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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CLASSROOM WRITING AS BOTH EXPRESSION AND TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

BY

SHELLEY LYNN PETERSON

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The goal of this research study was to explore cultural views that are expressed in, and transmitted through, four grade six children's writing and their classroom interactions while writing.

Based on an understanding of language as a learning tool which individuals use to construct their representations of the world through interacting with others, the research study took place in a classroom where children were encouraged to interact while writing and to share their polished writing with their peers.

Tape-recorded interviews with the four children, their parents and their teachers provided the major sources of information for the study. Other sources included: tape-recorded interactions among children, observations during language arts and social studies classes, and samples of the four children's drafts and polished writing.

The study showed that the classroom audience for children's writing influenced children's views of themselves as writers. Recognizing this, the children's teacher modelled and reinforced expectations for students to respond positively to writing shared by classmates.

The classroom audience also influenced children's views of their social roles within the classroom, as they named characters in their stories after their peers and then negotiated roles for the characters in ways that reflected the construction of their own social roles in the classroom community.

In addition, the classroom audience influenced the content of the children's writing, as well as the focus of their revision efforts. Because the children's goal for their writing was to entertain their audience, they made decisions which reflected their

awareness of the topics, characters and genres which would be received favorably by their classmates. As well, the children's revisions of their writing reflected a desire to cor nunicate ideas clearly to their audience.

Though the children were autonomous writers who used writing to construct their own understandings of their world, they felt that their elementary classroom writing was not as important as that carried out by adults and secondary students. The children anticipated that they would lose some of their autonomy in secondary school, as they would be required to write informational text that would conform closely to their teachers' standards.

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CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDINGS UPON WHICH THE RESEARCH STUDY IS BASED

Introduction

Underlying this research study, as is the case for every research study, is a complex web of understandings about the research topic, the nature and purpose of research, and about the environment within which I, the researcher, live and work. Constructed through my interactions with the people and things of my environment, these understandings represent my interpretations of the world. While these understandings are created through my interactions with others, they also serve to guide those very interactions, as they provide the knowledge, attitudes and emotions which influence the decisions I make. Thus, in a simultaneous manner, these understandings influence and are influenced by my perspectives of the topic, my methods for interacting with the participants in the study, and my ways of interpreting and communicating the results of the data collected through the research study.

In order for readers of this research report to construct their own meaning of the study, they need an awareness of my underlying web of understandings about the ways in which individuals learn through language and the ways in which they learn language. Consequently, in this chapter, I have described two of the significant perspectives which underpin my research study; the understanding that learning is both a linguistic and a cognitive process, as learners construct meaning through social interaction, and the understanding that learners make sense of their world through writing about it.

Learning as a Linguistic and a Cognitive Process

In this research study, learning is viewed as the active construction of meaning by individuals as they use language to represent and make sense of their experience,

connecting new information, gained through interactions with the people and things of their world, to their background knowledge.

Language plays an important role in learning because it allows individuals to "symbolize reality" (Britton, 1970, p. 20) and thus, to hold an accumulation of experiences over time. Individuals' representations of experience endure within their consciousness as "frame[s] of reference" (Britton, 1970, p. 18) which allow them to go back over their experiences and make sense of them long after the experiences have passed. Indeed, it is "only symbolic expression [that] can yield the possibility of prospect and retrospect, because it is only by symbols that distinctions are not merely *made*, but *fixed* in consciousness" (Cassirer, 1946, p. 38). Thus, language serves as a key learning tool because it provides the symbols and structures to represent experiences, together with the means for reflecting upon and understanding those experiences.

The reflection process involves the creation and testing of hypotheses. Based on their representations of the world, individuals create hypotheses, determining how new information fits within the hierarchy of knowledge that constitutes their "theory of the world, a theory that is an interpreted summary of all past experience" (Smith, 1985, p. 199). The notion of a "theory of the world" is further explained by Smith in the following quotation:

> Such a theory contains all our knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about the objective world in which we find ourselves. We are confused whenever we encounter an occurrence in the world that we cannot relate to our theory and surprised when something occurs contrary to our expectations . . . The theory was contructed of hypotheses, confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of our own internal tests, our thinking. Where did the hypotheses come from? From the theory itself. Nothing the theory cannot hypothesize can be part of the theory (nothing the theory cannot make sense of can be made sense of).

In this way, individuals' "theories of the world" provide a network of understandings to which individuals can relate new information, creating and testing

hypotheses in an effort to make sense of the situation at hand. As well, it is these "theories of the world" which enable individuals to make predictions about the outcomes of future interactions with the people and things of their world, and thus, to have some control over their world and their interactions within it. In this way, "all learning is a process of contextualization: a building up of expectancies about what will happen next" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 49), as individuals actively construct their own "theories of the world" in order to make sense of it and to interact within it.

The active construction of meaning occurs within a social context, as individuals learn through interacting with others (Rowe, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978). However, as described by Halliday (1975, p. 140), the social system does not serve "so much an external condition on the learning of meanings as a generator of the meanings that are learnt." Rather than providing a backdrop for learning, the social system (or culture) within which individuals interact serves as a source of information from which individuals construct their own understandings of the world. Recognizing culture as "a set of interrelated systems of meaning" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 4), it follows that learning involves "a sharing of the culture" (Bruner, 1986, p. 127) as individuals "make [their] knowledge [their] own" within "a community of those who share [their] sense of belonging to a culture."

If individuals are to learn and to operate successfully within their culture, they must have access to those systems of cultural meaning that comprise their culture. Because language is one of the media through which a culture is expressed and through which it is transmitted to its members, every member of a culture gains this access through learning and using language in interactions with others. Bruner (1986, p. 65) states that "learning how to use language involves both learning the culture and learning how to express intentions in congruence with the culture." Thus, through learning language, individuals learn the expectations, values, attitudes, and perspectives of their

culture in order to function within it. McCormick, Waller and Flower (1987, p. 36) assert that, "All the discourses of a culture envelop its members in a network so total that people can't express themselves outside it. Language is not a reflection of a non-linguistic reality--[individuals'] use of language *creates* that reality for [them]."

Language, itself, is a set of rules for organizing ideas using sounds, syntactic structures, and meanings. Thus, the organizational structures of language and of the social system, itself, give shape and substance to the meanings created by individuals. Ideas, attitudes or emotions exist only through the language available within the culture which enables individuals to express and transmit those ideas, attitudes or emotions. Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 11) explain that "the context in which the text unfolds is encapsulated in the text . . . through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organisation of language on the other." With an understanding of text as "a social exchange of meanings" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 11), it follows that cultural meanings are defined not only by the social interactions in which they are embedded, but also by the organizational structures and functions of the language that is used to express and transmit those meanings.

As individuals use language to interact with others and to make sense of their experience, they are learning both the values and the ideas of their culture. However, it is not so much through formal instruction that cultural learning occurs, but rather through the everyday interactions between individuals when they use language to accomplish their purposes. Halliday (1978, p. 9) explains:

> Language is the main channel through which the patterns of living are transmitted to [individuals], through which [they] learn to act as a member of a 'society' -- in and through the various social groups, the family, the neighbourhood, and so on -- and to adopt its 'culture', its modes of thought and action, its beliefs and its values. This does not happen by instruction, at least not in the pre-school years; nobody teaches [them] the principles on which social groups are organized, or their systems of beliefs, nor would [they] understand it if they tried. It happens indirectly, through the accumulated experience of numerous small events,

> insignificant in themselves, in which [their] behaviour is guided and controlled, and in the course of which [they] contract and develop personal relationships of all kinds. All this takes place through the medium of language . . . The striking fact is that it is the most ordinary everyday uses of language, with parents, brothers and sisters, neighbourhood children, in the home, in the street and the park, in the shops and the trains and the buses, that serve to transmit, to the child, the essential qualitites of society and the nature of social being.

In summary, the language that individuals learn and use in everyday interactions plays a very significant part in the learning process because it provides a means for expressing and transmitting the system of meanings which constitute a culture.

However, while language is "the means by which people find their places within their world and by which they are defined" (McCormick et al., 1987, p. 35), it is also a tool which individuals use to modify and redefine their culture. Language is used to construct personal meanings in individual experience, as those individuals shape their understandings of the world through interactions with others. Because the use of language involves the "exchange of meanings between the self and others" (Halliday, 1975, p. 140), social interaction provides the context within which individuals "construct the system of meanings that represent [their] own model of social reality" (Halliday, 1975, p. 139). Whenever individuals use language, their unique understandings are integrated with the cultural understandings expressed in and transmitted through language, in order to create new meanings for each individual. Thus, within the culturally-defined boundaries imposed by the language, individuals create new cultural understandings every time they interact with others using language. Schutz (1973, p. xxix) summarizes this notion by saying, "knowledge is socially rooted, socially distributed, and socially informed. Yet its individuated expression depends on the unique placement of the individual in the social world."

In the classroom, it is through countless daily interactions, such as the one recorded in the research data that is cited below, that children's concepts of their world

are constructed. In this exchange, Steven and Adam are writing a travel brochure for tourists travelling to Harbin, China. They are shaping their understandings about the marketing of goods in Harbin as they interact directly with each other and as they interact indirectly with the author of an informational book on China. In addition, because of the dialectical relationship established between the boys' culture and their individually-constructed meanings, the two boys are also learning the cultural meanings of their environment, as expressed and transmitted in the informational book, this recorded interaction, and in the countless interactions from which their previously-constructed understandings evolved.

S: We should put this, 'The only fruits available were those that were grown locally.' Put this in our words.
A (writes): Fruits and vegetables hardly came from other parts of the country.
S (reads): Small businesses started buying fruit from other . . .
A: We can't copy it. We have to change it.
S: Little businesses bring their . . . wait, let's see, bring their fruits and vegetables to Harbin. No, Farmers wanted to bring vegetables into city markets.
A: Did they?
S: It doesn't say.
A (writes what S dictated)

In this exchange, the two boys generated hypotheses about the motives and actions of the farmers who marketed their produce in Harbin, testing the information they read in the book against their background knowledge about the topic of marketing farm produce. They also made predictions about the nature of behaviors of others and of themselves in order to carry out the task successfully. Through their interactions, Steven and Adam negotiated the plausibility of their hypotheses, constructing their own understandings based on previously-constructed webs of understanding and the information available to them in this interaction.

The understandings which the boys constructed through previous interactions provided the context within which they created new understandings in the described

situation. Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 47) further this idea by explaining that "meaning arises from the friction between the text [or individually-constructed meaning], and the context [or social situation]. This means that part of the environment for any text is a set of previous texts, texts that are taken for granted as shared among those taking part." In this way, the text that the boys were creating in this interaction would provide the context for the creation of future texts, as the new concepts which they were creating in this interaction would create new expectations for future interactions. Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 48) summarize this notion by saying that "every part of a text, therefore, is at once both text and context [to other text that is to come]."

Because of their previous participation in a multitude of similar social interactions, the two boys expected to be able to communicate meaningfully with each other. They assumed that they shared many expectations about the nature of the exchange of ideas between themselves, about their interactions with the book, about the topic they were exploring, about the outcomes of their interaction, about behaviors that are acceptable in a classroom setting, and about the countless other concepts which are necessary in order to carry out the cited exchange. These implicit assumptions illustrate a "reciprocity of motives" or the belief that others understand one's perspective and that they represent reality in the same way (Schutz, 1973, p. 23). Indeed, individuals assume that others will respond in ways which match the expectations that they have created through their experiences, in spite of the fact that there is not a universal reality , or "one right way" of constructing meaning that is recognized by all members of a culture (Bruner, 1990, p. 30). However, it is this same "reciprocity of perspectives" that makes possible everyday interactions between individuals, since participants assume that others have derived similar perspectives from the cultural knowledge available to them through social interaction. Bruner

(1986, p. 57) defines these as "transactions" or "those dealings which are premised on a mutual sharing of assumptions and beliefs about how the world is, how mind works, what we are up to, and how communication should proceed." In the cited example, the two boys were able to carry out the task successfully in spite of the unique ways in which each boy had used language to represent his own experiences within the culture. Their success was contingent upon their expectations that the other would share their motives and attitudes toward the task and toward each other (Schutz, 1973, p. 23).

In summary, this research study is based on an understanding of learning as both a linguistic and a cognitive process, as learners use the symbols and structures of language to construct their representations of the world. Because language expresses and transmits the culture, individuals learn cultural understandings through interacting with others, and at the same time, create personal understandings through integrating information which builds upon previous understandings and assists them in making sense of their experiences.

Writing and Learning

While the previous section of this chapter showed that both oral and written language are learning tools, this section will explore aspects of writing that make it particularly efficacious as a vehicle for developing an individual's "consciousness and his intellect, his comprehension of himself and the world about him" (Diringer, 1962, p. 19). It will show that, as a learning tool, writing provides a symbolic form which individuals use to construct their experience in ways that make sense to them.

It has previously been established that individuals reflect upon, elaborate and modify their understandings of the world through the use of oral and written language. Though it is often recognized that writing is an enduring form which allows our ideas a permanence that oral language cannot provide, Smith (1985, p. 207) argues that the

ease with which written words can be erased and changed renders writing a less permanent form than speech. He goes on to explain that once words are uttered, they cannot be taken back. However, writing is "malleable. In writing [individuals] not only can create worlds, [they] can change them at will. Writing enables [them] to explore and change the worlds of ideas and experience that the brain creates." Because written language is a visual representation of individuals' understandings, it provides a forum for individuals to review and modify their understandings of the world. Thus, the property of the writing process which is especially valuable in the construction of meaning is the ease with which written thoughts may be revised.

Britton (1970, p. 124) furthers this notion by describing two roles which writers may assume; that of the participant and that of the spectator. Individuals who write as participants use written language to accomplish purposes demanded by the social situation. Individuals who assume spectator roles use writing to achieve social goals, as well, but they also reflect upon their writing, revising the written representations of their understandings as they strive to make sense of their experience. Fulwiler (in Fulwiler & Young, 1982, p. x) further describes the spectator role adopted by writers by saying that writing "allows authors to distance themselves from experience and helps them to interpret, clarify and place value on that experience; thus writers can become spectators using language to further define themselves and their beliefs." In this way, when writers assume a spectator role, writing acts as a tool for learning because it allows individuals "to go back over events and interpret them, making sense of them in a way (they) were unable to while they were taking place" (Britton, 1970, p. 19).

According to Moffett (1988, p. 104), an understanding of the notion of inner speech is necessary in order to comprehend the relationship between writing and learning. Moffett (1988, p. 91) defines inner speech as "an uncertain level of

consciousness where material may not be so much verbalized as verbalizable, that is, at least potentially available to consciousness if some stimulus directs attention there, and potentially capable of being put into words because it is language-congenial thought (discursive)" and views the process of writing as the "revision of inner speech" (Moffett, 1979, p. 278). Because writing is a process of constructing meaning, when individuals use writing to construct meaning from the pure meanings of inner speech, they shape those thoughts into new forms, making connections between ideas that may not have been apparent before they assumed written forms. Moffett (1988, p. 179) explains that "when you make something from some materials, the materials have to change. A composition structures the mind while the mind is structuring it."

Written language both opens up and and constrains the meanings which individuals construct. It provides an array of possibilities for representing experience, yet at the same time, the culture which written language expresses and transmits imposes restrictions on the possible meanings which may be constructed. The constraints and possibilities inherent within written language help individuals to "organize and develop the possibilities of [their] own minds[. As such,] writing can be an extension and reflection of all of [their] efforts to develop and express [them]selves in the world around [them], to make sense of that world and to impose order upon it" (Smith, 1982, p. 16).

Because individuals feel the need to be explicit when communicating to others through writing, they use the organizational structure of writing to organize those thoughts in ways that make sense to themselves and to others. Vygotsky (1986, p. 182) explains that,

> Inner speech is almost entirely predicative because the situation, the subject of thought, is always known to the thinker. Written speech, on the contrary, must explain the situation fully in order to be intelligible. The change from maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written

> speech requires what might be called deliberate semantics -- deliberate structuring of the web of meaning.
>
> Written speech is considerably more conscious, and it is produced more deliberately than oral speech.

Consequently, it is the conscious focus on communicating the meanings of inner speech to others which facilitates the discovery process while writing.

Though Smith's argument against the notion of the *permanence* of writing was cited earlier, it appears that the *prolonged attention* to thoughts that are expressed in written words does contribute to the discovery process. Both Emig (1983) and Moffett (1988) present cases for the new learning that occurs through writing, as unexpected connections between ideas are made when individuals focus on those ideas for a prolonged period of time while writing. Moffett (1988, p. 154-155) states that, "the deliberate selecting of images and ideas, and of words themselves, not only breaks up routine and random inner streaming, but *sustains the development of a subject beyond what we have thought or imagined about it before.*" Emig (1983, p. 112) adds to this notion as she states that the physical process of writing contributes to its effectiveness as a thinking tool, as it "keeps the process slowed down. . . and allows for surprise, time for the unexpected to intrude and even take over." It appears that writing functions as a learning tool because it demands sustained attention on a topic, so that individuals are able to discover new connections between ideas and revise their understandings of the world. When individuals use writing to communicate the meanings of inner speech, their prolonged focus on those meanings serves to illuminate new connections between ideas; ones that are not so readily apparent in the stream of thoughts that comprise inner speech.

In summary, writing is a particularly effective learning tool because it symbolizes experience in ways that require individuals to focus on the meanings of inner speech for prolonged periods of time and in ways that communicate meanings explicitly to

themselves and to others. The sustained attention to thoughts and the demands of the communication situation serve to illuminate novel connections between ideas and to allow individuals to construct meaning from their experience.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Questions

Recognizing that children learn the ways and values of their culture through interactions with others using language, it follows that an exploration of children's understandings about writing and writers would provide a picture of the cultural views of writing that have been transmitted through their interactions. Because learning language involves not only the transmission of one's culture, but also the creation of "representations of the universe" (Kelly, 1955, p. 12) by individuals, the children's understandings of writing reflect the ways in which they are expressing their culture through language.

With the goal of gaining a better understanding of the cultural views of writing that are expressed in and transmitted through grade six children's oral and written language, my research study explored four grade six children's understandings of writing and of writers, as well as the social contexts which influence and are influenced by their perceptions.

The following research questions served as starting points to guide me in achieving the goals of this study:

1. How do grade six children, whose formal writing instruction has occurred within environments where social interaction is encouraged, conceptualize writing?
2. What are the contexts which influence and are influenced by these children's understandings of writing?

Recognizing that the children's interactions with their parents, teachers and peers have played a large role in shaping their understandings of writing and writers, I attempted to address the second question by talking with the children's parents and

teachers about their understandings about writing and by tape-recording the children's interactions with their peers while writing.

Research Methods

Participants

Selecting the School Context

Because there is "much to be gained from watching language at work in the socializing process" (Halliday, 1978, p. 215), especially in environments where individuals are encouraged to interact with others as they are learning language, my study took place in a classroom where children interacted with their peers and their teacher while writing. Thus, I talked with a number of teachers about their views on the influence of social interaction on students' writing before selecting a classroom in which to observe and interact with students. The school which I selected was one in which the teachers of grades three through six encouraged their students to interact while writing, and had been in the school for a number of years. One of the grade five teachers had transferred to another school, but I was able to contact and interview him at that school. The teachers who had taught the students in my study for their first and second years of schooling had either moved or retired and I was unable to locate them.

Selecting Participants for the Study

Within this school, the classroom which became the site for my study was a combined grades five and six class in a large urban school district in Alberta. There were 11 grade six students and 14 grade five children in this class.

Having narrowed my focus to a suitable classroom for my study, I selected four of the grade six children who showed that they felt comfortable in sharing their thoughts with me. Their mothers, through completing the letter of permission I had drafted, had

indicated their interest in talking with me about their views on writing. When selecting the participants, I also considered the gender of the students, their facility with writing and their mother tongue. My goal was to reflect, as closely as possible, the nature of the class. In addition, I wanted to represent a diversity of writing abilities and confidence levels. All of the students in my study were proficient in the use of computer keyboards and the word processing program, Waterloo McJanet, used in the school.

In this class, two of the 11 grade six students were girls. The mother tongue of five of the 11 grade six students was a language other than English. As a result, I selected three boys and one girl to take part in this study, with one of the boys having learned English as a second language. After observing and talking with all of the grade six students for two weeks and confirming my observations with the teacher, I confirmed the selection of the four students for my study. The teacher agreed that these four students showed a range in terms of their degree of confidence and proficiency in their writing.

The mothers of the four focus-students chose to talk with me about their views on writing and writing instruction. No fathers chose to participate in the interviews.

I also interviewed the five teachers who had taught the children in this study during their third through sixth years of school. In this school, teachers taught classes with combinations of grades. Consequently, two of the teachers interviewed in this study had taught two or more of the participating children in their third and fourth years of school. One teacher had taught one of the children in his fourth and fifth years and one teacher had taught another child in her fifth year. The grade six teacher had taught one of the children during his fifth year, as well.

Classroom Environment

In my first visit to the combined grades five and six classroom, it was clear that social interaction was encouraged as a vehicle for learning. Though I had not observed the teacher's instructional strategies, I felt confident that the children in this classroom would be sharing their learning in small groups, as I noted the arrangement of the desks in blocks of six. There was one extra desk for a student whose difficulties with the English language kept him out of the room or working with a teacher's aide. Students from both grades five and six were in each block. Two of the children in this study were sitting in one block and the other two children were in separate blocks.

In addition, there were 13 Macintosh computers in the classroom, with four at each of three round tables at the back of the room and one computer on a desk with a printer. It was at these three tables that students did their writing during writing classes. There were no assigned computers and students sat at the computer of their choice.

One side of the classroom was allocated to the social studies unit that was being explored at the time. It contained pictures, drawings, news articles and books related to the topic. Beside this display was a bulletin board which the student of the week filled with pictures and other items that were of significance to him or her.

The opposite wall contained four charts describing steps in the writing process. Chart 1 asked the question, "Will you publish or share?" Chart 2 described the "publishing conference" with small groups, including the teacher. Chart 3 described the "revising conference" with classmates. Chart 4 provided topics for editing and making a book.

At the front of the room the "Classroom Rules" were hung, together with the timetable and a calendar. The back wall contained a "Literary Elements Ch... ", a *Pizza Hut* progress chart for the number of books read by individual children, and children's

writing and art work. In addition, there were bookshelves which held children's published stories, together with trade books and informational books.

The classroom was a place for learning and celebrating one's learning, as the children worked together at their desks in blocks of six, or at the computers. The many print resources on bulletin boards and shelves supported the children's learning as they interacted with each other and with their teacher.

Ethical Considerations

I talked informally with the teachers and children who participated in the study about the purposes of the study and about their roles in helping to achieve those purposes. In addition, I sent an information letter to all of the students' parents, detailing the goals of the study, the methods I would be using to gather data and the ways in which the information would be used. This letter included a form for parents to sign, indicating their willingness to have their children participate in the study and their willingness to share their own views on writing through responding to open-ended questions in an interview (Appendix A).

All participants were informed that they had the right to opt out of the study at any time and that their names and locations would not be identified.

Pilot Study

Once weekly for four weeks and then every day for a one-week period, I conducted an observational study of 25 grade five students during their language arts classes. Through interviews with the children and observations of their writing behavior, I came to recognize the wealth of information that is to be gained through placing children in positions where they "become our teachers, showing us how they learn" (Calkins, 1983, p. 10). My work with these grade five students generated my interest in conducting a

similar study of fewer students over an extended period of time, so that I would be able to provide a more holistic understanding of children's understandings of writing. Consequently, this mini-ethnographic study served as a pilot study for a more intensive exploration of four children's perceptions of writing.

As well as providing me with an understanding of how the use of qualitative research methodologies could help me to accomplish the purpose of this research study, the pilot study provided me with experience in using qualitative research methodologies for gathering and analyzing data. For example, through my work with the grade five students, I became comfortable in carrying out the role of a participant-observer who interacts with students and their teacher within their classroom, gaining their trust so that they feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and feelings. In addition, I gained experience in analyzing the abundance of data that are derived from classroom observations, children's writing samples, and interviews with children and their teacher through my work in the pilot study.

Data Sources

When selecting sources of information to assist in achieving the purposes of this study, I was conscious of the need to "preserve the web of factors and circumstances that make up the complicated process of language learning" (Moffett, in Perl & Wilson, 1986, p. x). Though I recognized the impossibility of bringing to consciousness every facet of that complex web, I attempted to highlight significant aspects of it through using a diversity of methods for gathering information.

The major sources of information for exploring the participants' understandings of writing were the tape-recorded interviews with the four children, their parents and their teachers. Other sources included the following: (1) tape-recorded interactions between members of the class and the participants in the study, (2) observations of the

children's, their peers' and their teacher's behavior during language arts and social studies classes and (3) samples of the four children's drafts and polished writing.

Interviews

My goal was to illuminate the ways in which children construct meaning through social interaction by comparing and contrasting the responses of the children with those of significant people in their school and family contexts. For this reason, in tape-recorded interviews, I asked the children, their teachers from grades three through six, and their parents about their writing experiences and views on writing.

My interviews with the children took place in the classroom during their writing classes, which took place on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 p.m. until 2:05 p.m and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:20 p.m. until 3:20 p.m. As the students sat around the tables in the computer area typing their stories, I sat beside them with the tape-recorder playing and asked them questions for five to fifteen minutes. Usually, I talked with two or three students in each writing class.

Together with questions about the writing in which the children were engaged, my questions explored their views of writing, of good writers and of themselves as writers. I found the list printed in Appendix B to be a helpful reference for developing questions that related to the purpose of my study. Each day, I started interviews with the children by asking one question from this list and then focusing subsequent questions on topics related to this question. In addition, by transcribing the interviews immediately after they had taken place, I was made aware of the need to ask further questions which would clarify or expand on what the children had said. Thus, the starting points for the next day's interviews often came to light while listening to and typing the children's perceptions.

Agreeing with Hansen (1987, p. 98) when she asserts that "a teacher's own definition of a good writer frames her instruction and assessment in writing," and that the teacher's observations of her students contribute to a more complete understanding of the children as writers, I conducted four informal interviews, one every two weeks, with the children's teacher. These tape-recorded, half-hour interviews took place in the classroom before morning classes began. I also met each of the four teachers who had taught the children in grades three through six once for 30-50 minutes before or after scheduled class time. These tape-recorded interviews were based on the list of questions found in Appendix B.

In addition, whenever the opportunity arose at recess or before class time, the children's grade six teacher and I talked about our perceptions of the children's behavior and their responses to my questions, together with our perceptions of writing and writing instruction. I carried the impressions and thoughts from these discussions to my journal where I explored them further. Often, these explorations prompted the next day's chat with the children's teacher.

Following the wishes of the children's mothers, two of the informal interviews took place at the school during or after school hours. One of the mothers asked me to talk with her at her home during the day and another met me at the university where she was taking undergraduate courses. The questions in Appendix B provided starting points for the interviews.

Though I started with a list of questions for parents and one for teachers, the flow of each interview determined the emphasis of my questions. For example, one parent had many memories of her formal writing instruction in elementary school. She had not thought a lot about her expectations for her child's writing instruction. Thus, I adapted my questions to gather more information about the area in which she felt comfortable.

Classroom Observations

When exploring children's language learning with the goal of informing theory and curriculum, it is necessary to observe language users in "functional real natural language settings, where all systems are allowed to transact" (Harste, Burke & Woodward, 1984, p. 204). With this in mind, I recorded my observations of the children's interactions and writing behavior during their afternoon writing classes and during their reading and social studies classes on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 8:40 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. These were not the only times when the children had writing, reading and social studies classes, but they were the longest uninterrupted times for these classes.

Recognizing that my presence as an observer influenced the children's and teacher's actions, I worked with them for nine weeks in an effort to become an accepted and trusted member of the class. By gaining the trust of the classroom members, I hoped that they would interact in ways that were similar to those that took place when I was not in the classroom. In this way, I would be able to "collect and elicit the native view(s) of reality and the native ascription of meaning to events, intentions, and consequences" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. 154).

Samples of the Children's Writing

I also gathered data by looking at the children's writing and drafts of their writing. Recognizing that the drafts and final copies of children's writing gathered over time represent "a visible collection of thoughts expressed, experiences distilled" (Graves, quoted in Walshe, 1983, p. 12), I used this strategy to gain a better understanding of how the children's ideas have been shaped through revision and how their writing reflects who they are as writers and learners.

Further to this, Moffett (1988, p. 97) explains that, "writing throws out to society samples of the cosmology that any individual has to be making for himself all the time as an ongoing orientation to this world and an unceasingly updated guide for behavior." Thus, to be consistent with my understanding that individuals construct their representations of their world through language, and that written language helps individuals to organize and make sense of their world, it follows that including the children's writing in my data collection enriches my construction of the ways in which the children view writing and writers.

The Researcher's Journal

Recognizing that "all aspects of the context of situation, including the researcher, are an integral part of the process and hence an integral part of the phenomena one is attempting to explain" (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984, p. 53), I kept a journal which described the rationale behind the gathering and analysis of the data collected, together with my personal perceptions of my experience in the classroom. In this way, my journal provided a means of showing how my own experience has shaped the way I collected and interpreted information. In addition, by leaving this "audit trail" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 122), I hope that others will be able to verify the consistency and credibility of my study.

In summary, my methods for collecting data were selected with the goal of describing the children's understandings of writing and the contexts within which they were created by conveying a sense of "the texture, the quality, and the power of the context as the participants in the situation experienced it" (Owen, 1982, p. 8).

Data Analysis

Using the research questions as a starting point, I conducted an ongoing analysis of the data as they were being collected. In this way, my analysis provided new directions for further data collection and analysis.

Recognizing that "the perceptual system of the observer is the first tool used by the observer and that this tool is influenced by the observer's own goals, biases, frame of reference, and abilities" (Evertson & Green, 1986, p. 164), it seems that the exploration of children's understandings of writing requires a sensitivity to their representations of the world and an awareness of the influence of my own understandings of the world. Thus, I sent my interpretations of interviews and observations to the participants. In an effort to interpret as closely as possible the participants' understandings of the world, I invited the teachers and parents to verify, modify or expand upon my interpretations of the data. One parent and one teacher provided more information on topics which they felt had not been clearly addressed in my interpretations. Two of the mothers corrected details, such as their occupations and the number of children in the family, which I had incorrectly presented. On the whole, the participants were satisfied that I had interpreted their intended meanings.

In addition, a perception check was carried out, as a fellow doctoral student reviewed the data from my research study and read the final chapter of this dissertation, which presents a discussion of the findings. She felt that the conclusions presented in the discussion were consistent with the data that had been gathered.

My view of learning as the construction of meaning influenced the methods used to analyze the data, as well. I selected strategies that allowed me to construct meaning from my interactions with the participants, rather than fitting the data within pre-determined representations of the participants' understandings. Thus, I used an inductive method to analyze the data, deriving categories which represented the meaning

I had constructed from the transcripts of interviews with participants and interactions between children, and from my observations of the children's writing. In this way, I allowed "the patterns, themes and categories . . . [to] emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390).

In my analysis, I examined the transcripts of interviews with each participant, highlighting phrases and words that seemed significant in addressing the two research questions. The units of meaning that appeared to have some relationship to each other were highlighted in the same color. Because certain meaningful units were related to many others, I circled those units with more than one color. After grouping the related units, I attempted to capture the essence of the qualities which connected the units within each group by giving the categories titles such as: "views on writing and learning" and "views on 'real' writing". I followed this procedure for each set of interviews with the children, their teachers and their parents. In addition, I examined my written observations and the transcripts of interactions between children in the classroom in a similar manner, adding the meaningful units identified within them to the categories for each child, and forming new categories where necessary.

Before writing the report of my findings, I drew two webs for each child, using the following descriptions as the hubs of the webs: (1) self as a writer and (2) views on writing. By linking the categories and the meaningful units within them to the two topics of my research questions, I reviewed the data once again, testing the relatedness of units within categories and the ways in which the categories were related to the central topics of my research questions. I also drew webs for the data gathered through interviews with each teacher and each mother in order to organize the categories and to show their relationships to the research questions. Because I was interested in the mothers' views of themselves as writers and on writing, together with their views on writing instruction and their children as writers, I drew four webs for data gathered

from the mothers' interviews. They centered around the topics used for the children and two additional topics: (1) views of son or daughter as a writer and (2) views on the school writing program. The webs which I designed using data gathered from the teachers' interviews focused on one additional topic: views on writing instruction.

Later, in order to derive the overall themes for the study, I drew webs which brought together similar categories from data gathered for all of the participants. The titles for these webs were as follows: (1) cultural views on writing, (2) cultural views on writers, and (3) cultural views on effective writing instruction.

The categories derived from the interviews with the participants, my classroom observations and the transcripts of interactions among children while they were writing provided the basis for my analysis. However, believing that "writing throws out to society samples of the cosmology that any individuals has to be making for himself all the time as an ongoing orientation to this world" (Moffett, 1988, p. 97), I also examined the children's writing. My analysis of the writing involved determining the ways in which the views the children expressed in interviews and in interactions with others were transmitted through their classroom writing. In addition, I reread my journal, noting the issues that had arisen as I was conducting the research and relating them to the categories which had been drawn from the data.

Limitations

In accordance with my understanding that individuals construct their own representations of reality using the possible realities available to them in their culture, I recognize that there are differences in the ways in which I understand the world and the ways in which the participants in my study represent the world. As a member of the culture, I assume a reciprocity of perspectives; that others view the world in ways that are similar to my own and that they will be able to communicate their representations of

reality to me in ways that I will understand. However, I also recognize that I am constructing my view of the participants' understandings based on my observations and interactions with them and my understanding of the world. Because of these differences, as an observer of the classroom situation, I may have been able "to see at the same time more and less than what [was] seen by [the participants]" (Schutz, 1973, p. 26). Though I may have been able to see beyond the understandings of those who were immediately involved in the situation, a limitation of my study is the fact that I will not perceive the world exactly as the participants in my study do because I have constructed the world in different ways than they have.

The transferability of the results of my study will be limited because of the complex nature of interactions between individuals. It is impossible for researchers to construct "a model of a sector of the social world within which merely those typified events occur that are relevant to the scientist's particular problem under scrutiny" (Schutz, 1973, p. 36). In this way, I will not be able to make generalizations about children's understandings of writing that will apply to all children interacting within an urban, middle-class grade six classroom. In order to make those generalizations, I would have to simplify the interactions by excluding many of the factors which are unique to the situations of the children in this study. Thus, in recognition of the unique "theories of the world" which individuals use and recreate through interactions, the transferability of the results of my study will be limited.

However, Calkins (1983, p. 7) proposes that, "by understanding the pathways one child has taken in learning to write, we may be able to discern and trust the pathways other children will take." In this way, the understandings gained in my study about the four children's concepts of writing and of writers may provide a framework for the exploration of other children's understandings about writing.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

An affective model of writing instruction, one which encourage social interaction while writing, is outlined in the first section of the literature review. Following this, an examination of the use of computers in writing classrooms is presented because the children in my study were writing with microcomputers.

Finally, the literature review focuses on the findings of studies which examined writing using three different approaches: exploring cognitive processes of writing, exploring cultural understandings of writing, and exploring writing development.

Social Interaction Among Writers in the Classroom: An Affective Model of Writing Instruction

In classrooms where writers are encouraged to interact with others as they use writing to discover more about themselves and their world, writing is viewed as idiosyncratic. It is understood that there is a basic process of writing that is practiced by most writers, but that the manner in which individuals follow these processes "is as variable and unique as the individual's personality" (Graves, 1975, p. 237). These differences arise because, "at any given point in a writing episode, many variables, most of them unknown at the time of composing, contribute to the writing process" (Graves, 1975, p. 237).

Thus, a large part of the teacher's role involves helping children to discover and develop their unique qualities as writers, or their "voices," in their writing. By providing opportunities for children to make their own decisions about topics and formats for their writing, teachers encourage children to use written language in ways that are personally meaningful, so that the children may assume the observant, self-

examining and world-examining stance of writers who value writing as a means for enriching their lives.

With the goal of helping children to discover more about themselves and their world, writing instruction is typically associated with activities such as:

> brainstorming, journal writing, emphasizing students' ideas and experiences, small-group activities, teacher-student conferences, multiple drafts, postponing concern with editing skills until the final draft, and deferring or eliminating grades. For convenience in instruction, process activities in writing are often subdivided into stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, usually with the caveat that the processes are recursive rather than linear, complex rather than simple (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 6-7).

While many teachers provide opportunities for the students to select their topics for writing, others feel the need to provide a context for the writing. This context may be created through the use of activities such as sociodramatic play and creative dramatics. Grossman (1983, p. 54-55), one such educator, asserts that "creative dramatics encourages creative writing by getting children emotionally involved in the topic and by heightening the sensory aspects of an experience . . . The sensory involvement allows the children to experience and appreciate more fully their impressions and thereby adds to the dimension of feeling, understanding and empathy upon which the imagination can build." Thus, in some classrooms, the prewriting stage may include sensory experiences designed to provide a context within which children may choose topics. In other classrooms, devices such as notebooks for recording observations and feelings may be used to generate topics for writing (Calkins, 1991). In both cases, the goal is to encourage children to write about topics to which they feel committed.

By providing opportunities for school-aged writers to publish their written work, an emphasis is placed on revision in writing. Because it "contributes to a sense of audience" (Graves, 1983, p. 54), the publishing of written work encourages children to

revise the content of their writing, "continually circl[ing] back, reviewing and rewriting" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 3). By attempting to communicate their thoughts and feelings so that others will understand their intended meanings, children are provided opportunities to shape their ideas through continuous revision.

The publishing of children's writing also encourages children to edit their writing, focusing on the correct use of conventions, so that the meaning of their writing is communicated to their readers. However, it is not only the publishing of their writing, but also the frequency of their writing that contributes to children's growth in using writing conventions. As Calkins (1986, p. 197) asserts, "The single most important thing we can do for students' syntax, spelling, penmanship, and use of mechanics is to have them write often and with confidence." Thus, children's correct use of writing conventions is encouraged as they strive to communicate their intended meaning by producing pieces of writing which use conventional spelling, syntax and punctuation.

Because the initial focus is not on the correct use of writing conventions, children are encouraged to take risks within a supportive classroom environment where "learning [is considered to be] ongoing and cumulative, with errors to be expected (and even encouraged as a natural concomitant of tackling new and more difficult problems)" (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 6-7). The supportive environment for taking risks and accepting errors as a part of learning is created by inviting all writers in the classroom, including the teacher, to share their writing and to explain the decisions they made while writing. In this way, the classroom becomes a writing community where its members "learn to help and model for each other" (Graves, 1983, p. 51), and consequently, all members develop a closer interpersonal relationship with each other (Hansen, 1987, p. 16).

In summary, within classrooms where social interaction is encouraged while writing, children are provided opportunities to develop their individual writing

processes and styles within a framework which recognizes the complex, dialectical processes of writing. They are invited to discover more about their world and themselves as they write within a community of writers.

Using Word Processors in Writing Classrooms

Once keyboarding skills are mastered, the benefits of using word processors as writing tools in the classroom are numerous. One advantage is that the physical activity of writing is less demanding when using a word processor than it is when manipulating a pencil. In addition, the processes of revising and editing are facilitated because of the ease in altering the letters, words and sentences that are used and because spelling errors can be located and corrected easily. In addition, the finished product is attractive and can easily be shared with others.

However, the influence of computers extends beyond this overt activity and touches on the students' views of writing and the nature of social interaction within the classroom. In the following review of research studies on computers in writing classrooms, the influence of computers on each of these aspects is discussed.

Influence on Students' Views of Writing

Writing tools are often viewed as practical devices which carry out the physical aspect of the writing process. Weizenbaum (1976, p. 18) suggested that tools are not just instruments, but instead are "pedagogic instrument[s]." Thus, the ways in which writers understand the process of writing are influenced by the cultural implications of the writing tools they use. For some elementary students, grasping and manipulating a pen or pencil is an arduous act that requires their full concentration. As a result, they have little energy to devote to the composing process and the act of producing letters is the most significant factor in determining these students' views of writing. In their

research study, Cochran-Smith, Paris and Kahn (1990, p. 240) observe that "the lines of the paper stressed alignment, the relative immutability of the hard-marking pencil stressed first-round precision, and the dexterity required to properly manipulate the slender writing utensil stressed that writing was laborious physical work."

In contrast, students who wrote using word processors found that "many of the physical difficulties of handwriting were subtracted out [and, as a consequence, they] could concentrate on producing text rather than drawing letters" (Cochran-Smith, Kahn & Paris, 1990, p. 238). In this way, the computer is a "facilitator" and an "equalizer" (Cochran-Smith, Kahn & Paris, 1988, p. 64-65) in that it frees all students from the physical activity and focuses their energies on the thinking processes. As a result, students who use word processors view writing more as a composing process than as a physically demanding process.

Freed from the drudgery of recopying texts, students take greater risks in expressing their ideas and play with language, as well as the features available on the word processing software. Daiute (1985, p. 191) recognizes that children have a fascination with the pressing of keys and with the graphic images on the screen and notes that children prefer writing on the computer because of the enjoyment of playing with the writing tool. She cautions that the novelty of the writing tool may draw some students' attention away from the writing task, however.

The presence of one's words on the computer screen provides a means of communicating with oneself and thus "support[s] the idea that writing [i]s about verbal composition" (Cochran-Smith, Kahn & Paris, 1990, p. 240). The notion of the computer as a writing tool which interacts with the writer is furthered by Daiute (1985, p. 68) who states that "the computer's blinking cursor and program responses seem to provide some sense of another participant -- a minimally social environment

for writing. This environment certainly does not replace real readers and editors, but it can make the individual steps in writing a little more lively."

A study by Bridwell, Sirc, and Brooke (1985, p. 174) also shows that postsecondary students who use word processors feel that the quality of their written products is improved because of the time saved and because they are able to "think about more substantive textual and rhetorical problems" while "'tinkering' with the text." Daiute (1985, p. 75) echoes this observation as she states that computers facilitate the "freewriting" of ideas. This, in turn, allows writers to develop their ideas and "then move on to discover and express more ideas." As observed by Repman, Cothern and Cothern (1992, p. 214), when students view writing as a process of discovery, "feelings of kinship with successful authors emerged, and with this kinship came a great sense of importance and accomplishment. Students began to take themselves, as well as their writing, seriously."

In addition, the polished look of their writing stirs students' pride in their work and motivates them to revise their papers. Indeed, Daiute (1985, p. 66) asserts that "a writer who is using a computer tends to feel that the process is ongoing." Writing with computers redirects children's attention from the physical process to the composing process.

However, Cochran-Smith, Paris and Kahn (1988, p. 72) caution that:

> children will not revise their writing simply because word processing makes it easy to revise. Nor will they use early drafts to discover what they have to say simply because word processing allows for the easy refinement and rearrangement of brainstormed ideas. If these writing conceptions and strategies are not already within children's repertoires, word processing will not create them. If, however, these strategies are (or are coming to be) parts of children's writing, then word processing can enhance them and make it easier for children to use them within their writing.

Cochran-Smith (1991, p. 129) states that "because they have well-developed revising skills, experienced writers tend to utilize the capacities of word processing to

support revision more effectively than inexperienced writers do." The results of a study by Bridwell, Sirc, and Brooke (1985) reinforce this notion, as they show that postsecondary students are more concerned about formatting and making surface level changes to their writing when using word processors. However, not all students increase the size and complexity of the units of writing they have revised. Thus, the ways in which students view writing are influenced by the use of computers as writing tools, but there are other factors, such as the writing task, the nature of the writing instruction they receive, the teacher's goals, and the student's background experiences and knowledge, which contribute to students' views of writing and their writing processes. In this way, word processing is viewed as a process that is embedded within the "social processes of classrooms -- with the cultures of teaching and schools, people, conditions of learning, and teachers' and children's goals over time" (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 109).

Influences on Social Interaction

Daiute (1985, p. 19) asserts that "writing on a computer is more public than the traditional writing environment . . . the classroom with computers may be most appropriate for interaction." Because the words written on the computer screen are visible to all who pass by, Cochran-Smith, Kahn and Paris (1988, p. 64) observe that "children paused as they passed the computer to read the work-in-progress" and provided feedback to the writer. In this way, spontaneous peer conferencing was occurring on an ongoing basis.

In addition to encouraging peer conferencing, Larter (1987, p. 81) found that in classrooms where computers were used as writing tools:

> (1) Teachers engaged in more one-to-one conferencing to improve weaknesses in the children's writing; (2) Teachers were more likely to acknowledge pupils' writing by having them share it with other pupils;

and (3) Teachers were more likely to acknowledge pupils' writing by having them read it to the teachers.

This study showed that interactions between peers and between students and their teachers are encouraged because of the enhanced visibility of students' writing on the computer screen.

In summary, the public nature of the computer screen appears to encourage students and teachers to read the writing of others. Once another student's or the teacher's attention has been engaged, the writer has ample opportunity to talk about the writing on the screen. As a result, the use of word processors in writing classes appears to enhance social interaction.

Exploring Cognitive Processes of Writing

Researchers who view writing as a "set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 366) have attempted to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in writing through observing writers in grades six and twelve, as well as first year college students and competent writers, while they were writing in settings outside the classroom. These researchers (Emig, 1971; Mischel, 1974; Stallard, 1974; Nolan, 1978; Perl, 1979; Pianko, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1980a; Nistler, 1989) asked writers to verbalize their thoughts while writing on topics provided by the researchers.

Through their words and actions, the writers in these studies showed that writing is a complex "goal-directed thinking process" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 266) within which a hierarchy of processes operate -- the basic ones being "planning, translating and reviewing" (Flower & Hayes, 1980a, p. 12). In addition, they showed that the writing process is guided by a hierarchical network of process goals, through which the writer exercises conscious control over the process of writing. A hierarchical network

of content goals, through which writers determine the meanings that they want their audience to gain from their piece of writing, also guides the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 377).

The writers in these studies also showed that the act of writing requires them to deal with "an excessive number of simultaneous demands or constraints" (Flower & Hayes, 1980b, p. 33). These constraints are imposed by the writers' abilities to organize and integrate knowledge, to apply correctly the conventions of writing, and to achieve their purpose for writing (Flower & Hayes, 1980b, p. 40). This notion is further explained by Bereiter (1980, p. 82) who proposes that writers are able to deal with these constraints through either the automatization of lower order skills in order to allow higher order skills to come into use, or through the reorganization of the hierarchy of writing processes in order to accommodate a process that is newly mastered.

The complexity of the writing process is highlighted by researchers (Perl, 1979; Fagan & Hayden, 1988) who found that writers carry out these processes within three identifiable stages: prewriting, writing (or transcribing) and editing (or postwriting). However, within these stages, writers showed that the decisions they made did not carry the writing forward in a linear fashion. Rather, these writers carried out "a process of 'retrospective structuring'; [in which] movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go" (Perl, 1979, p. 331). The recursive nature of the writing process allows for the simultaneous construction and discovery of meaning, as "writers know more fully what they mean only after having written it" (Perl, 1979, p. 331).

However, because meanings are constantly being "created, found, formed, and reformed" (Berthoff, 1981, p. 71), writers must be able to tolerate the ambiguity that accompanies this discovery process. Thirteen-year old Steve, a skilled writer,

illustrates the nature of this ambiguity as he says, "I have started pieces of work thinking I knew it all and then finding that I knew nothing about it . . . So therefore every piece of work becomes a shot . . . [with the target being something] I will never achieve but I do feel I get nearer to it with every project and piece of work" (Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, & Parker, 1976, p. 128-129).

In summary, the research studies which have explored writing from a cognitive processing perspective have looked at writers' goals, their representations of the writing task, and their metacognitive awareness and control over the strategies they use in solving the problems imposed by the writing task (Flower, Stein, Ackerman, Kantz, McCormick, & Peck, 1990, p. 245).

Exploring Cultural Understandings of Writing

Researchers, (Stallard, 1974; Watkins, 1985; Griffiths & Wells, 1983; Nistler, 1989; Marx, 1991) who have explored how writers construct cultural understandings of writing have either conducted interviews with students outside the classroom or distributed questionnaires to participants in an effort to determine their attitudes toward writing.

Regardless of the methods used to gather the data, these studies indicate that "good" and "poor" school-aged writers are preoccupied with surface features such as spelling and mechanics, and the number of words in the piece, rather than with the communication of their ideas to the audience of their writing, or with using writing as a learning tool.

However, writers in the two categories; "low apprehensive" and "high apprehensive", varied in their understanding of "good writing." It was found that "low apprehensive" writers were more apt to revise their writing in an effort to express their intended meanings than were "high apprehensive" writers. Thus, having greater

confidence in their abilities to carry out the writing process and in their use of writing conventions, these "low apprehensive" writers showed a recognition of writing as a means of communicating their thoughts and feelings (Watkins, 1985, p. 138).

The researchers in these studies conclude that many of the school-aged writers they observed, especially the more apprehensive writers, did not appear to feel a sense of purpose in expressing their thoughts and feelings to others, nor did they view writing as a means of learning more about themselves and their world. Rather, writing was viewed by these writers as a product which revealed their abilities and inabilities to use language in ways that were acceptable to their teacher.

A study conducted by Griffiths and Wells (1985) also provides insight into the ways in which adult writers have constructed cultural knowledge about writing. Its purpose was to explore the attitudes of 160 adults, representing a range of social classes and occupations. The study showed that "writing plays a significant part of in the lives of the majority of people," but that it is not viewed as an essential aspect of a happy life for some people (Griffiths & Wells, 1985, p. 150). In spite of this, the researchers found that "where a society expects literacy, self-image, self-respect and self-confidence can be damaged by the lack of competence in writing" and that decision-making in terms of "choices of employment and of leisure are affected by literacy" (Griffiths & Wells, 1985, p. 150). Thus, this study showed a relationship between individuals' perceptions about writing and their social identities.

Graves (1975) and Daiute (1990) found that writers' views on writing differed not only on the basis of the writers' perceived competence levels, but also on the basis of their gender. Diaute (1990, p. 4) found that when the children in her study collaborated in pairs while writing at the computer, the boys used play (including play with language, concepts, reality, and the writing instrument) more extensively than did the girls. In addition, Graves (1975, p. 236) found that the seven year old boys in his

study wrote "more about themes identified as in secondary and extended geographical territories than [did] the girls," while the seven year old girls wrote "more about primary territory, which is related to the home and school, than [did] the boys." He also found that the girls were concerned with the content of their writing, while the boys attended to the way the writing looked on the page when expressing their concepts of "good writing."

Edwards (1985, p. 2) proposes that children's language behavior is shaped by the ways in which teachers respond to their writing. Similarly, children's attitudes toward writing are influenced by their teachers' expectations for their writing. When teachers respond in ways that encourage children to take risks without fear of being given a low grade or derogatory remarks, the children feel more positive about themselves as writers.

Two studies (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, & Parker, 1976) explored the influence of teachers' responses to and expectations for children's writing. Though the researchers of these studies expected to find that children in schools were writing primarily to express their thoughts and feelings, they discovered that the children were not frequently encouraged to write in ways that would allow them to look at their world subjectively. Instead, they found that the children were asked to complete writing projects which emphasized writing as "a means of testing and not as a means of learning," with this emphasis becoming stronger in the later grades. As a result, the children viewed their teacher "as an assessor and not as someone interested in being communicated with" (Martin, D'Arcy, Newton, & Parker 1976, p. 29). Through the students' writing experience within the school setting, they had come to understand writing as a means of evaluating their abilities to conform to a standard of the "good writer" as determined by their teachers, rather than of expressing themselves as individuals who were attempting to make sense of their world. Thus, it

appeared to the researchers that with this emphasis on the assessment of writing and of children's understanding of subject area concepts as expressed in their writing, "the more important function of writing -- its potential contribution to the mental, emotional and social development of the writer (was) being neglected" (Martin, D'Arcy, Newton & Parker, 1976, p. 22).

This was not the only study which illustrated school-aged writers' views of writing as a means of evaluating their learning. However, most of the other studies were conducted with secondary school writers and college freshmen writers as the participants (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Applebee, 1984; Pianko, 1979; Gay, 1983; Marx, 1991). For the most part, these researchers found that the students wrote for their teachers in order to earn an acceptable grade, varying the way they wrote to "meet the demands of particular teachers, particular subject areas and particular topics" (Applebee, 1984, p. 186).

Thus, these students wrote in ways that used writing to please an external audience, rather than to grow as writers and to learn more about themselves and their world. They did not show an understanding of how writing contributes to their development as individuals because it "not only makes ideas more widely and easily available, it changes the development and shape of the ideas themselves" (Langer & Applebee, 1987, p. 3).

With the exception of studies conducted by Graves (1975) and Delute (1990), the research studies designed to explore how writers construct cultural knowledge of writing were not conducted within classrooms where social interaction was encouraged while writing. Thus, the critical role of social interaction in the development of one's writing abilities and in the construction of one's conceptualization of writing was not recognized in their studies.

Exploring Children's Writing Development

Pre-school and primary-aged children have been the subjects of many observational studies (Read, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1979; Bissex, 1980; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Clay, 1975; McConaghy, 1988). These studies found that young children "are motivated to explore writing because the task invites exploration and can be rewarding in itself" (Clay, 1988, p. 265). Thus, before formal writing instruction began, the children observed by these researchers were learning spelling, vocabulary, syntax, and punctuation rules through assimilating information about the ways in which language works from literature that they read and that adults read to them. In a systematic manner, children developed new hypotheses about language, as currently held understandings of language conflicted with those illustrated in new writings they encountered. Furth (1970, p. 41-42) describes this systematic process of growth by saying that "development is not a matter of cumulatively taking in outside information," nor does it mean "the disappearance of the old scheme and the simple substitution of a new scheme. Rather, organic development implies a progressive structuring so that later structures subsume earlier structures on a new level of functioning."

Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984, p. xvi) emphasize that children show growth in their writing when they take risks in choosing from a range of strategies to meet the demands of each new setting. Further to this, Calkins' (1983, p. 87) observations of one child during her third and fourth years of school showed that the child's writing became more "tentative, anticipatory, flexible, interactive, [and] responsive," as certain aspects of writing became routinized and she was able to take risks in exploring ways to make language serve a broader range of social purposes.

Other researchers who have explored children's writing development, (Moffett, 1968; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975), have examined children's

writing samples to determine their growth in areas such as the functions or purposes of the writing, the audience for the writing, the distance between the writer and the subject matter, and the level of reflection upon their writing.

For example, Moffett (1968, p. 55) asserts that growth occurs as young language users carry out a process of "decentering" through assimilating knowledge about the lived and literary world and accommodating their own understandings to fit more closely with those of the world around them. This knowledge includes not only the content, but the "way of learning that surrounds the content." Thus, the child "emerges with a general disposition that is of a higher level of complexity than the content itself" (Moffett, 1983, p. 153). This language growth becomes evident in children's writing as the writing becomes increasingly explicit, is written for more distant, unknown audiences, becomes less concerned with the present, taking into account the past and future, and becomes less stereotyped.

Britton (1970, p. 45) feels that expressive writing, which closely resembles everyday speech, provides a starting point for children's writing because it allows children to experiment with their store of knowledge about language and the world in order to use language to serve a broad range of purposes. Children show growth as writers as they assume a spectator's role, generating hypotheses and constructing representations of their world in order to operate within it. They also show growth as their writing is used to explain and inform, becoming more "transactive" (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rose, 1983, p. 79-83).

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF WRITING: THE CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

Introduction

Through observations of the children's interactions and writing behavior and through interviews, I came to know the four children as unique individuals. Though they shared many views on writers and writing, the variations in their understandings reflected their unique personalities, as well as the different home and school environments they experienced.

In this chapter, I have presented the views of each child and his/her mother in turn. Following a brief description of the children's family life and early school years, I have described my interpretations of the data which show who the children and their mothers are as writers and their understandings of writers and writing.

Ruben

Getting to Know Ruben

Ruben is the youngest of three boys in his family, though this was not to be the case for long, as his mother was due to have a baby in the spring of the year. Ruben's family immigrated to Canada from the Middle East when he was a toddler. He was a confident speaker of English, though it was not the language spoken in his home.

Ruben's mother said that before he went to school, Ruben had learned the alphabet and could read environmental print, such as the names of department stores. As a young child, Ruben was eager to go to school to learn to read and write. Ruben said that he did not do any writing until his formal writing instruction began in grade one. He went to kindergarten in another school in the same city, but has been in this school since grade one.

As Ruben did not live in the area surrounding the school, typically, his playmates outside of school were not his classmates. Instead, members of his extended family shared in his recreational activities, which included playing Nintendo (which was a recent Christmas gift), watching television and playing football or other team sports. In addition, Ruben spent a lot of time outside school hours reading. Each night, he read before going to sleep.

Ruben planned to work as an engineer upon reaching adulthood. He anticipated that he might do some writing in the future, but that it would not play a significant role in his life. He said, "I would write at home when I'm older if I had nothing to do . . . don't want to watch tv, don't want to read a book . . . So I'll just pop a pencil and paper and start writing something that I like."

Ruben as a Writer

Ruben felt he was a good student and expected high marks on his tests and assignments. When talking about the items in his portfolio, Ruben expressed disappointment in a social studies report which received a mark of 50%. His reason for judging the report to be a poorly written one was that the report had received only half the marks it was supposed to receive. He voiced his desire to achieve high marks and said, "If I was still at that time and I knew I was going to get this [mark], I would try to write it a bit more better."

However, he judged his narrative writing according to different criteria because the writing he did during writer's workshop time was not graded. When judging his narrative writing, Ruben said that he put words together well and could not think of a single area in which his writing needed improvement.

Ruben was a confident and enthusiastic writer. He explained, "I do like to write. It's not because I have to, even though I do have to. I like to write because stories like

this one, it kind of makes people laugh. It makes me feel good that at least one person in the world likes it. And I write because I just like to." Ruben greatly enjoyed writing, especially in writer's workshop, and regretted that he did not have the opportunity to write last year because he was attending language classes in his mother tongue during writers' workshop time. This year, the classes were scheduled during French classes for 45 minutes each day.

Ruben valued his writing. Though he threw away his school work at the end of each year, he kept the stories that he had written so that he could enjoy them in the future. However, in spite of his enjoyment of writing, Ruben did not write outside of the scheduled writing time at school, unless he had homework.

When writing at the computer, ideas for stories came easily to Ruben. He eagerly turned on a computer each day and the ideas flowed through his fingertips the moment he opened his "Chicken of the Night" file. He was a persevering writer who wrote steadily for the duration of the class. Often when his peers or I approached him to talk, Ruben appeared to wrench himself away from his writing to give us his attention. However, he readily talked about his writing with others and carried interested listeners off into possible directions in which his story might go. He, Ruben, was the protagonist of his stories and he talked as if the events of his stories were happening to himself when sharing his stories with others.

While writing, Ruben would attempt to draw the attention of his peers to his writing by throwing out invitations to become a part of his story. For example, one day near the beginning of my time in the classroom, Joey and Ruben were discussing the fact that everything they said was being tape-recorded by me, when Ruben determinedly brought the topic of discussion around to his story by asking Joey if he wanted to be a mobster in his story. Having captured Joey's attention, Ruben went on to relate the events of his story. Another time, Ruben walked over to another child's computer and

asked, "Guess who is the bad guy in Chicken Man II?" It was an invitation the other child could not refuse and soon there was a group of children huddled around Ruben's computer reading and discussing his story. His enthusiasm for his stories was infectious and often other children asked him about characters and events in his story, even when he did not invite their attention. It seemed that the whole class knew about Ruben's "Chicken Man" character and that "chicken mania" had infected the class. Ruben even chanted "Chicken of the night" in a sing-song voice as he wrote.

The many steps that Ruben took to protect his work demonstrated the value he placed in having control over his writing. He was very concerned that other children might learn his password for entrance to his files and he often changed his password. He did not want others to change his stories in any way. Also, he copyrighted his story under "Chicken of the Night Incorporated". As a result of the great pride which Ruben took in his writing, he was considered by his classmates to be an entertaining writer. However, it appears that Ruben's pride also invited his classmates' scorn, as I observed that they occasionally mocked his passion for writing by imitating his words and actions and by attempting to erase what he had written.

Ruben's voice in his writing resonated with the richness of the literature he had read and the television shows and movies he had watched. In the following excerpt from Chicken Man II, the character, Radical Mouse Machine, and the longing of Spy man to be "the second head boss" echo a story by Brian Jacques entitled, "Redwood", that was read to the students by their teacher's husband for fifteen minutes at the beginning of each day. In this story, a group of mice was threatened by a mafia-like gang of rats. One ambitious gangster, Cheesethief, proved himself to be particularly dastardly in his efforts to become second in rank to the gang leader.

The Chicken Man II Junior
Chapter 2
The Conversation

A fat middle aged man came in "Yes Squeak!" he squeaked.

"Don't call me that or else your tongue will be on my dog's dinner plate." threatened the Radical Mouse Machine. "Now get me a big piece of cheese, NOW!" commanded the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Yes sir." said Bowling Ball as he saluted. Then he marched out like an army officer.

An hour later Bowling Ball came in. He had 5 bags of cheese. "Here's your cheese sir, chief sir, captain sir."

"Zip it up now or else you'll get the bath." said the Radical Mouse Machine.

"No, no not the bath noooooooooo," bawled Bowling ball in agony.

"Alright you'll get another chance." said the Radical Mouse Machine. "Just don't blow it this time" warned the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Why don't you get the spy man to spy on some police stuff eh . . Chief." whispered Bowling Ball.

"That's a great idea B.B.," yelled the Radical Mouse Machine.

"B.B., sir?" said Bowling ball

"I gave you a code name Bowling Ball, if you want to keep it you'd better go with it, okay B.B.," stormed the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Yes chief. I must be a good agent to have a code name." said B.B. as he smiled.

"Now get out of here but leave the cheese THE YUMMY IN MY TUMMY CHEESE HERE AND LEAVE YUM." screamed the Radical Mouse Machine.

"I'm leaving sir," said B.b. Cheerfully.

"Spy man get in here pronto," said the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Yes sir, I'm here," said Spy man.

"Do what your rank says, you know what I mean," said the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Oh yes, I get to be the second head boss," said Spy man."

"NO, you get to get information from the cops, okay?" said the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Oh @$#$!#$%#@#@!." said Spy man.

"Now do your job right or this time I will personally shoot you right in the head with my new machine gun, . . . Is that clear?" stormed the Radical Mouse Machine.

"Yes sir," Spy man frowned as he left the room, unexpectedly he turned around and said. "After I get the stuff from the cops do I get to be the second head boss chief sir?" He smiled showing his ugly yellow and black teeth.

"Don't be an idiot Spy man! You'll never become the second head boss as long as I'm around," said the Radical Mouse Machine as he fell off his chair laughing at Spy man's teeth and request.

"You're fair," said Spy man as he pouted.

"Get atta here."

The exchange between the Radical Mouse Machine and his gang members is similar to that between the villain and his cohorts in Brian Jacques' novel, "Redwood". Ruben showed an awareness of the influence of literature and movies on his writing as he said, "I make the guy an old man and old men and women are usually wiser than everyone else because they've been in the world longer. A long time ago I think I read a story about it and I also see a lot of movies where old men are wise, kind of like fantasy movies, movies with castles and history." He was referring to a wise old character named Jackie White, who appeared in chapter 6 of the "Chicken Man II" story, and advised the protagonist, "Well instead of busting the boss first, bust the lower guys then you'll get higher and higher then you'll get to the boss." In addition, Ruben claimed that the ideas for his stories "just pop into my head. I just wrote 'The Chicken Man'. It came out of nowhere and I wrote it." However, he conceded that sometimes his ideas came from something funny that he heard on television or while interacting with his classmates.

Ruben confidently made decisions about which stories he would publish and which he would abandon. When he had an idea that he felt would make a good story, he showed great commitment to the story, adding events and details that carried on for many pages. However, he had no qualms about dropping a story if he did not feel committed to it. He explained, "Sometimes I just quit and write something else if I don't think something's a great idea." Ruben went on to say that he kept these stories on his file in the event that he decided to finish them. He said that the computer made it a lot easier for him to delete a story he had started but no longer liked.

Ruben was an autonomous writer who knew what he liked in a story and wrote to satisfy himself as a reader. He felt comfortable in making decisions about topics and genres for his writing and confidently expressed himself and his ideas through his writing. Ruben stated a preference for writing stories that "come out of your imagination" because "you can put anything you want." He appeared to enjoy the power

to create and change events as he wished. Ruben claimed emphatically that he would not change the way he wrote if others in his class did not like his writing. He asserted, "I like comedy no matter if the person beside me likes horror books or the person on my left likes serious books. I like comedy and that's how I am."

As shown in the following excerpt from Ruben's first "Chicken Man" story, the voice that readers hear in Ruben's writing can be identified as his unique voice, though it is clear that social interaction has contributed to the timbre of his voice. For example, in this story, he used the language of television crime shows and played up the chicken-like attributes of his protagonist with an awareness of the details which drew groans and chuckles from his classmates.

THE CHICKEN MAN

My name is Ruben and I'm a cop. I'm gonna tell ya a story about crime, and how crime never pays. And how 1 man can change the course of crime forever.

Chapter 1

On the night of September 15, 1932. The Bank of New York was robbed. It was 12:30 am. Suddenly the crooks got a chicken claw in their faces. They were pulled closer to the dark black shadow they were really scared. The bags of money they had dropped to the ground. They were screaming but nobody paid any attention to them. By the time we, the police arrived on the scene, we found the men tied up and a note in their hands it read: Hey boys in blue I got these crooks for ya! Take good care of them in the Slammer. And at the bottom it read: From the CHICKEN MAN.

We knew this guy must be a crime fighter because that was obvious. But only 1 clue told us who this guy works for and where he was born. To me, he was all American. The bags of money were returned and we also informed the bank owner that his bank was robbed. But once he heard that he was yelling like a dog. When we told him we nabbed the crooks he was normal again. By the time we left it was 2:30 am, we were all sleepy. Just then we saw a man in a chicken suite flying over New York. My partner was gonna try to shoot him. But I ordered him not to. We knew we had a long hard case in front of us. But if we didn't solve it no one else would try. The next day when I was off duty I went to the mall with my partner. We were wondering what this crazy guy in a chicken suite was going to do next.

This story continues for five chapters. It was the first and only story that Ruben had published and he said that he was very proud of it. During my time in his classroom,

Ruben worked on a sequel to this story, "Chicken Man II". Ruben had worked out an ending for this story before he finished writing it. He described how he would leave readers in suspense, waiting for "Chicken Man III", which he planned to write before he left grade six: "I plan to make that at the end, basically, that the Radical Mouse Machine doesn't get killed, but goes to jail and before he takes the death sentence, he escapes, and then it's to be continued." I was not the only one to hear about the ending. Many of Ruben's classmates also heard revisions of the ending that Ruben had described to me. It seemed that he was working through possible endings as he talked with his peers and with me.

Ruben equated the sequencing of events with a writer's style. He described his own style as one where he was "already into whatever it is. And then sometimes I go on to what happens after and after." As shown in the following excerpt of a story written by Ruben, he hurled his readers into the midst of the action and moved forward from that point, providing few details of the events leading up to the story's conflict.

> Mike Moose Badabing and the King
>
> After Mike Moose Badabing killed the giant the people were happy by only King Jack Chicken was mad because he had to reward the only person he hated in his whole kingdom. So he told the men to find and kill Mike Moose Badabing. Just when the men were going to stab him with a sword, the men heard the sounds of ogres. So they ran away leaving Mike Moose Badabing alive and alone. Then he saw the ogres and he ran away with the men.

Ruben explained that he had adopted this "style" of sequencing stories because that is what he enjoyed reading. For the most part, Ruben's writing decisions reflected his preferences as a reader.

Ruben felt that his writing had improved over the years because he had moved from the use of himself as a protagonist to the creation of other protagonists who lived in past eras. Though his stories do not show the consistent use of protagonists other than himself, Ruben appeared to have an awareness of a developmental progression from

expressive writing on more immediate topics and settings to ones which were further removed from his immediate experience. In agreement with Britton (1970, p. 45), it appears that Ruben recognized that he had assumed more of a spectator's role than he once had as a writer.

Indeed, Ruben was pleased that journal writing had been discontinued that year. Expressive writing was not something Ruben now enjoyed because "I kind of like keeping things to myself. Like sometimes I tell my friends, but real bad problems at school, I tell my parents." Perhaps the spectator role was a safer one for Ruben when he had to share his thoughts and feelings with others. Though he confidently shared his fictional writing, in which he had cast himself as a more stereotypical police officer from his favorite television shows, he was apprehensive about sharing thoughts and emotions that were identified as his own.

In summary, Ruben was a confident, autonomous writer who readily expressed his thoughts and feelings through the characters in his writing. The voice with which his writing spoke was one that had been influenced by the television shows he watched, the books he read and his interactions with others. Ruben was conscious of the ways in which his classmates might respond to his writing and he shaped his writing to evoke their laughter. Thus, an awareness of the elements of stories which his peers found humorous was a factor which contributed to Ruben's perceived success as a writer.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Ruben felt that writers become better at their craft by writing. He explained,

> "Every time I write a story, I get to learn how to write the next one better than the last one. After it's done, you always see that you did make some little mistake. I mean it might be like the spelling and everything is right and so are the sentences, but something is just missing from the book. You just put it in the next book because this one's already done."

His words suggest that the goals which writers have for improving their writing involve more than the correct use of writing conventions. Though he was unable to articulate what that "something that is just missing" might be, it appears that he was talking about the way the words are put together in order to achieve his purpose. He also seems to be suggesting that writers improve when they read over and reflect upon the stories they have written.

Though Ruben felt that he wrote well, he did not consider himself a "real" author. He explained, "I haven't published any books that go out into the real world. I do call myself an author of a couple of stories, but those things are nothing like the books that get let out to the general public." It appears that a classroom audience was not considered by Ruben to be a "real" audience, so the writing Ruben shared with his peers was not "real" writing.

Ruben identified himself as a writer. He compared himself to published writers by saying that they, too, made decisions which satisfied their own interests as readers and which evoked feelings and responses that they wanted for their readers. In this way, as a writer, he expressed the self which he had constructed through interaction with his social environment and influenced the feelings and behavior of others. Ruben explained, "People don't write stories that are for somebody else's personality. They write about things they like." While talking with me, Ruben seemed to be working out his views on what constitutes a story, as he said, "I think what makes it a story is actually the writer's ideas, like what the writer did, but if the writer writes a story that no one likes, then it's still a story, isn't it? No one might like it, but that's their own interests 'cause I don't think an author would write a story that they didn't like." However, as he toyed with these ideas, he ended with the comment, "Authors have to write a story that at least one person will enjoy." It seems that the need for an appreciative audience was weighted heavily in Ruben's definition of a story.

Action and humor were the most significant qualities which determined whether a story was "good" in Ruben's opinion. According to Ruben, good books, "get you into the action." His assertion that, "It doesn't always have to teach people something, but it should have a point to it" showed his awareness of the need for a theme which ties the events, action and setting together and of the need for a purpose for writing. He elaborated on this idea by explaining that the reason he wrote "Chicken Man I" was to express these ideas: "Staying around mobsters and drug dealers is a bad idea and there will always be the police as long as people are making crime."

Ruben recognized many purposes for writing. He explicated these purposes by saying, "books teach you stuff, and make you laugh. Sometimes they're serious and teach you lessons." Ruben explained that the following report was an example of writing that teaches.

Report on Samuel de Champlain

> Samuel de Champlain sailed to North America to find a route to Asia. He came in contact with the native Indians. The province of Quebec was named by Samuel de Champlain, the native Indians called it Kebec, this word means where the river gets narrow. Native Indians thought Samuel de Champlain a lot of things. They thought him how to make a kind of tea kind of medicine that would cure a bad disease. After a couple of years the Algonquin tribe wanted to be Allies with the French so they could help them fight their enemies the Iroquois tribe. The Iroquois tribe were Allies with the English. years later de Champlain found the great lakes but he was upset because they weren't the Pacific ocean. Near the end of his life Samuel de Champlain drew maps and showed the people how to cure the disease his crew had. He made his trips by borrowing money from a French merchant. Champlain wanted to keep looking for the Northwest passage and to explore the area around the new settlement. On one trip, he travelled south with a group of Native people. They went along the Richlieu River until a large lake. Today this lake is called Lake Champlain.

Ruben described the process he carried out in writing this report in this way; "We just had to read the book about it and basically put it in your own words." Ruben appears to have an "intake-outlet" model of reading and writing informational material. He explained that when you read, you "force in as much information as you can" and then

when you write, "you let it all out on paper." He expanded on his model by describing the accumulation of learning that occurs when individuals read on a topic and then write a research report: "When someone wrote down the stuff that they researched about, then someone else takes their research, puts a bit more research and writes it down. So, it's like this first guy did this much and this guy did this much and a bit more."

When Ruben spoke of his own writing, he concentrated on fiction, which he described as writing which "comes out of your imagination. It's a lie, something that you wouldn't believe. It didn't happen and it never will." His experience showed that "usually it's something fiction that a kid my age writes." He said that it is difficult to write fiction because "I have to think what will happen next."

Though he differentiated between the physical act of moving a pencil along paper and the turning of peges, Ruben recognized many similarities between reading and writing. He found both to be relaxing when given adequate amounts of time and choices of topics. Through the continued writing of fiction, Ruben felt that he would become "a bright person because of the imagination." However, when given assignments to read or write within a time frame set by the teacher, he described how "the pressure is on" and the activities are no longer relaxing. He felt that similar skills were needed for both processes so that when individuals were engaged in reading, they were also learning to write. Ruben provided an example: "If you read, you see all these right spellings. This way, this teaches you to write, okay, 'on' is spelled o-n." Ruben's admonition that those people who cannot read would not know how to spell words correctly further illustrates his view of reading as a model for his writing, as it provided ideas and models for the correct spellings of words he used in his writing.

In summary, Ruben appears to view writing as a purposeful activity which externalizes the knowledge and ideas of the writer to inform or entertain readers. His definition of "good" writing very closely resembled his description of his own writing.

Ruben's views on writers were determined by the audience for the writing. In Ruben's eyes, "real" authors have an audience for their writing beyond the classroom walls.

Ruben's Mother

I met with Ruben's mother in her home during the school day. Ruben was ill that day, so he also took part in the interview and responded to many of his mother's comments.

Because Ruben's mother spoke her mother tongue at home with her family and did not work outside the home, she had some difficulty with English and was unable to respond to some of my questions. However, as she greatly valued education and was very willing to work with anyone connected with her son's school, she graciously attempted to provide as much information as she possibly could to help me with my research.

Ruben's Mother as a Writer

Ruben's mother said that she had little time to write because she was busy maintaining the household and preparing for the birth of her baby. She explained that her husband took care of any business kinds of writing that needed to be done so that she had no reason to do any writing, apart from the occasional letter to her parents.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Ruben's mother was unable to articulate her views on good writers and good writing. She said that she read very little and that all of her reading was in her mother tongue.

When asked about the kinds of writing that she did, Ruben's mother replied, "Sometimes I read stories, but there is no reason to write anything." It appears that she

viewed writing as a tool for carrying out practical, everyday purposes and recognized that many of her needs required the completion of written forms.

Views of Her Son as a Writer

Ruben was viewed by his mother as a good writer who "sometimes don't care about his writing. He want to finish so he can go out and play." She repeated many times that Ruben wrote quickly "to have time to play more." She first heard this assessment of Ruben as a writer from his kindergarten teacher and she believed that it continued to characterize Ruben as a writer. Ruben was present at our interview and he insisted that he no longer rushed through his work in order to play. His mother was pleasantly surprised to hear this. It seems that the descriptions of Ruben that were made by teachers of his early school years played a significant role in shaping her views of her son as a writer.

Ruben's mother pointed out that Ruben loved to read, as did his older brothers. Though she did not see him doing a lot of writing at home, she said that he always read before he went to sleep.

Views on Writing Instruction

As a public school student, Ruben's mother did a lot of assigned writing which was graded by the teacher. She remembered many assignments where the teacher "gave us the title and about this title we wrote two or three pages." She said that she had not thought about the kinds of writing she would like to see Ruben doing in class, but that she was satisfied with all aspects of his writing instruction, except for the lack of homework that Ruben had. She explained, "I like my children to have homework so they have something to do. If they don't have any homework, [they] just play all the time. When I was in my country, we have lots of homework to have to do and lots of lessons we have to

read, but here, the children come back from school and they have nothing to do." She appeared to value homework as an extension of the learning that occurs at school and as a productive way to occupy children's time. In this respect she had a different opinion on homework than Ruben did, as he valued his time for playing after school and told his parents that he was "too smart for it so [he didn't] get any homework." Ruben felt that writing should be done at school and that his time at home should be his own.

In addition, Ruben's mother wanted him to have homework because she felt that parents should help their children with their homework so "they know what their children do in school." Though she felt well-informed about Ruben's progress as a writer through communication with his teacher, she would have liked more opportunities to work at home with Ruben on his everyday writing projects so that she might see his daily progress for herself.

In summary, Ruben's mother appears to view writing as a communication tool which was learned in school. Her son's success in school was important to her, so she wanted him to be a "good" writer in terms of the school's definition of a successful writer.

Joey

Getting to Know Joey

Joey is the eldest of two boys in his family. Unlike his brother, who had been content to "sit and read and to draw pictures and color" from an early age, Joey enjoyed activities such as karate, biking and playing Nintendo. His mother described him as an active, "pretty easy-going, quiet type of character."

In the classroom, Joey displayed the "easy-going" behavior described by his mother. However, though Joey was never involved in overt disputes with his classmates, he generally chose to work alone when small group projects were assigned.

Joey explained that he did not like being a "leftover" when others were choosing partners with whom to work. Thus, he decided to work by himself in order to avoid feeling left out.

According to his mother, Joey found his first year of school to be very frustrating and disagreeable. Finding himself in "an EXTREMELY structured class," Joey, "who was not a child who was really interested in sitting down for more than 30 seconds at a time," did not like school and his mother had to be very persuasive to get him to go to school.

Before entering grade one, Joey's writing consisted of "practising drawing and writing letters", skills that he claims to have learned while watching the television show, "Sesame Street." Joey said that he has had writing "as a subject" since he moved to the school in which he is presently enrolled. Prior to that time, he explained that he "had to learn to spell and how to write the letters, like in handwriting." Without a knowledge of "how to write things down," Joey said, "I wouldn't know how to write [stories]."

Writing had never been a favorite activity for Joey and he said that he would choose to write at home only if there were no other activities to occupy his time. However, since moving in grade three to the school in which he was currently enrolled, Joey had begun to feel more successful as a learner and to view school in a more favorable light. His mother felt that Joey's change in attitude toward school had been brought about by teachers who took "a huge interest in him" and who were supportive of his efforts.

Joey as a Writer

Joey considered himself to be a good writer because he "came up with good ideas," and because there was "action in [his] stories." His teacher called him "an idea man"

who had an abundance of ideas to write, but who struggled with expressing those ideas in writing.

The action that Joey valued in his stories was also present in the science fiction books and television shows that he chose to read and view. In addition, many of the characters and events in his stories were drawn from his reading and viewing. The following draft of the story on which he was working during my time in the classroom is based on a comic book about a character named Ice Man.

WOLVIRINE AND ICE MAN

Wolverine was an abendond child, Seperated from his brother. He was raised up in the woods by animals. Onde day he left the forest because he no longer needed to take the hospitality of the animals. He travled to canada because it was too buisy in the United states. When he was walking on the shore by vancouver he saw something walking the distance he ran after it egerly. It was in a human form but a diffrent colour it was shiny white ceramic colour it looked at him and said "why are you runing after me?" He said nothing. The ice man said to folow him. The ice man took him into a cave with pictchers on the lime stone walls. He recognized the person was him as a boy. Wolverine has finally found his brother.

Mean while the villains were robing the mind bender at west Edmond mall. When Wolves heard the disturbing news on TV wolvirine said to ice"gee if we have the mutant power why don't we use it?"

Ice man said "wolverine! they see us theyl capture us and put us in a jar".

"Sign, no they wont we look just like evry one else" "I guess you'r right but" "But what ice man said we can't expose ourselves to the normal."

"Well I hitch-hiked here, tonnes of times" "Then how will we get there?"

"Duh!" "we hitch-hike, Wolverine said." "It worked me across north america so we can easily make it to Edmonton." "I guess your right." "So what are we waiting for?"When the got to Edmonton they heard pidgens all around the place this was so hard on wolverine's ears it was even worse when they got into fantasy-land there was lions roaring roller coasters screeching on their 50 meetie wheels, This was too much for him, he yelled SHUT UP! His eyes got dark red and his claws turned yellow he through his armes out to the criminals and the claws shot out a Lazer beam, and hit the CRIMINALS, and they fell asleep. And then ice man shot a white BOLT of ice at them they froze into ice and the police took them away.

THE END

After revising and adding five pages to this story, Joey went on to publish it. The first draft of "Wolvirine and Ice Man" took about a month to write, as Joey worked on it every other week, finding other stories to work on in the interim. Joey did not like to write for long periods of time. In his view, an hour a day would be "just enough time" to spend on writing. He liked to work on different pieces from week to week, explaining that he became bored with stories after a while and needed a change.

Joey found that ideas came to him quite readily and explained that writing "is pretty easy. You just write down what you think. I think of stories and stuff like that." He commented that though "it is easy to get started, it's hard to finish it 'cause if you're doing a story and it's not done, you keep on adding on to it." I observed his difficulties in finishing stories on many occasions. Though he was always occupied at the computer, I obaerved that he would often add only one or two sentences to his story during a one-hour writing class. Even when he had only one or two paragraphs written, he read over his work many times before adding or making changes to it. Many of the changes involved changing the font or size of the print, or realigning the writing on the page.

As a result, Joey was happy to talk with me during most writing classes. However, on two occasions when Joey's writing was going smoothly, he declined an interview with me. Instead, he agreed to voice his thoughts while writing. The following quotation is taken from Joey's verbalized thoughts:

> I'm fixing this up because before it showed, they're watching tv, right? and they heard news that this bank was being burglarized at X Factor and as soon as they got there, they were still there. I put down in quoshions [quotation marks] "the criminal stayed over night" because it would be kind of wierd because like he wouldn't stay there the whole time. He wouldn't get there in a second. It takes 12 hours to get there.

His thoughts show his concern about making the events of his story believable and easy to follow for his audience. One of the reasons he gave for describing himself as a good writer was because he "made [his stories] easier to understand." As he voiced the

thoughts transcribed above, Joey carried out proposed changes that reflected his awareness of the need to provide sufficient information for readers to make sense of his story. For example, he changed the title because "there were too many 'ands.'"

Joey expected that he would "need to correct [his stories] quite a bit" when he finished writing. Though spelling was the focus of his editing efforts, Joey showed an awareness of the need to select the most effective words for communicating his purpose, as he also looked for "words that aren't supposed to be there." It is these concerns with "how you set your story and the sentences" that Joey felt his teacher was looking for when she read his writing.

He explained that he had improved as a writer because he had learned how to evoke responses of fear from his audience through watching movies and by writing and because he wrote "stories that are two or three peges" now. In addition, he had learned "stuff like you can't start a sentence with 'because.'" In the past, Joey ended his stories when he "r[an] out of ideas." In grade six, when a story "[didn't] sound that much finished," Joey added another character or a "Part II" in order to lengthen it. Joey thought about other ways in which he could lengthen his stories and described what he had noticed in J. R. R. Tolkien's writing that he thought would be helpful in his own writing: "He doesn't put every single bit of action in one story in one sentence. He divides it and leaves you hanging, so you read some more. And there's a few boring sentences." It seems that Joey is beginning to recognize the need to provide information that sets the reader up for the action that is about to happen, rather than writing a sequence of actions that are not connected through cause-effect relationships.

When Joey defined his own writing style he said, "I only write so much in one sentence. I don't put, like, all the words in one sentence. You have to come up with the right words to fit the sentence." He gave an example using the opening sentences for "Wolvirine and Ice Man": "Wolverine was an abandoned child. Seperated from his

brother." Though Joey was unable to explain what he meant by "the right words," he said that his opening was a good example of "using the right words" because it "tells you what the whole beginning is about. It has lots of character. It tells you what it's about." Joey appears to view himself as a writer who uses few words to provide the reader with information needed by readers.

Joey felt most comfortable writing about topics with which he was very familiar, including personal experiences and fantasy or science fiction stories that he had read. He described a story that he would like to write, which would be similar to Brian Jacques' story, "Redwall": "I'd put maybe a castle, swords, weapons. Maybe the time and place would be different. Maybe I would put it in Canada or the US because I'm more used to our language here than other places. I wouldn't use an English accent [because] I don't know it." It appears that Joey heard the dialect of the writer when he read a story. His definition of the writer's voice, thus, appears to be determined by the setting of the story and the writer's and reader's familiarity with that setting, since the two parties in the communication process need to have the sounds of the dialects in their ears in order to hear them when writing or reading the words.

Joey preferred writing on topics of his own choice. He explained, "Writer's workshop is fun, more enjoyable. You can write anything you want." He did not enjoy writing in journals because "with journals you have to write down what happened in the past. You write on a specific person and you're writing about what happened to you on a certain day. It's boring kind of. It's the same thing every day." I observed Joey's reluctance to write in his journal, as he often spent more time than the other grade six students in disengaging his journal from the tangle of books and papers in or under his desk, or in his storage tub at the side of the room. Upon locating the appropriate book, Joey often wrote "Journal" at the top of the page and then talked with a peer in his block, got up from his chair to sharpen his pencil or watched the grade five mathematics

lesson that was in progress. On one occasion, I observed that he whispered under his breath the answers to the math questions that were asked of the grade five students. After these preliminary activities, Joey did write something in his journal. The following excerpt is representative of his journal entries:

March the 2, 1993, Wedensday
this morning I whent
to running and we did
relays and then (--)
did races.
at lunch (--) recess
(--) I played
basketball and football.
when we came in
ruben got beat up by
bobby simpson.
by Joey

(--) denotes words that were written and crossed out

The physical act of writing appeared to interfere with Joey's flow of thoughts, as he labored over the formation of the letters. In addition, his writing was difficult to read, as there were many spaces between words and his letters were scrawled across the page. Joey took pride in the writing he did at the computer and enjoyed sharing the typed products, but he was reluctant to share his journal entries with me, as he was not pleased with the presentation.

Joey's writing behavior while using a pen and paper was similar to that while using a computer in that he spent a great deal of time playing with the tool he was using; doodling with the pen, and changing fonts and print sizes with the computer. Understandably, however, Joey preferred to write using a computer because "these computers are easy to write with. I know almost everything about them." The burden of forming letters was lightened for Joey when he used a word processing program that was familiar to him. Indeed, when Joey was using a pen and paper, he did not choose to edit his writing. The following tanka is one that was written as a class assignment. Joey

wrote this one tanka and chose not to revise it, even though he was aware that it did not follow the rules of tanka writing (e.g., five lines with the following pattern of syllables: 5,7,5,7,7).

Winter

Snow flakes falling on the
cool dark ground at night
the blue-magenta shadows enywhere
can be found. soft wispers
through the cool night
fog, shadows enywhere
can be found.

It appears that writing was much more arduous for Joey when he had to form the letters with a pen and he was not willing to take the effort to rewrite his pieces. In addition, Joey did not appear to be as committed to his writing as he was when he chose the topics and genres for his writing.

In summary, Joey was a writer who had many ideas for stories and preferred to write on topics of his own choice. The action stories he wrote paralleled those of the super-heroes in the books he read and movies he viewed. Joey labored over the physical aspect of writing and spent a great deal of time changing the physical layout of his writing, rather than its content ,when using a computer to write.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Joey felt that good writers "put humor and adventure into their stories so that . . . people like to read them." He placed Ruben, one of the children in this study, and Brian Jacques on his list of writers whose stories exemplify his idea of a good story. Joey enjoyed their stories because they "put it in a funny way" and had "lots of good ideas [so they] are not boring or anything."

Joey's definition of good stories appears to include the consistency of events and details with the context of the story. When he discussed what he liked about Brian Jacques' novel, "Redwall", he said, "It's like in the 16th century where there's castles

and kings and wars; stuff like that. It does take place in the past but it's an animal book. If it was in the future, they would have like electricity, but they don't. They use fire, candles, sunlight." His statement shows an awareness of the need to communicate clearly to readers through making appropriate connections between characters and the setting.

Joey often used the word, "realistic" to describe good stories. He defined "realistic" by giving an example: "Well, my grade one stories would probably be about a frog. This is about people." The character to which he referred is "Ice Man", a comic book character. Though he recognized that super heroes are not real people, Joey felt it was more realistic to write about human-like characters than to write about animals.

The background knowledge and experience of the reader in the topic area of the story also played a part in Joey's definition of a good story. He claimed that J. R. R. Tolkien's books might be boring to some readers because "Tolkien puts a whole bunch of stuff that you can't really understand. You have to be like a teenager to understand it." In contrast, Joey felt that Brian Jacques' books were interesting because "he can make a story so that everybody understands it." It appears that Joey's criteria for good writing included the ease with which readers were able to make sense of what was written. This is consistent with his goals for his own writing, as he attempted to write stories that made sense to his readers.

Joey's definition of good writing also shows that he viewed reading and writing as interconnected activities. He defined writing as a process where individuals "put their ideas on paper so they can keep their ideas. [If you did not write], you'd forget what you were going to say. In Joey's view, it followed that if writing was a means of recording and remembering ideas, then reading would be a means of finding out about the ideas of others. He found writing to be more demanding because "you have to make up the story" whereas when reading, you merely "go over the story," gathering the ideas of others.

Because of the demands of writing, Joey felt that writers would "take a long time" to finish books. However, he did not think that published writers took as long as he did to complete their books and estimated that Brian Jacques likely wrote "Redwal"l in "about a month." It appears that, although Joey viewed himself as an author, he did not associate the struggles he experienced in writing with the efforts of published authors.

When asked what he learned when writing, Joey said that he improved as a speller and that he learned "different ways of writing." He defined "different ways of writing" as "different fonts, different sentences, different ways you write." Joey said that the process of writing also helped him to build his imagination and allowed him to share his ideas with others.

Joey explained that he wrote because "it's one of our subjects." He expected that there would be greater demands placed on him as a writer in junior high school, positing that "we'll probably have to do a lot more writing than what we do right now so we could accomplish more." He went on to say, "We'll probably get marked on our stories, so we'd have to make bigger stories and get it really good." In addition, he anticipated that what he has learned as a writer in elementary school might be helpful when he has to write exams in high school. Joey expected writing to be a more "serious" activity in junior high school, as it would be marked and there would be great demands placed on him to meet his teachers' expectations. In contrast, it appears that Joey viewed writing in elementary schools as a tool that was helpful for enjoyable, albeit less serious reasons, like building his imagination and sharing ideas.

Joey did not foresee that he would be writing when it is no longer a required subject in school. He conceded that writing may be useful "if you're going to be an author or newspaper man or something," but did not intend to take up these vocations.

In the subject areas, Joey viewed a practical use for writing, as it helped him to "get the facts and put down my ideas." He went on to say, "It's the best way how to get

information like facts, normal stuff." The following social studies report, which was an assignment where students selected explorers about which they could write, shows how Joey synthesized those facts he had recorded:

Jauques Cartier
His first voyage was in april 30'th 1534.
in July cartier landed in the gaspe
penincula.
He visited severall large bays on the coast
of newbrunswick. Thinking they
might be the north weast
pesage. Cartier keped a journal in witch he
recorded the things he saw on his voyages.
They found good fishing grounds on the coast
of the atlantic.their chief was was named
Donacona. With thim were two sons , TAIGONY
And DOMAGAYA.
cartier gave the indians gifts like knives, and
glass beads ,and tin rings,and combs.And in
return native people shared their food with the europeans.
They gave the visitors fresh fish. They
showedthem how to cook te dried corn,
fruits,and nuts they had brought with them frome
their village ,Stadacona. Stadacona is the
same place QUEBEC City is today.

It seems, in this report, that Joey had seized on the trading idea and provided many details to develop that idea. In this way, he provided "the facts" for his readers.

In summary, Joey viewed writing as a means for recording ideas to share with readers. In his eyes, the appreciation of the reader is critical in determining "good" writing. Thus, "good" writers are those which satisfy their audience by writing in ways that "make sense" and entertain their readers.

Joey's Mother

Joey's mother is an undergraduate student who is completing a B. Ed with a major in English in the Department of Secondary Education. She met with me in my office at the university following one of her classes.

Joey's Mother as a Writer

Writing had always played a significant role in the life of Joey's mother. In the past few years as a university student she had written many papers to fulfill course requirements. Before becoming a student, her work required that she draft business letters and memos to her staff. Also, at home, she and her two sons wrote notes to each other to communicate the information necessary to keep a busy family going.

When speaking of her childhood, Joey's mother said, "I just loved to sit in my room and shut the door and write in my journal." She had always been an avid reader who "could read just about anything they set in front of [her] before [she] started school." She told a story about the frustration she experienced when her grade one teacher did not recognize that she could read and "had her day planned and everybody moved along with that day." She prefaced the story with these memories: "I could read and everyone else was learning the alphabet. I was really quite bored. I wanted to tell them so badly that I knew how to read and I didn't want to be doing [the alphabet]." She went on to say that when she wrote a story on her desktop, she was punished for writing on the desk and yet no one applauded her writing abilities. She used the word "stifling" to describe her writing experiences in school. However, though Joey's mother found little time to do more than that required for her courses, she continued to enjoy writing in spite of the discouragement and constraints of her formal writing instruction.

Her enjoyment of writing was contingent upon certain factors. Self-expression and an appreciative, non-evaluative audience for the writing were two of those factors. When she was provided the opportunity to write on topics that interested her and for which she had background experience and emotional commitment, she felt a sense of satisfaction in her writing. Joey's mother explained, "There was one paper that I just enjoyed very much. I was excited about it and really pleased with it; all these things I was learning. And you're able to throw in a few of your own thoughts. You look at the

finished product and it's a tremendous feeling when it goes that way." The satisfaction that Joey's mother gained from writing appears to come from the expression of her own voice in her writing.

Whatever the subject matter and purpose for writing, Joey's mother felt that writing is a creation in which writers embedded something of themselves. As such, writing is an expression of the writer. Joey's mother found it satisfying "to actually look at something and touch it and see that you have created it." She enjoyed seeing part of herself in her written creations.

Having an appreciative and non-evaluative audience for her writing was an important factor which contributed to Joey's mother's enjoyment of writing. She said that, "If it's something that I'm writing for myself, I find it very enjoyable and very easy. Writing a letter to a friend or keeping a journal, I find that an interesting thing." As in her childhood, Joey's mother continued to write in a journal, though she said that she did not have the time to write in it on a consistent basis. However, she valued journal writing as a means to "sort things out." Finding the act of creating something to be very satisfying, Joey's mother would have liked to have the time to write stories or plays. She was not confident that anyone else would want to read her writing, but would have enjoyed the opportunity to do some creative writing. She regretted that she had not written narratives since she was a child. Joey's mother felt that critical evaluations of her writing were not necessary in order for her to improve as a writer and looked forward to a time when she could write fiction for herself, or for appreciative audiences who would give her positive feedback on her writing.

When Joey's mother wrote papers for her university classes, she found it "to be a tremendous amount of work and a very slow process." She attributed the difficulties she experienced to the knowledge that someone else would be evaluating her writing and explained, "I find the stress of being evaluated sort of interferes with the writing." Part

of the stress lay in her perception that the purpose for writing the papers was to "evaluate how much you've picked up on what you've read, how well you've been able to analyze it." She viewed university papers as an evaluation of her thinking about a topic and of her ability to express her thoughts using the conventions of writing. Though she had received high marks on her university papers, Joey's mother said that "the anticipated judgment takes away from the enjoyment" of writing.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Joey's mother appreciated the writing of those writers who "capture so many human characteristics," as they "have a sharp eye for human beings." In addition to gaining insight about what it is to be human, Joey's mother liked to be entertained when she read. She enjoyed the humor in Geoffrey Chaucer's writing and the interesting ways in which Margaret Atwood "structures her writing," together with Atwood's "conversational style," which she felt was readily accessible to most readers. Joey's mother found that the best writers expressed their ideas in ways that were easy to read and were not clumsy or contrived in any way. She mused that the ease with which published writers use language disguised the hard work that goes into the writing process.

Because of her great enjoyment in reading the written expressions of writers' thoughts, Joey's mother hoped that writing would never diminish in importance as a form of communication. She conceded that telecommunication technology has eroded the need to write in the business world, but felt that writing would always play a role in the work world. Thus, Joey's mother valued writing as a vehicle for communicating needs, for learning, and for enjoying the insights of others.

Joey's mother asserted that she learned through reading others' written thoughts. However, she also felt the writing process, itself, was a tool for learning. She described

her own experiences in this way: "I find that when I write, it's a really different thought process than if I were to just sit and think about something. The things [that you write] have been quite processed to get there. You can't write about something you really don't understand or have not thought about." When writing, she made connections between ideas in order to understand them better. In addition, the organization of thoughts and feelings while writing helped her to form new connections so that she learned something new when she wrote. As a process which highlights connections between ideas and thoughts, writing was viewed by Joey's mother as a learning tool and as a vehicle for communicating thoughts and feelings.

Views of Her Son As a Writer

Joey's mother wished that Joey shared the joy she had experienced through reading and writing when she was a child. She explained that "it's not his favorite pastime. He has probably written a few letters but he doesn't spend lots of time writing." She described an occasion where Joey and his brother wrote a book together at home. She was certain that, though the boys initiated the project on their own, it was "school-inspired because they've never done a lot of story writing."

She had observed that Joey found writing to be an arduous activity because of the difficulty he had with fine motor coordination and with focusing on a task for lengthy periods of time. As a result, he was not a prolific writer and tried to finish written tasks quickly in order to move on to less onerous tasks. She explained, "He is not a joyful writer." However, she also observed that "he thinks he's a pretty good little writer." Joey's mother attributed his positive feelings about himself as a writer to the encouragement that he received at school and at home. She cited many examples where Joey had published his writing or had been asked to read his writing to another class. She felt that these experiences greatly contributed to his feelings of success as a writer.

Joey's mother had read many of his stories. She described Joey's stories as "very creative. [They are] about things he likes, like super-heroes and monsters and bugs." She observed that Joey enjoyed entertaining his audience and appreciated her laughter at the humorous parts of his stories.

Views on Writing Instruction

Believing that the personal qualities of writers are embedded within their writing, Joey's mother felt that the goal of writing instruction should be to make children feel good about themselves as writers. She focused on the role of evaluation of children's writing in encouraging positive attitudes toward writing and in improving their writing. Citing instances from her past where she experienced "a real heartbreak when you've worked on something, handed it in and then there's all these red lines and negative comments," Joey's mother advocated positive feedback, rather than criticism as a means of encouraging improvement in children's writing. Indeed, she attributed any lack of success in writing experienced by university students to "too much negative feedback. They don't enjoy writing and believe they can't do it."

She observed that Joey felt "happy about learning" and attributed his satisfaction to the positive comments he received in response to his writing. She felt that "if he had been severely judged, he might have stopped trying." She added that Joey felt successful as a writer because his teachers "make a bit of a fuss about [his writing] and really encourage him." Lamenting the "stifling of curiosity" that characterized her writing instruction, Joey's mother was happy to see that he was provided many opportunities "to come up with [his] own ideas" as he was "actively engaged in the process" of writing. Though she accepted that all writers need to learn the conventions of writing, she did not want drills on specific conventions to "take all the fun out of [the writing process]." Instead, Joey's mother supported writing instruction that employs a variety of

strategies to improve children's writing. Though she claimed to have limited knowledge of the actual strategies used by Joey's teachers, she was pleased with Joey's progress as a writer and with the writing instruction he was receiving.

In summary, Joey's mother viewed writing as a means of expressing oneself and of discovering more about one's world. As a result, she felt that the focus of writing instruction should be on enhancing children's views of themselves as writers so that they were confident in expressing themselves in their writing.

Shelbi

Getting to Know Shelbi

Shelbi is the eldest of three girls. She enjoyed many interests, including playing the piano, reading and horse riding. A large part of Shelbi's life involved riding and jumping horses. Her two younger sisters were horse riders and her mother wholeheartedly supported Shelbi's interest. Shelbi's enthusiasm for horse riding spilled over into her writing and reading, as the characters in most of the stories she read and wrote were horses.

Shelbi was an avid, self-motivated writer who initiated writing projects at home and at school because she enjoyed playing with language. Indeed, her mother explained that "if you give Shelbi homework, she'll just walk in the house, drop her backpack and she does it." Her youngest sister shared Shelbi's confidence in her reading and writing abilities, while her middle sister experienced difficulties with reading and writing. Shelbi corresponded with one of her uncles, who read the stories she had written and sent her those that he had written. This uncle's son was a published writer who encouraged Shelbi in her writing. Her mother related how Shelbi had always enjoyed "creating things, whether it was with words or just pictures, or with wool and, . . . she'd always tell you a story about it." Dramatic play with her youngest sister involved being

"somebody else in a different world." At a younger age, Shelbi and her friends also created their own "Snee" language. Using her imagination to create had always been a part of Shelbi's life.

As a reader, Shelbi had "three or four books on the go." She would "pick up which one she wanted" and was "able to maintain story lines and characters without losing track of who's in what book or where she was."

She had been writing since she attended play school at the age of four. Shelbi remembered many occasions where she stapled paper together to make books and asked her mother to write the stories she dictated, as a part of her play. Later, she would read the stories to her parents, and as her mother explained, "It wasn't always the same story because her imagination would take over. She'd add little bits and then she'd add pictures. Shelbi's mother shared an incident where a very young Shelbi, having observed her father engaged in writing his doctoral dissertation, "sat down and she wrote out, and it wasn't writing, it was just scribbles, and then she came up to my husband and said, 'You know, I just finished my thesis, and it only took me two hours, and here you've been doing it for three years!'"

When asked how she learned to write, Shelbi was specific in describing the process carried out in her early years of school, as she said, "First we learned our A, B, C's and then we learned what they looked like on paper and then we learned what they all sounded like and then we learned how to put them into little words like 'a', 'it', you know, things like that. And then learned how to put them into sentences and all this time we learned how to read them. And then we learned how to expand our sentences and then we just kept practicing from there." Though Shelbi did not recognize the contribution of her preschool reading to her writing abilities, her mother described how Shelbi had enjoyed reading since her infancy. She said, "We even have pictures of her reading to her little sisters when they were just babies sitting on the couch."

School has been a comfortable, inviting environment for Shelbi since the day she entered its doors. Her mother explained that though Shelbi "was a little one who wouldn't be left anywhere . . . she literally walked into the classroom [in the playschool at the age of four] and turned to me and said, 'You can go.' And that was it." Successful in all subject areas, Shelbi enjoyed school work and set high standards for herself in both the arts and the sciences. Her teacher had recommended her to attend a conference at the city's university for girls interested in the sciences.

Having set goals for herself, Shelbi had been striving to improve her spelling and "to learn to do more on the computer." To that end, I observed her tenacity in exploring the possible uses of Hypercard to fulfill a class assignment in social studies. She labelled the process "fooling around" and said she had made a "fool-around file." In many respects, it seems that Shelbi took a playful view of learning and did not find it at all boring or arduous.

Of the four students in this study, Shelbi was the only one who chose to attend a presentation by a published author during a two-day career information session. Though her interest in animals had led to ambitions to pursue a career as a veterinarian, Shelbi felt that she would continue writing fiction throughout her life because she found writing to be very entertaining.

Shelbi as a Writer

As an autonomous writer, Shelbi enjoyed the freedom provided in her writing class to write on topics of her choice and to use her imagination. She declared, "I enjoy being able to think up what I write and change it and not have any guidelines. She explained her preference for writing fictional narrative over other genres by pointing out that when writing informational pieces and journal entries, "you can't really use your imagination at all because you're just writing what happened." However, she wrote in a

relaxed, conversational manner in her journal and rarely engaged in a stark retelling of the day's events, though one of her journal entries was prefaced with the regret, "I have found that every time I try to relate my whole day I get interuped, and I belive I will be again today because I have a dentist appointment and my mom is coming to pick me up this aftrnoon."

Shelbi was proud of her writing and enjoyed sharing it with individuals outside the classroom, including her riding instructor. In addition, she had published a piece in the children's magazine, *Magpie*. Having taken this first step as a published writer, Shelbi had aspirations to publish her writing for a wider audience in the future.

She differentiated between writing at home and writing at school by saying, "When I write at home, I just write because I want to. When I write at school, I write because I have to. It's one of the subject areas. I enjoy writing and I'm sure that if I was allowed to do whatever I wanted at school, I would do some writing, but well, I write because I enjoy it and because I have to." She went on to state that "it kind of depends what mood I'm in. If I feel like writing, then I'd write all day if I could. But, . . . if I'm extremely hyper (which happens sometimes), then I'd rather go to gym." It seems that having the autonomy to determine when to write was an important condition which enabled Shelbi to write.

Shelbi preferred to write when she was alone and had no distractions. However, because of the many other interests in her life, Shelbi thought the ideal location and time for writing would be "at a huge horse barn in the city where [there is] a whole bunch of horse shows . . . I'd like to [write] in the morning [and in the afternoons go] horse riding. And then I could take care of all my horses." In addition, recognizing the ease with which she could compose and edit ideas at the computer, she stated emphatically, "I definitely would have a computer [to write]."

When asked about the source of her ideas for writing, Shelbi replied, "I have a lot of ideas and I get ideas from different places and I just kind of think, well, that would make a good story. And it's sort of like a story I would like to read myself and so I don't like forgetting my ideas, so I write them down. 'Cause it's easier to have an idea if it's there for you than if you just have to keep going through it in your mind." It seems that Shelbi found writing to be a process which helped her to organize and make visible the multitude of ideas in her head. Once her ideas were on the page, it was easier for her to think about and make sense of them.

She was a voracious reader who had read a variety of genres. Her favorite books were written by Walter Farley, an author of stories where horses are the protagonists. Shelbi claimed that many of her ideas were drawn from the books she read. She explained the origin of the story she had been working on throughout the school year in this way: "A little bit [is] from *Black Beauty* 'cause it's told by the horse's point of view. I've read that one a couple of times. And I got the idea for the mystery part from a series of books that I was reading. They're about race horses and there's like murders and people and more people who kill more people and they get richer and then they lose their money and then they get killed . . ." Shelbi's rich store of ideas for writing appears to have as its source the literature she had read. Here is an excerpt of the 50-page and still-growing story:

ZULU

FORWARD: This story will be told in the eyes of a horse. From the day of his birth to the day he makes Olympic history. All his training and basic experences until he is retired at the age of seven because of a bowed tendon.

ZULU

Then I saw her. She was massive, at least it seemed that way to me. Tall and sleek and black. I shut my eyes again until I felt soft breath on my back. She woofed softly and only then did I realize that she was my mother and ment no harm. I opened my eyes again and squinted as the light hit them. The interior of the large foaling stall was dimly lit and quiet.The walls were made of dark, rough wood and a light rope hung across the

doorway. This was all so knew to me that I lay my head down and let my mother lick my touseled coat.

I woke again some half an hour later. My stomach hurt, my mouth was dry. I glanced at my long thin legs and then at my mother standing near by, who nickered her encouragement. I put one leg out in front of me and balanced it on the straw, then the next. With beoth legs up I shook my head and pushed my hind end up. I stood on all four wirey legs for a fleeting second and then everything was a blur, the stall swirled around me and all was still. I opened my eyes and tried again. One, two, three, four. There I stood in the centre of the stall. I tried to lift a foot, nope down I went; Again I stood, lifted that stubborn leg and then planted it right in front of me. I gazed around, the stall looked the same, down at my leg strechedout in front of me and black from the knee down the rest brown. Long ever so long. I turned my head and nickered at my mother standing near by. She awnseredproudly and nuzzled my face.

Exhausted by the effort to stand I sank down in the soft straw and slept. A day passed I was able to stand, walk and even run a little. Then a strange thing happened. I was resting when I heard a soft thumping, rather like the sound my mother made but much lighter. Two "things" appeared at the door of the stall. They were smaller then my mother, I keep using her as an example only because she is the only thing I have ever seen, and had two legs and two arms, a straight body and a round head not to mention a short neck. I went to my mother but she had gone over to the things and they were petting and feeding her, they seemed harmless enough. I was confused for I had never seen the world outside of the stall or the creatures that lived in it. They came over to me talking in soft mumbling sounds that I couldn't understand. I backed into the corner of the stall and watched as they brought out a small harness. The creature reached out a hand and stroked my neck.

"He's a big one Alana, are ya still sure you want 'im?" One asked, odviously refering to me.

"Yes, the bigger they are the higher they jump."

The story from which this excerpt is taken was one of Shelbi's favorites. She felt that it "made sense" and was interesting because it was written descriptively. She explained,

> I like really describing stuff 'cause I know a lot of words and I like to use them 'cause, I mean, I can see these things in my head and I want the person who is reading to see them just as well as I can. I mean, I don't have to write to myself to show them, just think of it. But other people can't think exactly what I'm thinking, so I have to show them with something.

The "forword" to this story outlines the plot which Shelbi had planned. She expected to end the story when the horse "retired at the age of seven because of a bowed

tendon." However, in spite of her planning, Shelbi found it difficult to bring the story to an end. She expressed her difficulties in ending stories in the following way:

> If you have a good idea that can change, you could keep it going forever. Like, about the horse, he could live 'til he died but he had a son. And then you could do the whole life of the son who followed in his footsteps and then that son could have a daughter and the daughter was a bad horse and you could give all the accounts of her, but she was a good mare and had lots of foals and just on and on.

It seems that Shelbi could not rein-in her ideas, as they continually built upon themselves and lengthened her story. Though she believed that, "a story is really an idea put down, so when your idea ends, the story should end," her dilemma lay in keeping the idea intact, since it changed and expanded as she was writing. One of Shelbi's fears as a writer was that her story would grow too long and become boring for herself and her readers. Toward the end of my visit in the classroom, she decided to defer the problem of ending this story by writing, "To be continued" and then starting a sequel to the story.

Finishing stories was not a problem last year for Shelbi because "all the writing that we did ended up being an assignment. We had to finish it or we would get a zero and if we got three zeros, then we had to stay for a few minutes after school . . . I got everything done and that was good because that's the only year that I've finished everything." Without the deadlines, Shelbi worked on one story throughout the year in grade six, striving to impose her own pressures on herself to draw the story to a close.

Shelbi felt that "writing a story just on the computer is pretty easy, but if you have to write a longer story out by hand and you don't have any ideas, then it's hard." Of all the students in her class, Shelbi was the one who began writing the moment she sat down in front of the computer. Usually seated with the other grade six girl at one computer table during writing classes (the grade six boys were seated at the other two tables), Shelbi was preoccupied with her writing and responded reluctantly to invitations from her peers to join in their conversation. She conceded that others might

find writing difficult, but stated that "it doesn't need to be." Shelbi was aware that others struggled with writing, but she, herself, was a confident writer for whom the ideas flowed when she sat at the computer. Indeed, she found that "it's easier to find ideas now because when I'm in grade six, you learn more and then you know more, so then you can write about more things." Because writing was becoming easier and it "didn't take [her] as long [to write her stories]," Shelbi felt that she was becoming a better writer.

In summary, Shelbi was an autonomous, confident writer who thrived on the freedom to create stories which drew on the vast store of experience and ideas gained through extensive reading and exploring a variety of interests.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Defining authors as "people that write," Shelbi declared herself an author. When comparing and contrasting her writing processes to those of published authors, she indicated that the most significant difference was the audience for their writing, in that published authors "get paid to write,. . . [so] if they're going to publish their book, they have to use appropriate language and they have to kind of fit in with what the demand is." In contrast, though she hoped that others would enjoy her writing, Shelbi claimed that, for the most part, she wrote to please herself. However, because she intended to publish her story and make it available for the class to read, she attempted "to please as many people as possible [in order to] have as many people as possible enjoying it." She invited "creative criticism" because "if [her readers] didn't say what they didn't like, then [she] wouldn't know what to fix and it wouldn't be as good as it could be." Thus, Shelbi welcomed others' opinions of her writing and was anxious to find out whether I considered her story boring or not. She was concerned that the length might make the story tedious to read and consciously guarded against "going on and on about one thing because then it gets really boring."

When describing the processes of writers, Shelbi described the process that she carried out. She identified certain considerations which authors publishing for a wider audience would have by saying, "They have to kind of fit in with what the demand is. So, if a lot of mystery novels are selling and hardly any romances, which I think is probably the way it should be, then I think they'd have to change." In contrast, because she was publishing for a classroom audience, she felt greater freedom in writing to please herself because "nobody will care because I'm not writing to publish it."

Shelbi defined "good" writing in terms of the views of the audience for the piece of writing. Thus, in her view, published writing was "good" writing because someone had to enjoy it in order for the writing to be published. When asked to talk about "good" writing, she addressed specific features of fiction to describe a book that she had borrowed recently from her mother: "I like the way it ended. It was really freaky. [The author] develops the characters really well. She creates a really good mood. If you have an imagination (which everybody does), she makes it really easy to picture what's going on. " The importance of providing details which help readers to create visual images was one of Shelbi's concerns as a writer and one of her criteria for judging the effectiveness of other authors' work.

She compared reading and writing in the following manner: "You know how when you read a really good book, you kind of get into it? It's the same when you're writing the story except you get to make up the story and it gets to do whatever you want and however you want it. If you're in an exciting part of your story, it's really exciting to write." It appears that the two processes are similar, in Shelbi's eyes, with both the reader and writer being actively involved in the story.

Shelbi described writing as a process where ideas evolve and are shaped while writing. She explained, "As I write, it comes. So I have the idea, I write it and as I see it, it kind of comes." She elaborated on this notion of writing-as-thinking by positing

that the recursive writing process in which she engaged was "kind of like organizing ideas." She felt that the process of organizing ideas when writing an informational piece "makes you remember. You have to think about it so much that you remember it." In the following research report, which was assigned as a social studies project, Shelbi shows how she used the writing process to learn, integrating her own background knowledge and experience with the information gathered through her reading.

Report on Samuel de Champlain

Samuel de Champlain was a french explorer. He was also a mapmaker. Champlain was one of the frist people to set up trading posts and settlements in Canada. Champlain wrote about the native people he me throughout his voyages. He explored around the St. Lawrence river.

Samuel de Champlain made his first exploritory trip to Canada in 1603. He traveled with people who were planing to set up a new furtrading post. Just as Jack Cartier had done Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence but decided not to stay there. Instead he sailed back up to the Atlantic coast and built a settlement called Port Royal near the Bay of Fundy.

Samuel de Champlain explored the coast but became more interested i the St. Lawrence. In the year 1608 he again sailed down the river. He found a place along the river sheltered by cliffs and set up a furtrading post. He called this place Quebec because of the native name Kebec (where the river narrows). There was a lot of good soil near by and a good supply of furs. These were needed to pay for the settlement and some of Champlains many explorations. Samuel de Champlain made friends with the Algonquin and Montagnias peoples, he wanted their help to transport furs to the trading post. They said they would help only if he helped them fight their enemies the Iroquois.

Champlain was looking for the Northwest Passage. He founded Lake Champlain and in 1615 he came to lake Huron and Lake Ontario. He was disappointed that he didn't find what he was looking for.

There are many hardships that he might have had to deal with such as: The river freezing over, there being no animal there for no furs and the land being deserted. He could have run into ice burgs or got lost in a storm. There are many other things that could have happened.

When asked about the purpose for writing informational reports such as this one, Shelbi replied, "some people, I won't mention any names, are very good at sitting and listening and forgetting . . . You get all this information packed in your head and then you forget it all." She talked about writing as a process where she used information, rather than simply "pack[ing] it in [her] head." Consequently, Shelbi viewed writing as a

thinking process. She explained, "It's very easy to take the information, say it says, 'Samuel de Champlain sailed around Australia three times.' And you could just say, 'The French explorer, Samuel de Champlain sailed around the continent of Australia between two and four times.' You're not really writing it, you're just changing what the book says." Thus, to Shelbi, writing is more than the physical act of forming characters on the page. Instead, it is a process which facilitates her thinking and the organization of her ideas.

In summary, Shelbi identified with published writers in all respects except that they wrote for a wider audience. She defined "good" writing in terms of the specific characteristics which draw her interest in stories that she reads. The writing process is a thinking process in Shelbi's view. She feels that she learns more about her topic and what she wants to say through writing.

Shelbi's Mother

Shelbi's mother is a physiotherapist. She agreed to meet with me at the school just before the end of the school day so that she could pick up her three girls and bring them home following the interview.

Shelbi's Mother as a Writer

Communicating information about her patients in progress notes and writing letters to friends and family members were the primary uses of writing in Shelbi's mother's adult life. Writing was a larger part of her husband's life because of the demands of his work as a university professor.

Though Shelbi's mother did not remember seeing her parents engaged in reading or writing when she was a child, she and one of her sisters had always been confident and avid readers and writers. Like Shelbi, she had "just enjoy[ed] school right from the

very beginning and it wasn't a lot of work for [her]. [She] could do okay with a little effort." She explained that English was a subject in which she had excelled in school. However, when writing poetry, her favorite genre, Shelbi's mother did not appreciate having an imposed structure. She preferred to "just sit down and write a poem" and gave an example from her high school English class where she was asked to write a sonnet. While she had always found writing to be easy and enjoyable, working within the sonnet's structure did not allow her to let the words flow. As a confident writer, Shelbi's mother found that "if I just let myself write, then it is fun."

Understandings of Writing and Writers

In Shelbi's mother's view, writing is a means for communicating information about the world and about oneself. Indeed, she appears to feel that self-expression is an inherent aspect of written communication and gave an example using newspapers. In newspapers, she explained, "you can always pick up the underlying views of the person who writes them, even if it's an article that shows the pros and cons. You can always tell where a person stands because the emotion comes through." For this reason, Shelbi's mother felt that writing will always play an important role in our lives.

Good writers, in Shelbi's mother's opinion, "can carry you right from the beginning and just keep the story going." Citing Dick Frances' mystery books as ones which currently interested her, she explained that one of the characteristics of his books which she enjoyed was the "ending that you don't expect." Shelbi's mother found that books were boring when she "figured out right from the beginning" what would happen. It seems that her views on good writing focused on the writer's ability to entertain his/her readers.

Views of Her Daughter as a Writer

Shelbi's mother had collected Shelbi's writing samples since her preschool years. She had observed Shelbi's writing behavior at their home computer and provided feedback on her writing. She explained that Shelbi "really likes me to read [her writing] but she doesn't like me to change it. So she doesn't really ask for a lot of input. It's more, 'Is this okay?'" Recognizing that Shelbi had "her own focus and direction" and that "it's going to be HER story, not my story," the form of feedback that Shelbi's mother usually provided was encouragement.

Shelbi's mother laughed as she described the changes in Shelbi's writing over the years. She said, "they have changed from being sort of beginning, middle, end all-on-one-page kind of stories to these ones that have no ending because they go on forever." Shelbi has not always experienced frustration in finishing stories. When she was younger, Shelbi "would just sit down and write a story and it would be very simple." As an older writer with a vast store of ideas from her lived and literary experience, Shelbi's imagination carried her off in many directions and she had "trouble bringing herself back to a much more narrow outline." Shelbi's mother observed that Shelbi "makes them so detailed and wants to bring in so many characters and so many different points of view that it becomes a bit frustrating for her." Shelbi's mother explained that Shelbi had a 60-page, unfinished story at home that she had abandoned because she grew tired of it. She expressed her hope that Shelbi would follow the outline she had made for her " Zulu" story and draw it to an end, since she felt "it would be nice to see something finished."

To assist Shelbi in her writing, her mother did not feel that Shelbi needed "a lot of structure," but rather, she felt that "more emphasis on writing an outline and sticking to it so that when [she starts] a story, she can see it develop, know where the boundaries are, where she should hold things in a little bit and then finish it." Shelbi's mother

posited that, though Shelbi might not appreciate having deadlines set for her writing, it could be helpful in encouraging her to finish her story.

Shelbi's mother viewed her daughter as an "imaginative and verbose" writer who would probably continue to write in her adult life because of the great pleasure she found in writing. Indeed, as long as she can remember, Shelbi has enjoyed writing. For years, she had heard her daughter express a desire to write a series of children's books about horses. Because Shelbi was such a self-motivated writer, her mother felt confident that she would carry out her wish.

Shelbi's mother cautioned that Shelbi's interest in writing lay in the freedom to "let her imagination take over" and to live "in a whole different world." As an autonomous writer who did not appreciate a great number of limitations or suggestions from others, Shelbi experienced difficulty in her grade five class because of the deadlines and structures that were imposed on her writing. Her mother explained, "She's never had trouble before and the fact that she struggled a little bit last year was foreign to all of us. She did well, but it was more of a fight to get her to do what needed to be done."

Shelbi's mother noted that Shelbi "tends to focus always on the same theme. It's either going to be an imaginary world, which she really likes, or horses." Shelbi's mother chuckled as she related an experience where Shelbi's teachers had encouraged Shelbi to write on a topic other than horses because she had dwelt on the topic for a lengthy period of time. Because Shelbi wanted to become a veterinarian, she "chose to study what it would take to become a vet. And of course the vet she had to follow was a horse vet, so she got her horses in there, anyhow." She explained that Shelbi drew from a vast store of experience with and knowledge about horses when she wrote because she read "every horse book that comes out, whether it's an encylopedia on horses or it's a story about the black stallion" and spent about 18 hours a week with her horse. Shelbi's

mother attributed Shelbi's penchant for writing fantasy stories to her reading interests, since many of the books she read were of the fantasy genre.

Views on Writing Instruction

Shelbi's mother advocated a writing program where the interests and needs of individuals were accommodated. She explained, "I don't think we can take a global writing program and make it fit everybody, because it won't. Some kids will be better independent, others will need a lot more structure. It's partly just their thought processes."

For students who were experiencing difficulty, she recommended "giving them more focus," and for students like Shelbi, who were more independent, she felt that "coming around in the back door and saying, 'How about this, this and this?'" would be more efficacious in improving their writing.

When talking about assessment strategies, Shelbi's mother indicated an interest in having information about her children's perspectives on their learning, together with descriptions of how they were performing at school tasks. She explained that this information would be helpful in understanding many of the influences on her children's behavior.

Shelbi's mother thought that the writing instruction provided in the school had been very effective in encouraging Shelbi's growth as a writer. She thought it was important that teachers provided feedback on students' drafts, so that the students were continuously working to improve their writing. As well, she valued the opportunities for students to work with published authors at certain times during the year.

The goal of writing instruction, in Shelbi's mother's mind, should be to "encourage children just to express themselves." She felt that an emphasis on the correct use of writing conventions should be balanced with an emphasis on self-expression because

"your work doesn't really tell you anything" if readers are not able to decipher the words. Because the communication of the individual's ideas was the most significant aspect of writing, she thought it was important to consider spelling, grammar and sentence structure "if something was going to be posted outside." However, she explained, "if a child has a zillion spelling mistakes, I prefer to see half of them corrected, rather than a zillion of them corrected because that's hard for [the children]." Shelbi's mother felt that the use of computers in writing classrooms facilitated the students' editing of their writing. She also applauded the teachers in her children's school for providing positive feedback to students, so they would be encouraged to express their ideas.

In summary, Shelbi's mother felt that writing instruction should focus on the needs of individual children in order to encourage all children to express their ideas effectively.

Adam

Getting to Know Adam

When asked to find a partner for a group project, the boys in Adam's class looked first to Adam. Adam was the one most likely to initiate a conversation with girls in his class. With his easy-going, fun-loving nature, Adam appeared comfortable in any social situation within the classroom. He had readily assumed a leadership role as one of the class representatives on student council. As the captain of the school's safety patrol team, he had been nominated to travel to Ottawa for a week-long conference recognizing outstanding students who had worked on their school's safety patrol. The goals that Adam set for himself at the beginning of the school year reflected the value he placed on social relationships, as they included "mak[ing] friends with others in school [and] do[ing] well on my patrol test." His academic goal was to "improve my division."

Adam is the youngest child in a family of eight. Four of his siblings are of school age and living with their parents. Adam visited the home of one of his older brothers over the Christmas vacation and returned with a desire to pursue a career as a lawyer, the vocation of his brother. He recognized that writing would play a part in his law career, but did not feel that writing would assume a role in any other aspect of his life. When Adam was assigned writing tasks to complete at home, he fulfilled the expectations. However, he did not initiate writing projects at home. Instead, Adam described how typical days were spent with friends outside playing baseball or hide-and-seek, with some time spent inside playing Nintendo.

Adam's love of stories was evident in the variety and numbers of books that he had read. His favorite genre was fantasy. The Brian Jacques' "Redwall" series, which was introduced to him when his grade six teacher's husband began reading it to the class, was the subject of many conversations between Adam and his friends during writing time. While listening to this story, Adam responded overtly on many occasions. One incident in the "Redwall" story amused him enough to send him sprawling out of his chair with laughter. The stories he had read and the movies he had viewed became the starting points for much of his writing. He loved to tell these stories to his peers and often the questions I asked him during the course of this research study were answered with, "You know the movie about . . ." as an introduction to his retellings from these movies and stories.

Adam's mother said that he has always enjoyed reading and having stories read to him. As a preschool child, he asked his mother to write captions for pictures he had drawn. However, she felt that he really started writing when he was at school and had learned "how to print and knew how to spell."

Adam as a Writer

When asked about his writing style, Adam described himself as a writer who included "talking and describing and then talking" in his stories. He explained that his stories often began with dialogue and then included a part "where there's many descriptive words and it's saying all the stuff about the people and how they were travelling through all this place and then I go back to talking, so my whole story isn't just talking." He provided the following story as an example of this "style" of writing:

> The [his family name] Family
>
> "Timmy, stop that," Lisa sheaked running up to the bathroom and slamming it on Timmy's face.
>
> The bathroom is the only place where you can lock the door in the [Adam's family name] house-hold, except for the study which is down in the basement. Timmy was smacking Lisa on the rear with a wet wash cloth, and by now Lindsays butt is as read as a Chili Pepper.
>
> Timmy snuck away behind the door in the laundry room while Lisa unlocked the door and slowly opened it. She steped onto the hallway rug with her hands up and ready for action. Timmy snuck up behind her, and Lisa stopped to listen.
>
> A snap of a wet cloth rang through the gigantic house.
>
> "Aughhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh," Lisa yelled in anguish as the cloth streaked across her rear end.
>
> The sound of foot steps came down the stairs while Lisa, and Timmy stood up straight.
>
> "I know I heard soemthing dow here, so whats the problem," Mrs. [family name] said in a quiet voice looking at the two trouble makers.
>
> Before Tommy could say anything Lindsay said aloud, " Timmy is smacking me on the butt with a wet cloth."
>
> " Well, she was throwing water at me in the kitchen."
>
> Down the hallway I was giggling while watching the action.
>
> Timmy ran down the hallway to smack me but Mrs. [family name] stopped him and told him and Lisa to go and do something instead of laughing at everything I see. I went to sit in front of the tube while Lisa and timmy went to their rooms to study for their tests the next day.

This excerpt from his story shows Adam's relaxed style of writing, which is very similar to the easy flow of conversation in which he engaged with both adults and his peers.

Adam felt that by reading stories by published authors, he was improving as a writer. He claimed that when he was reading Brian Jacques' novels, he "was actually

writing better. He explained that this was because "I had his writing in my head." As a result, Adam's stories were very similar to those of Brian Jacques. In the following excerpt from Adam's story, there are many shades of Brian Jacques' stories. The plot is similar, in that a group of malcontents attempts to take over the home of a peaceful group. In addition, the dialogue between the characters in Adam's story is similar to that between the villains in Brian Jacques' stories.

Invasion
From The
Planet
ZORKON

PROLOGUE

The morning dew dripped off the winter icicles, snow diamonds fludered in the air on the planet Zorkon. The zorkons have been at war with earth for many years until pollution on Zorkon planet had started to shrivel up and die. They found a planet to dump it on. Now the war was over and the zorkons had won and taken over the planet. Army recruits are sent to the planet every moon to take a ton of garbage down to the planet earth, and only one team can save the earth from terrible destruction, are Zorkbusters!. The Zorkbusters were once zorks but now that the they have taken over the planet earth they vowed to protect the humans. They are armed with lasers, gas masks, and shoes the only thing that can harm a zorkon. The Zorkbusters live on the planet Marsbar. The planet Marsbar is hot, cold, and chewable. The Zorkbusters are the only things that can survive on Marsbar, of course, their are anteaters.

CHAPTER 1

The morning sun beam bounced off the sparkling crystals on the army base of Zorkon while the mid afternoon sun broke threw the sheddered Ozone layer on the filthy garbage laying on what used to be earth. Earth was going threw a big crisis while the Zorkons sat on their rear ends drinking lemonade. School kids were learning how to launch garbage, and use pollution guns.

"Butterfingers, how could you be so stupid", a voice said in a loud shreek that could almost be heard all around the planet Marsbar, the voice was smack he always took a bite out of the planet that is why he has the name smack because he keeps on smacking away.

"I can't help it smack, every thing keeps slipping".

"Now I know why they named him Butterfingers because he's such a goof-up", said Zack the smartest and the leader of the Zorkbusters.

The Zorkbusters are a team made up of klutzes, fat heads, and brains. These three hated the pollution on the their planet but they though it was bad to just go and find a planet with living creatures or just any planet and just dump it all on it.

This story began as an assigned narrative fiction which was to be handwritten and completed within a one-hour time frame. The assignment was used as a diagnostic tool and as preparation for an upcoming provincial achievement test. Adam explained; "I continued [the assigned story] on the computer because we didn't have time. It turned out that my fiction in here is only the prologue for the story." Adam appeared to find it difficult to write within a designated time frame and expressed his appreciation of the freedom from deadlines that was provided in writers' workshop.

Another way in which Adam hoped to improve as a writer was to receive specific feedback from his peers during authors' groups with his peers and his teacher. He explained that he wanted his peers "to say what parts they like about it and not just say,'I like it' . . . what was good about that part, or if they didn't like a part, I'd have to fix it up. I like them to tell me what's wrong." It appears that Adam placed great faith in his peers' and teacher's abilities to discern the needed changes in his stories. He viewed his writing as something that could be right or wrong, as a response to a test question might be.

Adam was always willing to talk with me about his writing. He had many ideas for stories and showed great enthusiasm when starting to write a story. However, often plagued by "writer's block", Adam found it difficult to follow through on them and was often looking for a diversion. Adam described ways in which he had tried to get past the block, including "writ[ing] out the ingredients for writer's block". Though he "really like[d] writing", Adam "was not really into it." He explained, "If I work on it too much, I get bored and so I just leave the story and then I never get around to it again." As a result, his file held many openings for stories. He did complete the two stories included in this study, but they did not meet the length requirements for published stories in this class, so he had not published any stories by the end of April in this school year. In the past, however, Adam had published a number of stories.

To assist Adam in following through on his ideas, his teachers have provided suggestions for using webs or for jotting down ideas to plan his writing. Adam explained that he found these planning procedures "took up most of [his] time, so [he] just think[s] about it in [his] mind instead of writing it all down." He stated that he usually did not know how his stories would end when he started them and expressed frustration that he could "never get [his ideas] down on paper 'cause they never turn out right." It appears that Adam compared the literature that he read with the stories which he was writing and was rarely satisfied with his efforts. This may have been one reason for his inablity to complete stories this year.

Adam found that his most successful stories were [illegible] which drew fairly heavily from literature that he had read. Though he was [illegible] from deadlines in writers' workshop, he struggled with the freedom [illegible] because he found it difficult to "get on the computer and start writing." In addition, Adam stated that he did not enjoy journal writing because he had nothing to say. It appears that Adam needed more of a focus for his ideas in order to carry through with them. Adam spoke with pride about a story he had written with a peer in the previous year. As part of a unit on ancient Greece, he had been asked to write an "[illegible]" myth that was based on Greek myths. Indeed, Adam claimed that he "started really writing stories" in grade four when he began working with Ed, the teacher who often provided assignments of this nature.

Adam spoke enthusiastically about all that he had learned through Ed's writing instruction, saying, "I think I learned everything from him. He was really big into writing. He had pictures all about writing, about similes and metaphors and all that. And we learned how to do similes and metaphors in our stories, how to do description." Adam stated that he also learned a lot when his teacher sent home a tape with his comments about Adam's stories. He explained that "my parents would go through them

with me and we talked about the story and my mom would talk about my spelling and all that."

Adam's teachers were not the only individuals who helped him to become a better writer. Adam claimed that, through reading the writing of Brian Jacques, he learned "about what the personalities of a character should be like [and] how to make [his] characters come alive." In addition, Adam felt that one of his peers "taught [him] how to start off a story good." Adam felt that he had become a better writer because the stories he was writing in grade six were about many imaginative topics, while the writing he did in his early school years were strings of events based on patterns provided by his teachers.

As an author, Adam hoped that his readers would "want to have an adventure like the one in the story" that he had written. He described this vicarious experiencing of the story's adventures as "getting into the story", something that he did when reading stories. He felt it was important to achieve his audience's expectations for all the writing he did. When thinking about the audience for his writing, Adam appeared to determine how he wanted his readers to respond and then attempted to draw that response through the tone and details of his writing.

When Adam read his stories to me, he often corrected spelling errors that he encountered. The correction of spelling errors and the inclusion of words that were missed were his purposes for rereading his work. When using a pen to write a piece of narrative fiction for diagnostic assessment purposes, Adam used a great amount of white-out to correct spelling errors, and to change words.

Though Adam felt that interacting with his peers helped him in his writing, he did not enjoy sharing his writing with others when they criticized his writing. It appears that Adam's classmates' responses to his writing were of great significance to him. As a result, critical reactions greatly influenced his concept of himself as a writer. Adam

described one such experience as follows: "Jim was trying to bug me . . . I got one word wrong and he couldn't read it. He'd yell at me and bother me about it and so I didn't bother publishing it." It appears that the fear of receiving negative feedback from his peers contributed to Adam's difficulty in finishing his stories in order to publish and share them with his peers.

In summary, Adam was a writer who brought his love of literature to his writing. He drew on stories and movies he had read and viewed for the ideas of his writing, and set high expectations for his writing by comparing it to that which he had read by published authors. Wanting his audience to enjoy his writing as much as he enjoyed the published stories, he was rarely satisfied with his efforts and often experienced "writer's block". In addition, he was very conscious of his audience's reaction to his writing and feared negative feedback. As a result, he had published no stories in grade six, but had many openings for stories on his file.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Adam described himself as a good writer in terms of mechanics, saying, "I am a good speller and I have neat writing." However, he despaired that he was unable to "stick with [his] story" and thus, was not a good writer. He speculated that published authors "probably work on [their writing] hours and hours and they don't have any distractions around." He appeared to view the difficulties he experienced as similar to those that published authors would experience. However, Adam related that "I might get close [to becoming a good author], but I don't think I can get perfect." He explained why he could never become a "real" writer in these words: "It takes a real writer a long time to write a story [because] you don't have enough ideas. You have to plan ahead for a long time." In Adam's view, "good authors" are able to "stick with their story and they have good ideas." In contrast, Adam summed up the difficulties he experienced in writing by stating, "I can

get all the ideas but I can't write them down." In addition, he felt that "getting new ideas for a book" is difficult because a million books have been written in the world and [the new ideas] have been used up, almost."

Adam's description of "good" writing reflected the things he learned about writing from his grade four and five teacher. Writing descriptively played a large role, as did the use of "good verbs," characteristics of the "anklebiter myth" which Adam composed with his peer the previous year. Adam used "description" and "the expressions" as criteria for judging Natalie Babbitt's story, Tuck Everlasting, as an example of "good" writing. He said, "You could just listen to it." In addition, Adam commented that good writing "has to have humor in it. It can't be dull, just carrying on and on. It has to have adventure, fighting and good and evil." Adam appears to judge "good" writing based on the many stories that he had read. Fantasy was his favorite genre and his criteria for good stories were reflective of that which would be found in fantasy stories. He felt that Brian Jacques was a good writer because of his imaginative ideas, the details he included when describing characters and the background information about animals which he brought to the story.

According to Adam, writing in the subject areas involved "doing a lot of describing" in order to meet the assignment requirements. Once he had written the information, Adam felt that there was no need to dwell further on it because, as he explained, "that's it." He found it helpful to talk and read about subject area topics, but stated, " I don't think you learn anything by writing it." However, Adam did feel that writing helped him to remember information about which he had talked or read.

When asked why he thought he had been assigned to write the following report, Adam replied, "It was time for history and we talked about history in social." It seems that Adam felt that the power for determining the focus of his learning was in his teacher's hands.

Martin Frobisher

Frobisher was from England, his first voyage was in the year of 1576 in the summer. He sailed around North America, and explored the coast of Labrador, he discovered an island which he called Baffin Island, he named Frobisher bay after himself which was discovered on the island. At first he thought it was the Northwest Passage. Frobisher and some crew men went ashore with gifts for the Inuit, the Inuit traded furs with the crew men for many falubles. Frobisher used sign language so the Inuit could guide him and his crew threw the Northwest Passage. The Inuit were called the Inuk. Frobisher took back a rock to England thinking it contained gold.

Frobishers second voyage was in 1577, he collected many of those black rocks. He wanted to know what happened to the five missing sailors. When frobisher and his men started to leave the Inuk started to follow them. They chased the sailors back to their boat with bows and arrows, one of the arrows hit Frobisher. Only a few of the Inuit were killed. By then Frobisher and his crew had fifteen ships. They landed on an unknown island. Frobisher and his crew took back many of those black rocks finding they were worthless. His crew found out that the rock was fools gold, and iron pyrite. This voyage was Frobishers last.

Adam felt that the only reason for writing non-fiction books was to earn money. These books were written, in his view, for students to read in fulfilling school requirements. Adam, himself, declared that he would not write informational books "unless I was really bored and an old man and didn't have anything to do in my life." It appears that Adam associated these books with school tasks and saw little value for them outside this realm.

Many of Adam's reasons for writing related to school tasks, as well. Though he felt that writing "helps to build your imagination," he also felt that writing was an important subject in school because it "helps you with your education, . . . it helps with a lot of other subjects, [including spelling], and helps you get used to the computer because the computer is used a lot with work." Schooling was valued by Adam for preparing students for the work world and writing was one of the tools that he felt were necessary for success in the work world.

The process of writing, in Adam's view, was similar to that which he carried out while reading, as he commented that "ideas pop into your head" because "you ask 'what's

going to happen next?' . . . and then you just think, 'Oh this might happen and this might happen.'" In addition, Adam felt that reading and writing were similar in that they drew the reader and writer into the story. He explained, "When I read, if it's an interesting story, I get into it. And when I'm writing and it's an interesting story, I really get into it." He went on to say that Brian Jacques "would probably get into his writing because his stories are exciting." According to Adam, if he were the one writing Brian Jacques' stories, "I just couldn't wait until the next part happened, even though I was the one writing it."

Though Adam felt that he wrote "kiddie stuff," in elementary school, he felt that he would have to improve as a writer in junior high school and become a more descriptive writer. In this respect, he felt that his writing would more closely resemble that of published writers which he had read and enjoyed.

In summary, Adam viewed fictional and non-fictional writing as serving two different purposes. In his view, fictional writing was meant to entertain and to engage the reader and the writer. The purpose of non-fiction writing was to record information that had been gathered through reading or discussion. He felt that published writers carried out writing processes which were similar to his own. However, he differentiated between himself and published writers by saying that they were successful in meeting his criteria for good writing, whereas he had difficulty in meeting those expectations.

Adam's Mother

Adam's mother, a former teacher, met with me at the end of one school day. Adam joined our meeting in the school library from time to time, as he was waiting for his mother to take him home.

Adam's Mother as a Writer

Adam's mother and father were both English majors who used writing in their daily lives as a vehicle for communication and for carrying out work-related tasks in the business that they owned. They enjoyed writing and shared their personal and professional writing with each other. However, apart from writing essays, letters and reports, Adam's mother stated, "I'm not a writer [because] I don't write stories. I'm not really interested in doing that." Instead, she enjoyed writing in her journal.

The importance of writing, in Adam's mother's personal life, lay in its capacity to record the personal expressions of family members so that individuals would have a glimpse of the history of their family and of how they came to be their unique selves. As a result, she valued her children's writing and kept samples of all seven children's written work from every school year. In addition, writing in journals had become a family project. Adam's mother explained, "We try to encourage our children to write in their journals because we say, 'When your children and your grandchildren read your journals, they'll say, 'Oh, that's where I come from. That's why I do that. My grandma did that. She liked that or felt that way.'" All members of Adam's family wrote in journals. For the most part, individuals wrote on their own time. Periodically, the family would set aside time for writing in their journals as a family. To Adam's mother's knowledge, journal writing continued to be a part of her children's lives.

Describing the writing she did as a high school student, Adam's mother explained, "I always had honors in language and writing. When I would write an essay or something, it was always good and my teachers gave me a good mark and praised me a lot." In spite of her confidence in her informational writing and the encouragement she received from her teachers, Adam's mother regretted that she was not as creative a writer as her mother was. She considered herself a "pretty straightforward" writer

because, in her stories, the "people and characters didn't do anything too dramatic or too wild."

In summary, Adam's mother viewed herself as a good writer who communicated information readily and enjoyed writing. When comparing herself with other writers in her family, she observed that she was less creative than others and, as a result, preferred informational over fictional writing.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

When describing her views on good writing, Adam's mother related an incident where one of her English professors provided an outline for his students which showed how he wanted essays to be constructed. Adam's mother, confident that she would succeed in her writing without using the outline, handed in an essay on which her professor wrote, "You owe me 25 marks for having to read that." Adam's mother related her horror at receiving this response but said that her views on good writing changed after that experience. She realized that it was necessary to impose a structure on her writing because "what that does is focus you. You don't ramble, you don't run on. I liked it much better when I stopped being so casual about it and started being precise. What I find is that structure gives you freedom because you then are in charge." She explained, "If I were to write a book, I would outline all of the chapters, what they were going to be about, and have all of it perfectly organized ahead of time." It seems that Adam's mother considered writing that was focused and structured in ways that accomplished the writer's purpose to be "good" writing. Thus, in her view, to succeed as a writer, individuals would need to have a clear idea of the purpose and direction for their writing.

Adam's mother valued writing as a "means of expressing yourself and a means of getting to know yourself." She went on to explain,

> Easy times, you don't learn anything about yourself. You don't grow and become who you are. But when you have difficult times, that's when you really get to know who you are, who is in there. Well, when you write, and you read it, it tells you who you are. We have no other way of knowing. Other people can tell us who we are, who they think we are, but they don't know. We're the only ones who can tell who we are and one of the very best ways is by expressing ourselves in some way. Writing is the best because it stays there as a record to see, and then reading it and seeing.

It appears that the primary functions of writing, in Adam's mother's view, are those of expressing and of getting to know oneself. She felt that self-expression was facilitated through the thought processes that are involved in writing, as individuals are required to focus on their thoughts and emotions.

Views of Her Son as a Writer

When Adam's mother described Adam as a writer, she compared his style of writing to hers by saying, "I'm not as dramatically creative as Adam is. I'm more a 'Dick and Jane' kind of writer and I write about things that I know about, but Adam writes about things he imagines." She explained that Adam has "a very good imagination. He writes in a fantasy way. He's written stories about space travel and the creatures that you would meet." Adam's mother observed that fantasy was his favorite genre when reading, as well, as he really enjoyed reading J.R.R. Tolkien's and Brian Jacques' books.

Adam's mother felt that Adam's easy-going personality was expressed in his writing, as she described his writing style in this manner: "very fluid, very flowing, very easy, very relaxed. He writes as if he were speaking." His mother explained that Adam enjoyed writing and often shared his written work with his parents. However, he did not initiate writing projects at home, as he preferred to read. When he completed written assignments at home, Adam rarely requested assistance from his parents. Like his brothers and sisters, Adam showed a facility with writing. Indeed, according to Adam's mother, all members of her family were "language oriented. We get high marks

there. We don't do well in maths and sciences as much without a lot of hard work, but we can almost write an essay in our sleep."

Views on Writing Instruction

Identifying self-expression as a significant function for writing, Adam's mother felt that the primary goal for Adam's writing instruction should be to enable him "to express the person that's in there readily and easily . . . because inside there is a marvelous human being that we're only seeing the very tip of. And the only way we see anything else is to communicate it." In her view, students had to trust those who were reading their work and feel confident in their own abilities in order to take the risk of expressing themselves in writing. Recognizing that "it's a tremendous responsibility when you read something that someone else has done because you're going to influence their whole life. You're talking about their values and their feelings and perceptions," Adam's mother felt it was important that students' writing not be "censored." She explained, "This is the tragedy in the school situation. Your feelings are read by someone else who says you shouldn't feel that way." Adam's mother feared that "a lot of people are closed up because of their experience" in having low grades and negative comments on their writing. As a result, she applauded Adam's teachers for encouraging and praising Adam so that he felt comfortable in expressing what was important to him.

With self-expression as the goal, Adam's mother felt that writing instruction should include a "this is how format." She explained that students "need to know exactly where they're going. There are pathways to follow. It's like we used to be taught, and I imagine still are, about how to write a paragraph. A paragraph consists of these things. If you have these things, you have a good paragraph. And that's your way of checking back, otherwise you have no parameters to judge it by." Indeed, Adam's mother attributed individuals' failure to write a "good" paragraph to a lack of awareness of those

parameters. She recommended that teachers provide models of good literature in a variety of genres so that students could "break [them] down to see how the author got her story across in an organized way." In this way, with teachers providing an outline which pointed out the structure of the literature, students would be made aware of the structures they could use in their own writing. Thus, Adam's mother felt that direct instruction which described the expectations and conventions of good writing provided student writers with the confidence needed to write well. These expectations provided a structure for the students' writing and a means of determining how successful they were as writers.

Recognizing that it was not possible for schools "to be all things to all people," Adam's mother advocated a "return to the basics." She explained, "I think school was meant to teach reading, writing and arithmetic." She felt that the focus of school instruction should be on writing and reading and that these communication skills should be integrated into all subject areas.

In summary, Adam's mother appears to view writing as an important communication tool. Because of its key role in self-expression and in the communication of information and ideas, she felt that schools should emphasize writing in all subject areas, and should ensure that children are skilled in communicating their ideas in writing.

Chapter 5

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF WRITING: THE CHILDREN'S TEACHERS

Introduction

Influential factors in shaping the children's views of writing included the ways in which their teachers viewed writing and themselves as writers, together with their views on how writing instruction should be organized. The views of the children's grades three through six teachers are presented in turn, beginning with those of Gabrielle, in whose classroom the research study took place.

Gabrielle

Throughout the duration of the study, Gabrielle met with me four times in her classroom before classes started in the morning.

Three of the students in this study were new to Gabrielle's classroom. Only Ruben had been in her class last year as a grade five student.

Gabrielle as a Writer

There was never enough time in Gabrielle's life for writing. She said that she did most of her writing in the "private, quiet" moments of early mornings or in the summer when she had "large chunks of time that were unstructured." Gabrielle enjoyed "private writing" because it helped her to "work out a problem, maybe get over some feelings that [she] needed to work out." However, she pointed out that reading played a larger role in helping her to get through difficult times because she "seemed to be caught up in the doing and having to" during those situations and found it easier to pick up a book than a pen and paper.

During my stay in her classroom, Gabrielle applied to be in a "pool of writers" for her school district. Having published a few professional pieces in journals for teachers, and having been a member of a writer's group within a school in which she had previously taught, Gabrielle had gained confidence in herself as a writer and wanted to nurture her interest in writing. She described her experience as a member of the writers' group as being a very positive one; one in which she "didn't stand out as being a fledgeling writer. We were all fledgeling writers." She appreciated the "exploring and exchanging of ideas" and the support provided by her colleagues, and looked forward to further positive experiences in this new group.

In spite of her growing confidence in herself as a writer, Gabrielle did not view herself as a "good" writer. She explained, "I know the craft of it . . . I have fluency, but I don't have that extra little bit. When I read someone like Len Deighton, who is so clever with words, he can say so much . . . I can't do that in writing. I really like words and I like playing with them, but it takes me a long time to be as powerful as that." It seems that Gabrielle's views of herself as a writer were based on a comparison of her writing with that of writers whose work she admired. Indeed, Gabrielle consciously used published authors' writing as a model for her own writing. She explained, "I know that I can't craft the way some of the authors that I read can craft, but I can pattern." Gabrielle related an incident where she had written a piece to read to her writer's group which parodied the writing of Erma Bombeck. After having read her piece, Gabrielle's colleagues teased her, "We know what you've been reading." She found this "patterning" of others' writing to be a "crutch" that facilitated her own writing.

Gabrielle felt that her apprehension of writing had its roots in her experiences as a student writer. She remembered the frustration of being a poor speller at a time when writing conventions were paramount in the evaluation of writing in schools. She felt inhibited by her spelling abilities and described her release from the careful attention to

spelling with the use of a word processor. With the use of a Spell Check, Gabrielle felt "quite comfortable" in writing.

A difficulty with spelling was not the only hurdle that Gabrielle had to overcome as a writer. She also felt that much of the failure she experienced as a student writer was due to the paucity of good writing models available to her in her childhood. Gabrielle related an incident from her second year in school where she had been asked to describe a picture of a clown. She remembered the pride she had felt in writing, "It is a clown. It has red hair." She also recalled her disappointment in being told by her teacher, "This isn't a story." Analyzing her experience through a teacher's eyes, Gabrielle said, "There was no introduction, no example. There was a visual and that was it." Gabrielle felt that, as a grade two student, she needed to be nurtured as a writer by being read many examples of good writing. Because she had had limited previous experience with writing and with written language models at home and at school, Gabrielle explained that she "was a late person to read and so [she] didn't really become involved in the world of print, maybe until university."

Since that time, however, Gabrielle had been a voracious reader, who was "always interested in hearing writers speak" because she was "really fascinated with their crafting." As a reader, Gabrielle was interested in the ways in which writers put their words together and attempted to apply her observations in her own writing.

Though Gabrielle did not think she wanted to become a professional writer and did not want to write in the "structured" manner of professional writers, she intended to continue with her expressive and personal writing because of the pleasure she experienced in writing. She also felt that it was important to model for her students of someone an enjoyment of writing, so she attempted to write as her students wrote in class. However, she explained that there was little time for her own writing because the students were in need of her guidance. As a result, she laughingly related, "Every

September, I start writing and then go blong! I have eight notebooks that start in September."

Understandings of Writing and Writers

As a communication process, Gabrielle felt that writing played and would continue to play a significant role in the functioning of society. She cited the fax machine as one example where contemporary technology required the use of written language. In her view, the permanence of written communication contributed to its critical role in society. Gabrielle explained that because of the increasing complexity of society individuals seem to demand "a piece of paper to validate anything."

Though she had read polls which indicated that people were spending more time watching television than reading during their leisure hours, every adult in Gabrielle's circle of acquaintances read for enjoyment. She felt that there would always be a market for fictional writing, and that expressive writing would always be a part of writing instruction.

In addition, because Gabrielle viewed writing as a learning tool, she predicted that writing would continue to play a large role in subject area learning in schools. She explained that writing was "a reaffirmation of what you know" as it allowed individuals to "practice" using their knowledge. It seems that Gabrielle viewed the permanence of writing as helpful in allowing individuals to take a second look at the understandings they had written, in order to think further about them.

Gabrielle observed that the finished product which emerged from a word processor changed the tone and feeling of a piece of writing. She explained, "It's the presentation. It's just not as personal (which isn't the intent ever), but when you get this typed piece of paper, somehow it's so much different than these loopy handwriting bits that you pour through." She felt that the process of writing using computers changed the way in which

individuals viewed their writing, as they took greater pride in creating a polished product.

Gabrielle mused, "I've often thought that one of the bench marks or maybe sign posts of good writers might be the way they interpret poetry. I know some people who can look at a poem and just get so much out of it immediately and they are very good writers." She appears to relate the insight and experiences that readers bring to poetry reading with the creativity that is involved in expressive writing.

"Good" writers, in Gabrielle's view, "throw words around" in interesting ways. She cited Len Deighton as an author who was particularly talented in this area. Another characteristic of good writers, according to Gabrielle, is their ability to evoke an emotional response in their readers. Margaret Atwood is one such author, as her writing has "made [Gabrielle] angry, . . . made me think and re-evaluate." Gabrielle summarized her views on good writers as their ability to "play with language" and to be "provocative."

Views on Writing Instruction

Gabrielle greatly valued writing and had high expectations for her students as writers. Though she "really fe[lt] the push of curriculum at this level," she "guard[ed] the writing time that the kids d[id]" because she felt that the students benefited from the four hours of writing they did each week. She proudly stated that some of her students were "outstanding writers" who were "far better than [Gabrielle] ever hoped to be." She explained, "I know that they wouldn't be if I had said every Friday afternoon, 'This is your hour for writing.' I know that they wouldn't." She hoped that her students would continue to have time for expressive writing throughout their school years, but understood that subject area specialists in secondary schools were constrained by time, so that her students would likely be doing more informational writing in future. She

stated that the genre was not so important to her as long as the students were engaged in the writing process and there was a purpose for their writing.

To provide a purpose for students' writing, Gabrielle allotted time for students to share and celebrate their writing with her and their peers. While in authors' groups, she modelled the specific, positive feedback that she wanted students to provide each other during formal sharing times and during the writing sessions when they interacted informally. She observed, "There's a lot of chatter going on during writers' workshop and sometimes I think, 'They're not on task,' but often they are on task and it might not sound like it, but in fact they're spurring each other on or they're giving each other ideas. Even if it's just talking about the next recess, it just might trigger another kernel that they can write about." Gabrielle recognized that writing required quiet time for concentration, but felt that interactions between students were helpful in providing ideas and support for each other's writing.

Having worked with classes where students denigrated each other's writing, Gabrielle took great care to ensure that students' feedback on their peers' writing was of a positive nature so that children would feel sucessful as writers. She had observed how negative responses to writing had damaged the self-concept of writers, describing how students from her previous class "were very hard on each other so that [she] couldn't do a lot of peer conferencing. They were too cruel to each other." As a result, she provided guidelines for students' responses to their classmates' writing. Gabrielle expected that students would "receive" a piece read during "Author's Chair" time by summarizing the plot and "respond" to the piece by describing what they liked about it. She explained that, "if it's a published piece, it's not going to be changed. We're not asking for revisions at that point. That's it." I observed that Gabrielle enforced these guidelines by reminding students of them before students shared their stories and by modelling the responses during authors' groups.

Gabrielle wanted her students "to establish ownership of their learning." She felt that the freedoms and expectations of hour-long writers' workshop sessions encouraged "self-discipline," as they had to "organize [their] thoughts and stay focused" each day. The students made decisions as to how they would make the best use of the hour, as they could plan or write at the computer, or share their writing with peers or their teacher.

Creativity and self-expression were important to Gabrielle. She stated that a "basic goal" of her writing program was to encourage students "to express in writing what they want to say." Consequently, when she evaluated her students' fictional writing, she not only assessed the students' fluency or "how [the piece] hangs together" and "how the students crafted their stories and developed characters", but also noted whether the stories showed originality and whether the students' voices were clearly heard. She stated, "One thing I'm always happy to see is voice. If the piece isn't that great but there is voice, then I know there's hope." When talking about Ruben as a grade five student in her class who was learning English as a second language, she described how he had had some problems with writing. However, his voice came clearly through in his writing, so she had thought, "This guy is going to go," and indeed, he had become a very strong writer.

Gabrielle emphasized self-expression rather than the attainment of certain standards using writing conventions. However, though she emphasized the writing process in her classroom, she did feel that having a quality product was important "if it's something that they're going to be sharing in a formal kind of way." She felt that the use of word processors as the primary writing tool in the classroom facilitated the steps in the writing process and helped students to create a better finished product. Gabrielle believed that the use of a word processor mitigated a preoccupation with correct spelling and freed students of the onerous physical task of writing. She had observed that students carried out the steps in the writing process as they composed at the computer,

even though their typed product did not show evidence of their thinking. She explained, "I think a lot of revision is going on. They see the print so immediately and then they look at it and they evaluate it." In addition, Gabrielle felt that the formal print of a page that has come from a printer "makes your words so important." Thus, she felt that the use of the word processor also encouraged students' enjoyment of writing, as they placed greater value in the final product because of its polished appearance.

Gabrielle was encouraged by the knowledge that more students enjoyed writing because of the supportive environment that had been created in elementary classrooms, but felt that "we've done children a real disservice because we haven't been able to be really specific about their writing." She had observed that the focus on providing positive feedback which existed in elementary classrooms may "have given kids a false idea of where they [we]re and that create[d] problems later. I think we have to be really concrete about it." She found that when writers' workshop was first introduced, "it was 'Give them paper and a pen and let them go.'" However, she noted that students "didn't have tools" because they were not being taught what writers did to compose "good" writing. As a result, she welcomed Donald Graves' introduction of mini-lessons for making students aware of effective writing strategies. She explained that it was necessary to "point out the things that happen in literature so students could reflect [them in their writing]. Someone had to say, 'Let's have a look at this paragraph. Why do we like this paragraph? What is happening in here? What are the words doing? How are the sentences structured?' I mean, the very very basic kinds of things that you have to do." Gabrielle welcomed the specific guidelines for writing that had been provided by the provincial department of education in the language learning program of studies. She felt they provided her with many specific characteristics on which she could evaluate her students' writing. She explained, "Before that it was more of, 'Tell me about your writing.' And then sort of riding by the seat of your pants." Gabrielle thought that the

most important purpose for assessing students' writing was to determine specific strengths and areas of weakness, so that students could improve as writers.

While marking provincial achievement tests last year, Gabrielle observed that "spelling had really taken a nose dive (which was a red flag for me) and handwriting had gone down. So those were kind of symptoms for me that we needed to go back and we needed to help those kids." She addressed these concerns through her formal spelling program where students took a weekly pre-test and post-test of words from a list of commonly misspelled words. She explained that she did not feel it was necessary "to go in the old grammar route with fill-in-the-blanks and stuff like that. We're certainly beyond that. We need to do some skill development." She also used standardized spelling tests, which were taken four times throughout the year, to get an indication of how children's spelling had improved. She attributed their spelling growth to their reading and writing, as well as to the weekly spelling instruction she provided.

Gabrielle empathized with students who had difficulty in finding what they wanted to say and explained, "I don't push for products so much because if the kids have something to say, it will come. If they have nothing to say, it's really painful and they sit there. And I've experienced that, too." She accepted that there would be times when the students would appear to be doing nothing, as they struggled with ideas for their writing. Gabrielle noted that discussion sometimes assisted those students "because maybe there is something that they could say but it isn't on their awareness level." She related her concerns about students who never seemed to finish a piece of writing and described how she had provided deadlines for students to complete their writing. However, she explained, "you don't get quality. You get people who are writing to a deadline and you and I know what writing to a deadline is like." She, herself, found that writing to meet deadlines did not improve the quality of her writing and caused her to dread writing.

Gabrielle felt that the processes she used for assessing students' writing were always evolving. She explained, " We're a little further along the continuum" for finding an effective assessment system. "I will never find the correct answer. I will just keep looking, trying this and trying that." The goal of the portfolio system that she used was to "showcase what my kids are doing to communicate with parents." She explained that her portfolios had evolved from "a collection of work" to a collection which included teachers' comments and "contextual clues for the pieces that were put in the portfolio." She felt that her experience in marking students' writing on provincial achievement tests gave her "a good idea of what a piece is," and was satisfied that she was providing more specific feedback on students' writing than she had previously done.

However, the portfolio system was proving to be very time-consuming and she regretted that the criteria for selection of students' work to put in the portfolios was "too subjective." She explained,

> Although we have a menu [of the contents of our portfolios] for our grade, what I would put in for my writing samples might be very different from the lady next door, the comments that I would put in may be very different from the comments that she would put in . . . Sometimes I get a child from another area and honestly, I have to do my own assessment because I can't really just look at somebody else's assessment. . . There's a real problem in transition from elementary to junior high. There are some junior highs that are looking at portfolios, but when I look at what they're doing, their menus are again very different. So that whole dialogue thing needs to happen; there needs to be some stronger direction . . . If we need something that is going to be an honest reflection of where the kids are and what they're doing, I think it has to be tightened a little bit. And then I'm scared to do that because as teachers we have this professionalism. We're supposed to be able to make these choices.

Gabrielle appreciated the professional autonomy to make decisions about the ways in which she would gather, analyze and communicate information about her students' progress as writers, but felt that constraints on professional autonomy were needed in order to provide consistent methods for assessment across grade levels.

In summary, Gabrielle felt that teachers should organize their classrooms and respond to children's writing in ways that enhance children's views of themselves as writers, and at the same time, guide them to become more effective in communicating their ideas to readers.

Rhonda

Rhonda taught grades 5 and 6 in the classroom next to Gabrielle's classroom. Previously, she had taught Joey and Shelbi in their third and fourth years of school. Rhonda met with me in her classroom one afternoon at the end of the school day.

Rhonda as a Writer

Rhonda found writing to be "just darn hard work." She explained, "The biggest piece of writing I did was my master's thesis. It wasn't bad once I got started . . . I didn't mind the writing part, but the number of hours that you have to sit there to get it out! " Because of the time-consuming and arduous nature of writing, Rhonda did not do a great deal of personal writing. She did not consider herself to be a writer, though she felt that "when I'm forced into writing, it comes out okay." If given a choice, Rhonda preferred to communicate through speech rather than through written words.

When reflecting upon the writing she had done in the past, she recalled, "I remember about grade 6 writing mystery stories. I don't remember writing in junior high school or high school at all [except for] essays." Rhonda explained that mathematics had always been her area of interest, rather than writing or reading.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

When asked to describe "good" writing, Rhonda said, "There's writing that I enjoy and there's writing that I don't particularly enjoy. I'm not really into it enough to know

why." She explained that she read informational text for the most part, and had not read enough fictional literature to shape her views on "good" writing.

Rhonda felt that written language played a critical role as a vehicle for communicating understandings in all subject areas. In her classroom, she emphasized the need to learn the language of each subject area in order to understand the concepts within those subjects.

As well as being a communication tool, writing also played a significant role in learning, in Rhonda's eyes. She explained,

> Writing can be a confirmation of your thoughts and sometimes the thoughts might be a bit scattered. Yet, when you have to focus on the writing, it focuses what your thoughts are and you coordinate your thoughts into a package, then, that you can move forward from. So, it consolidates and directs thought . . .
>
> You may not really have the knowledge of the connection of those thoughts until you go through a process where you have to change it from the thought process to a writing process.

It seems that Rhonda viewed writing as a means of making connections between bits of information that may have been stored in students' minds as unrelated ideas. By bringing these connections to students' consciousness, writing helped to "create knowledge for them."

Views on Writing Instruction

The primary goal of Rhonda's writing instruction was her students' enjoyment of the process of writing. To accomplish this goal, Rhonda attempted to create a classroom environment where all students would experience success as writers. She cited an instance where she had encouraged a student who had been experiencing difficulty in writing to "use some *National Geographic* pictures to create a mystery story on a hypercard stack." This student was very proud of the writing he had done and Rhonda had

invited him to share his writing with his peers. She explained the significance of this incident by saying,

> It's just those little things that are very important, you often can't preplan them, you have to just react in the situation that you're in and if it works, fine, and if it doesn't, then you try something else . . . I find that my role is often to take a child that doesn't see anything too exciting to write about and find a way for them to get into something far enough so that it starts to feel good, . . . and as soon as you see something good, you've got to hop on it.

Being sensitive to the needs of her students as writers, Rhonda encouraged their enjoyment of writing and then built on their enthusiasm by making them aware of characteristics of good writing. She explained that she often asked students to read their writing aloud, inviting their peers to "listen and see what kind of neat words this person has used." By asking students to read their writing to their peers, Rhonda was attempting to enhance their views of themselves as writers, and at the same time, was providing models of good writing for all students.

Together with the use of "exciting vocabulary, one of Rhonda's criteria for good writing was its ability to convey a message in ways "which somebody else can read and understand." As a result, she expected her students to use writing conventions correctly, though she cautioned that the mechanics of writing were "not as important as other things. And yet for a reader, they have to be there." To make students aware of the correct use of writing conventions, Rhonda helped students to edit their writing and also provided opportunities for students to edit their peers' writing.

In Rhonda's classroom, as in Gabrielle's classroom, for four days each week, half the students wrote at computers while the other half had mathematics instruction. Rhonda expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement because she did not "have enough interaction with [her students] when they were actually performing the writing . . . I'm just sort of running to catch up with what they're into these days." She wanted to have more time for writing conferences with individual students.

Rhonda described the uncertainties she experienced when using writers' workshop in her classroom by saying, "Inside you have to have that faith that you set the situation up properly so that [students' growth as writers] will happen. And it usually does. It's just that bit of discomfort in not really being a part of it." When using writers' workshop, Rhonda stated that she felt less control over what her students were learning than she would "if each child was working on a particular structured activity and I was marking it on a daily basis." However, she asserted that she was "willing to experience that feeling for the benefits that the kids get of going in the directions that they want to go." Having taught for 25 years, Rhonda observed that this sharing of control over what the students were learning was "more difficult for teachers" because they "did not know exactly what each child was learning." However, she felt it was "better for kids. They have a lot more opportunities to express themselves and go off in creative directions and for children to bring something to it."

Rhonda felt that the use of word processors in writing classrooms also enhanced students' writing, as it made editing a much easier process and provided a polished looking product of which students could be proud. However, she noted a need for a balance between writing using computers and writing with pens. She felt that, while using a computer, students "tend[ed] to be impulsive and pop out ideas all over the place and they [had] a hard time coming to grips with what a story might be." She found that the unconstrained flow of ideas did not always result in a better product. In contrast, Rhonda had observed that students tended to "tidy up their writing content-wise" when writing with a pen. She explained, "Writing by hand, it takes them longer to do it. They have to think a little bit more as they're going through it and they don't want to put maybe as much physical energy into it. So, they might take a little bit more thinking time before they actually put it down." Rhonda was not convinced that a free flow of ideas

while writing with word processors enhanced the thinking process while writing, though she conceded that the computers did facilitate the physical process of writing.

There were two questions which guided Rhonda's assessment of her students' growth as writers. They were: "What's good?" and "What could you do better?" She asked these two questions of her students during writing conferences. To answer these two questions, she used the criteria outlined by Alberta Education for evaluating students' writing of provincial achievement exams because she thought, "The stuff's out there. This is the direction things are going. Maybe I'd better have another look at what I'm doing." However, she had modified the criteria because she felt that it could be "simplified for kids" so that they would be able to use the criteria to assess their own writing. She explained that one criterion would be, "Does the whole thing make sense and fit together?" She added, "I would think the organization or the content would be one and then another one would be, 'is willing to take risks and go for difficult language or try to express things in a different way', and then the third one might be the conventions." She felt that these three categories would provide enough information so that students would be aware of what they were expected to do and would be able to set goals for themselves as writers.

Throughout her teaching career, Rhonda had attempted to apply what she had learned through discussion with colleagues and her observations of students' behavior to design a writing program that encouraged students' enjoyment of writing and their success as writers.

In summary, it appears that Rhonda viewed a diagnostic approach to writing instruction as being the most effective. She felt that teachers should assist children in developing their writing skills by observing what the children were able to do and then determining how they could become better writers.

Alice

Alice taught a combined grades three and four class down the hall from Gabrielle's room. She had been Ruben's grade three and four teacher and Adam's grade three teacher.

Alice met with me in her classroom one morning before classes began.

Alice as a Writer

Alice valued writing as an effective vehicle for communicating her ideas. However, in spite of its effectiveness as a communication tool, she also found writing to be a difficult way to share her thoughts. Thus, though she had published books on computers in education, she asserted that she would rather give a two-hour presentation on a topic than write a book about it. She considered herself "one who has lots of ideas to share and to give, but not a good writer," and relied on other writers to assist her in presenting her ideas clearly to her readers.

Having experienced success as an adult writer through the publication of her books, Alice found that "writing [wa]s not anywhere the onerous task it used to be for [her]." Throughout her school years, she had considered herself a "math-science type" and could not recall feeling successful as a writer. However, with encouragement and guidance from her husband and others whose writing she admired, Alice felt that her writing had "improved tremendously."

Understandings of Writing and Writers

In Alice's view, clarity of communication and having a "good flow of ideas" were essential elements of good writing. She considered the effective use of writing conventions, together with "writing a sentence and making it hang together and writing a paragraph and making it coherent with a theme" to be factors that "come into play in

order to make the message clear." Thus, Alice viewed good writers as those who were able to communicate their intended message clearly to their audience.

The communicative function of writing carried over to the subject areas, as well. Alice asserted that writing was "so important in all of the subject areas [because] it really is a tool to communicate." In this way, when students wrote, they were "communicating the subject matter."

In addition, Alice viewed writing as a means of "organizing and structuring things", whether those things would be ideas for stories or subject area information. She thought that the ability to organize and show relationships between information enhanced learning in all areas. Thus, as a tool for organizing information, writing was also a learning tool.

Views on Writing Instruction

Alice wanted her students to feel successful as writers. She hoped they would not feel the frustration that she had experienced as a student writer. Instead, she wanted students to "be able to successfully record their ideas in a way that they fe[lt] satisfied with and [we]re willing to present to others to share." To encourage students' enthusiasm for writing, Alice invited her students to polish each story which they felt was ready to be read to a larger audience and then to "publish it, print it out on the laser printer, coil it, and share it with others."

In Alice's view, being able to communicate ideas to others through their writing and to experience others' enjoyment in their writing contributed to the success her students felt as writers. Indeed, one of the goals for her students was to encourage their abilities in writing "an idea or group of ideas that would be appealing to someone else, to an audience." She felt that the use of descriptive vocabulary and the correct use of writing conventions were important in order for writers to communicate ideas that

would appeal to their audience. With the use of an international computer network, Alice's students had written to children in other countries and had written for a global newspaper. They had also written to their parents. With the use of the word processor, her students had taken pride in writing pieces which communicated their ideas clearly to others.

Alice also felt that her students would feel successful as writers if they were made conscious of the ways in which their writing was improving. Consequently, she viewed assessment as a vehicle for helping students "to improve and to feel good about what they've done." When Alice discussed her students' writing during student-teacher writing conferences, she tried to "show them areas that they [could] improve." She explained that "if we don't do this, it's hard for [students] to know what to do. They need to know that this part of my story is strong but this part doesn't come across very clearly." Alice asked her students to work on the aspects of their stories that needed improvement so that these areas were "[brought] up to the level of the strength of the story." Alice felt that her role as a teacher was to encourage and support her students as writers as she made them aware of how they could improve their writing.

Alice explained that her writing program had evolved through the years as she observed her students. As a teacher-researcher in her classroom, she explored her students' understandings of writing and their thought process as they wrote. For example, Alice had observed that her grade three students were not grouping their ideas into paragraphs when they wrote. Through formal lessons, she made her students "aware of the paragraphing in reading material" and then encouraged them to write using paragraphs in their stories. Alice then observed that students "[did] not really paragraph as they [we]re writing, but they [did] go back after."

In Alice's eyes, the influence of the word processor in the writing classroom reached far beyond its editing capabilities to assist students in using paragraphs to group

their ideas. She observed that students used quotation marks in dialogue more consistently when using word processors. She attributed this consistency to the clarity of the marks on the computer screen and felt that the physical presentation of print enhanced students' awareness of what they were writing. More significantly, Alice noticed that her students were "much more willing to edit" when writing with word processors. She explained, "it is still something that the teacher really has to encourage, but there's more the willingness to do the editing." Because the students were rereading what they had written and felt confident in making revisions, Alice felt that their writing had improved considerably. Indeed, she asserted that, "the computer itself is the tool that has made the biggest difference in what I've done over the years in writing with children."

Alice also emphasized the editing and revision stage of the writing process through having student teachers and parents "involved in assisting the children one on one." She described the "editing parties" she had had in the classroom where 22 parents were matched with individuals from the class of 35 students. The students read their stories and then the adults "helped them to do some editing and bring it to the stage where [the students] could publish [the stories]." Alice valued the guidance which she and other adults could provide students, and viewed the writing conferences with individuals as factors which contributed significantly to her students' growth as writers.

Alice had observed that guidance from their teacher and interactions during "brainstorming sessions" assisted students in finding topics for their writing. She explained that these idea-generating sessions involved all students in the class "because [she felt] they stimulated each other." Alice was sensitive to her students' readiness to begin writing and invited those who had "enough ideas to go ahead and start creating on their own." To the other students she often said, "If you're really stuck and still want to think it through some more, remain on the story carpet and we can talk some more." She

also recognized that some students needed "some time to think on their own" before starting to write. Alice recalled the struggle she had had as a student writer in finding ideas for her writing and directed a great deal of her energy toward assisting students in that aspect of their writing. When she wanted them to write on specific topics, she drew those topics from concepts in science or social studies "or something that's happening in the literature piece that we're looking at at the time. And we'll focus on maybe a character or a happening or the theme that's there and then use that same theme in the children's writing." Whether the topics were of the children's choice or teacher-directed, Alice attempted to assist the students in making connections between the information, so that students had a store of related ideas from which to draw when writing.

In summary, through Alice's experiences as a writer, together with her observations of her students' writing processes, she believed that her writing instruction enhanced children's views of themselves as writers because it allowed the children to express themselves within a framework that she had provided. In addition, because of the success which she and her students experienced through the use of word processors in writing, the word processor played a large role in her writing program.

Ed

Ed was the assistant principal of another elementary school in the school district. He had been Adam's grade four and five teacher.

Ed met with me in his office one afternoon at the end of the school day.

Ed as a Writer

Writing played a large role in Ed's professional life, as he wrote numerous letters and administrative reports for the school district's central office. Writing played a less

prominent role in Ed's personal life, as he rarely found time to write fiction or poetry. However, he valued the opportunity to write in a journal during those times when he needed to work through difficulties in his life. He felt that he did "a reasonably good job" when writing informational pieces and explained that informational writing was easy for him "because it's factual and it's organizing thoughts that are there, but you pick the words. It's basically reorganizing, taking something else and reorganizing it." Ed found informational writing to be easier than fictional writing and speculated that this was because "it's safer. It's not coming from the heart as much; it's not me. It's not as threatening." For this reason, he felt confident in sharing his informational writing with others.

In contrast, Ed felt that "[he was] too cliche" in his creative writing, and as a result, did not view himself as an effective writer of fiction. However, he admitted that he "might be better than [he] thought" because he had never shared his fictional writing with others to find out how they viewed his writing. In addition, Ed was aware that others viewed him as "really creative and quite dramatic" and as someone who had "a lot of really good ideas." He thought that these were qualities of good writers and was willing to consider that he did have the potential to be a good writer of fiction.

Ed had started many pieces of writing that were left unfinished because he rarely found the time to write. Ed enjoyed expressing his emotions through writing poetry during quiet times "when [he was] on a camping trip or [he was] out somewhere hiking." However, often caught up in the bustle of everyday life, Ed did not do as much writing as he would have liked to do. Ed dreamed of a day when he could cast aside those everyday concerns and "sit at home and write." He speculated that participation in a network of writers who were interested in sharing and responding to each other's writing would encourage him to initiate and follow through on fictional and poetic writing.

Ed could not recall many details about his experiences as a student writer. He did remember one incident in grade four where his teacher had "commented on plagiarism" when he handed in a report, carefully copied from an encyclopedia, on the topic of cats. Ed viewed the writing assignments that he completed during his high school and university years as necessary tasks that helped him to reach his goal of being a teacher. He explained that he "put in the effort that [he] had to do, but that was about it [because] nobody was sitting down with me and going over it and encouraging me and all that. I handed in a finished paper and they gave me a mark." Reaching the standards set by his teachers was Ed's goal as a student writer. The rewards of writing were tied to the products he created and he did not value the actual process of writing.

After having encouraged his elementary students in their writing for a number of years, Ed felt that he had become a better writer. It was through his work as a teacher that he had come to appreciate the relationship between writing and thinking. In this way, the process of writing became more important in his eyes. In addition, through his teaching of reading and writing, Ed became conscious of the ways in which professional authors expressed their ideas. He explained, "Since I started teaching, I notice things in books I read much more than I did before." Believing that his students would become better writers through reading literature that communicated writers' emotions and thoughts in descriptive ways, Ed had become increasingly sensitive to all that he could learn about effective writing through reading the work of good writers.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

Ed described the letters he received from people he considered to be good writers as "conversations" with the writer. He explained that these people wrote in a comfortable, smoothly-flowing style which communicated a feeling of personal contact with the

author. When Ed read their letters, he felt "as if the writer[s] [were] sitting there," talking to him.

In addition, Ed viewed good writing as that which communicated the author's intent using "detail and description" to entertain and inform the reader. Ed contrasted descriptive and non-descriptive writing by sharing an example which he frequently gave his students. He called this his "Vancouver Story". The non-descriptive, uninteresting version of the story began in this way: "I went to Vancouver for summer holidays. It was nice. We lay on the beach. The waves came." He felt that the reader's response to this opening would be to snore and go to sleep. In contrast, he began a more descriptive version of the "Vancouver Story" as follows: "The sun was setting quietly on the waves as they crashed along the golden beach." Ed then asked, "Which one would you rather read?" In his opinion, the better opening was that which included descriptive details, together with adjectives and adverbs, because it was written "non-drearily" and in a manner that would interest readers.

Ed viewed reading and writing as the "basics" of education because he felt they were essential skills for learning in all subject areas. He saw a close relationship between reading and writing, as he explained, "A good reader makes a better writer. A good writer, if they have some training and discussion, it makes them a better reader. They can pick things out and look at things and predict and all that stuff if they're writing and thinking about it in their writing." He felt that writing played the largest role in learning because the writing process required individuals to do "a lot of thinking about how [they were] putting [their] thoughts together." He went on to say, "I don't think you can learn just from reading, you have to do some writing, notetaking, whatever, even just for yourself as you're going through it and going back [over it]." Ed felt that "taking [information] in is one thing, but being able to consolidate it and put it down and teach it to someone else, is another one. Though lots of us learn for our own sake and benefit,

we're never learning just for us. It makes us able to contribute this to a conversation and that. We don't just sit down in our room and read and learn, . . . never to share it or never to use it." It seems that Ed viewed writing as a learning tool because of its ability to shape and form new understandings in ways that would facilitate the communication of the information to others.

Views on Writing Instruction

Through his experiences as a teacher, and as a reader and writer, Ed had formed strong opinions on what he viewed as important goals for his students as writers and readers. Though he recognized that his students might not "use creative writing in their lives", he wanted them to appreciate good writing and to "start writing better [because] it might make them better readers." Reading played a significant role in his personal and professional life and he hoped that his students would value reading throughout their lives, as well. In addition, Ed spoke with certainty about the qualities he encouraged in his students' writing and asserted, "I believe strongly in something and I go with it and I push it and I get it. I say two years with me is all I want a student to have because I've got lots of things that I'm sure I'm not streng in, that someone else could give them."

In Ed's view, one of his strengths was encouraging students to write using descriptive details. To achieve this goal, Ed found many opportunities to make students aware of the use of description, both in the literature that he read to his students and in the stories that his students wrote in class. He also gave his own examples of how writers could enhance their writing by using descriptive language, and explained, "Often I'll say, 'Listen to this line' and I'll take in a line that I've read and just spice it up to make it more interesting." In addition, on occasion, Ed addressed descriptive writing through direct instruction with the whole class. Ed described one lesson where he asked his students to visualize and talk in small groups about the details they saw in pictures

from a calendar. Later, he asked the students to "build a story around" the setting they had pictured and described. Valuing description in the literature that he read, much of Ed's writing instruction was directed toward encouraging his students' use of descriptive details in their writing.

Ed explained that he wanted his students "to take risks, . . . to be able to push and challenge themselves and feel safe doing that." To provide a supportive environment, Ed spent a great deal of time, both during class time and at recess, working with individuals to read through and point out the strengths of their writing. In addition, he gave students specific suggestions on how they could improve their writing and said to them, "You're the author. You have to choose. None of them might be any good. You might want to stay with what you have." He cautioned that he did not want to take away the ownership of the writing from his students. However, he also explained, "If I don't like [the story], I can't inspire the kids. And I say to them, 'If I don't like your writing, that's my opinion. Someone else might, but you are working here with me' and I work with it and usually after two years, I get pretty good stuff." Thus, Ed attempted to provide support for his students in ways that helped them to shape their writing so that it resembled more closely the descriptive, interesting writing that Ed valued.

Ed found that his students were more successful as writers when they focused on a particular genre for extended periods of time. He asserted, "When I want creative writing, I want creative writing and so I structure that. I don't allow diary, journal stuff unless they talk about it and work with it." Ed had observed that most of his students were "able to do the report type of writing fairly effectively," but that they needed to make their creative writing more interesting. In addition, because much of the writing that students did in his class involved informational writing in content areas or responding to literature that they had read, Ed felt that his students should become absorbed in creative writing during the "couple of times during the year [when he]

focused on story writing." During those times, Ed implemented what he called "a very unstructured writing program." Depending on what he wanted to teach at the time, Ed organized his classroom so that students were either working on topics of their choice, working on topics he provided them, "brainstorming a whole bunch of plots, settings, characters and then picking ones they wanted to write about," or writing in partners on topics they had chosen. Having observed that students often started many pieces and then had difficulty in following through on them, Ed asked his students to "build on [their stories] and to revise [them] and edit [them]" for four to six weeks. He explained, "There are certain things that I will not accept. My biggest thing is sit down and two minutes later, I'm finished." In Ed's view, writers required extended periods of time to focus on their writing in order to create a piece that communicated their intent in interesting ways.

Ed thought it was important to make students aware of the importance of writing conventions in communicating effectively. He explained that he "would always teach a whole class lesson on all these things just so they've all been exposed to it. Some would never hear it again because they weren't ready for it but they were at least exposed to it and speaking the same language." In Ed's view, it was important not only that his students used writing conventions correctly but that they also were aware of the labels for the parts of speech that they used. He explained that he used the labels, "adjective" and "adverb" when talking about students' writing and did not refer to them in general terms as "descriptive words."

Recognizing that some students had difficulties with conventions such as spelling, Ed taught his students strategies to improve their use of these conventions. He wanted his students to be as independent as possible, in spite of their difficulties, and encouraged their use of reference materials such as dictionaries or thesauri. Ed felt that writing instruction should encourage students' creativity and did not advocate the use of

grammar exercises and questions with "an absolute right or wrong answer" as methods for teaching students the correct use of writing conventions. He explained that it was unreasonable to expect students to learn writing skills by teaching one whole-class lesson on a particular skill. Instead, he felt it was necessary to "link it up with students' writing" on an ongoing basis, so that students were made aware of how they were using writing conventions and of how published authors used those conventions.

Ed asserted, "I believe strongly that a student who writes on a computer is a better writer." He supported this assertion by explaining that editing and revising are facilitated by the use of a word processor as a writing tool. When he had writing conferences with students whose work was written with a computer, Ed found that the students were much more willing to think about how they could communicate their intended thoughts and feelings more effectively and were more apt to make changes to their writing.

Ed had observed that his assessment of students' writing was most effective when it was used "to make them aware of what it is that they are doing and things they could be doing differently." He went on to explain, "Just putting a mark on it, I don't know that that helps them to be better writers. It's through talking, through helping, through encouraging them, I think that it happens." Though he had used letter grades in the past to evaluate his students' writing, Ed had always included many comments to describe the grade. He had been disappointed that the students placed greater value on the grade than they did on the comments. The use of grades, in Ed's view, promoted competition between students and did not enhance their writing.

In the previous year, Ed had used audio cassettes to communicate to his students' parents his expectations for students' writing. He had voiced his comments on the writing of ten grade five students into a tape recorder and then sent the cassettes home so that parents would "sit down with their kids and go through the story, see[ing] . . . that

it's not just every spelling mistake circled." He had found parents to be very receptive to this assessment strategy and wanted to continue with this practice, but found it too time-consuming to do with an entire class of 27 students.

In summary, Ed's views on the importance of using direct instruction, together with individual conferences and small group work to improve students' creative writing, were shaped through working with university instructors and school administrators who helped him to see that "there's so much you can do with [language arts]." He felt that his experience with student writers and his love of literature also contributed to his views on the important aspects of good writing, such as detail and description, that he chose to emphasize in his writing class.

Myrna

Myrna taught a combined grades five and six class in another wing of the school. She was Shelbi's grade five teacher.

Myrna met with me in her classroom during her preparation class one morning.

Myrna as a Writer

Myrna found professional writing to be rewarding and viewed writing as one way in which she would achieve her professional goals. In addition to writing her master's thesis, she had published a paper in a professional journal and had written a manual to assist teachers in profiling student growth. She explained that her "concrete-sequential" nature was reflected in the ease with which she wrote "how-to" manuals and professional articles explaining teaching practices which she found to be effective.

In spite of her success as a writer of informational text, Myrna did not feel that she was a good writer because she did not write fluently or express her feelings and thoughts to others in a comfortable manner. She felt that the roots of her negative views of

herself as a writer lay in her public school writing experiences. She remembered one occasion where her high school teacher "stopped [her] in the hallway and said, 'Myrna, you're just not a writer. You just don't have what it takes.'" She described her emotional response to this teacher's assessment of her writing abilities as one of being "devastated." As a result of this and other experiences of a similar nature, Myrna disliked writing. Indeed, she felt that experiences such as this one explained "why [she had] never felt confident or [why she] felt like [she] struggled with writing." In spite of the difficulties she experienced, Myrna observed that she had become a better writer and that she was gaining a facility with writing.

Understandings of Writing and Writers

In Myrna's opinion, "writing is communication." She felt that writing was "like reading and talking" because "you read someone else's writing and your writing will be read by someone else." She considered oral and written language to be closely related communication tools and felt that the goal which directed writers' decision-making processes should always be the effective communication of their intended message.

Writers, in Myrna's view, were born with "certain gifts." However, she explained that "you can teach [writing]. . . [However], someone who is actually talented in that area can go a lot farther. With appropriate motivation and expectations, the teaching, the modeling, the practicing, the application, you can certainly improve." Thus, though Myrna felt that good writers possessed a natural talent for communicating their ideas and feelings, she thought that effective writing instruction made it possible for most individuals to become adept at writing.

Myrna recognized good writers as those to whom writing came easily. She contrasted her own struggles as a writer with the comfortable, effortless writing of those whom she considered to be good writers by explaining, "What [they] can do in half

an hour probably would take me a day. What I always envy is how easily it comes to them. It just flows." Myrna did not consider the products of the writing when defining good writers, but rather, looked at the ease with which individuals carried out the process of writing.

Views on Writing Instruction

Myrna's experiences as a student writer greatly influenced her views on writing instruction. She asserted that she wanted "to be the teacher [she] didn't have . . . so [she] tried to make it as novel and motivating as it wasn't novel and motivating for [her]." Consequently, Myrna viewed her role as one of providing motivational activities to develop within her students a "love for reading and writing." Because she felt that an enjoyment of writing and reading provided "a good foundation" for learning in all subject areas, in Myrna's view, students' attitudes toward writing and reading were important factors in determining their success in school. She cited a personal writing activity, where students communicated what happened to them over the spring break by designing postcards on computers, as one of the "really neat, more novel, innovative approaches to writing" that she had implemented in order to motivate students to reach curriculum expectations. She also described independent projects, where students selected topics which they wanted to explore and then presented their research in a "variety of modes (written, oral, video, gameboard)" as her "pride and joy." Myrna felt that independent projects assisted her in "captivat[ing] kids' motivation" and in carrying out her "responsibility to make curricular connections."

The goal which directed Myrna's teaching in all subject areas was to "teach [her] children lifelong skills [and] to empower [them]." She felt that one way in which she prepared her students with lifelong skills in her writing program was to have them "do a variety of writing for a variety of purposes . . . because you never know when you're

going to use [the writing formats]." She also structured writing assignments so that students wrote for a variety of audiences and in ways that reflected the kinds of writing that students would be doing in their lives outside the classroom.

Myrna's view of writing as a communication tool was reflected in her writing program. She felt that students should use writing conventions correctly in order to communicate their message. In this way, spelling, handwriting and grammar were considered by Myrna to be basic to writing. She empathized with individuals who thought there was not enough emphasis on writing conventions in elementary schools and explained, "I think that [there were] teachers who did not understand "whole language", and they were thrown into the throngs of it and maybe didn't understand the whole philosophy." She went on to say that the expectations for writing conventions such as phonics and spelling may have become less rigorous for some teachers because they were uncertain about how they should teach these conventions. However, in Myrna's view, "Phonics has its place. You need phonics to spell. But it's how it's taught, because we used to teach it in isolation, but it can be taught in very much a whole language approach." Myrna asserted that she was teaching "the same basics" that she had taught for a number of years, "but maybe just in a different approach." In her classroom, Myrna put into practice her views on the value of writing conventions by asking her students questions such as, "What are you trying to tell someone?", and then pointing out that "if your audience doesn't understand what you have written, all your work and effort has been for nought."

Myrna valued writing as a means of reflecting on one's learning. Her views were reflected in the weekly "Reflections" newsletter which each student wrote to take home to his/her parents, and to which parents were invited to respond. During the last period of each day, students "filled in all the key learnings that had happened throughout the day in their "Reflections" letter. They reported what they did in class as well as what they

learned (which is not so easy to do)." Myrna explained that it was "a mega time commitment because it takes a large chunk out of our language arts time each day, but if you believe in it, you can see the positive effects it has on children's writing." She observed that the newsletter provided students with a means of reflecting on and synthesizing their learning, as it "developed higher level thinking, self-analysis of strengths and weaknesses, fluency, and of course, all the writing skills." She also used the newsletter as a "tool to teach outlining [and to] reinforce paragraphing skills because there's supporting details under the main headings." In addition, Myrna found the newsletter to be "an excellent vehicle for communication between parents and kids. It's a super weekly newsletter so parents know what's happening in this classroom." Myrna valued reflective writing as a significant part of students' learning processes.

Interactions among students and the sharing of individual talents were also important aspects of Myrna's writing program. She explained,

> I always tell the kids that people who are successful are not successful because they did it themselves; it's who they network with. Networking is very important. It's not cheating. You've just got to make sure you give credit. So my kids do flow charts of every individual, company or institution, both in and out of school, who has assisted in some part. We're not all illustrators, so there will be kids who will get other kids to illustrate.

It appears that Myrna viewed everyone in the class as learners and teachers. She felt that all students had talents to share, and that through interactions with their peers, students were able to improve the effectiveness of their written communication. In addition, they learned valuable interpersonal skills which would enhance their success in the work world.

Myrna valued assessment as a means of showing students' growth and of enhancing their views of themselves as writers. She attempted to achieve these goals through providing specific information about the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing. Myrna explained that "marks, per se, do not tell you anything other than that the kids

may be good memorizers. But that doesn't tell you the kind of learner they are or the process they went through." In Myrna's view, "authentic assessment", in which the teacher used anecdotal comments to describe specific aspects of students' writing, was needed in order to document students' growth and to enhance their self-esteem. She asserted, "It's far more time-consuming, but you see, it's something I believe in and value, so despite the time commitment, I do it."

Myrna very strongly believed that students should be involved in assessing their own writing and that of their peers. To assist students in carrying out self-assessments, Myrna developed questions for students to ask themselves about the writing processes they carried out. She also presented specific criteria for each writing assignment because she believed that students "should know what they will be assessed for, because every writing assignment is different." Thus, Myrna assisted her students to reflect on the effectiveness of their own and their peers' writing by providing them with specific guidelines.

Myrna's experiences as a teacher and writer influenced her views about writing instruction. She described her program as an "eclectic" one and felt that it was always evolving. Myrna expected that she would "never arrive" at the point where she had a perfect writing program. However, she was pleased with her students' achievement of her goals for them as writers and felt that her writing program reflected her views on what was important in writing.

In summary, Myrna felt that writing was a communication tool that students would use throughout their lives. Because she wanted her students to enjoy writing, Myrna felt that a key aspect of her role as a teacher was to provide motivational learning activities which would encourage the children to write and to value their writing.

Chapter 6

SOCIAL CONTEXTS WHICH INFLUENCE CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDINGS OF WRITING

Summary of the Findings

Views on Writing

The participants in this study viewed writing as a purposeful activity which assisted them in meeting their needs. Writing served primarily a communication function in their lives, but they recognized it as a learning tool, as well.

Though the four children in the study asserted that they enjoyed writing and wrote with confidence, only Shelbi had initiated writing projects outside of school time. Indeed, she was the only child whose parents did much writing at home. It appears that the children's observations of writing carried out by their parents shaped their views on writing, as Shelbi was the only child who viewed writing as something that was more than a school activity.

There were a number of reasons which the adult participants gave for the small amount of writing they did at home. Though the children's teachers and the mothers of all of the children except Ruben expressed a desire to write fiction and poetry, they regretted that their daily lives did not allow the time to write for themselves. In addition, the adults felt that they lacked the creativity which they felt was necessary to write fiction. They also described the apprehension they experienced when sharing their writing with others, attributing their fears of criticism to their formal writing instruction. Consequently, because much of their day was spent in fulfilling the requirements of their work, the adult participants chose to fill their limited leisure time with activities that demanded less of their energy than did writing.

The participants in this study had many different ways of expressing their views of writing as a learning tool. The three boys viewed writing as a means of making their

thoughts permanent and tangible, while Shelbi and many of the adults in the study showed an understanding of writing as a recursive process; one that allowed writers to construct and discover meaning simultaneously.

The children, together with their parents and teachers, judged the effectiveness of a piece of writing on its ability to entertain and sustain the interest of its readers. As a result, they felt that the focus of revision efforts should be on the content of the piece. However, because they viewed writing conventions as a means of facilitating the communication of ideas to readers, the participants also thought it was important to attend to writing conventions when editing.

Views on Writers

The adult participants in this study expressed their awe of the creative talents which they thought "good" writers possessed. Except for Ed, whose friends had told him that he was creative, the adult participants were unanimous in their belief that they did not possess the creative talents of "good" writers. However, of the four children, Shelbi and Ruben viewed themselves as "good" writers and did not feel that the process they carried out differed in any way from that which published writers carried out. Though they were confident writers, Joey and Adam struggled to write their ideas. The two boys thought that published writers must have an easier time of it or they would be unable to produce great volumes of text. It appears that the children who felt successful as writers were also the ones who felt a greater kinship to published writers.

The children viewed themselves as writers because they had gone through the writing process and published writing for their classroom audience. However, they felt that they would become "real" writers when their writing met the rigors demanded by an audience outside the classroom.

The children's parents agreed that teachers play a significant role in fostering children's self-confidence as writers. All of the adult participants felt that their teachers' criticism of their writing had contributed greatly to their apprehension of writing and of sharing their writing with others.

It appears that the children's views on writing and on writers were influenced by their observations of their parents' and teachers' actions, together with their interpretations of the adults' views on the role of writing in their lives.

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

In this study, the classroom audience for the children's writing significantly influenced their views on their success as writers. In addition, the children's criteria for evaluating their own writing, together with the ways in which they defined their roles within the classroom social network, were influenced by the audience's response to their writing. This section presents a discussion of the interactions within and beyond the classroom which influence and are influenced by children's understandings of writing.

The Audience for Children's Writing

Influence on Children's Views of Themselves as Writers

Viewing writing as an expression of the writer's thoughts, feelings and personal understandings of their world, the adult participants in this study agreed that writers are vulnerable when they share their writing with others. As a result, the adult participants agreed that the role of those who responded to children's writing in the classroom was one which required sensitivity to the writer as a person, as well as attention to the message communicated through the written words. For this reason, the

teachers in this study went to great lengths to ensure that all children in their classrooms felt that they and their writing were accepted by their classmates and teachers.

My observations of classroom interactions while writing showed that the teachers' attention to the building of supportive peer networks for writers was necessary in order to shield children from the kinds of criticism that would damage their views of themselves as writers and as participants in the classroom social network. During my time in the classroom, there were several incidents where animosities among children, brought to the writing classroom from social situations outside the classroom, were overtly played out while writing. For example, Joey expressed the hurtful feelings of being a "leftover" who was rarely selected as a partner for collaborative projects. In addition, Ruben resented the stinging remarks made by his peers while he was writing, and threatened to tell his teacher what had been said. This prompted further derision from his peers, in spite of his attempts to make them laugh by telling them of the escapades of the "Chicken Man" in his story. It appears that the children brought to their writing classes conflicts which had arisen in past encounters with others, either within or outside of the classroom environment.

The presence of the conflicts and their influence on the children's confidence in their writing were recognized by children and teachers alike, as Gabrielle, the grade six teacher, cited past experiences where children in her classroom had denigrated their peers' writing and the writers had become ashamed of their writing. The students also gave examples of incidents where their peers' negative comments had damaged their views of themselves as writers. Adam described one such occurrence as follows: "Jim was trying to bug me . . . I got one word wrong and he couldn't read it. He'd yell at me and bother me about it and so I didn't bother publishing it."

As a result, when organizing their writing classrooms, the teachers considered not only curriculum and instructional matters, but also the ways in which they would structure interactions among children in the classroom. Sensitive to her students' views of themselves as writers, and remembering past experiences where her own writing had been criticized, Gabrielle looked for ways to discourage students' damaging criticism of their peers' writing. In her mind, children have a purpose for writing when they know it will be shared with others. However, when children fear that their writing will not be accepted by their peers, the opportunity to share their writing is no longer a factor which enhances their writing. Thus, Gabrielle spent a lot of time planning ways to guide her students' responses to their peers' writing. By taking part in the authors' groups, she modelled positive responses to children's writing. She also established rules for acceptable responses to polished writing, as she felt that, "if it's a published piece, it's not going to be changed." Thus, when the children shared their polished writing with their peers, only positive responses were allowed. At this time, Gabrielle reprimanded students who made suggestions or asked questions, instructing writers to ignore the comments, as their piece was finished and no further revisions were needed. It was evident that Gabrielle had carefully structured classroom interactions in an effort to ensure that the children supported and encouraged each other in their writing.

The ways in which the children's teachers responded to their writing also influenced children's views of themselves as writers. The adult participants in this study felt that children's self-expression was not possible when teachers graded children's writing by comparing it to a standard set by the teacher. Instead, the participants felt that teachers should view children's writing as a source of information for diagnostic assessment; identifying the learning that is demonstrated in the writing and the areas where teachers could assist the children in becoming better writers. The parents of the four children in the study felt that the teachers' responses to their

children's writing did encourage the children to express themselves, and they commended teachers for fostering their children's self-confidence as writers.

It appears that the adult participants' views on effective responses to writing were influenced by their own experiences as student-writers. The participants noted that their teachers had praised their writing when it conformed to teacher-imposed standards. However, when the participants had used their writing to explore their world and to make sense of new ideas in ways that did not match the understandings of their teachers, their writing received harsh criticism. Unable to achieve their teachers' expectations, the participants in this study became increasingly apprehensive about writing and came to view themselves as unsuccessful writers. Smith (1983, p. 79) agrees that when children are placed in positions where they must identify and emulate their teachers' models of "good" writing, they become apprehensive about writing, fearing that their writing will fall short of their teachers' expectations. Smith reasons, "Perhaps children grow up reluctant to write for the same reason that so many grow up reluctant to sing, to dance and to play, at least publicly. We become self-conscious about activities that once were spontaneous, and we become too concerned about our own and other people's evaluation of what we do." The children's teachers and parents echoed Smith's words, as they regretted their tendency to evaluate their own writing using the criteria set by their former teachers. Concerned about the opinions of others, the adult participants were unable to enjoy writing for the pleasure of expressing themselves.

In summary, the adult participants in this study recognized the significant influence of the audience's response on writers' views of themselves as writers. As a result, teachers encouraged the children to support each other in their writing and invited children to explore their world in their writing, rather than to conform to teacher-imposed standards.

Influence on Children's Views of "Good" Writing

Calkins (1986) and Graves (1983) assert that children who write for an audience other than their teacher have a purpose for revising and editing their writing because they want to communicate clearly their ideas to their readers. The participants in this research study confirmed this understanding. For example, when the children revised and edited their work, they had their audience in mind and attempted to change wordings that did not clearly communicate their intended meanings. From Shelbi, who was deemed by all of the children in the class to be the best writer, to Joey, who was the least confident of the four children in this study, the children's primary concern was the interest of their audience.

In addition, the adult participants in this study felt that attention to writing conventions was important in order to facilitate the communication of their ideas to their readers. Alice voiced the feelings of parents and teachers by saying that,

> having a good flow of ideas is what is really essential. However, that flow of ideas comes by having some of these other things in place, like being able to write a sentence and make it hang together, being able to write a paragraph and make it coherent with a theme . . . Being able to really communicate a message is really pretty basic. And the clearer we can make that message, the better it is, and so some of those things that we call mechanics come into play there in order to make that message clear.

All of the adults agreed that they did not want the children to focus on writing conventions, but that they did want the children to attend to them to some degree, in order to communicate their message effectively.

The adults' wishes for their children appear to have been realized, as the children felt that writing conventions were important, but they were not particularly concerned about them. For example, Joey stated his desire to make his stories "easy to understand" by having words spelled correctly. As well, I observed that Adam and Ruben often made spelling corrections as they read their stories to me and pointed out errors that they saw on their peers' computer screens. However, though the children did use the "Spell

Check" on their computers, they often ignored the suggestions that were provided. As a result, the spelling errors appeared in their polished stories. It appears that, though the children were not anxious about writing conventions, they were aware that it was important to attend to them in order to facilitate the communication of their ideas.

The children in my study evaluated their writing according to different criteria than did the participants of studies conducted in classrooms where students' writing was graded by their teachers (Stallard, 1974; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Applebee, 1984; Pianko, 1979; Gay, 1983; Watkins, 1985; Marx, 1991). The participants in my study expected that "good" writing would entertain and interest readers. The four children wrote to please themselves and their peers, though they also wrote because it was a requirement in school. In contrast, the participants in previous studies wrote to "meet the demands of particular teachers, particular subject areas and particular topics" (Applebee, 1984, p. 186). In addition, the participants in previous studies made decisions based on their views of what would elicit the desired grade from their teachers. It appears that the differences between the expectations of the participants in this study and those of other studies lay in the anticipated audience for the writing.

In summary, the participants in this study judged the effectiveness of a piece of writing on its ability to comunicate ideas and information in ways that entertained and sustained the interest of its readers. As a result, the focus of their revision efforts was on the content. However, the children did attend to writing conventions to some degree, in an effort to facilitate the communication of their ideas to readers. In this way, the classroom audience for the children's writing greatly influenced their views on "good" writing, and thus, the ways in which they revised and evaluated their own writing.

Influence on Children's Social Roles Within the Classroom

My observations of the children's interactions while writing, together with their interview comments, showed that the classroom audience provides a forum for children to construct their views of themselves as writers and as participants in the classroom social network.

Often during writing sessions, the children in my research study asked their peers to read or to listen to what they had written. It appears to be very important to the children that their writing should capture their peers' interest and spark their laughter. Indeed, the children claimed that without an interested audience, a story was not really a story. Ruben expressed his views on the importance of an appreciative audience by saying, "Authors have to write a story that at least one person will enjoy." Thus, as the children shared parts of their stories with each other, their peers' favorable responses provided not only a sense of purpose for the writing, but also a sense of accomplishment for the writers.

Indeed, many of the decisions that the children made while writing reflected a concern for their peers' reactions to their writing. For example, Adam explained that he shared his writing with his peers while his writing was in process because he did not "like writing and nobody hearing it and then find[ing] out after [having] written the whole story that nobody likes it." It appears that Adam gauged his success as a writer through his peers' acceptance of his stories.

Similarly, Ruben was conscious of the ways in which he must put words together in his writing to evoke his own and his peer's laughter, and thus, to perpetuate his view of himself as a humorous and entertaining writer. Because he felt that "good" stories were ones that contained humor, Ruben perceived that his success as a writer was contingent upon his ability to draw his peer's laughter through his writing. Ruben explained his view by saying, "From the personalities of quite a bit of people in this classroom, [he

points to the boys in grade six], I think I've gotta make them laugh a bit. Most of them like it funny." It seems that Ruben was confirming the social role which he thought he should be playing in the class by evoking the response that he wanted from his peers. If his peers laughed at the parts which he thought were humorous, then they were verifying his view of himself as a humorous writer. In Ruben's mind, a humorous writer was equated with a successful writer.

It appears that the children held common beliefs about the acceptability of characters and topics that they could use in their stories. They showed their awareness of the cultural expectations of their classroom by writing many stories using these characters and topics. For example, the boys' stories achieved greater recognition from peers when they were about super- heroes and television or video game characters. Joey explained that when he was younger, it was acceptable to write about animals. However, as a grade six student, he was expected to write about more "realistic" characters, such as video game heroes. It seems that "realistic" was a term that Joey applied to those things that were relevant to him and to his peers at the time, and thus, that met the expectations of the classroom social network. By choosing to write about "Ice Man", a video game hero, Joey was making decisions that were accepted by his peers. Their favorable responses to Joey's writing contributed greatly to his feelings of success as a writer and to his sense of belonging in the classroom social group.

Together with expectations for acceptable characters, there were also expectations for the topics about which grade six children should write. The three boys in the study recognized that their peers appreciated stories which were humorous and/or full of action. As a result, the boys explored humorous topics in their stories and advised that "good" stories should include words like "chicken", as well as clumsy manoeuvers carried out by characters, unpalatable food combinations, and disobedient characters, because these features prompted almost certain laughter from peers. It appears that the

elements which the children found most humorous were those outrageous events that the children would have loved to attempt in their own lives, but which they knew were not acceptable for children of their age.

As well as allowing the children to be funny in ways that were not acceptable in real life, story writing provided the opportunity for the children to explore everyday actions through the actions of stronger, braver characters they had created or borrowed from movies and literature. For example, the boys' stories often contained the violence and fast action of movies, television shows and books that the boys had viewed or read. These features of imagined worlds were often integrated with elements of everyday life, such as shopping in malls and eating pizza. Though the girls' writing generally did not include violence, it also centered on topics that combined elements of their everyday lives with features from literature, movies and television shows that they had read or viewed. It appears that the socially acceptable topics for stories shared in this classroom were those which allowed the children to explore their everyday lives in the shoes of imagined characters who were not restricted by the limitations of being an eleven or twelve year old child.

When thinking about their audience, the children in this classroom considered not only the nature of the of characters and topics for their writing, but also the names of the characters in their stories. They recognized that the use of their peers' names in their stories would enhance their classroom audience's interest in their stories. The children appeared to delight in hearing about the heroic exploits of characters who bore their names. The following exchange between Ruben, Joey and Mike is representative of the ways in which the children negotiated names and roles for characters in their stories:

R: Do you want to be in this story?
J: Sure.

R: Well, what do you want your name to be called? Do you want your name to be called Joey? His name is Mike Monster (motions to Mike). What do you want to be called?
J: Joey Calm.
R: Joey Calm. Cool, But, well . . .
J: Joey Zilla.
R: Joey Zilla, that sounds cool. Yeah. Joey Zilla. What rank do you want to be? You want to be in the police or a mobster?
J: Uh, the mobster.
R: Okay. You can't be the Radical Mouse Machine 'cause he's the, like the biggest mobster in New York. He wants to . . .
M: Who?
R: The Radical Mouse Machine.
M: Who's he?
R: Well, you're Captain Mike Monster. You're just getting in trouble right here.
M: From who?
R: From me. I have the highest rank in the New York Police. You're only a captain. I boss you around all the time.
M: You better not boss me around.

In this exchange, it appears that Ruben was inviting Mike and Joey to be a part of his story by attaching their names to characters who acted in ways that the two boys would like to act. By including the two boys' names and adding "Monster" and "Zilla" to them, Ruben was ensuring their interest in his story, both as he wrote it and when he shared it with the class.

In addition, the exchange also appears to provide a forum for the boys to explore their real-life relationships with each other, as Mike made it very clear that he would not tolerate a submissive role in his relationship with Ruben. He implied that a problem would arise if other children recognized this kind of a relationship in Ruben's story, as they might infer that this was the nature of their real-life relationship.

Another example of the children's perceptions that their social roles were expressed and transmitted in their writing was provided by Shelbi, who confided her fears that her story might become long and boring for her readers. It appears that Shelbi was not concerned about the boredom her peers might have to endure, but rather about their perceptions of her as the writer of a story that wearied them. If Shelbi

bored her peers through her writing, they might consider her to be a tiresome person and a less-than-acceptable writer, as well. As a result, Shelbi made decisions which ensured that her writing would be deemed interesting by her peer audience. Through pleasing her audience, she maintained her view of herself as a successful writer. Like the other children in the study, it appears that Shelbi constructed her view of herself as a writer, as well as her social roles, through her peers' responses to her writing.

Further to this, it was through the sharing of their writing that the children became aware of the strengths and weaknesses, and of the writing styles and preferred topics of their peers. Indeed, according to Ruben, the purpose for sharing his writing with his peers was "to give the other people in the class ideas and tell them a bit what this person's personality is like." Consequently, the four children were able to recognize the writing of others in their classroom. Adam's description of Shelbi as the writer of "really long stories [who] can come up with descriptive and funny stories and she can come up with adventure stories," demonstrated this awareness. In addition, there was agreement among the children that Shelbi was a very skilled writer and that Ruben was a humorous writer. It was through these and similar understandings about their peers and themselves that the children constructed certain expectations for their peers' writing and about the responses that certain features in their writing would evoke in their peers. These expectations served to shape their social roles within the class.

Though Fulwiler (in Fulwiler & Young, 1982) asserts that journal writing is a means by which individuals explore who they are and their relationships with others in their world, the children in this study appear to have used their story writing for this purpose. Indeed, they did not enjoy journal writing. The ways in which journals were used in the classroom appears to have led them to view journals as a means of recording events in their everyday lives. As a listing of events, journal writing left little room for the children to use their imagination or to play with the possibilities within those

events. Shelbi expressed this commonly-held view by saying, "When you're writing in your journal, you're writing what went on that day . . . You can't really use your imagination at all because you're just writing what happened to you that day." Thus, it appears that the children explored and constructed their understandings of themselves and their world through their story writing, rather than through journal writing, which is recognized by Fulwiler (in Fulwiler & Young, 1982) to be a more expressive form of writing.

Another factor which rendered journals less interesting in the children's eyes was the lack of opportunity for them to share the ideas written in their journals with their peers. Because they were writing a sequence of events in their journal for their teacher to read and were not attempting to entertain their peer audience, the children did not view journal writing as a means of constructing and reinforcing their views of themselves as successful writers. Consequently, the children preferred story writing over journal writing because they were able to entertain their peers through their story writing and, thus, to reaffirm that they were "good" writers.

In conclusion, much of the pleasure which the children derived from their writing lay in the favorable response of their audience. Indeed, their perceived success as writers was contingent upon the acceptance of their stories by their peers. It appears that the children viewed themselves as successful writers when their writing evoked responses from their peers which matched their own responses to the writing. In this way, the children were reinforcing their views of themselves as writers and their views of their social roles within the class through their audience's response to their writing. As a result, many of the decisions that the children made about characters, topics and voice were centered around expectations of what would entertain their peers. These decisions carried great weight because they assisted the children in fulfilling their

teacher's curriculum expectations and also established the children's views of themselves as writers and as members of the classroom social network.

Influence of Word Processors on Children's Writing

The children and their teachers agreed with the participants in a study conducted by Cochran-Smith, Kahn, and Paris (1990) that word processors are tools which facilitate the physical task of placing letters on the page. When using word processors, the participants in this study and in the previous study found that their focus was on the thinking process, rather than on the physical act of forming letters. As a result, the quality of their writing improved. Indeed, the word processor allowed those writers who had difficulty with the physical act of writing to compose as easily as those writers who had no difficulty. For example, Joey, who was described by his mother as having "very poor fine motor coordination, so it's a real chore for him to write," found this to be true. He enjoyed the ease with which his ideas could appear on the screen and the handsome form they took when printed on a page. This was not possible when he wrote his stories by hand.

Joey also used his freedom from the laborious forming of letters as an occasion for playing with the words and letters on the computer screen. He spent a great deal of time changing the fonts and print sizes, and never found writing to be a boring activity when he was using a word processor. However, as a result of his play, he did not write a great deal during his one-hour class periods. Daiute (1985) also observed that the children in her study enjoyed the novelty of word processor functions. She cautioned that the attention of some children could be drawn away from the writing task when they spent much of their time playing with their writing tool. In my study, Joey was the only one who appeared to view the computer as a diversion from his writing, and I observed that he found other diversions when writing using a pen as his writing tool. Thus, though the

computer was a source of entertainment for some children, it was a useful tool for all children.

The teachers in this study observed that the word processor influenced children's attitudes toward writing. For example, Gabrielle and Rhonda thought that the children took greater pride in their writing when using a word processor because of the polished look of the finished product. In addition, Alice observed that students used quotation marks in dialogue more consistently when using word processors because, as she explained, of the clarity of the marks on the computer screen.

Like the participants in a study conducted by Bridwell, Sirc and Brooke (1985), the children in my study stated a preference for writing using a word processor because it facilitated the editing of their stories and helped them to write better stories. Ed, Adam's grades four and five teacher, also asserted, "I believe strongly that a student who writes on a computer is a better writer." His transfer to a school where students did not use word processors for their writing provided a basis for comparing student writers who wrote with and without word processors. He found that the students in his former school were more willing to make changes to their writing following a conference with their teacher because it was much easier to do so with a word processor. Indeed, he expressed a reluctance to make suggestions for substantive changes in writing that was done by hand because he understood the great effort required to make those changes.

In summary, the classroom participants in this study viewed word processors as tools which facilitated and improved their writing because they made it easier to compose and to revise. In addition, the teachers felt that the polished writing which was produced through the use of word processors enhanced children's pride in their writing.

Influences of the Social Context Beyond the Classroom

The children's views on the importance of their classroom writing and their criteria for determining "real" writers appear to be influenced by factors beyond the classroom. Though their teachers organized the classroom in ways which invited children to value their writing as a means of self-expression and to consider themselves as successful writers, the children viewed writing which allowed them to explore their worlds and their social roles as less important than informational writing. In addition, they felt that they would become "real" writers only when their writing was accepted by an audience beyond the classroom wall and when it had received financial rewards.

It appears that the children's views were based on their observations of the kinds of writing in which secondary students and adults engage. The children anticipated that they would be writing informational text in secondary school and in their adult lives, rather than the expressive and poetic text that they were writing in elementary school. It appears that they viewed activities which took place primarily in elementary school to be less serious and of lesser importance than those carried out in secondary school and in the adult work world. For example, Ruben explained that "usually it's something fiction that a kid my age writes." He did not expect to be writing stories like "The Chicken Man" in junior high school. Similarly, Adam labelled the elementary school writing that he enjoyed as "kiddie stuff," and felt that he would have to write to communicate information in junior high school. All of the children anticipated that this kind of writing more closely approximated the "serious" writing that would be required of them in their adult occupations.

Through their views on the relative importance of elementary and secondary school writing, it appears that the children in this study are contrasting the "invisible pedagogies" of elementary school with the "visible pedagogies" of secondary school (Bernstein, 1975). In his work, Bernstein noted that the kind of learning which society

appears to value is that which enables individuals to accumulate wealth and to function independently in the work world. Thus, because elementary children have many years of schooling before they become adults, society accepts an "invisible" elementary school curriculum which provides opportunity for individual expression. However, as children move closer to the time when they will be part of the work force, the school curriculum focuses on the preparation of young adults for the world of work. As a result, the secondary curriculum encourages a more "visible" curriculum, with an emphasis on informational writing, where students are required to synthesize ideas from text books and lectures, rather than to express themselves (Bernstein, 1975).

The differentiation between the "visible" and "invisible" curriculum appears to have influenced the children's views on "real" writers, as well. Like the children in grades one, three and five in Nistler's study (1989, p. 16), the children in this study did feel that they were published writers. Indeed, they had printed a laser copy and made a cover for their stories, and then had made them available for their classmates to read by placing them in the class library. However, they held a common belief that "real" writers are those whose books "get let out to the general public," as voiced by Ruben. The children felt that they could only be "real" writers through publishing their writing for an audience beyond the classroom and through earning an income from their writing. The children recognized elementary school writing experiences as simulations of the experiences of professional writers, preparing them for the more rigorous (and therefore more valuable) experiences in secondary school and in the adult work world.

However, in spite of their views on the importance of the writing in which they engaged in elementary classrooms and on "real" writers, the children in this study were confident writers who made decisions about their writing based on their desire to explore their world and to communicate their ideas to their audience. As the children interacted and learned from each other, they shared the control over their learning with

their teachers. This sharing of control showed the teachers' trust in students' abilities to learn (Smith, 1986, p. 149).

However, in sharing the power over students' learning, two of the teachers, Gabrielle and Rhonda, experienced some uncertainities about the effectiveness of their instructional strategies, explaining that they had to have faith in the learning process. In spite of their abilities to articulate clearly and passionately their views of learning, these two teachers experienced an inner struggle in their attempt to reconcile traditional beliefs in a quiet classroom where the teacher transmits knowledge to students, with their developing understanding of social interaction as a forum for learning. It appears that they needed support and confirmation that their teaching was effective in reaching their goals for their students. Moffett (1985, p. 52) suggests that this lack of support arises because "the public wants schools to prepare youngsters for jobs and roles such as it grew up among. It wants to perpetuate a world it understands." Because the children in Gabrielle's classroom were provided opportunities to construct their own understandings of the world and their social roles through interacting with others, they were creating new worlds, rather than perpetuating the present one.

In summary, the children's elementary writing experiences allowed them to construct their own understandings of their world and they confidently used writing as a tool to explore their world and their social roles. However, a "technical" view of schooling (Giroux, 1983, p. 177), where teachers transmit well-defined quantities of knowledge to students in an effort to prepare them for the economic and social world of adults, is evident in the children's views of "real" writers. It is also apparent in children's views on the relative importance of the expressive writing they carry out in elementary school compared to that which they anticipate doing in secondary school.

It was not only the children who wrestled with this "technical" view (Giroux, 1983, p. 177) of learning. While their teachers believed that children learn through

social interaction, they, too, experienced uncertainties about the effectiveness of their instructional strategies, and wondered if their students were learning all that they should be learning. They speculated that they would feel more certain of their students' learning if their teaching methods were more "visible."

Social Contexts Which Influence Children's Understandings of Writing: Summing Up

When children are encouraged to express themselves in writing to an audience of their peers, they write confidently and enjoy writing. Because children experience success as writers through the positive responses of their peers and their teacher, their goals are to entertain their audience and to communicate their ideas clearly. Consequently, the focus of their revision efforts is on the content of the writing, though the correct use of writing conventions is also a consideration.

In contrast, when children's writing is compared to a standard set by their teachers, they apply their teachers' standards to their writing and do not view writing as a means of entertaining and engaging their audience. It appears that children become self-conscious about writing and carry these apprehensions into their adult lives, even when they become teachers of writing.

Though teachers of writing may not be confident writers, they strive to organize their writing instruction in ways that encourage their students to write with confidence. Teachers accept children's writing as a window on children's understandings of their world and attempt to build on those understandings by modelling and providing individual and small group instruction based on children's needs.

When writing for a classroom audience, children's views of themselves as writers are influenced by their teachers' responses to their writing. However, a more significant influence appears to be the responses of the children's peers. As a result, teachers model and provide guidelines for children's responses to their peers' writing,

in order to assure children that they are accepted as members of a classroom writing community.

It appears that children construct their understandings of "good" writing through their interactions in the classroom. Because the acceptance of the classroom audience significantly influences children's views of themselves as writers, children shape their writing to fit within the parameters of "good" writing, as defined by the classroom culture. Indeed, when making decisions while writing, children select topics, characters and genres which they feel will be accepted by their peers. As a result, there are many elements which are common to the writing of all of the children. However, there are unique variations of those elements in each child's story, as the children weave their unique experiences into the common threads found in all of the stories. Each time a new story is written and shared with others, individual children expand and change the shape of that body of writing which is deemed to be acceptable in the classroom. Thus, as children share their writing, they shape the classroom definition of "good" writing, while at the same time, learning the classroom definition of acceptable writing through the responses of their peers to the writing.

Children's writing provides a forum for the exploration of everyday classroom relationships among children. The children write their classmates into their stories by naming their villains and protagonists after their peers. When asking permission to use their peers' names in their stories, the children negotiate the possible roles they will have in each other's stories. As they negotiate their roles in the stories, they appear to be constructing their social roles in the classroom community, as well.

Through expressing themselves in their writing, children become autonomous writers who write to learn more about themselves and their social roles within the classroom. It appears that they write to please their peers and themselves, as well as their teacher. In this way, individual expression is encouraged, as children use writing

to construct their own understandings of their world. The curriculum that is learned is "invisible" (Bernstein, 1975) because it is not a clearly-defined body of information that is transmitted by the teacher to the children.

However, the children in this study anticipated that their secondary school learning experiences would follow a more "visible" curriculum (Bernstein, 1975), where teachers would expect them to write informational text that would conform closely to the teachers' standards. In this way, the children anticipated that they would lose some of the autonomy which they enjoyed as writers in elementary grades. The children thought they would be expected to reconstruct conventional understandings of their world, rather than to construct their own understandings through social interaction.

When teachers use an "invisible" curriculum (Bernstein, 1975) which allows children to explore their worlds, they experience uncertainties about the efficacy of their instructional methods. It appears that their uncertainties reflect their efforts to reconcile public demands for accountability through measuring the outcomes of their teaching with the teachers' belief that children learn through interaction and construct their own understandings of their world; understandings that cannot be quantified through testing.

Implications for Classroom Teaching

This study reinforces the value in using word processors as writing tools in grade six classrooms, as word processors facilitate both the physical aspect and the editing of children's writing. As a result, children are more apt to enjoy writing and to edit their writing so that it clearly communicates the intended message to their audience. In the process, the quality of the children's writing is improved. Thus, the use of word

processors as writing tools in classrooms enhances children's views of writing and their success as writers.

Because children's views of themselves as writers are greatly influenced by their peers' responses to their writing, children have a significant responsibility in supporting and encouraging their peers as writers. However, it is difficult for children to support and encourage peers with whom they were fighting on the playground during the recess prior to the writing class. These conflicts cannot be ignored by teachers. Rather, teachers need to provide children with tools to resolve the conflicts. They also need to model and reinforce expectations for responses to children's writing. By attending to the nature of classroom interactions, teachers are ensuring that children will be able to respond to the writing of their peers and not allow antagonistic feelings toward the writer to interfere with their responsibilities as the audience for the writing. As a factor which contributes greatly to children's views of writing and of themselves as writers, the classroom audience deserves careful attention from teachers.

Because children are very sensitive to their peers' response to their writing, and thus to the acceptability of topics and themes within their classroom culture, the classroom audience shapes the content of children's writing. Often, the topics and characters for children's writing are taken from popular culture and their stories include violent acts. Teachers may wish to influence children's views on the acceptability of topics and characters. When children explore their everyday lives through writing, there is no reason why their larger-than-life characters have to be drawn from movies and television programs. Instead, they can come from literature and real life. Teachers can make children aware of the multitude of fascinating characters that exist outside of the television screen. In this way, teachers can encourage certain topics and discourage others by providing literary models which replace the characters

and topics of popular culture. Thus, teachers are showing alternate ways in which children may explore the possibilities of their everyday lives.

In addition, children need to be given the option to share their writing with their peers or to keep it to themselves. There may be times when children wish to explore their world in ways that do not fit within the expectations of the classroom culture. Children may be reluctant to share writing which they feel would not be accepted by their peers. If writing is to be a tool for children to explore their world, they should have the freedom to write without being concerned with the response of their audience. Typically, journal writing provides this freedom. However, if the teacher is reading the journal and children are compelled to write in their journals during certain times of the day, the children may view journal writing as a school task and not as a forum for self-discovery and self-expression.

This study showed that children's views of themselves as writers are enhanced when teachers view their writing as a source of information for assessing children's strengths and needs as writers and learners, rather than as a product which must measure up to a teacher-imposed standard of acceptability. It is difficult to avoid the imposition of teachers' standards when teachers are compelled to grade children's writing because of public demands for accountability. However, it is possible to continue to teach an "invisible" curriculum and at the same time, to respond to public demands. Teachers may provide children the freedom to write on topics of their choice and then make periodic requests to write within a specific genre. This assigned writing could be graded using criteria which focus on the children's achievement of their purpose for the writing and on their abilities to communicate their ideas clearly. The children could also be asked to assess their own writing using criteria generated by themselves and their teacher.

In response to the public demand for accountability, it is not only through children's writing and writing processes that teachers can learn about their students as writers. The information which the four children have provided about their learning through responding to questions about their views on writing and writers has been valuable in providing a more complete picture of who they are as writers and learners. It seems that questions such as those found in Appendix B would be useful for teachers when gathering information for children's portfolios because children demonstrate their learning not only through their behavior and their oral and written products, but also through articulating their understandings of their world.

Teachers who use an "invisible" curriculum (Bernstein, 1975) and encourage children to construct meaning through interacting with others while writing may need to develop a supportive network of colleagues who espouse similar views on learning. Uncertainties accompany any effort which encourages change, rather than the perpetuation of the status quo. Because the learning that takes place in classrooms which espouse "invisible" pedagogies is not readily measured and, therefore, difficult to define, teachers need to feel confident in the efficacy of their instructional strategies. Without the support of their colleagues, teachers may become discouraged when faced with opposition and may begin to question their understandings of how children learn.

Implications for Further Research

To explore children's cultural understandings about writing in a further study, it would be interesting to focus on children in French immersion and English as a second language classrooms. Because the children are writing in a second language, their abilities to express themselves are limited to the vocabulary they learn in the classrooms. These limitations, together with the new perspective that is gained through

learning a second language, may influence their views on writing and on themselves as writers.

In addition, conducting a similar study with children whose parents are not professionals would enhance my exploration of the ways in which culture is expressed and transmitted through classroom writing. The children in this study recognized that writing played a role in their parents' working lives and valued writing as a tool for use in the work world. The proposed study would illuminate the ways in which children value writing when their parents do not use it to a great extent in their work lives.

The children in this class composed with word processors. To determine the influence of the writing tool on children's understandings of writing, it would be useful to compare the results of this study with those of a similar study conducted in a classroom where children use pens as writing tools.

In addition, it would be interesting to note how the four children's understandings of writing and writers develop over time and within different kinds of learning environments by following the four children into their junior high schools.

The content of the four grade six children's writing was greatly influenced by the responses of their classroom audience. I am interested in exploring whether the same is true of students at the primary and senior high school levels who interact while writing, or whether this is a characteristic of middle grade children.

The children's responses to my questions about their views on writing and writers provided a rich source of information about their learning and about who they were as learners. It seems that this kind of information would be valuable for teachers when compiling data for portfolios of children's learning. Recognizing that conducting interviews similar to the ones I carried out in my study would be difficult to schedule for classroom teachers, it would be useful to work with teachers to determine how this information could be gathered during everyday teaching.

Having suggested that teachers use their influence in the classroom to shape children's views on the acceptability of topics and themes in their writing, I would like to explore children's views of "good" writing in classroom environments where teachers make conscious efforts to shape these views.

It is interesting that the children's mothers volunteered to share their views on writing with a researcher in their classroom, but that the children's fathers chose not to participate in the study. I would like to conduct further research on the cultural understandings of parents' roles in their children's development as writers when the children are in primary and in middle grades. The questions asked of the children and of their parents would more directly explore their views on the parents' roles and their influence on children's views of writing and of writers.

Finally, I would like to observe students' interactions in primary, middle grade and senior high school classrooms, interviewing the students, their teachers and their parents about "invisible" and "visible" pedagogies. My goals would be to explore whether there are significant differences in teachers' views on the two pedagogies at each level, and to observe how their views are reflected in their classroom instruction. In addition, I would like to explore the ways in which teachers are reconciling public demands for accountability, through using "visible" pedagogies, with their personal beliefs in "invisible" pedagogies.

Personal Reflections

My experience with the research process has shown that it is very much a learning process. As a researcher, I embarked on the process with a "theory of the world" about the ways in which individuals learn; understanding learning as a process which occurs through social interaction with others, with language being the means for transmitting and expressing cultural understandings about the world. My "theory of the world" was

modified as I interacted with members of my advisory committee, with the participants in my study, with the written work of researchers, and with friends and colleagues who were interested in my research. Through these interactions, I constructed an understanding of learning that reflected the cultural understandings of my environment, together with my unique experiences as a teacher and learner.

In the research process, I began reading the work of Schutz, Bruner and Halliday. I wanted to build on the body of research about classroom writing and to put together a more complete picture of children as writers. I attempted to do this by exploring classroom interactions among children and by interviewing the children's parents and former teachers. In addition, having constructed some hypotheses about the significant influence of peers on middle-grade children's behavior, I wanted to find out more about the influence of classroom culture on the content of children's writing and on their views of writing. As I wrote this report about the research process I carried out, I was able to reflect upon my experience and to make new connections with previously-constructed understandings about my world. Consequently, I constructed new texts, modifying my "theory of learning" through my interactions in the research process.

One of my colleagues was asked if the results of her research study were not simply common sense. In my mind, one of the tests of reliable results should be their ability to fit within the "theories of the world", which I equate with common sense, of the participants in the culture. Because I view the research process as a learning process, I feel that the results of research studies should build upon the cultural understandings constructed by individuals and that they should illuminate connections with previously-constructed meanings that may not have been apparent before the research study was carried out. In this way, I hope that others will find that the results of this study fit within the realm of common sense.

Another goal of research and learning is to be able to make predictions about the outcomes of future interactions with the people and things of the world in order to gain greater control over one's actions. In this sense, the research process has enabled me to work with greater confidence as a classroom teacher with middle-grade students. After completing this research study, I taught in a grade six classroom for three months. During this time, I observed with greater understanding the influence of peers' responses on children's writing. I found that my students appreciated having a choice to share their writing with their peers because there was some writing which they wanted to do which they would not have felt comfortable in sharing with their peers. In addition, I introduced my students to writing using word processors as writing tools. Their response was overwhelming, as students who had shown no interest in writing were asking when they would have the opportunity to write. Finally, I also experienced the influence of the public pressure for a more "visible" curriculum in middle grades, as parents and students questioned teaching strategies which did not emphasize workbook pages and great amounts of homework. The question I heard from parents and children alike was, "Are the students going to be prepared for junior high school when they will have to write tests, take home great amounts of work and complete workbook exercises?" They appear to have voiced the fear that "invisible" pedagogies which I was embracing would not be carried into secondary school classrooms (though my questions of secondary teachers showed that there was, indeed, evidence of "invisible" pedagogies in secondary classrooms.)

The opportunity to observe and then to reflect on observations in another teacher's classroom helped me to make sense of the interactions in my own classroom. I found that the findings of my research did apply directly to classroom practice. I have framed new research questions following my experiences as researcher and teacher, again following the learning process where new information brings to consciousness new questions that

need to be answered in order to make sense of one's world. I am curious about the ways in which teachers are responding to public demands for more "visible" pedagogies, and about the ways in which teachers can be supported in their struggle to meet public demands and still apply what they know about how children learn. In addition, I would like to explore further the views of secondary teachers on "visible" and "invisible" pedagogies to see if the public view of secondary school matches that of secondary teachers. Finally, I would like to explore ways in which the cultural understandings about learning which have been constructed by non-educators can be enhanced, so that the demands for accountability reflect an appreciation of "invisible" pedagogies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS REQUESTING PERMISSION

Dear Parents:

I am a graduate student in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta who wishes to conduct a research study in Ms. M's class to find out about students' thoughts and feelings about writing and about themselves as writers.

For three to four months starting January 11, I will be talking to students during their language arts classes and when they are writing during subject area classes. I intend to work with students and Ms. M in ways that will not be disruptive to their regular classroom activities.

After getting to know the students, I will be selecting four or five students to work with me more closely. During their regular class time, these students will be asked questions such as the following:

* What do you think a writer needs to do in order to write well?
* Do you like to write? Why? Why not?
* Why do people write?
* Is writing a very important part of your life? What makes it important/unimportant?
* What have you learned about writing from your friends? from your teachers? from your parents? from others?
* What is the most difficult thing about writing? the easiest thing?
* What experiences helped you most in learning to write? in school? outside of school?
* Who are some of your favorite authors? What have they taught you about writing?
* How did you learn to write?
* Do you think that writing is easy or hard to do? Should writers expect that writing will be hard work? Why? Why not?

Also, I would like to photocopy the pieces of writing that they refer to when talking to me.

To find out more about the thoughts of people around them, I will tape record some of the conversations between the selected students and their peers while they are writing. In addition, I would like to meet with the four students' parents at their convenience to ask them similar questions about their views on writing. Those people who agree to talk with me about their views on writing may choose not to answer questions and they may withdraw from the study at any time.

The responses to the questions will be tape recorded and later transcribed, so that I may select the ideas that help me to understand how the students view writing. The tapes will be kept for a year and then erased.

The names and locations of all people involved will not be identified in my dissertation or in any publications arising from this research study. Though I intend to use quotations from the interviews and may use excerpts from the children's writing, I will not identify their sources.

I intend to share my findings with Ms. M and with parents and students who are interested in reading my dissertation.

I look forward to working with you and your child. Please complete the attached consent form, indicating your willingness to have your child participate in the study and your willingness to be contacted for an interview at your convenience sometime between January 25 and April 30, and return it to Ms. M before January 11.

Thank you very much!

Please complete and return this form to Ms. M before January 11. I thank you for your willingness to participate in my research study.

I am willing to have my child, _____, participate in Shelley Peterson's research study. (child's name)

I am willing to be contacted for a 20-30 minute interview with Shelley Peterson should my child be selected as one of the participants in the research study.

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Best times for meetings: _____

Best locations for meetings: _____

I will contact parents during the last week of January to set up meeting times.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Interviews with the Children

1. Do you think that writing is easy or hard to do? What makes it easy? What makes it difficult?

2. Do you think other people find writing easy or difficult?

3. Why do you write stories? Why do you write in social studies or science?

4. What do you think good writers do?

5. Do you like to write? Why? Why not?

6. How did you learn to write stories? How did your teachers help you? How did your friends help you? your parents? your brothers or sisters?

7. Who are some of your favorite authors? What have they taught you about writing?

8. Do you think you are a good writer? What makes you a good writer?

9. Tell me about your best piece of writing. What makes it the best?

10. What would you like to do better as a writer?

11. When did you start writing? What kinds of things did you write when you started writing?

12. How has your writing changed since you started writing?

13. How do you decide on the topics for your writing?

14. What do you learn when you write?

15. If you knew someone was having trouble with their writing, how would you help that person?

16. What kinds of comments are helpful to you in improving your writing?

17. What is the best time and place for you to write?

18. Do you think published authors do the same things you do? What do they do that is the same? What do they do differently?

Questions for Interviews with the Children's Parents

1. Tell me about your child's first writing.

2. How did your child feel about going to school and learning to write in grade one?

3. Does your child write at home? What are the ways that you have found to help him/her with his/her writing?

4. How do your other children feel about writing?

5. Do you like to write? Is writing easy or difficult for you?

6. What kind of writing do you do? What kinds of writing would you like to do?

7. Tell me about good writers you know. What makes them good writers?

8. What memories do you have of your writing instruction in elementary school?

9. What kinds of things helped you in your writing?

10. What do you feel is the role of writing in today's world?

11. How would you like to see your child using writing in school? in his/her adult life?

12. What changes have you noticed in your child's writing over the years? Does he/she show you a lot of his/her writing?

13. What do you think the goals of writing instruction should be in schools?

14. How does your child like to spend his/her free time? Is this reflected in his/her writing?

Questions for Interviews with the Children's Teachers

Goals of Writing Instruction

1. Tell me about your writing program. What has brought you to the point you are at?

2. What are your goals for your students as writers?

3. What do you see as the role of writing in subject area learning? in everyday life?

4. What is your reaction to cries to go back to the basics when teaching writing? What do you feel are the basics of writing?

5. What memories do you have of your writing instruction? How have they influenced your writing program?

Teacher as Writer

1. Who is a good writer you know? What makes this person a good writer? What has this writer taught you?

2. Do you enjoy writing? Have you always enjoyed it? What do you enjoy about writing?

3. What role does writing play in your life?

4. Is writing easy or difficult for you? What makes it so?

5. Do you consider yourself a good writer? Why? Why not?

6. What would you like to do better as a writer?

Assessment of Students' Writing

1. What do you see as the role of assessment in writing?

2. What are the criteria you use when assessing students' writing?

3. How have your views on assessment in writing evolved? What has influenced your views?