Rossatto; Appleman; Gore.

[5] In one sense, my concept of reader formation is comparable to, albeit much more basic than, Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, which Bourdieu explains as "a set of dispositions which generate practices and perceptions. The habitus is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or a second nature" (*Field* 5). Habitus is described elsewhere as "predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination" and as "a practice-unifying and practice-generating principle" (Bellamy 125–26). Just as habitus reflects "history turned into nature" (Bourdieu in Bellamy 126), one's reader formation reflects one's history turned into specific social practices and dispositions; it has material effects and influences (and is influenced by) one's educational (social and cultural) capital.

refers to the construction of the reading subject.[6] As Cherland and Harper argue, echoing Marx, "Readers make meanings from texts, but they make them from existing possibilities for meaning that have been culturally and historically produced" (181).

Thus, every reader is a product of her/his own literary history, and material factors affect reader formation. There is no ideal or typical reader. People's reading backgrounds (based as they are in conditions not necessarily of individuals' own choosing) are not uniform — and certainly not equal — and thus take individuals to different endpoints, despite what the liberal notion of equality of opportunity may seem to suggest.[7] As is obvious if we stop to consider the point, reading is an acquired, not natural, ability, and the ways in which we acquire it (like the facilities we ultimately have with it) vary tremendously. Our speech habits and accents, our practices in consuming various kinds of texts, our tastes in genres and styles, our behaviour and attitudes toward books and literature — and whether we even read at all — all determine how we are equipped to encounter, decode, and interpret texts.

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[6] Note here I am not necessarily conflating the reading subject with the literate subject, first because some readers, though functional in the print culture, are not considered literate within the confines of schooling; and second because (as above) I have distinguished the ability to read from the ability to write.

[7] Gee enumerates several principles related to student preparedness and learning opportunities, and relates these principles to equity in assessment, critiquing the assumption that "if rich and poor children are simply exposed to the same texts and facts in school, they will all 'pass the test' and problems of equity will thereby be taken care of" (27). His article relates various reading domains to reading across the curriculum and to overall school (and post-graduation) success.

Texts help structure our perceptions of social reality. Historically, "text"
referred to a written or printed document, reflecting a Western bias toward the
permanence, linearity, and rationalism of inscribed communications versus orality.
Since the late twentieth century, however, the meaning of "text" has grown more
encompassing. The explanation in the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum
document signals a contemporary, inclusive understanding of "text":

> This program of studies defines the word 'text' broadly. The texts that senior
> high school students study in their English language arts courses include
> works of literature and other texts in oral, print, visual and multimedia
> forms. ...
>
> Oral texts include storytelling, speechmaking, discussion and
> conversation. ...
>
> Print texts include books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. ...
>
> Visual texts include pictures, collages, diagrams, tableaux, mime and
> nonverbal communication. ...
>
> Multimedia texts include demonstrations and oral presentations,
> videos and films, graphic novels and cartoon strips, plays, drum dancing, and
> Internet Web sites. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4)

Longhurst extends this set of definitions, tying it to aspects of political economy and
the cultural industries:

> any cultural object, such as a book, play, film, television programme or
> record, should be thought of as a text. These texts do not come into existence
> spontaneously but result from production processes that involve different

institutions. ... Such cultural objects are not only produced, they are also consumed, or read, by an audience or audiences.... (Longhurst 20–21)

Fiske builds on this sense of "text" but emphasizes a postmodern understanding of constructedness, intertextuality, and interpretation invested in the word:

> Texts are the site of conflict between their forces of production and modes of reception. ... A text is the site of struggles for meaning that reproduce the conflicts of interest between the producers and consumers of the cultural commodity. A program [for example] is produced by the industry, a text by its readers. (14)

In this sense, a text is a product of literacy, its meaning/s dependent on the circumstances of its consumption. A text is then a social practice, both in its production and in its reception, just as "Reading and literacy are embedded in social practice" (Johnson and Kress 10).

Literacy thus is not universally produced. A student will acquire many kinds of literacy — many textualities — over time. As I will explain below, curriculum developers may use these multiple literacies to shape students' learning trajectories and outcomes in rational (or at least rationalized) ways based on students' early textual encounters.

Meaning is also not absolute and continuous but rather historically situated and often deferred. What "means" for us depends on intertextuality; our knowledge of "meaning" in a previous context imbues a new textual situation with resonance or

relevance.[8] High-status culture, for instance, depends on users' familiarity with taste and the conservative processes of canon formation. All text, then, is in a sense intertextual because it depends on our recognition of a previous textual situation for meaning — including, of course, our recognition of the world-as-text.

In his work with inner-city youth, Earl Shorris discovered an important product of liberal arts education, which he explained to his students:

'Rich people learn the humanities; you didn't. The humanities are a foundation for getting along in the world, for thinking, for learning to reflect on the world instead of just reacting to whatever force is turned against you. I think the humanities are one of the ways to become political, and I don't mean political in the sense of voting in an election but in the broad sense. ... Rich people know politics in that sense. They know how to negotiate instead of using force. They know how to use politics to get along, to get power. It doesn't mean that rich people are good and poor people are bad. It simply means that rich people know a more effective method for living in this society.' (n.pag.)

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[8] We might note that after decades of the New Criticism and Louise Rosenblatt's theories of reader reception, high school students are well aware that the correct, or at least preferred, interpretation — meaning — of any text is the teacher's or the examiner's. That is, the text and the author are still the authorities; it is the reader's job to understand what the text and the author "mean," and the reader's own experience and understanding is unimportant to (or at least less important than) the "real" meaning.

As Shorris demonstrates, although students cannot eat or wear cultural knowledge, it is an essential commodity for material success in a knowledge-based economy. On the other hand, a lack of cultural literacy, a lack of textual fluency, is also a lack of the cultural capital through which the privileged classes (Shorris' "rich people") retain their distinction. Although Shorris' students had grown up in a literate culture, consuming its popular texts (television, movies, music, news, and so on), they lacked the wider cultural literacy that might engage them in an effective political struggle for material change. In this last point we might consider Alberta's English Language Arts curriculum, with its differential outcomes: it reflects an apparatus of inequality, and in its maldistribution of cultural literacy (and by extension cultural capital), it produces lasting material effects on students. The three streams (-1, -2, and enriched) reflect traditional class structure too closely not to affect and reinforce the perception of social structures.

Literacy that is taught in a reductive manner — emphasizing the technical, psychological process of reading and ignoring the social situatedness of the transaction — leaves students with the ability to "read" without the underpinning of critical skills to build social meaning. That is to say, without the broader skills of critique, students may consume text without a relevant context: "one does not become culturally literate merely by absorbing a body of information. ... reading depends on cultural knowledge, and one gains that knowledge through understanding — and hence, in effect, joining the literate culture" (Winterowd 98). Unless they participate in literate culture, students may be technically literate — having the functional skills to read and write — and yet critically illiterate, lacking the analytical skills required to engage with text in a transformative way. Such a discrepancy is necessarily political, and we might well ask in whose interests a literacy of social utility operates.

Multiliteracies: Multiple Forms of Texts and Knowing

Having established that literacy is a contested concept, fraught with social significance and constructed to include or exclude, in this section I will explore the idea of multiple literacies, or multiliteracies. Multiliteracies are situated forms of knowing, sometimes socially oppositional but always imbued with the material circumstances of the knower. Jila Ghomeshi explains that speech habits, like literacy, are at once personal and social practices that people choose from a range (albeit limited) of possibilities:

> In claiming that people choose the way they speak, we should be clear on what they are choosing. They are choosing to be creative, to style their language in a particular way, to mark their generation, and/or to sound like the people in the groups to which they want to belong.... What they are not choosing are the connotations that their language may have, and indeed they may be unaware of these connotations. (Ghomeshi 76)

Although Ghomeshi is referring to accents and patterns of spoken grammar in this quotation, the connotations associated with spoken language also exist among competing literacies. Here I will examine how schooling — in particular, the English Language Arts curriculum — interacts with students' various literacies.

Students come to school with multiple literacies. Even before a student has learned the formal skills of writing and reading, from living in a literate culture she or he has absorbed the conventions of forms such as movies, television programs, advertisements, popular music, and video games:

culture is not the exclusive domain of literature or even of books. Culture is now carried largely in moving images on screens in cinemas, televisions and computers, in sound waves from music and radio, or in a thousand other new ways of cultural expression varying from T-shirt messages to display ads projected on the sides of buildings. (Worsnop 89)

After learning to write and read, students emerge more or less confident with print literacy, which often develops alongside visual literacy, screen literacy, and technological literacy (represented in various emerging digital platforms). Literacies are developmental skills: the more one "reads" texts, the more fluent one becomes with textual skills.[9]

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[9] There is also, of course, the possibility of aliteracy — a choice made by those who possess the technical skills to read and write but who choose for various reasons not to participate in literate culture. O'Brien refers to it somewhat hysterically as "the surge of nonreading by the literate and educated" (29). Aliteracy may be an issue arising from adults' evaluation of students' out-of-school textual practices. Sherman Young observes that

> For anyone brought up with a twenty-first century digital mindset, the printed book is an anachronism; books are everything that the new media technologies are not. There is no motion, there is no noise. There is no way to interact with the characters or the story. There is no-one else involved. Reading is a solitary experience. You can't talk back. It's just you and the words on the page. And all you can do with those words is read them; apparently there is no other way to engage. (66)

From this point of view, the privileging of print culture may, for some students, lead to a rejection of reading and writing in favour of more immediate and more interactive oral, visual, and digital forms. As I will discuss below, however, the

Students also carry with them various dialects or conventions of language, including grammar and idiom. Successful socialization in contemporary Western societies in fact depends on one's ability, from a very early age, to move effortlessly through language registers, from the subtle and nuanced speech of the intimate register through the volatile, competitive, and highly elided slangs of the informal register to the stylized utterances of the formal register — the register of academia and institutions. Many students can move fluently between a "home" dialect and the more formal "school" dialect — and eventually into a work dialect. As Ghomeshi affirms, "humans are more than capable of mastering more than one dialect and more than one writing system" (87).

What the ability to move through various literacies and navigate various registers demonstrates is that students obtain and are capable of producing multiple literacies and can understand and manipulate the strategies involved in their deployment. Students bring these assets to school unequally, however, depending on their local circumstance (their home socio-economic status, their local socio-economic status, their parental level of education, etc.).[10]

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adoption of new media is not necessarily a rejection of print culture but rather may reflect more nuanced consumption of text. Either way, aliteracy is a significant behaviour, but we must recognize that it may be a behaviour of privilege or of protest; without examining the social context, we cannot foreclose on its meaning.

[10] See Kathy A. Mills on this point in an Australian context. Mills notes, "Socioeconomic differences in adolescent literacy practices are widening and have been underemphasized in adolescent literacy research" (37). Closer to Alberta, in his discussion of recent changes to the Atlantic English Language Arts curriculum, Barry Barrell reflects on the large number of rural students, students from poor urban families, aboriginal students, and students living in remote, isolated communities. He observes, "Few students have free and open access to multiple entertainment outlets, diverse information sources, or technical innovations"

In theory, these assets are highly valued in schools. Some elements of multiliteracies reflect General Outcomes 1, 3, and 5 in the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum, while others reflect goals of so-called twenty-first–century literacy,[11]

("Technology" 238). While the digital revolution continues to change both schooling and society at large, the assumption that all Atlantic students have equal and unbridled access to the five-hundred–channel universe, to smart phones, to the internet, and to digital texts and technologies betrays a perspective that is "patronizingly suburban" (Barrell, "Technology" 238) — yet remarkably similar to the Alberta situation.

[11] According the National Council of Teachers of English, "Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possesses a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies ... multiple, dynamic, and malleable" (n.pag). Twenty-first–century literacy (NCTE prefers "literacies") requires that readers and writers

- Develop proficiency with the tools of technology
- Build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally
- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes
- Manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information
- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts
- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments. (n.pag)

As an Edmonton Public Schools document explains it, twenty-first–century literacy involves, among other skill sets, "digital age literacy that includes cultural competence, global awareness, accessing information from a variety of texts and effective use of technology and tools" and "inquiry learning, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, number sense, higher order thinking, meta-cognition and intellectual engagement" (3).

which "embraces the pluralism of contexts in which these [multiliteracy] skills are applied" (Edmonton Public Schools 3). Barrell exhorts, "We now need to think more in terms of composing texts using various multimedia in nonlinear formats rather than just simple acts of writing" ("Epilogue" 226). But at the same time, we must not allow the illusion of a better future through technology to prevent our recognizing that these outcomes are still relatively minor and are, practically speaking, not academically valued. As I explained in Chapter Five, the General Outcomes that really matter are 2 and 4, the outcomes captured in the diploma examinations, which account for fifty percent of a student's final mark in English Language Arts.[12]

Related to this form of literacy is information literacy, which the Association of College and Research Libraries calls "the basis for lifelong learning" (2):

> Because of the escalating complexity of this environment, individuals are faced with diverse, abundant information choices — in their academic studies, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. Information is available through libraries, community resources, special interest organizations, media, and the Internet — and increasingly, information comes to individuals in unfiltered formats, raising questions about its authenticity, validity, and reliability. In addition, information is available through multiple media, including graphical, aural, and textual, and these pose new challenges for individuals in evaluating and understanding it. (2)

Note that all these explanations of emerging "literacies" are grounded in reading and writing.

[12] The *Information Bulletins* emphasize the "interconnected" design of the program of study, despite the dominance of General Outcomes 2 and 4, remarking, "Because of the interconnected nature of the five general outcomes, both Part A and Part B of the diploma examination will assess, at least indirectly, all the general outcomes" (Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-1* 1; Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-2* 1).

Today a tension exists between those who champion the concept of multiliteracies and recognize their educational potential, and those who continue to endorse the value of traditional, print-based literacy reflecting mastery of the conventions of standard edited English. Educators, researchers, parents, business and political leaders, and other authority figures may worry about students' "literacy" when we observe their use of practices that are not necessarily our own. We must remember, as Gallego and Hollingsworth caution, "all views of literacy have epistemological, cultural, and political biases that are dependent on the social, economic, and experiential viewpoints of their proponents" (4). The English Language Arts curriculum itself acknowledges different kinds of literacy, encouraging and in some cases requiring the use of film, digital, photography, and other non-print texts, but betrays itself in the high-stakes examination at the conclusion of the program of study, which emphasizes traditional writing, reading, and mastery learning.

All literacies are valid in their context.[13] To inform this understanding, however, we must acknowledge the conservative function of literature and print

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However, "Because many types of assessment are suited to classroom situations only, teachers should ensure that their assessment of student progress reflects the full Program of Studies for Senior High English Language Arts" (Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-1* 1; Government of Alberta, *Bulletin 30-2* 1).

[13] To be clear, I must point out that the curriculum document itself emphasizes the issue of context in English Language Arts as an outcome: "Senior high school students must be able to communicate well in a variety of contexts — for a variety of purposes, with a variety of audiences and given a variety of situations" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 5). This sentence stands alone as a paragraph; the document does not explain why students must be able to communicate this way or why high school students in particular must possess this skill. The sentence does suggest,

literacy — representing a literacy of power, as Shorris identified above. Despite their apparent ubiquity, alternative literacies and the texts of popular culture do not fully reflect "high" culture, the prestige dialect carried by those in positions of power. The text forms that students see modelled in popular culture and through emerging technologies (e.g., chat speak, texting) are not accepted in business, academic, or institutional settings. The English language is made up of dialects, and the protected dialect — standard edited English — is the dialect of power. That dialect, like all others, evolves over time through usage. What matters is the way in which that dialect circulates, the way in which it is deployed. Despite passing commitments to plain language and accessible diction, standard edited English, particularly as

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however, the somewhat mystifying presence of context in the curriculum, introduced a few lines earlier in the document:

> This program of studies emphasizes the importance of context, including purpose, audience, and situation .... The context itself may be defined by limitations of time and space and by expectations influenced by audience characteristics, such as age, gender and culture. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4–5)

Still, we may wonder, *whose* context? That of the author, of the original audience, of the current audience? And how much do students learn about context? Do they learn how their unique contexts — their reader formations — inflect their reception of every text they encounter? Do students themselves question why students in the -1 stream consume and produce different texts than do students in the -2 stream? (Here I have intentionally shifted from the traditional vocabulary of the six strands of language arts to the diction of twenty-first–century literacy that takes up the audience member as "prosumer," simultaneous producer and consumer; see Shirky.) Perhaps: the curriculum itself is silent on these matters, and this dissertation does not move into the classroom formally to investigate the day-to-day experience of the curriculum as enacted.

captured in the formal register, is the language of the elite. It is the language of

contracts, of law, of policy, of bureaucracy, of diplomacy, of governance — the

apparatus of the state — and of access to these bodies of power. It is also the innate

language of education — the dialect in which our textbooks are written, in which

teachers are educated, in which curriculum is produced, and in which the law and

policy framework that controls education is written.[14]

The need for all students to understand, use, and critique the socially

valuable dialect of power must be explicitly clear. The risk we take in accommodating

multiliteracies in the classroom without teaching all students about the significance

of communications contexts (audience, form, and purpose) and about varieties of

power may be great: we risk concentrating the power of the master dialect of

standard edited English in the hands of an elite. This risk has both symbolic and

real, economic consequences. Critic John Simon reflects the linguistically

conservative outlook:

> contrary to popular misconception, language does not *belong* to the people, or
>
> at least not in the sense in which belong is usually construed. For things can
>
> rightfully belong only to those who invent or earn them. ... As for earning
>
> language, it has surely been earned by those who have striven to learn it
>
> properly.... (553; emphasis in source)

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[14] My argument is emphatically *not* a call for language stasis. To live, a language must continue to evolve, and for me, as an editor and educator, the dynamics of language change are exciting. The notion of a fixed and unchanging standard for English is not even an issue; English has been and will surely continue to be one of the world's most porous and dynamic languages.

Simon's defence of language standards, however, is somewhat misplaced: it is not the dialect of power that is at risk. Indeed, "a non-standard dialect is of no threat to the existence of a standard if speakers know and use both appropriately" (Ghomeshi 87). Our concern should rather be that, because of reductive views of literacy, some students are prevented, through the work of the curriculum (and rationalized by student choice, interest, and preference), from learning these standards. Through the apparatus of schooling they have been constructed as lower-level language learners and simply do not have access to the same texts as students constructed as higher-level language learners. So, while chatspeak, texting, and a range of other internet shorthands have fused into an English-based *lingua franca* used and understood by tens of millions of people, none of the structuring, controlling documents of our states are written in such forms. If standard edited English becomes the preserve of only a few, those few possess an extraordinary degree of power.

The valorizing of differences implied in multiple literacies reflects the stratification inherent in accommodation practices discussed in Chapter Five. Reader-response theories of literary criticism, such as those championed by Louise Rosenblatt, attempt to acknowledge that students arrive at literature from different starting points: "In the molding of any specific literary experience, what the student brings to literature is as important as the literary text itself" (Rosenblatt 78). Rosenblatt's theory, however, encourages a compensatory approach, accommodation rather than structural change. That is to say, Rosenblatt's view of "what the student brings to literature" reflects the middle-class expectations of academic preparation to which Bourdieu refers. Bourdieu argues that the extra-curricular, class-based learning of some students marks their preparation for schooling and their reception of texts as "normal"; in this way, formal schooling is tilted toward the tastes and practices of the upper-middle class and both rewards and reproduces the norms and

values of that class fraction (see *Distinction*). We recognize the differences of non-traditional literacies as assets, knowing they not are considered socially equal and are not rewarded equally, if at all. Despite the ingenuity and advanced skills multiple literacies signal, only traditional, print-based, high-status knowledge may be exchanged for social and economic power; indeed, powerful forces are at work to conserve conventional literacy.

Gary Day offers a nuanced view of the hegemonic distribution of cultural capital:

> 'Literature', in short, has the potential to transcend its determinations and offer an image of a fuller, richer life than that which exists under capitalism. At first sight 'popular' culture appears to be classless: it invites everyone to partake of its pleasures, it is based on consumption rather than production, and appeals to individuals rather than groups. However, 'popular' culture is more identified with exchange than 'literature' because it equates human qualities with commodities and identifies the popular with the profitable. As such, it, too, represents the triumph of the middle class. (203)

Literacies derived primarily from the texts of popular culture — literacies that consume texts as commodities rather than receiving and critiquing them — are vulnerable when they confront traditional, high-status, print-based literacy. In the context of the Alberta curriculum, we identify that the -2 stream offers an array of texts and learning opportunities, but not the same texts and opportunities as are offered to students in the enriched stream, or even in the -1 stream — in much the same way that a McDonald's menu offers choices from an array of foods but not the same choices as are offered at a five-star restaurant. The high-status knowledge

simply is not "on the menu" for students in the -2 stream.[15] Access to standard edited English, then, is not simply a matter of equality of opportunity, for there is no equality when the opportunities themselves are not comparable.[16]

Effective English language arts teaching for the twenty-first century, then, must adopt a *both/and* strategy. The *either/or* of academic versus vocational, functional literacy versus cultural fluency, merely reinforces the existing structures of inequality. Adopting multiple dialects in the classroom may be problematic, however, if their use is not contextualized within the action of hegemony, struggle, resistance, and power. Because only the dominant dialect, standard edited English — the dialect explicitly taught and studied in the -1 and the enriched streams — has social authority, we encourage students to use their alternative literacies in bad faith if we do not also stress the necessity of learning the dominant dialect.[17] As

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[15] My thanks to Dr J.L. Kachur for this helpful analogy.

[16] We must remember, of course, that "high" culture is in itself no more valuable than "popular" culture: value resides in what literacy strategies enable students to accomplish, or prevent them from accomplishing. Access to standard edited English by way of the curriculum is not in itself a guarantee of better life outcomes. For one thing, the teaching of any subject or stream may be sterile and may encourage student disengagement. Critical literacy teaching that draws on multiliteracies — the fusion of dialects, genres, conventions, idioms, and social texts — however, may reduce the risk of students consuming texts for their instrumental utility — that is, for the social and education capital they may transmit. Such teaching does not have to happen within the confines of the -1, "academic" stream.

[17] By referring to "social authority," I mean that standard edited English permits access to the tightly rationed realm of university education, shapes the discourse of professions, and underwrites the operations of the state. The social authority of standard edited English reflects greater or lesser access to and mobility within an

Winterowd explains, "If I want my language — hence my entire cultural stance — to count, I must use the dialect appropriate to the group that I want to join" (42). Students must be able to operate within the dialect of power, even as they work to resist its operations. If they are unable to write and speak the language of power, then they are vulnerable to power. More importantly, they must be able to read this dialect critically, to apply critique to this dialect in order to understand both what is said and what is not said.

As I have explained above, the English Language Arts curriculum ties specific course outcomes to future success in the workplace, acknowledging that the course sequences "emphasize career development directions" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 6). We may wonder, however, whether employers expect multiliteracy preparation from high school graduates. Barrell says yes:

> Transnational corporations have an insatiable need for flexible knowledge
> workers and thinkers. These workers need to come armed with the 'new ELA
> basics' — an understanding of teamwork, a command of multiple literacies,
> an ability to use the power of digital technologies to solve a variety of complex
> industrial problems and an understanding of integrated text
> communications. ("Epilogue" 222)

In a neoliberal era, however, we must consider whether employers really expect this preparation, or whether such expectations are perpetuated simply to produce anxiety for students who may perceive themselves to be under-prepared as they enter a

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elite. I do not mean that standard edited English is normatively better than other dialects.

highly competitive workforce. Perhaps they represent yet another barrier for those students who already lack appropriate economic and cultural capital.[18]

As I noted in previous chapters, formal schooling is delivered by the state and therefore its policies are shaped by the political economy, among other social influences. In the modern welfare state, Barrow remarks, "insofar as new production techniques require a more highly educated work force, public education may be viewed as a public subsidy to private business, because education defrays labor costs" (6). When we talk about "real-world" learning, we are talking about learning that is instrumental for, that is valued by, the workplace: not learning for the sake of knowledge but learning for the sake of industry. In this way the curriculum upholds the interests of the state by protecting the stability of the local economy.

If we encourage non-standard, unstable, and highly individualistic forms in place of standard edited English, we create the conditions for a linguistic underclass wholly vulnerable to the machinations of those who can adeptly manipulate and apply the power of language in the realms of policy, law, finance, politics, and social organization. Those lacking the privileged dialect may be unable to recognize, let alone resist, the ways in which they are manipulated by powerful interests. As Tony Judt reflects, "When words lose their integrity so do the ideas they express. If we privilege personal expression over formal convention, then we are privatizing language no less than we have privatized so much else" (n.pag). Such an encroachment of market logic on language is almost unthinkable, and yet strangely possible.

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[18] And although the subject is beyond the scope of this dissertation, we might also ask whether these expectations reflects another incursion of private, corporate interests into public schooling.

At the same time, there is undeniable wit and sophistication to such language forms; and no one can plausibly argue that those who engage in texting, chatspeak, and other non-standard usage are illiterate per se. Indeed, they demonstrate a clear awareness of the situatedness and purposiveness of language. Braun argues that, contrary to popular belief, young people today are writing and reading more than they used to, but on platforms that parents and teachers may not recognize or do not acknowledge as legitimate:

> Adults working with teens often believe that the text literacies teens exhibit when working with technology don't 'count' as much as the literacies teens exhibit when reading and writing in traditional print formats. ... every time a teenager is using one of those technological tools she is exhibiting literacy skills. (4)[19]

Perhaps what parents, teachers, and other authorities tacitly or explicitly recognize is teens' evasion of dominant literacy practices. Braun notes that "teens' sense of identity is intricately intertwined with their literary practices. Teen reading and writing is more meaningful when related to the search for personal identity" (60). Ghomeshi concurs:

> One of the more vital functions of non-standard language is to create solidarity with others. It is a way of expressing non-conformity. Non-standard

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[19] On this point, see also Margaret Mackey, "An Asset Model of New Literacies: A Conceptual and Strategic Approach to Change."

language can signal a stance taken towards authority and social norms. (78–79)

Such literacy choices may even reflect resistance. But if we want real social change, we need a revolution in curriculum.

The strategies of critical literacy become valuable with this recognition. As we build on the potential for resistance, the ability to read critically opens a space where radical change may occur. The conservative tradition of the literary canon holds within it the potential for transformation: an emancipatory consciousness.

Consequences

Having identified both the risks and the radical potential of students' multiple literacies, in this section I consider the larger context of English Language Arts in the curriculum of formal schooling. The issues of multiliteracies and reader formation confront the social practice of English Language Arts teaching by raising an important question: what is the purpose of English Language Arts study? As I have shown in the previous sections of this chapter, there may be a disconnection between students' entry preparation for the program of study and the outcomes of the curriculum; at a larger level, this disconnection exists between the discipline of English Language Arts and the social world at large.

While at the philosophical level the question of why to teach English is beyond the scope of this project, at the level of educational policy the question is immediately relevant. When we refer to "English Language Arts" (or merely "English") in schooling, do we invoke the cultural subject, the academic discipline,

the mechanical matters of a language spoken natively by a few hundred million people, or a corpus of literature (with appended texts from former British colonies)? That is, are we referring to a course, a program, a discipline, a language, a process, a skill, a function — or all of these at once?[20]

The effort to unpack the many assumptions tied up in high school English Language Arts may be easier if we understand the conflicts embedded in the discourse of the larger discipline. Historically, many English teachers have been taught that their subject represents a way to transcend gender, class, race, and background, in the belief that exposure to "great works" will inspire the human soul. Edmundson reflects this belief in his remark, "If you've become a teacher, you've already entered the game on the Emersonian side; you're there to change people, help them live better" (102). This view is entrenched in the liberal-humanist roots of universal education and is perpetuated by teaching practices that disregard the political work of the discipline. As Eagleton explains,

> The strength of the liberal humanist case ... is that it is able to say why dealing with literature is worth while. Its answer, as we have seen, is roughly that it makes you a better person. This is also the weakness of the liberal humanist case. (*Literary* 180)

Eagleton argues that this perspective

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[20] Here we confront an issue of meaning. I would argue that from student to parent to bureaucrat to legislator, every party affected by educational policy adopts a different sense of the term from moment to moment. We cannot be sure we mean the same things when we use this term — a crucial issue given the reach of this subject area in a student's experience of school.

is not weak because it believes that literature can be transformative. It is
weak because it usually grossly overestimates this transformative power,
considers it in isolation from any determining social context, and can
formulate what it means by a 'better person' only in the most narrow and
abstract of terms. (*Literary* 180)

The failing of the liberal-humanist view, then, is that it denies the existence of the
very politics that inform it. Naïvely or willfully, the "better person" argument
assumes a set of values and beliefs that perpetuate our current system of inequality
and injustice — that is to say, teachers, and teaching, also have a conservative
function.

Fish bristles at the concept of the "better person" argument:

To the question 'of what use are the humanities?', the only honest answer is
none whatsoever. And it is an answer that brings honor to its subject.
Justification, after all, confers value on an activity from a perspective outside
its performance. An activity that cannot be justified is an activity that refuses
to regard itself as instrumental to some larger good. The humanities are their
own good. (n.pag)

He continues:

Teachers and students of literature and philosophy don't learn how to be good
and wise; they learn how to analyze literary effects and to distinguish
between different accounts of the foundations of knowledge. ... Teachers of

literature and philosophy are competent in a subject, not in a ministry. It is

not the business of the humanities to save us, no more than it is their

business to bring revenue to a state or a university. (n.pag)

This lack of use value does not imply neutrality, however: texts are still political,

even if we adopt Fish's stance of viewing the humanities as mere subjects.

Woolard and Schieffelin adopt a more historical view of the humanities:

The nineteenth century foundation of English as a university discipline

created a distinction between reading as aristocratic and leisurely and

writing as work. Composition as skill training for employment is the dirty

work of English departments.... (66)

This distinction underlines the rationing of the aristocratic tradition to the

disadvantage of many, in the interests of class stability. Such is the understanding

Hennessy engages in her reference to "the humanities, premier legitimator of the

bourgeois self" (10). Of course, such a structure is hardly surprising in a capitalist

institution such as the university; as Peim observes, the discipline of English "works

against the majority of its students" (5). The reason English works against the

majority of students is that the game of literature is played elsewhere, as Roger

Chartier notes:

If we try to understand this [that some works possess more signifying force

than others] by invoking the universality of beauty or the unity of human

nature we will fall short of the truth. The essential game is being played

elsewhere, in the complex, subtle, shifting relationships established between

the forms (symbolic or material) proper to works, which are unequally open to appropriation, and the habits or the concerns of the various publics for those works. (xi)

Chartier's point echoes Bourdieu, Eagleton, and others in its defiance of the liberal presumption of equality of starting position: as Chartier underlines, not all textual strategies are similarly valued. Most students are unaware that the "game" of English is even being played, never mind being aware that its effects have real, material consequences for their lives.

Despite Fish's protests, the "better person" argument persists. Through literature, students catch a glimpse of other lives, other possibilities, and are asked to speculate on the various significances of these worlds within worlds. The 2003 English Language Arts curriculum document explains the importance of studying literature:

The study of literature allows students to experience, vicariously, persons, places, time and events that may be far removed from their day-to-day experiences. Literature invites students to reflect on the significance of cultural values and the fundamentals of human existence; to think about and discuss essential, universal themes; and to grapple with the intricacies of the human condition. The study of literature provides students with the opportunity to develop self-understanding. They imagine the worlds that literature presents and understand and empathize with the characters that literature creates. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 1)

Remember, however, that not all students will read "literature" in this program of study:

> the ELA 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 course sequence places a greater degree of emphasis on critical/analytical responses to literary texts, while the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence places a greater degree of emphasis on critical/analytical responses to print and nonprint texts *other than literary texts*. (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 7; emphasis added)

The curriculum makes clear that, through some failing of their own, some students — those in the -2 stream — "choose" not to live better lives, "choose" to remain poor, ill-educated, and unenlightened. Thus, the better person argument reinforces unequal student life-outcomes.

Literature — or any text under critical scrutiny — can be transformative only in an environment that is in some way receptive (or vulnerable) to critical literacy — to critique. Critical literacy is a tactic in few classrooms, though, and works distinctly against the declared outcomes of the curriculum. Ultimately we might go back to the curriculum document itself for an answer to why to teach and study English Language Arts. From the document's distinct outcomes for the streams and its evocation of choice, individualism, and enjoyment, the covert but still declared purpose of English Languages Arts teaching in Alberta is stratification: sorting and selecting students and legitimating social and material inequality through the representational work of text.[21]

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[21] To be clear, my position is not an uncritical endorsement of the -1 stream. While I am wary of the truncated literacy opportunities offered in the -2 stream, I am equally wary of the potential in the -1 stream for a closed, complacent transaction between

Concluding Thoughts

English language arts is an increasingly encompassing field where a wide range of literacies and textual strategies may be found. The text is now understood as more than the book-object, extending the scope of the discipline to visual arts, electronic media, and other communicative forms. The classroom work of English Language Arts refers not only to the processes of writing and reading but also to the selection of texts, the critical skills of responding to text, and the social and material effects of reading, writing, speaking about, listening to, viewing, and representing students' own and others' texts.

Opening the curriculum to other forms of textuality does not necessarily interrupt the larger work of the discipline, however. Learning to "read" images, films, popular texts, and digital forms may also institutionalize and domesticate reading practices — that is, it may establish "correct" reading stances and ascribe "correct" interpretations to these texts, just as "correct" interpretations have been applied to literature for decades. Although the technologies may have changed, the role of schooling in legitimating dominant culture remains: the imposition of preferred,

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docile students and non-resistant teachers, all of them interpellated by the myths of individual accomplishment, equality of opportunity, and equality of condition. Neither stream as posed in curriculum is inherently critical. There is admittedly strength in the discipline of critical thinking that may be realized in the -1 stream, but there is also strength in the subversive potential in the non-literary focus of the -2 stream. Neither stream as it currently exists is ideal because of the larger socio-political context of the curriculum document, and it is particularly not my intent, in critiquing the -2 stream, to valourize the -1 stream.

"correct" reading practices on all students and the identification of those students who cannot or will not conform. In the contemporary globalized economy, being a student who cannot or will not adopt "correct" reading practice may have very high-stakes consequences, as Fairclough observes:

> there is a need for a small elite of symbolic–analytic workers for whom the new system may demand a critical education (including a critical awareness of discourse). The danger is a new form of educational stratification which separates them from those likely to become other categories of workers (routine production workers, and workers in service industries) or to join the 'socially excluded' (including unemployed). (557)

When the potential for such stratification exists, as I have demonstrated it does in Alberta, students are vulnerable to domination. Taught to "read" in the dominant mode only, vulnerable students may have few tools to ask how meaning is determined, to question why certain meanings persist.

At the beginning of Chapter Five, I referred to the Klein administration, the ultimate architects of the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum, and observed that Ralph Klein allegedly had no plan for the administration of Alberta. Yet the curriculum produced under the aegis of this administration — a curriculum that presents itself as new and innovative while speaking the millennia-old language of rhetoric — could turn out to be an especially effective mechanism by which the Alberta state may manage opposition By preparing only some students to read beyond a text itself to seek the interests that inform and privilege it (and the gaps that betray it), the state has reinforced the stratification that produces the state's own apparatus.

This chapter has demonstrated that literacy is a mutable concept, shaped by English language arts teaching as a social practice. The choices of curriculum — whether by this term we refer to official documents or more generally to the path of one's life — inflect this practice importantly. The texts that we do or do not read, the words that we may or may not speak, the thoughts that we may or may not think affect the selves we are becoming. They also affect our ability and our will to work together, to unite our interests against oppression and exploitation. Yet hope remains. The work of critical literacy, as advanced by Freire and others, reminds us "that the world we live in is the result of human action, that the future will be made by human beings, that history is not static and unchanging, that the oppressive reality we see around us can be transformed" (Weiler 35). Full realized, critical literacy engages structural transformation: the redistribution of wealth and the dismantling of class and privilege.

Postman sees emancipatory potential in human communication:

... world making through language is a narrative of power, durability, and inspiration. ... For whatever we believe in, or don't believe in, is to a considerable extent a function of how our language addresses the world. (*End* 175)

Conlon observes similar potential in the moment of reading:

texts possess a reality separate from the intentions of their creators. Yes, writing is a necessary condition for reading, but it is not a sufficient one. All reading requires some form of performance and generates some form of personal commentary, even if only in the stream of consciousness that

inevitably fills the gaps left between words and sentences. Reflective pauses

are not times when reading stops, but moment inherent in the activity itself.

In an important sense, all real reading is enacted between the lines, and in

that space there is an essential, irrepressible autonomy. (40)

In that moment of addressing the world, in that gap where real reading happens, we find the space for resistance. Critical literacy and the humanities *in themselves* cannot change the world; but perhaps what they can do is reveal the conditions by which we can change our consciousness.

In deliberately producing stratification through the curriculum, the Alberta state reveals itself using education as an instrument to maintain class interests and class stability and to further the reach of neoliberalism. As I move into Chapter Seven, I return to my earlier claim that education policy is social policy. In Chapter Seven, I will consider the larger consequences of stratification; in Chapter Eight, I will propose some ideas for interrupting this process.

Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion

Alberta's 2003 High School English Language Arts curriculum document offers a rich opportunity for policy analysis. The new curriculum is the product of a regular and ongoing process of assessing a discipline and updating teaching methods and course content. The fact that the process is regular and ongoing, however, does not make it any less political. Curricula are necessarily backward-looking documents, always written in retrospect, attempting to capture and transmit disciplinary knowledge even while it is being created. In that sense, curricula are inherently conservative and traditional; yet in another sense, they are also liberal, in that they may be corrective and reform-oriented. Language curricula in particular are problematic, carrying as they do the accumulated burden of literary theory, history, taste, and tradition. Carrying that weight with them, they necessarily engage problematics of class, gender, and race. They also exhibit the built-in tension between the solidity of the canon and the cultural dynamic that produces new texts, new media, and new usage. Thus governments — such as the Alberta government — that dictate students' learning outcomes and experiences, and legitimate these outcomes and experiences through high-stakes testing such as the diploma examinations, are forced by their own accountability mechanisms to update programs of study regularly and evaluate these practices within a larger social context (e.g., admission to post-secondary institutions, successful employment, participation in the artistic community). In Alberta, this commitment is legislatively framed by the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (Government of Alberta, "Provincial test results") and the Alberta Education Accountability Plan (Government of Alberta, "More

students"). Curriculum revisions in this milieu, however, reflect retrenchment, not change.

Any curriculum is embedded in a set of social relations. Traditional Western public-school curricula have had an iterative, technicist orientation, emphasizing the *whats* of learning — facts, figures, names, dates, titles, theories — over the *hows* and *whys* of learning; Short and Burke refer to this model as the "*curriculum as fact*" (28–29; emphasis in source). Such an orientation is invested in individual achievement and accountability within an undifferentiated landscape of cultural information: the curriculum is posed as an objective program of learning, and individual acquisition of knowledge is evaluated by degrees of success or failure. In such a curriculum, political interests are always already entrenched.

The curriculum of state-sponsored schooling exists as a formally written, legislatively controlled policy document, representing the vision of its creators and contributors. But it also has a lived reality, interpreted by classroom teachers and enacted in the experiences of the students whose histories it shapes. A curriculum, then, is created by material interest and through its enactment produces material consequences. The 2003 English Language Arts curriculum document focusses on producing students who, through their choice of course sequence, are differentially prepared for post-graduation trajectories. As such, these students form a reserve pool of labour for capital, vulnerable to the exigencies of the market.[1] In this chapter I

[1] Alvin Finkel observes that historically, "capitalists wanted cheap labour and the purpose of social policy was to ensure that they had a plentiful supply" (*Social Policy* 327). As I will argue below, the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum helps to ensure a reserve of labour in an economy that still derives the majority of its revenues from oil and gas development and from the services (including highly paid, highly educated professionals) that support that sector.

identify a number of potential policy implications arising from this curriculum and suggest a policy alternative.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, education policy is social policy. As such, it affects all Albertans and all Canadians. An important feature of social policy has to do with how wealth circulates in society; put another way, social policy influences the experience of wealth and poverty in Canada. By poverty, I refer to economic and material lack, reflected in the serious constraints people face in attempting to meet their basic needs (food, shelter, security). The effects of poverty may be far-reaching. Because, as I will discuss in this chapter, poverty is also gendered and racialized, education policies that are deliberately structured to produce stratification amplify the effects of poverty, ensuring its stability through generations.

Remarking on global trends, Ulrich Bech and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim observe that

> the structure of social inequality in the developed countries displays a surprising *stability*; research findings tell us that, despite all the technological and economic changes and all the attempts at reform, there has been no major change in the relations of inequality between major groups in our society — leaving aside isolated shifts and grey areas. (143; emphasis in source)

These findings, according to Alvin Finkel, are *not* surprising. Despite the efforts of nearly a century of struggle, the Keynesian "welfare" state of the post-war era did not arise from significant inter-class economic redistribution but rather from structural adjustment within the instrumental and middle classes (Finkel, *Social Policy* 130–

31, 166, 212, 243). Since the 1980s and 1990s (and even earlier in some jurisdictions), neoliberalism has worked hegemonically to shift the public discourse away from redistribution and toward choice and the logic of the market. Poverty has since been discursively constructed as a matter of individual choice — a lifestyle preference — rather than as a result of state economic policy.[2]

Social policies are not neutral: they are enactments of our social will, reflecting our perceptions of and desires for the social good. In the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum, we have an instance in policy to interrogate how the state itself — through discourse, through rhetoric — produces and reproduces inequality, signalling choice and market logic as the guide to student and parent decision-making. Under neoliberal social policy,

> Actions then become judged not according to substantive values but according to whether they are profitable. Individuals are positioned as consumers rather than citizens, moral and political issues are displaced by market decisions according to self-interest, and the public good is steadily corroded. (Ray and Sayer, "Introduction" 9)

But such a result is only one direction in an array of possible policies; it is not inevitable. In Alberta, an avowedly market-oriented, neoliberal province, a curriculum designed to produce unequal outcomes may seem like common sense, given the mythos of self-reliance, self-determination, independence, and

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[2] To comprehend how illogical the discourse of poverty as a choice is, imagine the counter proposition: that wealth is a matter of individual choice, a lifestyle preference. If wealth versus poverty were just a matter of choice, who would not choose to be wealthy — who would choose to be poor?

individualism: some students simply work harder and achieve more than others do and deserve to be rewarded for doing so. As I have argued in Chapters Five and Six, however, this superficial reading of the curriculum document masks the much more entrenched deep structure of the curriculum as *policy*, which produces different and identifiably unequal work and life trajectories for students as a matter of individual accommodation, not the social good. As I will discuss in this chapter and in Chapter Eight, however, we can seek different solutions in policy to change such results.

Policy analysis is at one level a logical process. In the best case, a policy is successful because it applies an effective, appropriate solution to an identified problem. When a policy fails, however, it may do so because it applies an inappropriate or ineffective solution to a correctly identified problem; or it applies an appropriate or effective solution to a misidentified problem; or it applies an inappropriate or ineffective solution to a misidentified problem. In short, getting policy right is a complicated process, given the many factors that may go wrong; and of course, the diagnosis of a problem and the appropriateness or effectiveness of its solution may depend on the outlook of the viewer.

In examining education policy as social policy, I am claiming that education may be applied as a solution to a social problem. In taking up the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum this way and identifying it as troubling policy, I am making a normative claim about what the policy does versus what it purports to do and what I believe it should do. In the case of this curriculum, English language arts education is the policy applied to solve a problem of economic development. The state positions the Alberta student populace as competitors in the global economy and seeks to prepare them to compete — thus engaging the narrative of meritocracy. But I offer a counter reading to this curriculum as policy. I have argued in the preceding chapters that the problem for the state is not economic development per se; it is the

continued legitimation of the unequal social relations demanded by capitalism. In this reading, the curriculum as policy solves a very different problem: it functions hegemonically to defeat contesting claims for equality and social justice by offering the rhetoric of equality of opportunity.

In analyzing the 2003 curriculum as problematic policy, I have taken several deliberate analytical steps. In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the curriculum produces structural inequality through differential outcomes. I have shown that the curriculum rhetorically defends the stratification it produces as a matter of personal choice and individual interest. This defence supports the legitimation of the state's larger interests and is accomplished hegemonically through commonsense appeals to the language of neoliberalism. I have explained that, in making these appeals, the curriculum mystifies its (dominant) interests, using logos, pathos, and mythos to naturalize its claims so that they feel right and proper to their audiences. In short, I have demonstrated that what the curriculum announces rhetorically is not what it produces structurally; that is, what *seems* in this curriculum is not what *is*.

In Chapter Eight I will call for a single English Language Arts program, a program without streaming or enrichment, one rooted in the aristocratic tradition and built from critique — true critical thinking. The aim of such a program is to benefit all students, not only those in the -2 stream. My proposal is transformative in design and will, contrary to the existing curriculum, make its appeal with the intention of changing what *is* to what *could be*.

Over the last 150 years, English teaching has evolved from an avowedly political project to a purportedly apolitical or disinterested discipline to a student-

centred and allegedly student-empowering program. The discipline of English

language arts emerged in the mid nineteenth century as mass education became

common across Europe and North America. In that period, English was taught as the

poor man's classics course: instead of reading Latin and Ancient Greek texts, as in

the aristocratic tradition, students read from the Great Canon of English literature,

embellished in the United States by a smattering of American-born writers and,

more recently, in Canada by Canadian writers. In the industrial era, English was

taught for its so-called civilizing effect: its aim, as identified by Matthew Arnold, was

to enable the middle class to assert itself and to keep the working class in its place:

> For the aristocracy, education is to accustom it to decline, to banish it as a
>
> class to history. For the working class, education is to civilize it for
>
> subordination, deference and exploitation. ... For the middle class, education
>
> was something quite different. Its essential function is to prepare middle-
>
> class children for the power that is to be theirs. (Storey 24)

Mass education is often heralded as arising with the advent of liberal democracies.

This identification is a fine way of redirecting the fact that mass education also arose

with the advent of Western industrial capitalism and that mass education serves the

explicit and implicit needs of capitalism and class-based social structure. In the mid

twentieth century, as social class became less important to social mobility in the

aftermath of World War Two, the purpose of English studies took an individualistic

turn. Now English students considered "what it meant to be a person, to engage in

significant relationship with others, to live from the vital centre of the most essential

values" (Eagleton, *Literary* 27): typical liberal-humanist concerns that emphasize

social order, harmony, and rationality and distract from conflict, unrest, and inequity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, with the dramatic social shifts brought about by the civil rights and aboriginal rights movements in the United States and Canada, the rise of second-wave feminism in the West, and anti-colonialism around the world, education shifted again. Language arts curricula moved away from basal readers, literature anthologies, and musty classical texts toward a more affirming, student-centred approach using trade books and contemporary texts; in the larger culture, this period also saw the rise of young-adult publishing and growing realism in children's fiction. But by the 1980s and 1990s (depending on one's location), in step with the rise of neoliberalism, approaches to language arts changed again, under the wider banner of school reform. The organizing rhetoric of this change "stresses the failures of schools and universities and then proceeds to reform them with more economic and utilitarian goals" (Grubb and Lazerson 295), calling for greater privatization of schooling and increased accountability of teachers. Under the auspices of reform, language arts education came increasingly under scrutiny as parents, employers, and policy-makers raised concerns about graduates' literacy, grammar and spelling, writing proficiency, and knowledge of classical literature. High-stakes testing, such as Alberta's diploma examinations (and later the Provincial Achievement Tests at Grades 3, 6, and 9), became commonplace.

At the same time, in some quarters, the mistrust of totalities conveyed by postmodern theories led to a breakdown of faith in the institution of education to accomplish any social good; in other arenas, a mistrust of postmodernism led to a retrenchment of school as agents of civilization, with strong back-to-basics curricula arising alongside highly specialized, accommodation-oriented programming in both

public and private systems. A contest to declaim or affirm the legitimacy and authority was underway and continues.

In the new millennium an atmosphere of individual accommodation pervades Western schooling. In Canada, a mixture of private, public, and charter schools, each with a particular strength or focus, offers choice to students and parents. Language and literature study remains central to the curriculum, however. Schools, politicians, and economists speak urgently about the knowledge economy, global competitiveness, and the changing nature of work. As Green observes, "voters rarely question government claims that more education and training improves national economic competitiveness because they know that on an individual level, at least, human capital investment does pay dividends" ("Education" 195). The language arts — not merely basic literacy but new-media fluency and management of self-presentation — are arguably vital to individual success in late-capitalist economies.

Yet the language arts play a particularly vexed role in the service of capitalism. As I explained in Chapter Six, English curricula have long struggled with the divided focus of the discipline between literacy (reading, writing, and other language practices) and literature (knowledge of literary conventions and canonical texts). The common rationale behind near-universal literacy in Western nations has been to ensure baseline literacy in the populace as a whole. This thinking has its roots in the Industrial Revolution, when managers recognized that workers who could read were more efficient and less vulnerable to injury on the job than were workers who could not.[3] For those taking this perspective, however, literacy must not

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[3] Literacy was also an investment for workers, as Baron explains: "among the working classes, significant levels of literacy only began to emerge (especially during the second half of the nineteenth century) when there was a positive inducement —

encourage workers to adopt thinking that is contrary to the interests of industrialists and the state — thinking about unionizing or socialism, for instance. The question for capital then becomes, how much literacy is enough? For more than a century, Western curricula have responded with literacy teaching that has tended to produce an enriching experience for some learners, a truncated experience for most others. For students destined to be workers, the functional skills of reading, writing, and composing have been preferred over the higher-status skills of expressing themselves persuasively and interpreting text critically — the classical foundations of rhetoric and the basis of both conservative and critical literacy.

Functional literacy is a fiery topic. More than sixty years ago, in his pivotal essay "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell argued that the working class needs what today we would call critical literacy, in order to be able to decipher the high-flown rhetoric of the political elite and to confront and protest the material circumstances of their lives. Orwell believed that being equipped with sharp, simple language prepared one to confront the powerful because "Political language ... is designed to make lies sounds truthful and murder respectable" (285). He describes contemporary (1940s) English usage as deliberately obtuse, calling it a "mixture of vagueness and sheer incompetence" (273), noting that "political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness" (281), and explaining that the consequence of such usage was mental cloudiness and that "this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity" (281) — and in 2012, not much about English usage has changed.[4] Orwell could not, of course, have anticipated the acceleration of language

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generally economics — for enduring the trouble and often loss of wages needed to learn to read and perhaps write" (85).

[4] Building on Orwell's essay, Neil Postman observes,

processes — in English in particular — that have accompanied the explosion of mass communications technology in the last few decades. Yet in our current era of skillful public relations, slick consumer advertising, carefully packaged news production, and intense mass-media exposure, Orwell's warnings are arguably even more relevant than they were in the post-war era.[5]

Literacy involves more than the technical ability to read; it also depends on the ability to build meaning from text, and on readers' and writers' perceiving themselves as "participants in the culture-making process, not as passive recipients of a predetermined cultural agenda" (Winterowd 201). After all, as Gee remarks, "we never just read 'in general,' rather, we always read or write *something in some way*" ("Opportunity" 28; emphasis in source). When students are taught to consume text without engaging it in a transformative way — when they lack the skills to ask how meaning is constructed, privileged, legitimated, and circulated — they become literate in a dominant mode only. In controlling students' access to high-status cultural knowledge, English teaching — especially as influenced by a curriculum like

> To use language to defend the indefensible (as George Orwell claimed some of us habitually do), to use language to transform certain human beings into nonpersons, to use language to lie and to blur distinctions, to say more than you know or *can* know, to take the name of the truth in vain — these are offenses against a moral order, and they can, incidentally, be committed with excellent pronunciation or with impeccable grammar and spelling. (*End* 85; emphasis in source)

[5] Another contemporary commentator on Orwell's essay, Roy Peter Clark, notes that in the twenty-first century, "the debate is framed by simple phrases repeated so often to stay 'on message' that they turn into propaganda slogans, another substitute for critical thinking. Each side develops 'talking points.' (233)

Alberta's — performs the identifiable work of sorting and selecting students for particular trajectories, an enterprise that has important structural and material implications for individuals and for society overall; as Cherland and Harper insist, "literacy instruction is a material social practice" (193). Alberta's new English Language Arts curriculum requires explicitly that this work be done.

This dissertation does not question whether the process of formal education reproduces social stratification, for it is a tenet of virtually every theory of the sociology of education that it does so (see, for instance, Collins; Crossley; Davies and Guppy; Erwin and MacLennan, eds.; McCarthy and Dimitriadis; Wexler; and Wotherspoon, *Sociology* for iterations of this point). Instead, this dissertation has investigated Alberta as a specific, localized example of how social stratification is produced and reproduced and has examined the articulation between this specific instance and the larger machinations of political economy. The opening sentences of the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum document make explicit that the aim of the curriculum is to create future workers — an important and usual goal of state educational policy. In the further pages of the document, however, the curriculum works against its stated objectives by diminishing some students' experience of schooling by sorting students into skill streams.

If we agree that stratification — the deliberate construction of social inequality and inequitable distribution of material resources — is a problem because inequality leads to less, rather than more, social justice, then a curriculum that has as its mandate the deliberate production of stratified outcomes is a problem.[6] The

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[6] If, on the other hand, the reader does not agree that stratification is a problem — but thinks rather that hierarchy and inequality are "natural" or that meritocracy is a fair process in the social order — then our differences are philosophical and not

2003 English Language Arts curriculum identifies two kinds of learners — those who are destined for high-status education (that is, university education and a middle-class life trajectory) and those who are not — and produces distinct, stratified outcomes for these learners. Whether we agree that stratification is a problem or not, from the perspective of policy analysis, the problem with Alberta's English Language Arts curriculum is that it is structured to produce deliberately stratified outcomes but mystifies its actions with the rhetoric of choice to suggest that such outcomes are natural, expected, and even desirable.

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the representation of Alberta's history has perpetuated a mythology that values competition, rugged individualism, hierarchy, economic achievement, and consumerist behaviours of accumulation. The policy problem of a stratified curriculum, then, is not accidental. As De Neufville and Barton observe, "Myths are an essential starting place for insight into how values shape policy" (184), and we may see this shaping taking place in the *2006–09 Government of Alberta Strategic Business Plan*, which declares, "At the heart of *self-reliance*, and of any person's *success*, is *his or her desire* to learn" (11; emphasis added).[7] Similarly, the larger themes of the Alberta curriculum document function rhetorically to connect stratification in the English Language Arts curriculum to the

logical. As a historical materialist, I believe that social progress toward global justice is possible, despite that the process is slow and complex.

[7] Note that I am not disputing this sentiment per se; I simply wish to connect its mythic language to the enactment of policy. We might, however, invert the sentiment and ask what is at the heart of any person's failure. According to the logic of the quotation, a person fails because s/he lacks the desire to learn, the desire to succeed. The individualism of success is clear, and so too is the implication of the *social* cost, or burden, of failure: one is not wholly *self*-reliant.

larger mythos of Alberta's history of struggle and triumph. Barthes explains that myth functions to naturalize and to authorize: "This is why myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden — if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious — but because they are naturalized" (*Mythologies* 131). By naturalizing "Alberta values," the curriculum upholds the larger provincial identity and political-economic culture.

The language of the curriculum aligns with the demands of Alberta's political economy to signal individual choice and market freedom while transmitting signals about student aptitude, ability, and achievement. We see the appeals to political ideology on the first page of the curriculum document, which tells us, "An appreciation of literature and an ability to use language effectively enhance students' *opportunities* to become *responsible, contributing* citizens and lifelong learners while experiencing *success* and *fulfillment* in life" (Alberta Learning 1; emphasis added).[8] But the document speaks plainly, too: such a curriculum (particularly when conjoined with the high-stakes diploma examination) can achieve these outcomes only for some students. Through such dynamics, the curriculum document makes clear not only an agenda of stratification but the legitimation of class domination. Bourdieu and Passeron observe,

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[8] The quoted sentence signals both an economic goal and a social goal underpinning English education, yet we might question the rhetoric itself. What does the curriculum document mean by "responsible, contributing citizens"? Presumably those who pay taxes, spend their discretionary income on consumer goods, and do not collect social assistance or unemployment benefits. Presumably not single-parent artists or writers who require social assistance.

Recognition of the legitimacy of a domination always constitutes a —

historically variable — force which strengthens the established balance of

power because, in preventing apprehension of the power relations *as* power

relations, it tends to prevent the dominated groups or classes from securing

all the strength that realization of their strength would give them. (14–15;

emphasis in source)

As I demonstrated in Chapter Five, rather than using language for inquiry, as

citizens might, many students are trained through this curriculum to use language

instrumentally, as workers must.

Stratification in formal education is a social fact. Oakes explains,

we have seen that students in different groups were exposed to dramatically

different qualities of knowledge. Decisions were made about the

appropriateness of various topics and skills for students in different tracks

which served to limit sharply what some students would learn. The lower the

track, the greater the limits — quite different from any compensatory, or

even democratic intent. As a result, high-track students got Shakespeare;

low-track students got reading kits. High-track students got mathematical

concepts; low-track students got computational exercises. (*Keeping* 192)

More recently, and with regard to language arts classrooms in particular, Katy Smith

notes,

Curriculum differentiation leads students in upper-track English classes to

engage in quantitatively more reading, writing, and discussion than do their

peers in lower-track classes. In addition, the reading, writing, and speaking

that students in average- and high-track classes do is more likely to involve

higher-level thinking. (483)

Stratification means that students' learning — and subsequently life — experiences

are unequal, and stratification begets further stratification. From being the children

of families whose starting positions are unequal, the graduates of stratified English

Language Arts courses grow into the parents of the next generation, similarly

stratified, perpetuating inequality structurally over generations, not only in material

effects but also in the shaping of subjects' consciousness. Through the goals declared

in its opening sentences, Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum

unapologetically yokes the social practices of reading and writing to the social fact of

stratification.

From a policy perspective, the curriculum is a new iteration of the centuries-

old rhetorical tradition, organized around the belief that if teachers expose students

to high-quality learning opportunities — what Schrag calls "the inculcation of civic

virtue through immersion in the 'best that has been thought and said'" (272) —

students will learn. If a student does not learn, it is due to deficiencies within the

individual, not to problems in the curriculum or the school or the enterprise of

schooling. From a policy perspective, we may be concerned that the efficacy of the

rhetorical tradition, and of student receptivity, is treated as fact, not a matter of

interpretation or situation, in this curriculum.

The rhetorical tradition, which roots academic achievement and social

leadership in the individual student's aptitudes and personal attributes, is a

mechanism for directing social focus toward individual ability and achievement and

away from the structural features that enable some individuals to succeed at the

expense of others. If a student has been exposed to "the best that has been thought and said," then that student's presence in one or the other ELA stream must be seen as a matter of individual preference and interest rather than as a structural result of the student's social starting position.

Similarly, the government's invitation to schools to "specify additional requirements" creates a potential gap into which may fall schools whose "local communities" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 10, 11) are vulnerable to failure: high school outreach programs, schools in low-income neighbourhoods, and reserve schools. The apparently innocuous "additional requirements" phrasing permits these schools to fall back into under-preparation and less rigorous study as an artifact of "choice." Such schools may have fewer resources and their student populations come with limited background advantages, so the local community is unlikely to demand enrichment or enhancement (such as International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement programming), as a more affluent community might. Rather, the community will likely be satisfied with modest achievement and ordinary outcomes — functional literacy — reducing or eliminating any actual "choice" for the students, parents, and teachers in these circumstances.

Let us examine two places at which the curriculum document refers to the variability of student populations. Early in the document, the course writers advise that "Two course sequences have been developed in order to accommodate a diverse range of student needs, interests and aspiration" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 5). Mark Olssen observes that such language is situated: "In relation to neoliberalism, diversity is sponsored by the market mechanism, which results in compounding and cumulative inequalities" (276). Olssen's point becomes sharp when diversity is next mentioned in the curriculum document:

Since the ELA 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 course sequence provides for the study of texts

at a variety of different levels of sophistication *to meet the needs of a more*

diverse student population in terms of student aspirations and abilities,

students who aspire to post-secondary education, but not necessarily to

careers related to the English language arts, may register in this course

sequence. (Alberta Learning, Senior High 7; emphasis added)

We need only invert this construction to see what it is not making explicit: that

students in the -1 stream are a *less* diverse population, more unified and better

conforming to class expectations. Here we can see the work of habitus — the work of

the hidden curriculum — in action, as Bourdieu and Passeron suggest: "at every

stage in their school career, individuals of the same social class who survive in the

system exhibit less and less the career characteristics which have eliminated the

other members of their category" (82).

That students who succeed conform to the behaviours of middle-class self-

management is not an accident. Andy Green explains that the rise of state-sponsored

schooling in the nineteenth century brought to education "new habits of regularity,

subordination to routine, and monotonous work and strict discipline, and these could

only be achieved through systematic 're-education' of the work force" (*Education and*

State 52). Green continues,

The task of public schooling was not so much to develop new skills for the

industrial sector as to inculcate habits of conformity, discipline and morality,

that would counter the widespread problems of social disorder, and encourage

acceptance of the values of competitive capitalism both in the work place and

in the community at large. (*Education and State* 59)

As I discussed in Chapter Five, student behaviours that signal a lack of conformity and discipline — such as lacking deference to authority, being late for or not attending classes, and failing to conduct oneself appropriately in the classroom — lead to the student's being directed toward the low-status, less-valued outcomes of schooling such as the -2 stream.

Despite adopting a vocabulary of individual effort and ability, and gesturing to choice and rationality as touchstones, the curriculum document presents many strategies that reassert traditional class structures and conserve advantages for the already privileged. Put another way, the curriculum writers use their own mastery of rhetoric and political literacy to mask the deliberate denial of such literacy to a segment of the Alberta student population — arguably the segment that most needs this literacy.

To extend this policy consideration, we might also examine two documents adjunct to the curriculum — the *Alberta Authorized Resource List: English Language Arts Grades 10 to 12* and the *Alberta Authorized Resource List: English Language Arts Novels and Nonfiction Grades 4 to 12*. These documents explicitly warn teachers to be cautious, even self-censoring, in their textual choices and teaching strategies: "Alberta Learning strongly recommends that teachers read all selections in the student texts and all activities in the teacher guides prior to using them with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community" (Alberta Learning, *Grades 10 to 12* 1) and "Titles must be selected in a context of respect for the values of others. If a student, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable reading an assigned book, an alternative

choice should be offered" (Alberta Learning, *Novels and Nonfiction* 4).[9] Authorized

texts — a familiar canon of pre-approved "great" works (however the authorizing

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[9] The discussion of student sensitivity to content is explained further in the document, engaging both the tensions of living in a pluralistic society and the power of parents in shaping a student's educational experience:

> Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view, and to make sound judgments.
>
> **Teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues shall exercise sensitivity to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed, or intimidated for positions that they hold on controversial issues.**
>
> **Information regarding controversial issues:**
>
> **• represents alternative points of view, subject to the condition that information presented is not restricted by any federal or provincial law**
> **• appropriately reflects the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students**
> **• meets the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses and programs of study and education programs**
> **• reflects the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts.**
>
> **Controversial issues that have been anticipated by the teacher, and those that may arise incidentally in the course of instruction, should be used by the teacher to promote critical inquiry rather than**

agents might have defined greatness) — reinforce the rhetorical tradition and its

rationalism, and acknowledge the consensus of the community as a local market and

the disciplining force of the sensibilities of parents-as-consumers.[10]

The 2003 curriculum reflects a return to banking education, despite its

surface appeals to learner differences. Students come to their high school English

Language Arts courses waiting to be filled with appropriate content, rationed and

sanitized for their easy consumption. Whether student trajectories are realized

through inherited or acquired attributes, the interests of this curriculum lie in

stratifying, classifying, and preparing Alberta's future leaders and labourers, and in

ensuring compliance of students and teachers through accountability, competition,

hierarchy, and the controlled distribution of what is constructed as a finite resource.

But again, we must recognize that these interests are obscured: by engaging the

rhetoric of "choice," the curriculum signals that it is the struggling student's "choice"

not to succeed in English Language Arts, not to complete the highest level of

education available, not to attain "literacy" in her or his own culture. At the same

> **advocacy, and to teach students how to think rather than what to think.**
>
> **The school plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development, and shall handle parental decisions in regard to controversial issues with respect and sensitivity**. (*Grades 4 to 12*; emphasis in source)

The implications of this admonishment in the new context created by 2009's Bill 44, while beyond the scope of this dissertation, suggest valuable directions for further study.

[10] We might note that the narrowing of the "authorized" canon through mandated censorship magnifies the effects of class norms, tastes, and practices.

time, a student's "choice" to finish the -2 stream helps perpetuate the myth that students "choose" to be working class or "choose" to be poor — or even, were we to push this logic, "choose" to be ignorant of their own cultural literacy. Such rhetoric falsely assigns to agency what is arguably an issue of structure and power relations.

Jeannie Oakes observes that "the net effect of tracking is to exaggerate the initial differences among students rather than to provide the means to better accommodate them" ("Keeping Track" 14). Elsewhere she notes,

> We decide, for example, that groups of students who exhibit certain kinds of academic and social behavior (usually those less valued by schools and less consistent with school processes) are less educable. Then we go on to decide that a reduced academic content is appropriate for these students. These decisions are not usually a result of critical reflection on a variety of alternatives, but rather most often result from unquestioned and almost automatic responses. (*Keeping* 193)

Thus inequality is perpetuated uncritically, almost unthinkingly, for those with the "wrong" forms of literacy, the "wrong" forms of capital.

On the other hand, however, the presence of enriched programming — such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement in Alberta high schools — may yield explicit elitism and exclusion, in the guise of educational excellence, reinforcing students' background advantages (or disadvantages) and opportunities, and further refining the sorting and selecting process. A curriculum that sorts and segregates learners is unfair, not least because students' entry into the curriculum is unequal. While Albertans may feel morally more comfortable with the mythology of hard work yielding generous rewards — the founding myth of Alberta — this myth

mystifies the interests of the privileged and the powerful, and "mystification leads to the 'sacredness' of the social order, untouchable, undiscussable" (Freire, *Politics* 116). As De Neufville and Barton explain:

> Such myths perform a doubled-edge function in a policy or planning process. On the one hand, they can provide creative inspiration for policies, a way of translating community values into action proposals, and a powerful means to communicate to a broad public and rally support. They can mediate social and economic change by allowing new policies to carry familiar meaning. On the other hand, a myth can conceal crucial contradictions and realities, legitimize policies that benefit the powerful, and support anachronistic perceptions of policy problems. (181)

So, I argue, functions the English Language Arts curriculum.

The Government of Alberta may insist that "The learning system must support the development of the province's human capital to ensure Alberta is a leader in the knowledge-based world" (*Business Plan* 11), but the current curriculum clings to beliefs in the efficiency model and the rhetorical tradition, dramatically dividing knowledge by "interest" to produce students who can read and students who can lead. The government has declared its aim to be at the top regionally and internationally; that is, it has declared its acceptance of stratification — winners and losers — at a global level. The 2003 English Language Arts curriculum projects a similarly narrow understanding of "success" and "fulfillment" upon high school students. Thus, the policy question that emerges is whether the citizens of Alberta should accept a curriculum that ostensibly offers equality of opportunity but instead deliberately produces inequality of condition.

The Myth of Equality of Opportunity

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that the integral problem with a streamed curriculum is that it purports to offer choice to the student and parent consumers of schooling as a product. However, such choice belies one of the most valued principles of liberalism: equality, and in particular, equality of opportunity. In a liberal democracy such as Alberta, this incongruity should be problematic. The power of the phrase, after all, is compelling: many Albertans might like to believe in the presumed fairness of equality of opportunity, particularly as it evokes our mythic provincial values.[11] But there is a significant discrepancy between what the curriculum declares and what it produces. As I analyzed in Chapter Five, the curriculum maintains a superficial appearance of being committed to equality of opportunity through its declarations of similarity in the streams. Close reading reveals, however, that the streams are not similar, and are in fact dissimilar in ways that ensure some students — those in the -2 stream — are disadvantaged. Thus, the equality of opportunity signalled in the document is illusory.

The Alberta English Language Arts curriculum, which offers the basic -1 and -2 streams in addition to enriched International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs through public schools (and which boasts a smattering of charter schools and private schools), presents a preferred stream and a less-preferred

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[11] Erik Olin Wright notes, "A very broadly held view in liberal societies is that inequalities in material rewards and status are not, in and of themselves, generally morally objectionable as long as individuals have equal opportunity for achieving these rewards" (186).

stream. To put it another way, the system offers excellent, good, and poor paths suited to excellent, good, and poor students. My argument here is that these labels — excellent, good, poor — are not natural as applied to students but rather are artifacts of the structures of a capitalist society. Students may arrive at these descriptors having been already constructed as "excellent," "good," or "poor" on the basis of evaluations that have little to do with their intellectual abilities or readiness to read literature. "Poor" students, who cannot choose the most advantageous stream of high school English Language Arts study, may have been constructed as -2 students since their earliest days of primary school on the basis of their home or first language, their (lack of) early exposure to text, their classroom behaviour and (lack of) self-management, and other factors that have a great deal to do with the norms of class — the hidden curriculum. It is only in high school, where streaming becomes explicit, that such construction may become visible.

As Bourdieu has revealed, public schooling reflects the norms of the upper middle class (see *Distinction*; see also *Reproduction*, with Passeron). Students of this class tend to succeed because their habitus — their internalized, largely unconscious palette of attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge — disposes them well to the circumstances of schooling. In fact, most middle-class students fare well, if not brilliantly, in the K–12 system and go on to experience "a prosperous life, happiness, good health and rewarding job opportunities" (Edmonton Public School 2). Students from the working class, from working-poor families, from aboriginal families, and from other vulnerable circumstances, however, tend to be less successful in formal schooling.[12]

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[12] Here and elsewhere, I have used the term "vulnerable students" in sympathy with J. Douglas Willms' term "vulnerable children to describe students whose life chances

Knoblauch and Brannon analyzed the directionality of the relationship between school achievement and socio-economic status — that is, whether greater school success produces higher socio-economic status or whether higher socio-economic status produces greater school success:

> Official rhetoric typically relates success in school, as cause, to social and economic success, as effect, maintaining an assumption that everyone starts equal with respect to a set of neutral academic standards, then over time meets those standards to a greater or lesser degree, eventually 'earning' an appropriate spot in the economy. (158)

That is, whether school success produces an economically secure future or a secure economic background produces school success, individual apprehension of "standards" leads a student to her or his workplace destination through the legitimating linkage of school, effort, and results. Yet at one level the question is irrelevant because it is predicated on fundamental inequality of starting positions, regardless of subsequent equality — or inequality — of opportunities. As Bourdieu and Passeron has argued (14–15), in an already-stratified system, no opportunities are equal; the playing field is tilted to the advantage of the privileged before formal schooling even begins.

The premise of equality of opportunity is thus flawed, and the consequences may be grave. O'Neill argues that

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due to factors related to their families' socio-economic status. See Willms, *Vulnerable Children*.

market liberalism undermines the future of individual life chances because it

also fails to foster the institutional chances of a good life. ... it is evident that

where the civic staples of citizenship (health, education, and employment) are

placed under the sign of scarcity, coded through the system of success and

failure, then we seriously weaken the social covenant that underwrites all

other contracts. (17)

Despite the illusion of social mobility and individual freedom, "choice" is constrained

in the system, regenerating inequality and reproducing socio-economic class

structures.

One of the specific risks of inequality is poverty. Earlier in this chapter I

observed that poverty is gendered and racialized. What I wish to demonstrate is that

the effects of stratification are real, in that we can track generational post-secondary

participation and household incomes as identified by a variety of factors. This

tracking means that we can see that the effects of stratification have the potential to

constrain the life chances of subsequent generations within families.

One of the most visible differences between the -1 and -2 streams is that ELA

30-1 enables students to move seamlessly into university after high school

graduation and ELA 30-2 does not: no university in Alberta accepts ELA 30-2 for

admission to a baccalaureate program. Statistics Canada's analysis of post-secondary

participation during the 1990s (when the parents of children who are now in schools

were themselves young adults) reveals that one of the most important factors in

students' university participation is their parents' participation in university: "Both

males and females with university-educated parents are more than twice as likely to

go to university themselves than those whose parents stopped after high school, and

the gap is wider still when the comparison is made with those whose parents did not

complete high school" (Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman 13). As such, we might expect a greater concentration of students in the -2 stream whose parents had not attended post-secondary education than in the -1 stream. Household income is also significant, but less important than parents' participation (although of course parents' participation in post-secondary may affect the household income) (Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman 7). Importantly, family structure also has an effect on post-secondary participation: "42 percent of all female respondents who lived in a two-parent family went to university, whereas only 29 percent of those who lived in a mother-only family did so" (Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman 13). However, statistics affirm that "a long-standing pattern that university participation rates are highest among youths from high-income families and of highly educated parents" (Drolet 26) was still relevant in 2001, when the pilot implementation of the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum began.

If parental education and household income both have a relationship with students' post-secondary trajectories, then it is important to consider how these factors play through two visible and potentially vulnerable groups: women and aboriginal Canadians. Likewise, because family structure interacts with students' post-secondary participation, we must also consider the effects of being a single parent of either gender or of aboriginal ancestry.

Looking at Canadian women overall, Statistics Canada found that "In 2008, women with less than a Grade 9 education earned $20,800 on average, compared with earnings of $62,800 for women with a university degree. In contrast, men who had less than Grade 9 education earned $40,400, compared with $91,800 for those with a university degree" ("Women" n.pag). Immediately we can identify a significant gap between women's and men's incomes regardless of their level of education; an increased level of education does narrow the gap somewhat, however. Statistics

Canada had earlier reported that women's incomes are generally lower than men's and that in 2003 women's incomes were only 62% of men's incomes (Statistics Canada, *Women* 133). Further, "Women make up a disproportionate share of the population in Canada with low incomes. In 2003, ... females accounted for 53% of all Canadians classified as having low incomes" (*Women* 143).

In 2003, a woman with a high school diploma, employed full time, made an average annual income of $30,500 versus the $43,000 her male counterpart made (Statistics Canada, *Women* 153). The gap between women's incomes and men's is particularly significant in female-headed households: "Most notably, lone-parent families headed by women have, by far, the lowest incomes of all family types. In 2003, families headed by female lone parents under age 65 had an average income of $32,500, 38% the figure for non-elderly two-spouse families with children and less than 60% that of lone-parent families headed by men who had an average income of $54,700" (Statistics Canada, *Women* 134).

What these figures signal is that women are more vulnerable to poverty than men are, particularly when they are raising a family as the sole parent. Statistics Canada advises, "In 2003, 38% of all families headed by lone-parent mothers had incomes which fell below the after-tax Low Income Cut-offs. In comparison, this was the case for 13% of male lone-parent families and just 7% of non-elderly two-parent families with children." (Statistics Canada, *Women* 144).

If we compound the gendered issue of poverty with race, however, the figures look even grimmer. In 2006, the median income for aboriginal women was $15,654 and for aboriginal men was $18,714; by comparison, the median income for non-aboriginal women was $20,640 and for non-aboriginal men was $32,639 (O'Donnell and Wallace 27). In that same year, the overall unemployment rate among aboriginal women was 13.5% and among aboriginal men was 16.1%; by comparison, the overall

unemployment rate among non-aboriginal women was 6.4% and among non-aboriginal men was 6.2% (O'Donnell and Wallace 27). High school completion contributes significantly to income but does not tell the whole story, as "In 2006, 35% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had not graduated from high school, whereas the figure was 20% among non-Aboriginal women and 39% among Aboriginal men" (O'Donnell and Wallace 35), and "below the Bachelor's degree level, Aboriginal people consistently made far less than non-Aboriginal people with the same education level" (O'Donnell and Wallace 33). Also noteworthy is that "There is a gap between the proportions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women with university degrees. In 2006, 9% of Aboriginal women aged 25 and over had a university degree, compared with 20% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts" (O'Donnell and Wallace 37); or as Finnie, Lascelles, and Sweetman explain, "Native (First Nations) Canadians are less likely to go to a university or post-secondary institutions than any other ethnic group" (14). Poverty is clearly a significant and real issue for aboriginal Canadians and interacts with gender and educational achievement in complex ways; post-secondary completion is also a significant factor.[13]

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[13] O'Donnell and Wallace note one particular anomaly in the statistics:

> Recent research measuring the income gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada found that at the Master's or Bachelor's degree levels, Aboriginal people had essentially the same median incomes as non-Aboriginal people in 2006. Perhaps most startling, Aboriginal women who have obtained at least a Bachelor's degree actually have higher median incomes than non-Aboriginal Canadian women with equivalent education. This is the only segment of Aboriginal society that exceeds the median incomes of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. (33)

Because my work in this dissertation is theoretical and does not go into individual Alberta classrooms or examine student records, I cannot at this time confirm that the composition of -2 stream classes reflects a greater concentration of children from woman-headed households, aboriginal households, and/or aboriginal households headed by a sole female parent. This is obviously an urgent direction for further research. The information I have provided is meant to be illustrative and descriptive, but it is not definitive in this discussion. However, the specific reference to aboriginal students in the -4 Knowledge and Employability stream (identified in Chapter Five as a lower-level sequence than the -2 stream) suggests that there is a policy concern with aboriginal students' achievement in contemporary classrooms. What we do know, however, is that statistics indicate a direct relationship between level of education and poverty, between gender and poverty, and between being an aboriginal Canadian and poverty. Wotherspoon notes, "Those from backgrounds that include at least one key factor such as poverty, home-related health or emotional problems, lack of fluency in English or French, Aboriginal status, or having a single parent or learning disability, have the highest risk of failing to graduate from school or experiencing later life problems" (*Dynamics* 5). This indication means there are vulnerable students in Alberta classrooms, and these students are at risk from the effects of poverty and its complex interactions with social stratification.

Thus, if we wish to produce equitable life-outcomes for all students, our alternative is to change the policy — in this case, the English Language Arts curriculum. It is not enough to uphold the traditional rhetorical curriculum; instead, we need a transformative curriculum that helps all students become literate in standard edited English — the dialect of the elite — and gives them the tools to recognize *and change* their material conditions. I thus propose a curriculum for

tactical literacy: a fusion of the tools of close reading and critical thinking from traditional literary studies and the tools of critique from critical literacy.

Tactical Literacy

The ability to write and speak correctly and effectively — that is, to use the dialect of standard edited English — is a frequent marker of social status. This dialect signals "distinction" — a form of refinement or practice acquired as educational and cultural capital (Bourdieu, *Distinction* passim). Ghomeshi reminds us, however, "It is good to have a standard, but the standard is not 'good'" (85). With these ideas as background, I propose tactical literacy as a tool to help vulnerable students bridge the gap between the dialect of power and their personal literacies, and to help dominant students recognize their complicity in the structures of power.

As I argued in Chapter Five, the increasing specialization of education — not just in the differences between the -1 and -2 streams but in the availability of enhanced programming such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement — functions conservatively to retain privilege for the middle class, particularly the upper middle class. The purpose of differential streams has little to do with student success and much to do with projections of norms and aptitude; the point of the streams is to sort and select. Those students who correctly internalize and replicate the norms of the dominant interpretive community — represented by teachers and other authorities — are granted access to greater privilege and power by way of university education (in Canada, increasingly expensive and increasingly privatized) and the acculturation associated with it. Attending university allows the student to defer his/her full entry into the world of labour and adds further to the

student's social and cultural capital (as well as, obviously, to his/her educational capital through exposure to additional literacies, dialects, and domains of knowledge).

Those students who do not reflect back to the teacher an appropriate form of literacy (including self-management and "character" behaviours such as punctuality, self-discipline, deference to authority, and demonstration of an achievement orientation) are channelled more directly to the world of work, supported by functional literacy. Without university credentials, a worker may face sharply limited white-collar, "middle-class" employment prospects. Thus, despite textual competence, students in the -2 stream, unlike their more-privileged peers, may leave their English classes lacking the pragmatic skills to turn reading and writing to their advantage.

As I explained in Chapter Six, the "better person" approach to textual studies reinforces stratified student outcomes. Teaching canonical literacy by itself is insufficient to produce transformative teaching and learning. I therefore propose a new approach to curriculum, in which, alongside traditional literary studies, teachers also teach critical literacy, a consciousness of the purpose to understanding literature and its functions. For not only do all students need access to high-status culture such as exposure to "literature as literature" (Abrams *passim*) produces; in particular, vulnerable students — the students in the -2 stream who have arrived in that stream not because of their integral abilities or interests but as an result of social construction — need to understand *why* they need this access. All students require both literary appreciation and critical literacy skills to participate fully in a democratic society. This knowledge involves familiarity with a variety of language conventions, styles, registers, and devices. Students can acquire this knowledge only through exposure to and immersion in a broad range of texts, forms, genres, creators,

and aesthetic philosophies. This knowledge vitally involves the principles of resistant reading known as critique, which resists ahistorical, taken-for-granted, common-sense interpretations of texts (including the world-as-text) and relates exegesis to ideology. The crux of true literacy exists in the issue of interpretation. Tactical literacy ties students' multiple personal literacies to high-status knowledge in a creative, productive process of knowing.

English language arts courses are, at their core, classes in literary criticism, and the Alberta curriculum reflects merely another iteration of a century-long tradition (see Baldick, *Social Mission* 1–17). The conventions of punctuation, mechanics, spelling, grammar, and rhetoric are more often than not by-products of textual study, which culminates in the ability to write personal, expressive composition and/or literary expository essays. In literary criticism, as in other textual encounters, "The interpretive effort is to tear away the masks and illusions of consciousness" (Josselson 13). The basic work of literary criticism is appreciative: to identify, interpret, explain, and evaluate the significant features in a text, and then to demonstrate for others the aesthetic, political, moral, or philosophical concepts the author expresses and the reader receives. The literary transaction — like any communication transaction — depends on meaning, and thus on interpretation. Shor explains, "Literary technique is a structure for knowing reality. It can organize experience into meaningful shapes" (*Critical Teaching* 243); but these shapes must be decoded to be meaningful. It is in interpretation — in building meaning from representation — that text grows political.

Kramsch tells us,

Traditional academic practice, that emphasized form over meaning and had students interpret texts as if they were autonomous units, independent of a

reader's response, implicitly imposed its own context of interpretation on all,
claiming that its norms of interpretation were universal and accessible to
anybody's intuition. (55)

A tension develops here. Reading and interpreting text may encourage independent
thought rather than simply iterative responses. But most high school students are all
too aware of classrooms in which the only correct textual interpretation is the
teacher's. If teachers present text as "autonomous" and meaning as universal,
transferable, continuous, unchanging, then they enact power relations that reflect
the norms, values, and attitudes of the dominant interpretive community.
Interpretive communities reproduce certain specific and legitimized ways of
understanding texts; these interpretive strategies extend to our wider lives and
underpin the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours by which we experience and
conduct our social relations and transactions. However, if teachers present text
critically, supporting students in pushing the text to reveal the assumptions of its
creator, then they have introduced students to a crucial tool: critique. Once we
interrogate the conditions of our situation, we may begin to expose the ways in which
what we perceive as natural is constructed. Such is the dynamic of critique.

Critique is the practice of resistant reading: reading against the grain,
reading between the lines. Teresa Ebert explains:

Critique ... is that knowledge-practice that historically situates the conditions
of possibility of what empirically exists under patriarchal-capitalist relations
of difference ... critique disrupts that which represents itself as what is, as
natural, as inevitable, as the way things are. (810)

Critique enables students to read beyond the text itself to seek the interests that inform the text — the gaps, the silences, the taken-for-grantedness — and that reveal the material underpinnings of textual creation, transmission, and reception. It is a push back against the authority of the text; it is also a process of situated questioning.

Critique evades some of the problems of critical pedagogy by enabling students to speak from varying and variable ideological formation. "Vulnerable students" are not a uniform group or totality; they may be both "oppressed" and "oppressors" depending on circumstances (Allen and Rossatto 171–73). Critique is dialectical: students discover problematics for themselves in an ongoing process of coming to critical consciousness, a process that may begin in high school and last a lifetime. For this reason, critique is anathema to the efficiencies of a positivist orientation to curriculum:

> Critique slows matters down, requires analysis and reflection, and often raises questions rather than providing answers. Education in the service of economic productivity concentrates on the training of transferable skills — time-management skills, problem-solving skills, even critical thinking skills — but not critique. (Ruitenberg 348)

Critique is radical because where a rhetorical curriculum — such as the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum — demands answers, critique poses questions; where it requires measurable outcomes, critique adopts an innumerable process; where it expects a right and a wrong, critique considers a space in-between.

Critique defies the hierarchies of the curriculum of the rhetorical tradition by forging new material relations with texts. Freire remarks, "The means of production

must be linked to literacy ... so that literacy becomes an act, not just a transference, of knowledge" (*Politics* 26). Critique is the practice that does so. Critique is not an element of Alberta's 2003 English Language Arts curriculum.

I argue that all students need both forms of literacy in order to interrupt the structural relationship between a student's background and a student's academic trajectory. Krahn and Taylor find that

> In each of the four provinces [British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario], young people from university-educated families were significantly more likely to have open PSE [postsecondary education] options. ... While the differences are not as pronounced as those observed for parents' education, there is still a clear pattern evident in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, whereby young people from more affluent families were more likely to be enrolled in grade 10 courses that would keep their postsecondary options open. (n.pag)

On the other hand, dominant students need both forms of literacy to understand their own role in structural relations:

> Students from the oppressor group are to be engaged in a pedagogy that challenges them to gain a consciousness of how they contribute to hegemony. They are asked to form a critical consciousness of how society and schools function to reproduce social inequality through cultural and institutional processes. And above all, they are asked to intervene in hegemonic constructions on behalf of the oppressed and challenge members of their own

group. The oppressor student is asked to align with the oppressed in acts of

social transformation... (Allen and Rossatto 170)

Such learning requires a great commitment from students — particularly from

students who may be ideologically prepared to defend their privilege. This work will

not be easy, nor will be accomplished quickly. But no matter how difficult or

frustrating this work may be, we must do it anyway: we cannot know how our work

with both dominant and vulnerable students will change the future.

Such learning also requires a great commitment from teachers, and it is for

this reason that my discussion here addresses both teachers and the scholars who

teach them. To teach critique requires oneself to adopt a stance of critique; that is,

teachers must commit themselves to structural change, and such a commitment may

be personally challenging. Allen and Rossatto explain that "The political project of

critical pedagogy is a redefinition of education and literacy as a means for political

unification among the oppressed, with the ultimate goal being social transformation"

(169), and like some students, some teachers may be ideologically prepared to defend

their privilege. Teaching critique asks teachers to imagine the kinds of social

transformation that our society will require to effect real social equality, to achieve

real social inclusion, to end poverty and suffering, not just in the West but

throughout the world. Doing so requires teachers to understand their own complicity

— willing or unwilling — in the structures of state that perpetuate and reinforce

inequality.

Finally, such learning demands a great commitment from policy-makers, the

agents of the state that benefits from the perpetuation of stratification. Advocating

critical literacy for social transformation means breaking with dominant interests

and puts the legitimacy of the entire enterprise of state-sponsored schooling in

jeopardy, because critical literacy emerges alongside conscientization. Fully realized, conscientization questions the existing social structures, advocates the end of privilege and exclusion, and demands real social justice. Conscientization thus may propel dominated students and their families to question in whose interests they inhabit instrumental roles — and perhaps even to work together to change these social relations. As I have observed throughout this dissertation, the existence and teaching of English Language Arts courses are not in themselves responsible for social stratification, although literacy/literary study does contribute in its turn to the conservation of educational and cultural capital. As I have also argued, English Language Arts courses on their own cannot overturn the larger social structures of stratification. Universal as such study is in students' experience of schooling, however, these courses are a promising place to begin to make changes.

As I identified at the beginning of this dissertation, there is a disjuncture between the common perception of what is taught in a high school English Language Arts classroom and what is actually communicated through both the declared and the hidden curricula. Similarly, a contradiction exists between the declared aims and the produced outcomes of this curriculum, a contradiction the teachers of the curriculum may not themselves recognize; nor can their students unless the students develop critical literacy. Of course, it is naïve to imagine that the government will support such a change: "Problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?" (Freire, *Oppressed* 67). Nonetheless, the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum requires immediate changes, as I will describe further in Chapter Eight.

Concluding Thoughts

There exists in common culture the unexamined belief that education just "is": that it is ideologically neutral, spontaneous, almost supernatural in its existence (and of course wholly natural as received), and is not shaped or manipulated by government, business, teachers, the public, or any other interest. Sociologists and others who study education, however, recognize education as a powerful — and powerfully modern — institution, at once shaping and shaped by the economic and cultural structures of society. An education system is controlled by the dominant ideology of its society. In Canada, the institution of education reflects the image of a liberal democracy and is conditioned by the power structure of that society. It emerges out of a constant state of struggle, sometimes more subdued, sometimes more aggravated.

Streams in high school English Language Arts differentiate students distinctly in terms of social, cultural, and economic capital. Thus, as I have explained in this chapter, the policy problem to be solved with curriculum is vitally entwined with the problem of social inequality. As Martin Carnoy notes, "Social policy has real economic and social consequences for the poor and marginalized, and for the rich and the middle class. The consequences are not just symbolic. They shape people's lives and their place in the material world" (16). My proposal for tactical literacy — a *both/and* solution that offers students access to the high-status knowledge and critical thinking of canonical literary study and to critique, the basis of critical literacy — is, like all curricula, a reform-based corrective, revolutionary solutions being at best short lived and at worst violently repressed. Thus, this policy alternative is limited in its reach but still offers potential for social change. Critical education must not — cannot — be forced; rather, it seeks to "create space where

students can resist" (Cherland and Harper 141). Shor too cautions us, "Critical

education cannot feed the hungry or raise the minimum wage; it can only invite

people into action to achieve these and other humane goals" ("Critical Literacy"

n.pag). Critical education within the scope of English studies is perhaps a more

effective response to the consequences of social stratification and offers some

likelihood of lasting social change and greater social justice through real literacy.

There are many reasons to teach students to read and write, but each reason

leads to different destinations. With thoughtful policy and a revised curriculum, it is

possible for students to become literate in ways that reduce social stratification and

increase social equality. We need only remember that the curriculum, as an element

of educational policy and therefore an element of social policy, is a creation, a

construct of what teachers should teach and what students may learn according to

powerful political interests. The evaluation of this curriculum as policy, then, offers

teachers, students, and Albertans at large an immense potential for change.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

My purpose in this dissertation has been to examine the 2003 High School English Language Arts curriculum as a mechanism for stratification and social reproduction in Alberta. As I noted in Chapter Seven, the aim of the curriculum is to produce future workers — some high-status, some low-status — rather than to produce critically thinking citizens. My intent has been to explore the historical situatedness of the curriculum document and to discover opportunities for teaching critique, with the goal of recommending strategies and tactics for those students who are structured by this curriculum into the instrumental class to speak back to power.

It is my hope that the arguments and conclusions in this dissertation may help Alberta to take a step toward greater equality and fuller democracy. I hope this dissertation may also help those outside the province — and perhaps anyone thinking about curriculum development, even beyond the discipline of English language arts — to understand the specific, local structures and conditions that have led to Alberta's most dogged stereotypes and its enduring political economy, and to relate these conditions to the larger international relations of production and reproduction. The questions I have raised here may be taken up for discussion elsewhere, used by others to further their own thinking, and build upon — and perhaps in doing so may change the structures that now confine our understanding of Alberta's schools and persistent class structure.

It is, however, important to recognize a limitation of this dissertation. My work here identifies that the social processes of stratification, enacted in part through the English Language Arts curriculum, are real; it does not, however, identify that these processes are deliberate or conscious on the part of the curriculum

writers or other policy-makers. Further research of a different kind might be able to investigate to what degree awareness and intention produce the results I have identified here. But from a theoretical perspective, what this dissertation reveals is the insidious and persistent action of hegemony.

In the work of Paulo Freire and those inspired by him, we learn about the concept of "true," or critical, literacy that allows that oppressed to understand the structures of oppression and to overturn them. As I have explained in Chapter Seven, the full goal of critical literacy involves the end of class, stratification, and exclusion and the redistribution of social wealth and well-being. The potential for true literacy resides in textual studies, and I believe it is my personal history as a student of English (and later education) — learning first the ability to read critically and then, through exposure to feminism and historical materialism, learning critique — that has enabled me to understand and analyze the conditions of my local history. In a truly democratic society, that ability must be available to every student, and I argue that such a society is possible if we change the way we teach, the curriculum we deliver, and the goals we intend for future students. But we must have the social will to push our system in a radical direction.

Literacy pedagogy is not something we "do" but something we live, a social practice with material consequences. As Shor underlines,

> Some indication of just how high the stakes are in doing critical teaching can be seen in the enormous official attention devoted to questions of reading, writing, and the canon. So much controlling administration and testing directed to regulating literacy makes language use and instruction into pillars of the status quo. ("Critical Literacy" n.pag)

The recognition of the political dimension of what happens in the classroom is inseparable from a liberatory intent; that is to say, without the political stake, "progressive" pedagogy, despite its best intentions, is merely another iteration of the long liberal-humanist tradition. As Morrell observes, critical literacy must not be isolated from the larger practices of reading the world:

> It remains important for English educators to help facilitate access to academic literacies for populations that have not traditionally been granted this entrée, but it is also important to help members of these populations learn to analyze and deconstruct the dominant institutions (such as schools and the media) that they are forced to confront on a daily basis. (314)

It is my hope that through the analysis and discussion in this dissertation, both classroom teachers and the scholars who teach them will recognize that a student's place in the English Language Arts sequence is determined by structural factors beyond the experience of the individual student and her/his family. Rather, the symbolic violence of schooling may make features of the student's background appear natural and spontaneous when they are in fact constructed and carefully inculcated (Bourdieu and Passeron 3–68).

The new Alberta English Language Arts curriculum was introduced in 2003, after three years of pilot testing. The process of curriculum renewal is ongoing, and a new curriculum will likely be issued in a few years from now. We have an opportunity now to examine the existing document and its ethos and to understand it; it is only with understanding that we can hope to change the current structure of inequality and maldistribution that have plagued Alberta since its political formation. I do recognize that changing education — in fact, changing merely English

Language Arts education — is but a single step in a much larger social transformation. While education is arguably our most important institution, with the longest ongoing connection with individual students and the widest, most universal reach, it is not our only institution. Today, however, it is an increasingly problematic one. Changing education — even if that change could be effected in some revolutionary, immediate way — might not necessarily change society, or might do so only gradually, incrementally. Still, some change may occur, and I argue that in Alberta at this moment in its history, we need to try to produce change.

The suggestions I offer here are necessarily limited by the larger social will, and the forces resisting such change are strong and widely dispersed:

> If social reality is always in process of forming, it's also always strongly resistant to specific, purposeful interventions. Those with the most to gain from things as they are will be least cooperative in changing them; those who have power can powerfully oppose those who seek to alter its distribution; inertia conspires with dedication to sustain the status quo. (Knoblauch and Brannon 161)

This recognition does not mean that we do not try, however. Freire is perhaps most instructive on this point. Freire believes in hope, unfashionably but persistently — and necessarily. It is in hope that I have presented my analysis, discussion, and recommendations for change here. Without hope there can be no change — and once change begins, we need hope to sustain the vision of what it is we are struggling for.

I also recognize that my subject — curriculum and social reproduction — may be familiar to many. The specific focus of this dissertation, however — that is, issues of the curriculum and critical literacy from the perspective of Alberta schools — has

not yet, to the best of my knowledge, been undertaken. If the potential for

transformative education exists in Alberta, in a setting where old- and new-style

capitalism both range so successfully, then I would argue the ideas articulated in this

dissertation may have a wider application, beyond this milieu, and be recognized

beyond their specific setting for wider use and discussion. Only by understanding

ourselves in both grounded, specific ways and general, highly theorized ways can we

make wise, informed choices about our collective future.

      In light of these declarations of my hope and my intention to share and apply

knowledge of Alberta's material history, I present the following recommendations for

changes to its English Language Arts curriculum. (Of course, it should go without

saying that I would hope the same provisions would be made for Francophone

language learning as well.)

<div align="center">

Recommendations

</div>

1. End streaming in English Language Arts

      There should be only one English Language Arts curriculum. Jeannie Oakes

comments, "school practitioners generally have held the belief that the instructional

task is simplified when the range of student differences in class groupings is

narrowed" (*Keeping* 207). However, the belief that the best way to serve students is

through streaming is a fallacy, based in class-structured practices that segregate

students according to whether they do or do not "deserve" high-status knowledge.

This belief may also signal that some teachers do not understand the processes of

social injustice at work in their classrooms.

The common-sense explanation for streamed English Language Arts teaching is that some students cannot succeed with the curriculum in the -1 stream. That being the case, we should change the curriculum, because it is not meeting some students' needs. Education is a right for all people and must be equal and inclusive, not stratified and exclusive.

The -1 stream is used to qualify students for admission to most post-secondary programs in Alberta; the -2 stream is less commonly accepted at colleges and technical schools, and is not accepted for admission to any Alberta baccalaureate program. This fact makes clear that the streams have a purpose beyond addressing student aptitudes and competencies, but are rather about student sorting and selection. With a single program of studies, we eliminate one of the policy mechanisms of stratification. We also create the potential for all students to share in and learn from different and valuable literacies. For if that single program of English Language Arts studies embraced a *both/and* approach — teaching students to recognize and use multiple literacies, including the dialect of power and various home and community dialects — students could also be closer to critique, real critical thinking.

There are some strong ideas to be drawn from the 2003 curriculum, and in making a new, single program of studies, we could blend the rigour and reach of the rhetorical tradition of the -1 stream with the creative, resistant potential of the texts read/viewed/heard and produced in the -2 stream. In such a blended program, the power of multiliteracies may become more evident and, in conjunction with the other recommendations I am outlining, the potential for increasing social justice is greater.

2. End Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

Enriched programming — such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement — belies the purported principle of "equality of opportunity." Enriched program options tend to over-represent students who already possess superior educational and cultural capital. Parents with more prestigious class positions use International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement to protect their children's status and enhance their opportunities through better social and educational capital. As Bourdieu explains, already-advantaged students may then exchange their educational capital for other forms of capital (*Distinction passim*).

Sennett reflects that

A child of privilege can afford strategic confusion, a child of the masses cannot. Chance opportunities are likely to come to the child of privilege because of family background and educational network; privilege diminishes the need to strategize. Strong, extensive human networks allow those at the top to dwell in the present; the networks constitute a safety net which diminishes the need for long-term strategic planning. The new elite thus has less need of the ethic of delayed gratification, as thick networks provide contacts and a sense of belonging.... (80)

It is vital to reduce the opportunities for already-privileged students to protect their status, for families to protect their capital investment in their children. Ending International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs will eliminate a further mechanism of stratification.

3. End the diploma examinations

Part A of the English Language Arts diploma examination is a composition test; Part B is a reading-comprehension test. Neither part captures the declared aptitudes of English Language Arts. Rather, the examinations are a form of high-stakes evaluation, used to regulate and discipline students and teachers alike. Such high-stakes testing is a common element of the larger accountability framework of neoliberal administration and reflects a further incursion of governmentality into schooling.

Some might argue that the diploma examinations serve a balancing or corrective function. By providing a standardized evaluation mechanism (and by bringing together markers from around the province), the examinations equalize classroom outcomes for students from different regions and resource backgrounds (rural versus urban schools, schools in affluent areas versus schools in low-income areas). However, we should keep in mind that such discrepancies, if in fact they exist, are artifacts of a structurally unequal system. We should also consider the ideological effects of requiring students to conform to a centralized, rather than localized, literacy described from the perspective of white, middle-class, conservative — and measurable — norms and values.

4. Remake the English Language Arts curriculum from the ground up

This recommendation requires that English Language Arts curriculum in elementary and junior high also be remade. It involves stripping the English Language Arts program to its most basic outcomes and replacing it with the practices of tactical literacy from students' earliest days of schooling. We must interrogate

what we as a society expect English Language Arts instruction to produce. What do Albertans as a society (not as a bureaucracy speaking on behalf of conservative elite interests) — as members of a global community — want our children to learn about language and literature? As Andrew Sayer reminds us, "there is no good reason why a particular class or group should shoulder the burden of necessary evils such as unpleasant kinds of work" (*Class* 227). What do students themselves want and need to read? Are we truly committed to equality of opportunity — or, even better, to real social equality through social justice?

Given the multiple literacies students bring to school and the tremendous transformative potential of multiliteracy education to produce what in Chapter Seven I called tactical literacy, we need a wider range of texts, more writing, and more reading, not less. Although the principles of tactical literacy emphasize not *what* students read but *how* they read it, texts are a tool of the discipline for learning how to decode rhetoric and aesthetics and how to imitate form and style.

5. Extend students' English Language Arts learning

High schools must move away from five-month, five-credit scheduling to year-long English Language Arts courses. More curriculum hours must be assigned to English Language Arts learning, as has been done for science and math, with preparation courses as needed to assist students with mechanical reading and writing issues.

If we are committed to real literacy, we must not only include literacy across the spectrum of the high school curriculum but also provide sufficient time for literacy to develop. As Gee observes, language is always contextual and is "associated with one or more specific semiotic domains" ("Opportunity" 31). Gee elaborates:

By a *semiotic domain* I mean any set of practices that recruit one of more

modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds,

gestures, graphs, artefacts, and so forth) to communicate distinctive types of

meaning. ... For learning to be critical in a particular semiotic domain, the

learner needs to learn, not only how to understand and produce meanings in

that domain that are recognisable to those affiliated with the domain, but, in

addition, how to think about the domain at a 'meta' level as a complex system

of interrelated parts. The learner needs to learn, as well, how to innovate in

the domain, that is, how to produce meanings that, while recognisable, are

seen as somehow novel or unpredictable. (Opportunity" 31–33).

Gee continues,

Literacy in any domain is actually not worth much if one knows nothing

about the social practices of which the literacy is but a part. ... knowing about

a social practice always involves *recognising* various distinctive ways of

acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, knowing, and using various objects and

technologies, that constitute the social practice. ("Opportunity" 29; emphasis

in source)

These are issues of true literacy and support the concept of tactical literacy.

In short, I am recommending more English Language Arts instruction,

leading up to, during, and following high school: more reading of diverse texts across

the curriculum, more critical thinking, and more potential for true literacy — the literacy that empowers students to read and write both the word and the world. As I have noted, such changes to the high school English Language Arts necessitate changes across the high school curriculum and throughout students' experience of formal education. Again, these recommendations in themselves will not address the much broader issues of structural inequality in education and in society at large, but they may help students to analyze and respond more effectively to systemic inequality, and may also help them to discover and communicate ways to resist and overcome domination.

Further, I recommend that we change the way we refer to the discipline. In Chapters Five and Six, I discussed the evolution of literature to English to Language Arts, following the shift of literary study from aristocratic to humanist to pragmatic. I propose that we refer to English Language Arts instead as English Language Studies, reflecting the dual interests of tactical literacy in texts and critique. Such naming may help to bring about a shift in thinking about the discipline.

I recognize that these recommendations in policy are reform oriented, not revolutionary. After all, as Freire notes, "It would be extremely naive to expect the dominant classes to develop a type of education that would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustices critically" (*Politics* 102). As long as schools are organized in the interests of the state — and in a liberal democracy, such organization cannot be otherwise — curriculum and policy are unlikely to be changed to run contrary to those interests. Just the same, this dissertation has been written with hope that teachers', policy-makers', parents', and students' own awareness of the possibility of change may lead to commitment for larger-scale changes. At the same time, these recommendations are not a prescription, not a method. Rather, they represent part of a much larger project to develop critical consciousness —

conscientization. Freire points out that "no one conscientizes anyone else. The educator and the people conscientize together" (*Politics* 125), and the process must happen locally and organically.

I am not advocating that we eliminate English Language Arts teaching — far from it. But it is crucial that we change the direction that the current curriculum is steering our students.

Stratification has been an ongoing element of Alberta's history:

The frontier thesis ... implies that everyone started out on terms of equality, that the fittest survived, and that Canada's institutions of government were made more democratic as a result of the pioneers' protests. Again the easy generalizations about equality disguise the facts of unequal distribution of wealth and unequal access to education and political power that beset these communities. (Friesen, *Citizens* 72)

The Alberta curriculum exists in the context of Alberta political economy. Given Alberta's history and mythology, the 2003 English Language Arts curriculum could not likely have been other than it is; that is, the "context" — the "purpose, audience and situation" of the curriculum text's creation — necessarily constrains the document's "form and content" (Alberta Learning, *Senior High* 4). Although other options were possible, the Alberta curriculum has been designed to uphold the interests of the political economy.

Is Alberta's current English Language Arts curriculum oppressive? I believe it is. Alberta — and Canada — is certainly not as oppressive as the totalitarian

regimes of the world. However, Alberta's education system, as a manifestation of its political economy, is routinely symbolically, and in many cases materially, violent; and this violence is enacted about the lived realities of Alberta's students and their families. Bourdieu and Passeron explain,

> In any given social formation, the dominant ES [educational system] is able to set up the dominant PW [pedagogic work] as the WSg [work of schooling] without either those who exercise it or those who undergo it ever ceasing to misrecognize its dependence on the power relations making up the social formation in which it is carried on, because (1) by the means proper to the institution, it produces and reproduces the necessary conditions for the exercise of its internal function of inculcating, which are at the same time the sufficient conditions for the fulfilment of its external function of reproducing the legitimate culture and for its correlative contribution towards reproducing the power relations; and because (2) by the mere fact of existing and persisting as an institution, it implies the institutional conditions for misrecognition of the symbolic violence it exerts, i.e. because the institutional means available to it as a relatively autonomous institution monopolizing the legitimate use of symbolic violence are predisposed to serve additionally, hence under the guise of neutrality, the groups or classes whose cultural arbitrary it reproduces (dependence through independence). (67)

The production of stratification is a form of symbolic violence. It is so commonplace, however, that many of us do not recognize the violence inherent in its structure. The unequal outcomes produced by stratified schooling reproduce and many even magnify the inequality of condition of students' family inputs — their lived realities. But

further, these lived realities echo through our globalized world, our globalized economy, such that the relative privilege we enjoy in Alberta depends on the exploitation of someone elsewhere in the world. Critical literacy may — and I hope must — interrupt this process.

Language, and literacy within language, is not something external to the self, something objective, quantifiable; rather, it refers to a complex system of competencies and processes that are psychological, social, situational, and dynamic. When we value specific forms of reading and specific forms of textual production over other, situated forms of literacy and language use, we impose the norms and values of a particular class on all students. This is oppression.

Further, because of the lack of critical consciousness with which most students are currently emerging from the English Language Arts curriculum, students may be unable to connect their local actions to globalized oppression, such as the structural arrangements of the Majority World that underpin cheap clothing, underpriced food, and the vast array of consumer goods and services available in the Alberta economy.

In Alberta, one of the economically richest jurisdictions on Earth, one resource we share is hope: "It is not possible to live in plenitude without hope. Conserve the hope" (Freire in Torres 4). This is one of the reasons I have written this dissertation with hope. When Alberta students can read the word and the world — when they can recognize and make authentic, creative choices about language and literacies — we will have achieved real freedom, real equality, real social justice.

In an article on the gendered aspects of readers and reading, James Conlon explains why reading may be so liberatory for women and thus why women's reading

(and the representation of women's reading) has been so carefully controlled. He remarks, "In an important sense, all real reading is enacted between the lines, and in that space there is an essential, irrepressible autonomy" (40). It is my hope that every Alberta student will, through critical literacy, come to an understanding of this "irrepressible autonomy."

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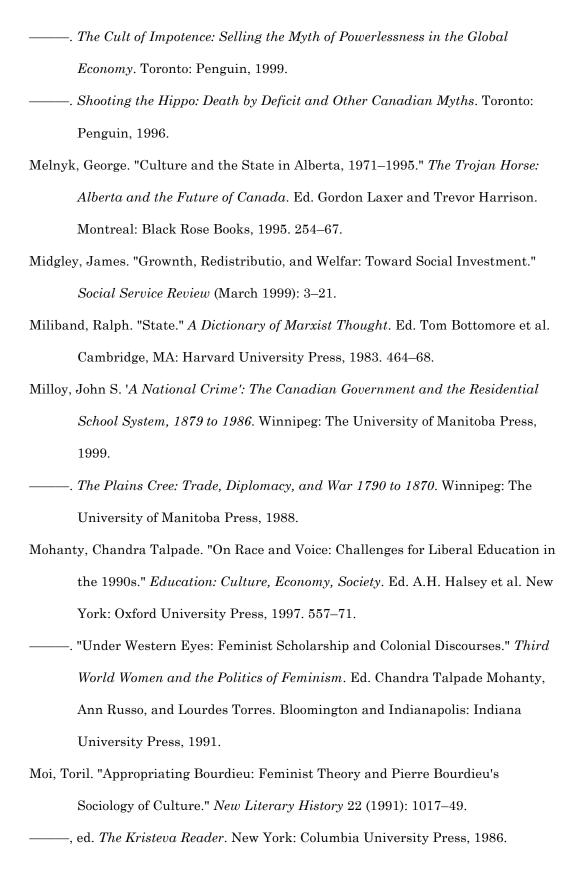McKenna, Barrie. "High Loonie Drives Canada Down on the Value-Added Chain."
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Outcomes for General Outcome 2

2.1.1 Discern and analyze content

Outcomes	ELA 10-1	ELA 10-2	ELA 20-1	ELA 20-2	ELA 30-1	ELA 30-2
a.	**identify** a variety of different kinds of texts, audiences and purposes for creating texts	**identify** a variety of texts, purposes for creating texts and audiences	**describe** the text creator's purpose, and analyze the target audience	**paraphrase** key messages in a specific text and **identify** elements present in the communication situation, in order to describe the text creator's purpose and target audience	**explain** the text creator's purpose, including implicit purpose when appliable; **describe** whether or not the purpose was achieved	**explain** the text creator's purpose, and **assess** the suitability of the text to the target audience in terms of the text creator's purpose
b.	**use** features found within a text as information to describe the communication situation within which the text was created	**identify** features of a text that provide information about the text	**describe** how societal forces can influence the production of texts	**explain** how a text can be studied to understand the context — or aspects of the communication situation within which the text was created	**analyze** elements or causes present in the communication situation surrounding a text that contribute to the creation of the text	**analyze** elements present in the communication situation surrunding a text that contribute to the creation of the text
c.	**describe** the relationship between text and context	**describe** elements found in a variety of communication situations and **explain** how these elements influence the creation of texts	**explain** the relationship between text and context in terms of how elements in an environment can affect the way in which a text is created	**use** strategies to gain background knowledge about history and society when studying a particular text	**explain** how understanding the interplay between text and context can influence an audience to appreciate a text from multiple perspectives	**explain** the relationship between text and context in terms of how elements in an environment can affect the way in which a text is created
d.	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text	identify the impact that personal context — experience, prior knowledge — has on constructing meaning from a text

2.1.2 Understand and interpret content

a.	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, and **develop** strategies for close reading of literature in order to understand contextual elements	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, **develop** a daily practice of reading, and **develop** strategies for close reading	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, and **develop** strategies for close reading of literature in order to understand contextual elements	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, **develop** a daily practice of reading, and **develop** strategies for close reading	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, and **develop** strategies for close reading of literature in order to understand contextual elements	**use** a variety of strategies to comprehend literature and other texts, **develop** a daily practice of reading, and **develop** strategies for close reading
b.	**paraphrase** a text's controlling idea, and **identify** supporting ideas and supporting details	**identify** a text's controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details	**describe** how supporting ideas and supporting details strengthen a text's controlling idea	**paraphrase** a text's controlling idea, and **relate** supporting ideas and supporting details to the controlling idea	**analyze** the relationships among controlling ideas, supporting ideas and supporting details in a variety of texts	**describe** the relationships between a text's controlling idea and its supporting ideas and supporting details
c.	**summarize** the plot of a narrative, **describe** its setting and atmosphere, **describe** development of conflict and **identify** theme	**retell** the plot of a narrative, **describe** its setting, and **identify** the conflict developed	**describe** the relationships among plot, setting, character, atmosphere and theme when studying a narrative	**develop** an understanding of the relationships among plot, setting and character when studying a narrative text, by relating the text to personal experience	**assess** the contributions of setting, plot, character and atmosphere to the development of theme when studying a narrative	**explain** how plot, character and setting contribute to the development of theme, when studying a narrative
d.	**describe** the personality traits, motivations, attitudes, values and relationships of characters developed/ persons presented in literature and other texts; and **identify** how the use of archetypes adds to an appreciation of text	**describe** the personality traits, attitudes and relationships of characters developed/ persons presented in works of literature and other texts	**compare** the personality traits, roles, relationships, motivations, attitudes, values and archetypal qualities, when appropriate, of characters developed /persons presented in literature and other texts	**compare** the personality traits, relationships, motivations and attitudes of characters developed/ persons presented in works of literature and other texts	**analyze** the personality traits, roles, relationships, motivations, attitudes and values of characters developed/ persons presented in literature and other texts; and **explain** how the use of archetypes can contribute to the development of other textual elements, such as theme	**explain** the personality traits, rols, relationships, motivations, attitudes and alues of characters developed in works of literature and other texts

e.	**describe** a text creator's tone, and **relate** tone to purpose and audience	**identify** a text creator's tone	**describe** a text creator's tone and register; and **identify** the moral and ethical stance communicated by a text	**describe** a text creator's tone, **relate** tone to purpose and audience, and **identify** the point of view communicated by a text	**relate** a text creator's tone and register to the moral and ethical stance explicitly or implicitly communicated by a text	**relate** a text creator's tone to the moral and ethical stance communicated by a text, when appropriate
f.	**differentiate** between literal and figurative statements and between imagery and nonsensory language, **identify** symbol, **recognize** familiar allusions, and **describe** how images are developed in texts	**differentiate** between literal and figurative statements, **describe** images developed in texts, and **recognize** imagery	**interpret** figurative language, symbol and allusions; **recognize** imagery; and **explain** how imagery contributes to atmosphere, characterization and theme in a text	**identify** figurative language, symbol and familiar allusions in texts; **interpret** figurative language in terms of its contribution to the meaning of a text; and **explain** how imagery contributes to the creation of atmosphere, theme and characterization in a text	**assess** the contributions of figurative language, symbol, imagery and allusion to the meaning and significance of texts; and **appreciate** the text creator's craft	**identify** figurative language, symbol, imagery and allusion in a text; **interpret** these devices in terms of the meaning of a text; **assess** the contributions made to the meaning of texts by using these devices; and **appreciate** the text creator's craft
g.	**describe** visual elements and aural elements, and **describe** their contributions to the meaning of texts	**identify** visual elements and aural elements that add meaning to texts	**analyze** visual and aural elements, and **explain** how they contribute to the meaning of texts	**recognize** visual and aural elements in texts, and **explain** how these elements add meaning to texts	**assess** the contributions that visual and aural elements make to the meaning of texts	**recognize** visual and aural elements in texts, and **explain** how these elements add meaning to texts
h.	**differentiate** between audience response to the content of a presentation and audience response to the performance of the presenter	**differentiate** between audience response to the content of a presentation and audience response to the performance of the presenter	**describe** the relationship between audience response to the content of a presentation and audience response to the performance of the presenter	**respond** to the content of a presentation; and **describe** the relationship, in general, between audience response to content and audience response to the performance of a presenter	**assess** the relationship between the content of a presentation and the performance of the presenter, and **explain** how the quality of the performance affects the credibility and audience acceptance of the content and message	**assess** the relationship between the content of a presentation and the performance of the presenter, and **explain** how the quality of the performance affects the credibility and audience acceptance of the content and message

2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge

a.	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed	**reflect** on and **describe** strategies used to engage prior knowledge as a means of assisting comprehension of new texts; and **select, monitor** and **modify** strategies as needed
b.	**describe** personal expectations for a text to be studied, by recalling prior experiences with and observations about similar contexts, content and text forms	**describe** personal expectations for texts to be studied, by recalling prior experiences with and observations about similar contexts and content	**assess** personal expectations for texts to be studied in light of prior experiences with and observations about similar contexts, content and text forms	**assess** personal expectations for texts to be studied in light of prior experiences with and observations about similar contexts, content and text forms	**assess** prior knowledge of contexts, content and text forms; and **explain** how it contributes to new understandings	**explain** how prior knowledge of contexts, content and text forms contributes to new understandings
c.	**recall** prior knowledge of rhetorical devices used in previously studied texts and textual elements and structures employed or developed to assist in understanding new texts	**recall** prior knowledge of the development of textual elements in previously studied texts to assist in understanding new texts	**use** metacognitive strategies to understand how knowledge of rhetorical devices, textual elements and structures used in previously studied texts contributes to understanding new texts	**use** metacognitive strategies to relate prior understandings of textual elements used in previously studied texts to understandings of new texts	**identify** variations and departures from the conventional use of rhetorical devices, textual elements and structures in texts; and **describe** the purpose and effect of such variations and departures	**explain** how prior understanding of textual elements, like theme, in previously studied texts can assist in understanding new texts
d.	classify the genre/form of new texts according to attributes of genres/forms previously studied	n/a	classify the genre/form of new texts according to attributes of genres/forms previously studied	n/a	classify the genre/form of new texts according to attributes of genres/forms previously studied	n/a

2.1.4 Use reference strategies and reference technologies

a.	use a variety of appropriate reference strategies and reference technologies to aid understanding	use a variety of appropriate reference strategies and reference technologies to aid understanding	use a variety of appropriate reference strategies and reference technologies to aid understanding	use a variety of appropriate reference strategies and reference technologies to aid understanding	use a variety of appropriate reference strategies and reference technologies to aid understanding
b.	create and use own reference materials to aid understanding	create and use own reference materials to aid understanding	create and use own reference materials to aid understanding	create and use own reference materials to aid understanding	create and use own reference materials to aid understanding

2.2.1 Relate form, structure and medium to purpose, audience and content

a.	**identify** a variety of text forms, including communications forms and literary forms; and **describe** the relationships of form to purpose and content	**identify** common text forms and their purposes, including communications forms and literary forms	**identify** a variety of text forms, including communications forms and literary forms; and **describe** the relationships of form to purpose and content	**identify** a variety of text forms, including communications forms and literary forms; and **describe** the relationship of form to purpose	**analyze** a variety of text forms, **explain** the relationships of form to purpose and content, and **asses** the effects of these relationships on audience	**describe** how some forms are more appropriate than others to achieve a particular purpose with an intended audience
b.	**describe** audience factors that may have influenced a text creator's choice of form and medium	**describe** audience factors that may have influenced a text creator's choice of form and medium	**describe** audience factors that may have influenced a text creator's choice of form and medium	**describe** audience factors that may have influenced a text creator's choice of form and medium	**assess** the potential influence of various audience factors on a text creator's choice of form and medium	**explain** how various audience factors may have influenced a text creator's choice of form and medium
c.	**describe** a variety of organizational patterns and structural features that contribute to purpose and content	**identify** and **describe** organizational patterns and structural features that contribute to purpose and content	**explain** how a variety of organizational patterns and structural features contribute to purpose and content	**explain** how organizational patterns and structural features contribute to purpose and content	**apply** knowledge of organizational patterns and structural features to understand purpose and content, and **assess** the effectiveness of a text's organizational structure	**apply** knowledge of organizational patterns and structural features to understand purpose and content, and **assess** the effectiveness of a text's organizational structure

d.	**describe** the characteristics of various common communications media	**identify** and **describe** the characteristics of various common communications media	**analyze** the effect of medium on message	**analyze** the effect of medium on message	**assess** the medium of a presentation in terms of its appropriateness to purpose and content and its effect on audience	**assess** whether or not the medium chosen for a presentation is appropriate for the intended purpose, content and audience

2.2.2 Relate elements, devices and techniques to created effects

a.	**describe** rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques that create clarity, coherence and emphasis in print and nonprint texts	**identify** rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques that create clarity, coherence and emphasis in print and nonprint texts	**explain** how rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques used in print and nonprint texts create clarity, coherence and emphasis	**identify** rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques that create clarity, coherence and emphasis in print and nonprint texts	**assess** the contributions of rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques to the clarity and coherence of print and nonprint texts, and **assess** the various means by which devices and techniques are used to emphasize aspects or portions of a text	**demonstrate** that the use of rhetorical devices and stylistic techniques in print and nonprint texts can create clarity, coherence and emphasis
b.	**describe** aspects of a text that contribute to atmosphere, tone and voice	**identify** aspects of a text that are effective in the creation of atmosphere	**explain** how various textual elements and stylistic techniques contribute to the creation of atmosphere, tone and voice	**describe** how textual elements that are effective in the creation of atmosphere are also effective in terms of tone and voice	**assess** the contributions of textual elements and stylistic techniques to the creation of atmosphere, tone and voice	**describe** how textual elements that are effective in the creation of atmosphere are also effective in terms of tone and voice
c.	**recognize** irony and satire in print and nonprint texts, and identify **language** used to create irony and satire	**recognize** irony and humour in print and nonprint texts, and **identify** language and ideas used to create irony and humour	**analyze** the use of irony and satire to create effects in print and nonprint texts	**recognize** irony and humour in print and nonprint texts, and **identify** language and ideas used to create irony and humour	**analyze** the use of irony and satire to create effects in print and nonprint texts	**explain** how irony is used in print and nonprint texts to create audience effects

d.	**describe** the effects of musical devices, figures of speech and sensory details in print and nonprint texts	**recognize** the use of simile and metaphor in print and nonprint texts, and **describe** their effects	**describe** the effects of musical devices, figures of speech and sensory details in print and nonprint texts	**assess** the use of musical devices, figures of speech and sensory details to create effects in a variety of print and nonprint texts	**explain** how figures of speech, sensory details and musical devices are used to create effects in a variety of print and nonprint texts
e.	**recognize** the use of motif and symbol in print and nonprint texts	**explain** the contribution of symbol to theme	**explain** the contribution of motif and symbol to controlling idea and theme	**explain** the contribution of motif and symbol to controlling idea and theme	**explain** the contribution of symbol to theme
f.	**recognize** the use of elements of effective oral, visual and multimedia presentation, and describe their effects	**recognize** elements of effective oral, visual and multimedia presentations; and describe their effects	**differentiate** between effective and ineffective presentations, and **analyze** the differences	**differentiate** between effective and ineffective presentations, **identify** the differenes, and **analyze** the reasons for the differences	**analyze** the various elements of effective presentations, and **assess** the effects created
g.	**identify** persuasive techniques used in a variety of print and nonprint texts	**identify** persuasive techniques used in a variety of print and nonprint texts	**analyze** persuasive techniques used in a variety of print and nonprint texts	**analyze** persuasive techniques and their effects on audience	**assess** the effects of persuasive techniques on audiences

2.3.1 Connect self, text, culture and milieu

a.	**identify** and **consider** personal, moral, ethical and cultural perspectives when studying literature and other texts; and **reflect** on and **monitor** how perspectives change as a result of interpretation and discussion	**identify** and **consider** personal moral and ethical perspectives, as well as cultural perspectives, when studying literature and other texts; and **reflect** on and **monitor** how perspectives change as a result of interpretation and discussion	**identify** and **consider** personal, moral, ethical and cultural perspectives, as well as cultural perspectives, when studying literature and other texts; and **reflect** on and **monitor** how perspectives change as a result of interpretation and discussion	**identify** and **consider** personal, moral, ethical and cultural perspectives, as well as cultural perspectives when studying literature and other texts; and **monitor** how perspectives change as a result of interpretation and discussion	**identify** and **consider** personal moral and ethical perspectives, as well as cultural perspectives, when studying literature and other texts; and **reflect** on and **monitor** how perspectives change as a result of interpretation and discussion

b.

respond personally and analytically to ideas developed in works of literature and other texts; and **analyze** the ways in which ideas are reflected in personal and cultural opinions, values, beliefs and perspectives	respond personally and analytically to ideas developed in literature and other texts	**respond** personally and analytically to ideas developed in works of literature and other texts; and **analyze** the ways in which ideas are reflected in personal and cultural opinions, values, beliefs and perspectives	**respond** personally and analytically to ideas developed in literature and other texts	**form** positions on issues that arise from text study; and **assess** the ideas, information, arguments, emotions, values and beliefs expressed in works of literature and other texts in light of issues that are personally meaningful and culturally significant	**form** positions on issues that arise from text study; and **relate** the ideas, information, arguments, emotions, experiences, values and beliefs expressed in works of literature and other texts to issues that are personally meaningful and culturally significant

c.

compare choices and motives of characters and people portrayed in texts with choices and motives of self and others	**compare** choices and motives of characters and people portrayed in texts with choices and motives of self and others	**explain** how the choices and motives of characters and people presented in texts may provide insight into the choices and motives of self and others	**explain** how the choices and motives of characters and people presented in texts may provide insight into the choices of self and others	**assess** the choices and motives of characters and people portrayed in texts in light of the choices and motives of self and others	**explain** how the choices and motives of characters and people presented in texts may provide insight into the choices of self and others

d.

identify and **examine** ways in which cultural and societal influences are reflected in a variety of Canadian and international texts	**recognize** Canadian content in texts, and **describe** contextual elements that represent Canadian culture	**identify** and **examine** ways in which cultural and societal influences are reflected in a variety of Canadian and international texts	**respond** personally and critically to cultural and societal influences presented in Canadian and international texts	**respond** personally and critically to cultural and societal influences presented in Canadian and international texts

2.3.2 Evaluate the verisimilitude, appropriateness and significance of print and nonprint texts

a.

identify criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of texts, **monitor** the effectiveness of the criteria, and **modify** the criteria as needed	**identify** criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of texts, **monitor** the effectiveness of the criteria, and **modify** the criteria as needed	**identify** criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of texts, **monitor** the effectiveness of the criteria, and **modify** the criteria as needed	**identify** criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of texts, **monitor** the effectiveness of the criteria, and **modify** the criteria as needed

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
b.	**assess** the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretation of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence	**assess** the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretation of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence	**assess** the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretation of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence	**assess** the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretation of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence	**assess** the appropriateness of own and others' understandings and interpretation of works of literature and other texts, by referring to the works and texts for supporting or contradictory evidence
c.	**describe** settings and plots in terms of reality and plausibility, as appropriate	**analyze** and **assess** settings and plots in terms of created reality and plausibility	**analyze** and **assess** settings and plots in terms of created reality and plausibility	**analyze** and **assess** settings and plots in terms of created reality and plausibility	**analyze** and **assess** settings and plots in terms of created reality and plausibility
d.	**describe** character and characterization in terms of consistency of behaviour, motivation and plausibility	**analyze** and **assess** character and characterization in terms of consistency of behaviour, motivation and plausibility, and in terms of contribution to theme	**analyze** and **assess** character and characterization in terms of consistency of behaviour, motivation and plausibility, and in terms of contribution to theme	**analyze** and **assess** character and characterization in terms of consistency of behaviour, motivation and plausibility, and in terms of contribution to theme	**analyze** and **assess** character and characterization in terms of consistency of behaviour, motivation and plausibility, and in terms of contribution to theme
e.	**describe** images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose	**analyze** and **assess** images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience	**analyze** and **assess** images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience	**analyze** and **assess** images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience	**analyze** and **assess** images in print and nonprint texts in terms of created reality and appropriateness to purpose and audience
f.	**assess** the significance of a text's theme or controlling idea, and the effectiveness of its supporting details, examples or illustrations, and content in general	**assess** the significance of a text's theme or controlling idea, and the effectiveness of its supporting details, examples or illustrations, and content in general	**assess** the significance of a text's theme or controlling idea, and the effectiveness of the content in terms of adequate and relevant supporting details, examples or illustrations, and content in general	**assess** the significance of a text's theme or controlling idea, and the effectiveness of the content in terms of adequate and relevant supporting details, examples or illustrations	**assess** the significance of a text's theme or controlling idea, and the effectiveness of the content in terms of adequate and relevant supporting details, examples or illustrations

2.3.3 Appreciate the effectiveness and artistry of print and nonprint texts

	ELA 10-1	ELA 10-2	ELA 20-1	ELA 20-2	ELA 30-1	ELA 30-2
a.	**use** terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of text forms	**recognize** that texts can be effective and artistic, and use terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of texts	**use** terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of text forms	**recognize** that texts can be effective and artistic, and use terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of texts	**use** terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of text forms	**recognize** that texts can be effective and artistic, and use terminology appropriate to the forms studied for discussing and appreciating the effectiveness and artistry of a variety of texts
b.	**describe** the effectiveness of various texts, including media texts, for presenting feelings, ideas and information and for evoking responses	**describe** the effectiveness of various texts, including media texts, for presenting feelings, ideas and information and for evoking responses	**describe** the effectiveness of various texts, including media texts, for presenting feelings, ideas and information and for evoking responses	**describe** the effectiveness of various texts, including media texts, for presenting feelings, ideas and information and for evoking responses	**appreciate** the craft of the text creator and the shape and substance of literature and other texts	**appreciate** the craft of the text creator and the shape and substance of literature and other texts

Outcomes for General Outcome 4

Outcome	ELA 10-1	ELA 10-2	ELA 20-1	ELA 20-2	ELA 30-1	ELA 30-2

4.1.1 Assess text creation context

	ELA 10-1	ELA 10-2	ELA 20-1	ELA 20-2	ELA 30-1	ELA 30-2
a.	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation	**reflect** on the purposes for text creation and on own motives for selecting strategies to engage an audience; and **consider** potential consequences of choices regarding text creation

b.	**identify** purpose and target audience for text creation, and **select** strategies to accomplish purpose and engage audience	**identify** the purpose and target audience for text creation, and **select** strategies to accomplish purpose and engage audience	**identify** purpose and target audience for text creation, and **select** strategies to accomplish purpose and engage audience	**describe** the purpose and target audience, and **select** from a repertoire of strategies to accomplish the purpose and engage the audience	**describe** the purpose and target audience, and **select** from a repertoire of strategies to accomplish the purpose and engage the audience	**assess** the results of text creation in terms of the intended purpose and whether or not the target audience was engaged
c.	**describe** and **address** audience factors that affect text creation	**identify** and **address** audience factors that affect text creation	**address** audience factors that affect text creation	**address** audience factors that affect text creation	**analyze** audience factors that affect text creation, and **explain** how consideration of audience factors has affected choices made while creating a text	**analyze** audience factors that affect text creation, and **explain** how consideration of audience factors has affected choices made while creating a text
d.	**describe** expectations and constraints of a communication situation, including assignment parameters, expected standards of quality and availability of resources; and **select** strategies to address expectations and constraints	**identify** expectations and constraints of a communication situation, including assignment	**analyze** expectations and constraints of a communication situation, and **select** preferred strategies to address expectations and constraints	**analyze** expectations and constraints of a communication situation, and **select** strategies to address expectations and constraints	**explain** how strategies were used to address the expectations and constraints of a communication situation	**assess** whether or not the strategies used to deal with the expectations and constraints of a communication situation were effective

4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium

a.	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text	**select** a text form appropriate to the purpose for text creation and consistent with the content to be presented in the text

b.	**identify** and **use** structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts	**identify** and **use** structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts	**explore** a variety of structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts	**explore** a variety of structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts	**explore** a variety of structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts	**use** a variety of complex structures consistent with form, content and purpose when creating texts; and **explain** reasons for choices
c.	**explore** the interplay among medium, content and context	**identify** and **use** a medium appropriate to content and context	**select** an effective medium appropriate to content and context, and **explain** its use	**select** an effective medium appropriate to content and context, and **explain** its use	**select** an effective medium appropriate to content and context; and **explain** the interplay of medium, context and content	**select** an effective medium appropriate to content and context, and **explain** its use
d.	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate n/a	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate n/a	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate **depart** from the conventions of oral, print, visual and multimedia texts, as appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**understand** the concept of convention; and **apply** it to oral, print, visual and multimedia text forms when appropriate

4.1.3 Develop content

a.	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging	**take** ownership of text creation, by selecting or crafting a topic, concept or idea that is personally meaningful and engaging

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
b.	**recognize** and **assess** personal variables and contextual variables that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and **address** these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation	**recognize** and **assess** personal variables and contextual variables that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and **address** these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation	**recognize** and **assess** personal variables and contextual variables that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and **address** these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation	**recognize** and **assess** personal variables and contextual variables that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and **address** these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation	**recognize** and **assess** personal variables and contextual variables that influence the selection of a topic, concept or idea; and **address** these variables to increase the likelihood of successful text creation
c.	**establish** a focus for text creation, and **communicate** scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect	**establish** a focus for text creation, and **communicate** scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect	**establish** a focus for text creation, and **communicate** scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect	**establish** a focus for text creation, and **communicate** scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect	**establish** a focus for text creation, and **communicate** scope by framing an effective controlling idea or describing a strong unifying effect
d.	**develop** supporting details, by using developmental aids appropriate to form and purpose	**develop** supporting details, by using developmental aids appropriate to form and purpose	**develop** supporting details, by using developmental aids appropriate to form and purpose	**develop** supporting details, by using developmental aids appropriate to form and purpose	**develop** supporting details, by using developmental aids appropriate to form and purpose
e.	**develop** content appropriate to purpose	**develop** content to support a controlling idea or to produce a unifying effect	**develop** content to support a controlling idea or to produce a unifying effect	**develop** appropriate, relevant and sufficient content to support a controlling idea or unifying effect	**develop** appropriate, relevant and sufficient content to support a controlling idea or unifying effect
f.	**develop** content appropriate to audience and situation	**develop** content appropriate to form and context	**develop** content appropriate to form and context	**develop** content appropriate to form and context	**develop** content consistent with form and appropriate to context
g.	**incorporate** appropriate examples from personal experience into created texts, when appropriate	**incorporate** effective examples from personal experience, concepts and ideas from exploration, and findings from inquiry and research into created texts, when appropriate	**incorporate** effective examples from personal experience, concepts and ideas from exploration, and findings from inquiry and research into created texts, when appropriate	**incorporate** effective examples from personal experience, concepts and ideas from exploration, and findings from inquiry and research into created texts, when appropriate	**incorporate** effective examples from personal experience, concepts and ideas from exploration, and findings from inquiry and research into created texts, when appropriate

4.1.4 Use production, publication and presentation strategies and technologies consistent with context

a.	**meet** particular production, publication and display requirements for print texts; and **explain** requirements in light of purpose, audience and situation	**meet** particular production, publication and display requirements for print texts; and **explain** requirements in light of purpose, audience and situaion	**meet** production, publication and display requirements for print texts as appropriate to purpose, audienceand situation	**meet** particular production, publication and display requirements for print texts; and **explain** requirements in light of purpose, audience and situaion	**meet** production, publication and display requirements for print texts as appropriate to purpose, audienceand situation
b.	**develop** presentation materials; and **select** strategies and technologies appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**adapt** presentation materials, strategies and technologies to suit purpose, audience and situation	**develop** presentation materials; and **select** strategies and technologies appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**adapt** presentation strategies to suit changes in purpose, audience and situation	**develop** presentation materials; and **select** strategies and technologies appropriate to purpose, audience and situation
c.	**develop** and **deliver** oral, visual and multimedia presentations, using voice production factors, nonverbal factors and visual production factors appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**develop** and **deliver** oral, visual and multimedia presentations, using voice production factors, nonverbal factors and visual production factors appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**develop** and **deliver** oral, visual and multimedia presentations, using voice production factors, nonverbal factors and visual production factors appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**develop** and **deliver** oral, visual and multimedia presentations, using voice production factors, nonverbal factors and visual production factors appropriate to purpose, audience and situation	**develop** and **deliver** oral, visual and multimedia presentations, using voice production factors, nonverbal factors and visual production factors appropriate to purpose, audience and situation
d.	**experiment** with various strategies to create rapport between the presenter and the audience	**develop** a repertoire of effective strategies that can be used to create rapport with an audience	**experiment** with various strategies to create rapport between the presenter and the audience	**create** rapport with an audience, by selecting from a repertoire of effective strategies	**develop** a repertoire of appropriate strategies that can be used to create rapport with an audience

4.2.1 Enhance thought and understanding and support and detail

a.

review the controlling idea or desired unifying effect of a text in progress for clarity and focus, and **modify** the controlling idea or desired unifying effect as appropriate to meet the intended purpose	**identify** the controlling idea or desired unifying effect of a text in progress	**assess** the effectiveness of the controlling idea or desire unifying effect of a text in progress, and **refine** the controlling idea or desire unifying effect as appropriate to meet the intended purpose	**review** the controlling idea or desired unifying effect of a text in progress for clarity and focus; and **modify** the controlling idea or desired unifying effect as appropriate to meet the requirements of purpose, audience and situation	**assess** the effectiveness of the controlling idea or desire unifying effect of a text in progress, and **refine** the controlling idea or desire unifying effect as appropriate to meet the intended purpose	**assess** the appropriateness and significance of the controlling idea and desired unifying effect of a text in progress; and **modify** the controlling idea or desire unifying effect as appropriate to meet the requirements of purpose, audience and situation

b.

review the accuracy, specificity and precision of details, event, images, facts or other data intended to support a controlling idea or to develop a unifying effect; and **add** to, details, events, images, facts or other data as needed to provide sufficient support or development	**review** the accuracy, speficity, precision, vividness and relevance of details, events, images, facts or other data intended to support a controlling idea or to develop a unifying effect; and **add** to, details, events, images, facts or other data as needed to provide complete and effective support or development	**review** the accuracy, specificity and precision of details, event, images, facts or other data intended to support a controlling idea or to develop a unifying effect; and **modify** or **delete** details, events, images, facts or other data as needed to provide sufficient support or development	**review** the accuracy, speficity, precision, vividness and relevance of details, events, images, facts or other data intended to support a controlling idea or to develop a unifying effect; and **add** to, **modify** or **delete** details, events, images, facts or other data as needed to provide complete and effective support or development	**review** the accuracy, specificity, precision, vividness and relevance of details, events, images, facts or other data intended to support a controlling idea or to develop a unifying effect; and **add** to, **modify** or **delete** details, events, images, facts or other data as needed to provide complete and effective support or developmnt

c.	**detect** and **correct** logical fallacies	**assess** own critical/ analytical responses for consistency, completeness and relevance of evidence; and **strengthen** reasoning as needed by adding to, modifying or deleting details to provide reliable and pertinent evidence and make effective arguments	**assess** reasoning for logic and evidence for consistency, completeness and relevance; and **strengthen** reasoning as needed by adding to, modifying or deleting details to provide significant evidence and make effective and convincing arguments	**assess** own critical/ analytical responses for consistency, completeness and relevance of evidence; and **strengthen** reasoning as needed by adding to, modifying or deleting details to provide reliable and pertinent evidence and make effective arguments	**assess** reasoning for logic and evidence for consistency, completeness and relevance; and **strengthen** reasoning as needed by adding to, modifying or deleting details to provide significant evidence and make effective and convincing arguments	**assess** own critical/ analytical responses for consistency, completeness and relevance of evidence; and **strengthen** reasoning as needed by adding to, modifying or deleting details to provide reliable and pertinent evidence and make effective arguments
d.	**revise** own critical/ analytical response to literature for plausibility, appropriateness of interpretations, and precision, completeness and relevance of evidence; and **revise** interpretations and evidence, as necessary	n/a	**assess** the plausibility and appropriateness of literary interpretations and the precision, completeness and relevance of evidence when reviewing and revising critical/ analytical responses to literature	n/a	**assess** the plausibility and appropriateness of literary interpretations and the precision, completeness and relevance of evidence when reviewing and revising critical/ analytical responses to literature	n/a

4.2.2 Enhance organization

a.	**assess** the beginning of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to establish purpose	**assess** the beginning of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to establish purpose and engage audience	**assess** the beginning of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to establish purpose and engage audience	**assess** the beginning of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to establish purpose and engage audience	**make** revisions as needed to ensure that the beginning of a text in progress establishes purpose and engages audience	**make** revisions as needed to ensure that the beginning of a text in progress establishes purpose and engages audience

The following landscape table is rotated on the page. Rows are labeled b, c, d, e and read across six columns.

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6
b.	**review** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience	**review** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience	**assess** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience or to strengthen their contribution to other intended effects	**review** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience	**assess** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience or to strengthen their contribution to other intended effects	**assess** the organizational components of a text in progress, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen their effectiveness as units of thought or experience or to strengthen their contribution to other intended effects
c.	**review** the closing of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to strengthen its relationship to purpose and to establish a sense of developed understanding	**review** the closing of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to strengthen its relationship to purpose	**assess** the closing of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to ensure that it is related to purpose, that it establishes a sense of developed understanding and that it will have an appropriate effect on audience	**review** the closing of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to strengthen its relationship to purpose	**assess** the closing of a text in progress, and **revise** it as needed to ensure that it is related to purpose, that it establishes a sense of developed understanding and that it will have an appropriate effect on audience	**assess** the closing of a text in progress; and **revise** it as needed to strengthen its relationship to purpose and to strengthen its intended effect on audience
d.	**assess** relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and **strengthen** relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts **assess** transitions and transitional devices, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen coherence	**assess** relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and **strengthen** relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts **assess** transitions and transitional devices, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen coherence	**assess** relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and **strengthen** relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts **assess** transitions and transitional devices, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen coherence	**assess** relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and **strengthen** relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts **assess** transitions and transitional devices, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen coherence	**apply** the concepts of unity and coherence to ensure the effective organization of oral, print, visual and multimedia texts	**assess** relationships among controlling idea, supporting ideas and supporting details; and **strengthen** relationships as needed to enhance the unity of texts
e.					n/a	**assess** transitions and transitional devices, and **revise** them as needed to strengthen coherence

4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice

a.	reflect on personal vocabulary and repertoire of stylistic choices and on their effectiveness; and expand vocabulary and repertoire of stylistic choices	develop a list of effective vocabulary words and stylistic choices	reflect on personal vocabulary and repertoire of stylistic choices and on their effectiveness; and expand vocabulary and repertoire of stylistic choices	develop a list of effective vocabulary words and stylistic choices	evaluate the use of vocabulary words and stylistic choices for effectiveness, and expand vocabulary and repertoire of stylistic choices as appropriate
b.	use words and expressions appropriately	develop the use of appropriate words and expressions	assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of diction, and revise word choice as needed to create intended effects	develop the use of appropriate words and expressions	assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of diction, and revise word choice as needed to create intended effects
c.	use a variety of sentence patterns and structures appropriately and effectively	use a variety of sentence patterns and structures appropriately and effectively	assess syntax for appropriateness and effectiveness, and revise sentence structures as needed to create intended effects	use a variety of sentence patterns and structures appropriately and effectively	assess syntax for appropriateness and effectiveness, and revise sentence structures as needed to create intended effects
d.	describe the effects of own use of stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices	describe the effects of own use of stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices	apply understanding of stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices when creating print and nonprint texts	describe the effects of own use of stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices	apply understanding of stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices when creating print and nonprint texts
e.	recognize personal voice in texts created; and continue to develop personal craft through practice, using various methods	recognize personal voice as a text creator, and practise and continue to develop personal craft through practice, using various methods	recognize personal voice in texts created; and continue to develop personal craft through practice, using various methods	recognize personal voice as a text creator, and practise various methods to develop craft	develop a repertoire of stylistic choices that contribute to personal voice

4.2.4 Edit text for matters of correctness

a.	use handbooks and other tools, including electronic tools, as resources to assist with text creation	use handbooks and other tools, including electronic tools, as resources to assist with text creation	use handbooks and other tools, including electronic tools, as resources to assist with text creation	use handbooks and other tools, including electronic tools, as resources to assist with text creation	use handbooks and other tools, including electronic tools, as resources to assist with text creation

	Col 1	Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6
b.	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly, including end punctuation, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, parenthese, underlining and italics	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly, including end punctuation, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, parenthese, underlining and italics	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly, including end punctuation, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, parenthese, underlining and italics	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly, including end punctuation, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, parenthese, underlining and italics	**know** and **be able to apply** capitalization and punctuation conventions correctly, including end punctuation, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, parenthese, underlining and italics
c.	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions consistently and independently	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions independently or with the use of a handbook or other tools, such as a list of spelling strategies or rules	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions consistently and independently	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions independently or with the use of a handbook or other tools, such as a list of spelling strategies or rules	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions consistently and independently	**know** and **be able to apply** spelling conventions independently or with the use of a handbook or other tools, such as a list of spelling strategies or rules
d.	**identify** and **be able to use** parts of speech correctly, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, definite and indefinite articles, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions	**identify** and **be able to use** parts of speech correctly, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs	**understand** the importance of grammatical agreement; and **assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure correctness of grammatical agreement, including correct pronoun reference and pronoun–antecedent agreement, and correct use of modifiers and other parts of speech	**know** and **be able to identify** parts of speech in own and others' texts, including prepositions, definite and indefinite articles, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions; and **review** and **revise** texts in progress to ensure correct use of parts of speech, including correctness of pronoun reference and pornoun–antecedenta greement	**understand** the importance of grammatical agreement; and **assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure correctness of grammatical agreement, including correct pronoun reference and pronoun–antecedent agreement, and correct use of modifiers and other parts of speech	**know** and **be able to identify** parts of speech in own and others' texts, including prepositions, definite and indefinite articles, and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions; and **review** and **revise** texts in progress to ensure correct use of parts of speech, including correctness of pronoun reference and pronoun–antecedenta greement

e.	**identify** parts of the sentence in own and others' texts, including subject, verb, predicate complement, and direct and indirect object	**know** and **be able to identify** parts of the sentence in own and others' texts, including subject, verb, direct object and indirect object	**assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure correct subject–verb agreement, correct pronoun case and appropriate consistency of verb tense	**know** and **be able to identify** parts of the sentence in own and others' texts, including subject, verb, direct object and indirect object	**assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure correct subject–verb agreement, correct pronoun case and appropriate consistency of verb tense	**review** and **revise** texts in progress to ensure correct subject–verb agreement, correct pronoun case and appropriate consistency of verb tense
f.	**review** and **revise** texts in progress to correct common sentence faults — comma splice, run-on sentence and unintended sentencee fragment	**detect** and **correct** common sentence faults — run-on sentence and unintended sentence fragment	**use** unconventional punctuation, spelling and sentence structure for effect, when appropriate	**detect** and **correct** common sentence faults — run-on sentence and unintended sentence fragment	**use** unconventional punctuation, spelling and sentence structure for effect, when appropriate	**detect** and **correct** common sentence faults — run-on sentence and unintended sentence fragment
g.	**know** and **be able to use** common sentence structures correctly — simple, compound, complex and compound–complex	**identify** and **be able to use** common sentence structures correctly — simple, compound, complex and compound–complex	**assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure the correct use of clauses and phrases, including verbal phrases (participle, gerund and infinitive), and to ensure the correct use of structural features	**develop** the use of common sentence structures — simple, compound, complex and compound–complex	**assess and revise** texts in progress to ensure the correct use of clauses and phrases, including verbal phrases (participle, gerund and infinitive), and to ensure the correct use of structural features	**review** and **revise** texts in progress to ensure that parallel structure, prepositional phrases, and dependent and independent clauses are used correctly and appropriately
h.	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices	**pay** particular attention to punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage and sentence construction when using unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and sophisticated rhetorical devices
i.	**assess** strengths and areas of need	**assess** strengths and areas of need	**assess** strengths and areas of need	**assess** strengths and areas of need	**assess** strengths and areas of need	**assess** strengths and areas of need

j.

n/a

explain why certain   n/a
communication
situations demand
particular attention
to correctness of
punctuation, spelling,
grammar, usage and
sentence construction

explain why certain   n/a
communication
situations demand
particular attention
to correctness of
punctuation, spelling,
grammar, usage and
sentence construction

explain why certain
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