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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CASE STUDIES OF ACCOMPLISHED WRITERS AND DEVELOPING WRITERS

by

DONNA WYATT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1987

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on the composing processes of four professional writers and three good student writers. The physical activities, cognitive processes and the role of the affective domain in the composing process were examined.

Case studies of Eudora Welty, Margaret Laurence, John Steinbeck, and Monica Hughes were based on information from published interviews, letters, biographies, and actual written products. Case studies of three good student writers were prepared from observational field notes, journals and interviews with the students, parents and teachers. The composing processes of the student writers were compared to those of the professional writers.

With reference to the student writers, the research demonstrated that each student writer showed a well-established set of physical activities associated with composition. There was little evidence of any physical plan nor of extensive revision. The student writers were positively influenced by the literature to which they had been exposed and by supportive parents and teachers.

With reference to the professional writers, the research demonstrated that each writer exhibited a well-established set of physical activities including a schedule free from interruptions. One of the professional writers participated

in a type of physical planning. All indicated that their stories had been in their minds for months and sometimes years. They participated in extensive revision, usually following the completion of the first draft. They were positively influenced by their reading of literature and by supportive parents and teachers.

The professional writers distinguished themselves from the student writers in their concern for content and form. They demonstrated well-developed senses of place and used sophisticated symbolism in their writing.

Implications for teaching emerged concerning the physical preferences associated with composition, the importance of the use of literature, and the importance of support provided by parents and teachers. It was suggested that the study of the composing processes of professional writers may help teachers understand the composing process and assist in planning appropriate programs for children.

Several recommendations for further research were made.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### Overview

This introductory chapter outlines the general nature of the study, its purposes, and the questions it sought to answer. The design of the study is briefly described, its limitations stated and its significance noted.

#### Background to the Study

Recent research into the writing processes of the developing writer has given us information about the writer. Lucy Calkins informed us of the composing processes of one child, Susie, in her book Lessons From A Child (1983). Glenda Bissex explained the composing processes and writing activities of her son Paul over an eight year period in her book Gnys at Wrk (1981). The Mast Way School Project under the directorship of Jane Hansen and Donald Graves has developed literacy profiles of many children in Mast Way School. This research represents a move away from study of the product to studies of the composing processes and as such may have more of an impact on instruction.

Interviews with well-known accomplished writers show that each writer demonstrates differing strategies in the composing process. The physical actions of these writers can be observed and some knowledge of their cognitive

processes can be gained through interviews and the reading of personal diaries or journals.

The Paris Review is a journal established in 1953 for the purpose of publishing interviews with writers of mainly fiction. These interviews tell us what writers are like as people, where they get their ideas, how they work on a daily basis and what they dream of writing. (Cowley, 1958) The interviews tell us of their composing processes and help in forming a composite picture of what the fiction writer is like.

In addition to interviews, more information about authors can be obtained from their biographies, letters, and discussions. For example, in his biography, Robert Quackenbush tells readers that he wrote the book Henry's Awful Mistake, a story about a duck because people always asked him about his name, Quackenbush. In a letter to young readers, Eve Bunting says that:

When I write my imagination takes me all the way inside my story. . . Through my books I've surfed the big waves, been an olympic diver, solved mysteries, helped a baby foal be born and and . . . It's wonderful and I'm wonderful in my books. (Bunting, 1979.)

Another author of children's books, Jane Yolen was discussing the use of word processors with illustrator, Trina Schart Hyman at lunch in October, 1984. Yolen revealed some of her personal writing history when she explained that she couldn't possibly compose without her old

green typewriter and that she needed to have the print in front of her with whatever errors she made in order to feel like she was really writing.

Thus, we can gather information about the activities of accomplished writers in a number of ways.

Few examples of educational research relate the processes of the accomplished writer to the developing writer. Donald Murray (1984), an accomplished writer and teacher of composition at the college level, will write for his students and compose aloud so that they can become aware of his composing processes and possibly become more aware of their own composing processes through such observations and the keeping of journals. Teachers are being encouraged to write with their students during class time so that the experience of composing can be shared. Still, much of teaching practice is related to what textbooks say should happen in the writing process and yet there is little documentation that proves that such processes are actually used by either accomplished writers or young writers.

It is important to examine the processes of the accomplished writer and the developing writer to achieve an understanding of the composing processes of these two groups of writers.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what young writers do in the composing process from the incubation of ideas to the publishing of the final product. Research into the composing processes of the accomplished writers, Eudora Welty, Margaret Laurence, John Steinbeck and Monica Hughes helped to inform the researcher of the writing processes of successful writers at any age.

### Research Questions

Based on the major purposes of the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What physical activities does the writer participate in?
2. What are the cognitive processes of the writer?

How does the writer plan?

How does the writer revise?

What awareness does the young writer have of his own processes?

3. What role does the affective domain have on the composing processes of the writer?

What feelings are present throughout the composing process?

4. How are the physical activities, the cognitive processes, and the affective influences of the young writer?

similar to and different from those of the accomplished writer?

These questions provided guidance for the observation of the students and the organization of the findings.

### Methodology

Three grade five students, a boy and two girls, were selected for case studies by a sampling approach. The sampling was designed to identify very good writers from classrooms where writing was considered a priority and where it would be possible to observe young writers engaged in the writing process.

Consultants from the Edmonton Public School District were asked to nominate classrooms at grades four to six where daily writing was evident and where teachers had shown an obvious interest in the development of writing evidenced by attendance at inservices, involvement in writing fairs, or the publishing of student writing. From this list, two classrooms most frequently nominated were selected. The teachers of selected classrooms were then asked to name good students from their classrooms.

The selected students were then interviewed by the researcher and permission was obtained for extensive observation and interviews with each child. Observation and interviews took place during writing classes two to five

times per week from January to May in the two selected classrooms. A questionnaire (Appendix C), designed to examine the composing processes of each student was administered at the beginning of each observation session to all students in each classroom. Each student was given a journal and encouraged to write about their composing processes. The researcher interviewed each selected student several times for a total of three hours. The parents of each child were interviewed twice, once by telephone at the beginning of the observation and again in person near the end. Discussions with teachers took place throughout the observation and a separate interview to discuss the case study was arranged. Students were asked to save all of their written products during the time that the researcher was present in the classroom.

Four professional authors were selected for study to determine their cognitive processes, their physical processes, and their feelings while composing. The authors to be studied were chosen subjectively to allow for researcher familiarity with their writing, and to reflect on the presence of additional source material such as interviews, reports from others, and biographies. This information was compiled, analyzed and synthesized to provide some guidelines for the observation of the developing writers.

## Data Analysis

1. The interviews and other information about famous authors was analyzed, categorized, and synthesized to provide information about the physical activities, cognitive processes, and the affective domain. The synthesis also included any unique aspects of these writers activities that could help to understand developing writers.

2. Transcripts of interviews with the teachers, students, and parents were analyzed and categorized to achieve a sense of organization for the data. Descriptive field notes were analyzed and categorized to allow for organization of the data and to permit exploration of the research questions. Journal entries of students were considered.

3. Collections of student work were used to provide memory assistance in the interviews. I was able to ask questions about the planning of new writing projects and about the revision of first draft writing. The written product was used to discuss student awareness of where they obtained their ideas and what techniques they employed in the writing. For example, I noticed that Stacey had decorated many of her titles. This led to a discussion about the thinking that she did before writing a title.

4. The writing processes of student writers were compared to the writing processes of accomplished writers by noting

similarities and differences in the physical activities, composing processes, and the role of the affective domain. Categories that had emerged in the case studies of both groups of writers were compared. For example, the influences of teachers was compared between each writer and between each group of writers.

The categorization and explication of the research questions assisted in the organization of the data. Unexpected responses from both groups of writers were also considered.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. This study involved case studies of a small number of students over a relatively short period of time which may limit the generalizability of findings in the study, and comparison between subjects.
2. The study of accomplished writers is also restricted to a small number and may be a limited sample on which to draw.
3. Determination of the cognitive processes of the accomplished writer and the developing writer is very subjective and dependent upon the ability of the writer to be introspective and be able to verbalize them.
4. Data gathered is dependent on the researcher's ability to gather meaningful information using an interview technique and observation.



### Significance of the Study

Observation of student writers as they practice the craft of writing will help to inform the educational world of the activities of young writers. A comparison of the activities of accomplished writers to developing writers will help to inform educators of the specific needs of the student learning how to write and give a notion of the full path of development of a writer.

The complexity of the writing process and the interrelationships of its components have been underestimated by many educators. A descriptive case study approach allowed the researcher a method for discerning the cognitive processes of both accomplished and developing writers within a naturalistic setting. Additional knowledge about the methodology has been gained.

The comparison of the learner to the professional may lead to insights into other areas of study. For example, would the study of the work of professional lawyers assist in the education of students aspiring to become lawyers? Would the study of the processes of the computer analyst help to formulate curriculum in the area of computer technology?

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

#### Overview

This chapter reviews the literature and research concerned with the trends in research on composing. Although this study involves eleven-year old students, research on beginning writing will be explored because it provides insights into the writing processes of older students. Research on good writers has also provided useful insights. Although the number of studies is limited, studies of professional writers will be reflected upon. In conclusion, the choice of research methodology will be discussed as it relates to studies of writing processes.

#### Trends in Research into Writing

In the last ten years there has been a wealth of studies and research in the field of writing. To some extent, this research has caused writing to be more of a focal point in some school districts and individual schools. Because of this new focus on the teaching of writing, research in composing may help serve the needs of the practitioner.

Research in the area of writing has changed as well. Donald Graves noted that only 156 studies of writing, or an average of six annually had been done in the twenty-five years prior to 1981, and more than half of those studies had been done

in the previous seven years. Much research was conducted on the best methods for teachers where a scientific method was applied to isolated instructional variables. The data became meaningless when removed from the context of the classroom. Since then there has been a change of focus to descriptive studies of children's activity. (Murray, 1981, p. 93-94)

Because much of the previous research focussed on facets of the teaching of writing, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer (1963) recommended that researchers determine what is involved in the act of writing and the nature of the writing itself. Following this 1963 review of research in writing, the studies showed some similarities. Many studies involved small groups of students in a "think-aloud" position as they composed. This was combined with observations, tape recording, and interviews to provide a window on the composing process. Many researchers situated themselves in the classroom to observe young children writing (Calkins, 1980; Graves, 1978; Hansen, 1981; Nolan, 1979). Other researchers conducted experiments on larger groups of writers to gain insights into the composing processes. (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1982; Bridwell, 1980)

The work that was done following the recommendations by Braddock and his colleagues helped to develop a research tradition and led to new breadth and depth of interest in the teaching of writing. In a subsequent report on research

on composition, Hillocks (1986) noted that in the years following Braddock's initial report:

We have developed a number of instruments and techniques which will continue to be refined but which are already useful in research. We have a body of knowledge about the composing process which suggests something about teaching and which raises very interesting questions for further research. We have a good deal of knowledge about classroom practices which can serve as a basis for developing more effective programs and for developing new hypotheses for exploration and testing. And all such knowledge, tentative though some of it is, can contribute to theories of instruction in composition which will be far stronger than the highly speculative theories of the past. (Hillocks, 1986, page xvi)

In conducting this literature search, I noted many recent studies of children's composing processes (Bennett, 1986; Calkins, 1986; Hansen, 1986; Hubbard, 1985; Perl and Wilson, 1986; Newkirk and Atwell, 1985) which suggests that the trend to research the composing processes is continuing.

This review of research will begin with some of the earlier studies on the writing process and conclude with some of the more recent studies. It will focus on the studies that deal particularly with the student in grades four, five, and six and on the composing processes of individuals. Some of the research cited will reflect various methodologies that have been considered before approaching this study. Research about good writers has been included because this study is concerned with what good writers do in the composing process. Although research about the composing processes of professional writers is sparse, a number of researchers have

noted the composing processes of such writers and these have been cited where available.

### Research into Writing Process

One of the first studies in writing process was Janet Emig's (1971) detailed study of the writing processes of eight seventeen-to-eighteen year old high school students in Chicago. As well as studying the writing products she invited the students to compose aloud and conducted interviews with them about their writing. She considered two categories of writing; the reflexive or inward-looking and the extensive or outward-looking. She showed that there is a profound difference between what good writers do, what practising writers do and what standard composing textbooks say they should do. For example, in the area of pre-writing, Emig found that able student writers did little or no formal prefiguring, such as a formal outline, for pieces of school-sponsored writing. For self-sponsored writing, the sample of students did no prefiguring, yet when interviewed these students showed that almost all features and components of their discourse were present. Emig questioned the teaching of the traditional outline, when it was not used either for school-sponsored or self-sponsored writing.

Emig's study was undertaken at about the same time as an extensive study of students aged eleven to eighteen in

London by Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen (1975). Their aim was to undertake a developmental study of the processes by which the written language of children becomes differentiated, between the ages of eleven and eighteen. To complete the study they investigated the written work of a representative sample of five hundred boys and girls. This was amplified by analyzing the written work of two groups of one hundred boys and girls, aged eleven and eighteen at the outset, for an extended period of four years.

They considered three aspects of the children's writing: the conception stage, the incubation stage, and the production stage. The authors advise teachers of the importance of the beginning stages of writing. One reason given was that while the writing is in progress, the writer is redefining, planning, and sorting so that all of the stages may be in operation at the same time.

The other important reason for studying the preparatory stages is that it is in these stages that teachers seek to influence the writing of their pupils. Once they are writing, we do not interrupt them with advice, but we do a great many things before they begin, so the more we know about the way the writing process works in the early stages, the more influence we are likely to have. We may also learn more about when we should not interfere. (Britton, et.al., 1975, p.26)

Concerning the production stage of writing, the authors explain that we can gain insights into the process by observing the writer at work, by studying what people say about what they do, and through making inferences from the

product itself when we know the circumstances under which the writing has been done.

From this extensive study it appeared that a focus on the process of writing particularly the pre-writing stages would help teachers plan more appropriate ways of teaching the writer how to write.

At about the same time, Donald Graves (1975) examined the writing processes of seven year old children. Graves conducted his research at four levels of investigation as can be noted by the following diagram:

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Data was collected from all classes in level four. The writing of 94 children was collected in file folders and yielded 1635 writings which were logged for theme, type of writing, number of words, use of accompanying art and teacher comments. This article (1975) states that in level three, fourteen children were selected from the four classrooms and observed while they were writing. The

writing episodes were not structured by the researcher. A single writing episode was considered to consist of three phases. The prewriting phase immediately preceded the writing of the child. Writing observed in this phase was affected by room stimuli to thematic choice, art work behaviors, and discussions with other persons. The composing phase was the actual writing including spelling, resource use, accompanying language, proofreadings, rereadings, interruptions, erasures and teacher participation. The postwriting phase consisted of all the behaviors following the completion of writing the message.

In level two the researcher focussed on five children by observing the writing process and by conducting interviews with children about the writing in their folders. They were also asked to rate the writings from best to poorest and to tell why the one paper was rated best. A second interview consisted of asking questions as to the child's conception of what good writers needed to do in order to write well.

At the conclusion of the data gathering, a decision was made to report only one case study, Michael, but to use the information gathered in the other three levels. Additional procedures were interviews with parents, individual administration of test batteries in reading, intelligence



and language, and extended observation in areas other than writing at home and at school.

In reporting this extensive study, Graves noted that the case study was an effective means of making visible those areas which contribute to a child's writing. A broad inquiry would not have enabled the constant focus in observation, interviewing and testing. Certain variables were identified that could be researched in large group studies. The study of the writing episodes made it possible to hypothesize about the range and relationship of developmental variables. For example the significance of studying differences between boys' and girls' writing and assigned and unassigned writing was identified and could be researched from the large group data.

Conclusions were reported on learning environments. Any environment that requires large amounts of assigned writing inhibits the range, content and amount of writing done by children.

The chief conclusion drawn from the case study of Michael was that there were many variables contributing in unique ways at any given point to the process of writing. Children write for unique reasons, employ highly individual coping strategies and view writing in ways peculiar to their own person. Four main variables influenced Michael's writing:

Family and home, teacher - Room D, Michael's developmental characteristics, and a peer, Kevin. These influences could be observed at various stages of the writing process.

(Graves, 1975.)

### Studies of Early Literacy

In addition to research of the writing processes, a number of studies have given us information about how children learn language. Assumptions and beliefs about how children write have been derived from such research and observation.

When Marie Clay (1975) did research on beginning reading, she observed five year old New Zealand children who entered school in the first two months of the school year. Clay rejected the idea of learning letters, then words, then sentences explaining that these are ways that teachers understand writing. She explains that the first things learned will be "gross approximations" which later become refined: weird letter forms, invented words, make-believe sentences. She suggests that the child is reaching out towards the principles of written language and any instruction should encourage him to do this. Additionally, Clay notes that as individual words and letters become recognizable, the child shows that his/her knowledge is very specific. For example, Jenny has developed the habit of

writing her name as 'Jehny' and subsequently rejects the correct spelling. (Clay, 1975, page 15)

Clay believes that a child's behavior must develop in each of three areas: language level, message quality, and directional principle. Throughout her observation, Marie Clay makes us aware of the need for sensitive observation and monitoring of the learning process in order to plan instruction to meet the needs of the individual child.

Glenda Bissex (1980) studied the writing development of one child, her son Paul, from ages five to eleven. In this study, Bissex carefully documents Paul's writing development. She concludes that learning to read and write are processes shaped by more comprehensive patterns of human growth and learning. The first pattern would be that children learn first those aspects of language that are most universal and last those that are most culture-specific. Paul's first readings were from pictures in books and later from signs that he recognized but did not code phonetically. His first messages were letter forms in somewhat nonlinear arrangement designed to fit the shape of the paper but with a clear intention to communicate. He acquired the cultural aspects of written language, the letter formation, the left-to-right, top-to-bottom spatial and sequential arrangement of print, later.

The second pattern is similar to Clay's "gross approximations". Bissex suggests that this writing develops from global to differentiated and integrated functioning. The child is not interested in correctness. The global awareness provides a framework within which the differentiated specifics function and have meaning. The history of Paul's learning to write and read was one of "increasing differentiation" and "heirarchic integration". He moved from associating letter forms in general with meaning to associating specific letter forms with specific speech sounds.

The third pattern in the growth of reading and writing, cited by Bissex, is that of decentration. It involves differentiating oneself from other persons and objects, and thus becoming conscious of oneself, but it also involves the growth of memory and language, extending time and space beyond the immediate. In Paul's early writing there was no clear distinction between writer and audience but as decentration developed Paul not only distinguished himself from his audience but also modified his writing style according to his audience.

In Bissex's concluding statement, she indicates that Paul did more than grow - that he was in control of his own learning; that he acted on his own environment, selecting

some information and experiences while ignoring others.

Bissex provides insight into one child's growth in language and reading in a way that cannot be replicated through other research methods. Her findings assist in the observation of the development of other children.

#### Research on Good Writers

A number of studies have examined the composing processes of good writers and often have made comparisons to the composing processes of poor writers. They show that skilled writers devote more time to planning throughout the writing phase and tend to more frequently examine what they have written compared to weaker writers who spend very little time in planning (Atwell, 1981; M.E. Henderson, 1980; Perl, 1979; Sawkins, 1971; Stallard, 1974; Warters, 1979). Many studies noted that good writers pay greater attention to matters of content and organization, while weaker writers have a tendency to be preoccupied with mechanics, particularly spelling (Bechtel, 1979; Metzger, 1977; Pianko, 1979; Sawkins, 1971; Stiles, 1977). (From Hillocks, 1986, p. 28)

Barch and Wright (1957) conducted a study of good and poor writers in high school by surveying groups of superior students (those enrolled in Communication Skills enriched sections) and deficient students (those enrolled in Writing

Improvement Service). Students were asked to note on a questionnaire, some of their own views of themselves, of their high school teachers and of their writing problems. Barch and Wright's early study suggested that the good student writer is concerned about organization, form, and lack of real purpose. The poor writer is mainly concerned with mechanics and errors in mechanics. In determining their self-concepts as writers, Barch and Wright noted that the good writers saw the need for improvement in forming concepts and relationships in writing; whereas the poor writers thought of their writing problems as mechanical and graphic. (Barch and Wright, 1957)

Like Barch and Wright, Culpepper-Hagen used a questionnaire to identify methods used by the best writers among a group of university freshmen. (1950) Culpepper-Hagen and two other raters identified the best thirty and the worst thirty writers in a group of 120 freshmen at the University of Denver. They purposely excluded the area of mechanics of expression and supplemented the evaluation of three papers from each student with a battery of objective tests and the student's grade in the Basic Communication course. She then administered a Writing Methods Inventory to the sixty students. Culpepper-Hagen found that good writers at this level had no difficulty in concentrating on the job of writing and that they generally made a plan or outline to

give guidance. Good writers in her study had no concern about the mechanics of writing and found little need for revision or correction.

In the studies by Barch and Wright (1957) and Culpepper-Hagen (1950), questionnaires allowed the researchers to survey a large number of students. Some criticism of this method has been offered since they may not represent accurate findings; the students' response may be what they thought they should say rather than what actually took place.

Charles Stallard's (1972) study of the writing behavior of good student writers was a departure from the questionnaire method to observation using a checklist with predetermined criteria. He studied the processes of fifteen "good" student writers (those who ranked highest in their senior class on the STEP Essay Writing Test) and fifteen randomly selected students. In his study Stallard noted that good student writers spend more time completing the writing assignment, they change many words as they write, good student writers frequently stop to read over what they have written, and they are concerned about having a purpose in their writing. Stallard reported that generally, the good student writers who participated in this study, put more effort into their products than writers in general did; the

investment of time, the conscious attention to communication problems, and the effort of repeatedly thinking through what had been written were evidence of his conclusions.

Sawkins (1971) used an interview technique to gain information from fifth grade writers of compositions of high quality and low quality. The compositions had been rated using the Diederich writing scale. The conclusions relative to the differences between the writers of high quality and low quality were:

1. Writers of compositions of high quality tended to be more concerned with the content of written expression, with ideas, with organization within the story as evidenced by concern for and use of paragraphs, and with the function of beginning and ending sentences.
2. Writers of compositions of low quality tended to be more concerned with the mechanics of writing, particularly spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, encounter more problems when writing, and rewrite their compositions more frequently. (Sawkins, 1971, p.120-121)

One further conclusion was that the ability to discuss or answer questions about the writing process did not insure that the writing produced would be of high quality.

Sawkins suggested that teachers use an interview technique as a means of understanding individual approaches to writing and as a means of assisting in the diagnosis of writing problems.



More recent studies have shown a trend away from the questionnaire type of study and into more individual case studies which require careful observation of and interviews with the writer.

One such study is that of Barbara Diamond (1985) who studied the cognitive processes of three competent third grade writers. The data consisted of field notes of writing instruction and student writing, student and parent interviews, student writing samples and teacher journals.

Diamond's major finding was that the elements of the environment influenced the writing processes of the students. These elements included: the teacher emphasis on writing content and organization and deemphasis on mechanics, the formality of the group, the time restrictions made upon the subject and the school day, the literacy backgrounds of the students, and the nature of the interactions of the students with their peers.

Diamond found that these competent students were able to balance the cognitive constraints so that they could express the meaning desired; they each planned for writing but in different ways; they revised during the process of writing, two students revised mainly for structure and handwriting and one for meaning and audience; and they easily expressed meaning because of the wide store of available knowledge.

Diamond's findings differ somewhat from the findings of previous research cited in that two of the competent writers revised for structure and handwriting contrary to the findings of Stallard (1972) and Sawkins (1971).

Kathleen Bieke (1985) studied the audience awareness of competent writers during expository writing using task analysis and think aloud procedures. She concluded that writers in this study proved that it ~~was~~ possible to produce competent writing without taking the role of anyone other than one's self and that audience awareness was not necessary for competent writing.

Mano (1985) conducted a case study of a successful adolescent writer, Simon, over a two year period. She used regular interviews, analysis of formal texts and observation of Simon in his own home. Three factors emerged as facilitative of Simon's developing literacy: critical consciousness, exposure to media, and access to social support for writing. Mano notes that these factors were not always facilitative, rather they continually interacted with each other and other factors in the writing situation. She noted that school-sponsored writing could be as interesting as self-sponsored writing and that parents could be an asset to the learning processes.

Birnbaum (1982) related her study to Loban's 13-year study of children's language development and the finding that children who were high achievers in one language process tended to be high achievers in the others. She used videotaping, audiotaping, analysis of reading and writing samples, reading and composing aloud as well as classroom observation to develop profiles of more proficient and less proficient readers and writers in the fourth and seventh grades.

The more proficient writers actively assumed control of the process: they paused longer to deliberate over topics; related ideas and possible organizations to represent meaning to an audience; and they volunteered more evaluative comments, both positive and negative. The more proficient readers and writers viewed themselves as generally good writers and good readers although they recognized variations in response to different contexts. They engaged in self-sponsored as well as school-sponsored writing.

The less proficient readers and writers seemed to be influenced by external forces outside of their own control. When they revised, it was to find errors.. None engaged in self-sponsored writing.

Her findings concurred with that of Loban's in that better readers were also better writers. Although not reported in

this (1982) article, Birnbaum noted in her study that differences in attitudes and activities of parents and teachers were associated with levels of proficiency.

Thus research at least since 1957 has reflected the researcher's concern for what good students do in the composing process. A variety of research procedures have been implemented to obtain similar conclusions. Generally, the research suggests that the good writer shows more concern for content, purpose and organization than for the mechanics of writing. Most studies indicated the influence of the environment suggesting that the support from teachers and parents was associated with ability in composing. Research indicated that the good student writers exhibited control over their writing compared to poor writers who seemed to be influenced by the external expectations.

#### Study of Professional Writers

When Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen began studying the writing abilities of students aged eleven to eighteen, they were aware of the difficulty of researching the writing processes rather than the written products. One reason was that it was much easier to study the product since it was there to be observed and analyzed. Another was that the tradition established in researching both speech and writing was to analyze the product. Nonetheless they

were aware of literary studies that had shown more interest in processes, some of it stimulated by the publication of writers' notebooks, letters, diaries and interviews such as those published by Paris Review. A selection of interviews had already been published as a book entitled Writers at Work. (1958) The research group also took note of the work of D. W. Harding who had assisted with their understanding of the psychological processes of poets and novelists. One of their goals was to determine if what the professional writers said about themselves could be applicable to the writing of children and adolescents.

Britton et al. concluded that the similarities between the groups was much greater than the differences but, there were irreconcilable differences between the way writers work and the way teachers and textbooks were advising their students to compose. Teacher intervention was an area that required further study because frequently the child's own intentions were not considered when making a writing assignment. The role of teacher as examiner was seen as having a dramatic effect on student writing (Britton et al. 1975 pages 19-20).

Donald Murray (1978) alludes to his interest in the composing processes of professionals when discussing writing as "internal revision":

This new interest in the process of writing, rather than the product of writing, opens the doors for important and interesting research which can employ all of the tools of intelligent research. It is a job which needs to be done. . . . The better we understand how people write - how people think - the better we may be able to write and to teach writing.

Murray, an English professor at the University of New Hampshire, is a writer himself. He won the Pulitzer prize for editorial writing, but he is also the author of magazine articles, juvenile and adult non-fiction books, novels, short stories and poetry. He frequently provides a 'writing' when requested to do a 'reading' where a think-aloud protocol illustrates his writing processes. He is very aware of his own processes and comments:

. . . There is no one right way to write. Writing starts in the middle or the end or the beginning of the process. It starts where it starts. And you use the process in whatever way it can help you make an effective piece of writing.

. . . the writing process is recursive. You do not march through it as much as you keep circling back through it, taking a step or two back whenever you need to make the writing go. (Murray, 1978, p.101)

In addition to coming to an understanding his own writing processes, Murray collects interviews with writers to "hear what they have to say about what they went through when they wrote." (Murray, 1984, pp. 213-14)

It was as a result of Murray's concerns that I pursued the study of four professional writers. (Murray, 1986) He suggested the use of diaries and journals, writers' letters,

autobiographies by writers and biographies about writers, and interviews from the Paris Review or Writers at Work.

Despite the wealth of information on professional writers, there is surprising little research that incorporates the writing processes of professional writers. One recent study, A Comparison of Elements of Writing Considered Important by Professional Writers and Compositions Texts, (1986) involved interviews with ten professional writers of non-fiction prose and the examination of nine high school composition texts. Crowe researched what professional writers considered to be the most important elements of writing, what the composition texts prescribed as the important elements of writing, where the two sets of elements were the same and which elements that professional writers considered important were ignored by the textbooks. A comparison of the data showed that the textbooks and writers agreed on four elements: transition, getting started, consideration of audience, and use of proper mechanics. The professional writers reported, eleven elements of writing that were overlooked by the texts: reading, writing daily, deadlines, writing organized subconsciously, use of word processor, writing the lead first, ability to write anywhere, necessity of writing in quiet, purpose, flexibility of rules and peer editing. This research suggests a significant difference between what the

professional writers and what textbooks view as the essential elements of writing. (Crowe, 1986)

It appears that several authorities on the teaching of writing agree that educational practice could benefit from the study of the writing processes of professional writers, yet there is little research to support this belief.

### Summary

Following the tradition of research on composing processes, I have selected the descriptive case study as a way to research the composing processes of good writers. In one sense this study will add to the research which already exists in this field.

Janet Emig first looked at the composing processes of twelfth-graders in 1969. Since this premiere study of writing processes, there have been many others including Don Graves' pyramidally designed study of the writing processes of seven-year old children in 1973. Glenda Bissex studied the reading and writing processes of her son Paul over an eight year period. These studies and others have indicated the value of observing a few children over an extended period of time since they illuminate the complex composing processes of developing writers.



Additionally, a case study approach may overcome the difficulties associated with using survey and questionnaire methods that large group studies have implemented.

(Braddock, 1963)

Studies of children should encompass a sense of the development of the child. For this reason, it is important to relate the findings of research in literacy development to the new knowledge about composing processes. Studies by Bissex, Graves, and Clay suggest that many abilities in language begin at the same time. For example, both Bissex (1980) and Clay (1975) noted that the writing of their subjects developed from "gross approximations" but became more specific. They noted that children gradually acquired the cultural aspects of written language and that the written language of the child changed as they developed and became aware of the facets and functions of written language.

Studies like those of Barch and Wright (1957), Culpepper-Hagen (1950), Sawkins (1971) and Stallard (1972) focussed on good writers. They indicated that good writers focus on content, organization and purpose for writing rather than the mechanics and surface features of the writing. All suggested that good writers were influenced by the school and home environments. Good writers tended to be

more involved in the writing process and had a view that they were good writers. Studies of what good students do have an underlying assumption that by noting what good students do, we can effect change in instructional practice that would benefit all students.

For this reason, it was also important to examine what professional writers do in the composing process. Both Donald Murray (1978), and James Britton (1975) encouraged researchers to consider the writing processes of accomplished writers. The few studies that were available suggested that the practices that professional writers engage in varies considerably from writing practices in the school setting.

Thus, my study has tried to encompass an effective research methodology based on the strengths and weaknesses of other reported methodologies; a view of the student learning written language within a recognized developmental process; an understanding of what current research has informed us about the good student writer; and an appreciation for what is known about the professional writer.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Overview

A description of the design of the study, the selection of subjects, and the techniques and procedures for gathering and analyzing data are reported in this chapter.

#### The Descriptive Case Study Approach

It was decided that the best way to research the composing processes of young writers and those of accomplished writers was through a descriptive case study approach. The descriptive case study is a means of observing the characteristics of an individual unit - a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyze intensively the phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit, sometimes with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs. (Cohen and Manion, 1980)

Such a study involves collection of the data including descriptions of the subjects; transcripts of the dialogue (interviews); opinions of others; description of the physical setting; and accounts of particular events, activities, and behaviors. Such studies allow for

collection of a considerable mass of data which must be analyzed and/or categorized and then reflected upon.

Sometimes the researcher may need to return to the field site to confirm his/her interpretations or may wish to test them against other situations.

The findings are usually written in a narrative form with allusions and quotations of actions selected to support the findings. Anticipating that this study might be read by classroom teachers, school administrators, parents and the students who were involved, the findings were written to reflect the qualitative nature of the study and to appeal to an audience in addition to the university setting.

(Murray, 1982)

#### Selection of Students

Three students were selected for case studies by a sampling approach. This was designed to identify very good writers from classrooms where writing was considered a priority and where it would be possible to observe young writers engaged in the writing process.

Five consultants from the Edmonton Public School District were asked to nominate classrooms at the upper elementary grade levels (four to six) in which daily writing was evident and in which teachers showed an obvious interest in the development of writing. This interest in writing could

be determined by presence at writing workshops, involvement in writing fairs, the publishing of student writing or an awareness that a good writing program was being implemented. A total of twenty-three classrooms were identified. From those, five classrooms most frequently nominated were selected.

Teachers of the selected classrooms were then asked if they would be willing to participate in the observational research as suggested by the proposal. They were asked to nominate students from their classrooms whom they felt were good prolific writers and demonstrated through their work and/or attitudes that they might someday choose writing as their life's work.

The teachers' choices were considered to be a very reliable guide because the classrooms had been selected based on the interest in writing that the teachers demonstrated.

Presumably, such teachers could quite easily identify good writers. As well, the teachers had already been working with the selected students for four months and would be knowledgeable about their students' writing abilities. They might also have access to file folders of the children's writing and reports about their writing from previous years.

The researcher interviewed each student selected by the teachers and chose three students who agreed to being observed, interviewed and studied over an extended period of

time. The students were also selected on the basis of perceived differences from one another so that the research sample would include differing types of developing writers. One boy and one girl were chosen from one classroom to represent gender differences as well as differences in background. Stacey had been born and educated in Edmonton. Milan had started school in grade one in Edmonton following immigration from Yugoslavia. Both attended a small upper middle class school. Melanie was chosen from a large lower middle class school and was different from Stacey in that she appeared to be more shy and less out-going. The students in Melanie's class viewed her as being one of the best writers.

#### Classroom Observation

I met with each of the classroom teachers and principals to explain the purpose of the study and to set a schedule for observation. An initial visit was made to each classroom to explain the purpose of the study - that of determining the composing processes of the young writers and to compare them to the composing processes of the accomplished writers. The choice of classrooms was determined partly by willingness to participate in the study as well as the school's proximity to my home.

It appeared to be most efficient to observe the two students in one classroom first, then to begin observation in the

second school with the third selected student after observation in the first classroom had been completed.

I contacted the parents to answer any questions that they might have about the study and to ask permission for an interview to be arranged at a later date. This first telephone interview served as an important information gathering session as well. Written permission was received from each parent before observation started.

Observation began in January at which time a schedule was set. It was possible to observe the two students as they engaged in the writing process about three times a week for about an hour each time. They could be observed simultaneously or individually. During this time I documented the writing processes of the students and analyzed the writing activities exhibited. Observation in the second classroom began in mid-March and was completed by May 1. The same observational procedures were followed, the main difference being that there was a student teacher present for much of the time.

Interviews were scheduled following the observation times. The interviews were an attempt to determine the students' perceptions of themselves as writers and their strategies for writing. Often, we would discuss the written products most recently completed or the writing that the student was

working on at the moment. I tried not to interfere with the composing process by observing the writing and waiting until the student had completed a section of the writing.

Each student in each classroom was given a journal to record the physical activities, awareness of cognitive processes and feelings about his/her writing. Additionally, every student was asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) designed to determine the physical activities and cognitive processes of writing. The results from the questionnaires were compiled and summarized to give information about individuals within the class. They also served as sources of information for interviews with the selected students.

At the beginning of the research, in the first classroom, each student was given a letter (Appendix A) that informed all parents of my presence in the classroom and requested permission for their children to be involved in the observation. This resulted in a desire by many students to be the ones selected for specific study. In a sense of fair play, a number of students were interviewed individually, although they were not the ones specifically selected for study. These interviews helped in further observation. For example, one student reflected on the class members that they considered to be good writers stating that they were good writers because they could write such long stories. A couple of students indicated that they got their best ideas



for story writing from dreams. Following these suggestions, I was able to question the selected students about what they thought makes a good writer and where they were able to get their ideas.

#### Observation Schedule

The case studies were arranged to allow for in-depth study of each child. The researcher was present in the first classroom for a period of nine weeks. This allowed for interruptions due to school holidays, field trips and illness. A total of twenty-two visits were made to the first classroom. As well, a follow-up visit was made two months later.

In the second classroom, a total of nineteen visits was made over a six week period. This observation of one child may appear more extensive, however there was a student teacher as well as the classroom teacher in this class. The context for instruction varied from teacher to teacher.

The following schedule illustrates the observations:

### SCHOOL ONE

December 20 Initial visit with the principal and teacher.

Week 1	January 4-9	2 visits 2 parent telephone interviews
Week 2	January 12-16	3 visits
Week 3	January 18-23	Interviews with Stacey's former teachers.
Week 4	January 26-30	3 visits
Week 5	February 2-6	3 visits
Week 6	February 9-13	3 visits
Week 7	February 16-20	3 visits 2 parent interviews

### TEACHERS' CONVENTION

Week 8	March 2-6	2 visits
	June 2	Follow-up visit

### SCHOOL TWO

March 10 Initial visit with teacher and principal

Week 1	March 16-19	3 visits parent telephone interview
Week 2	March 23-27	2 visits

### SPRING BREAK

Week 3	April 13-16	4 visits
Week 4	April 20-24	5 visits
Week 5	April 27-May 1	5 visits parent interview

### Sources of Information

The students selected were asked to save all of the writing they did (both at home and at school) during the time of the research. Both Stacey and Melanie's parents had saved beginning writing samples which provided additional information about their composing processes. The students also provided their daily journals and writing samples from the beginning of the school year.

Additionally there were three hours of taped interviews with each child which were scheduled as required for explication. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed briefly following each day's observation.

The parents of each child were interviewed initially by telephone and then in person near the end of the observation time. The first interviews allowed for some initial insights into the composing processes. The second interview was more extensive (two hours) and permitted the researcher to confirm some of the ideas that had been gleaned from observation and study of the students.

The teachers were also a source of information. The researcher checked perceptions with the teachers through frequent telephone conversations and quick conferences during the school visits. The teachers read and responded to the case studies that were written following the

observation. Additional information was obtained through interviews with three of Stacey's former teachers at another school.

Other students in the classroom were also valuable sources of information. It was possible to gain their perceptions through questioning and from their self-initiated comments.

### Selection of Accomplished Writers

Four authors were selected for study to determine the physical processes, the cognitive processes and the role of the affective domain of these particular authors. Although only two authors, Eudora Welty and John Steinbeck, were featured in the Writers at Work series, the questions that were asked in that series of interviews served as guidelines for the research on Margaret Laurence and Monica Hughes.

The authors studied were chosen subjectively for the following reasons:

Eudora Welty was selected because available information showed that she was very introspective about her own composing processes as evidenced in her autobiography, One Writer's Beginnings and from interviews available.

Margaret Laurence, a Canadian author, was chosen because of my familiarity with her writing. The Diviners, Laurence's last major novel, is the introspective story of a writer.

John Steinbeck, an American male writer, was chosen because of my familiarity with his novels, short stories and films.

Monica Hughes was selected because of my familiarity with her work as a Canadian writer of children's literature. She is introspective about her own composing processes and will discuss them quite candidly. I interviewed Mrs. Hughes for this study.

It was possible to collect data on the composing processes of accomplished writers from a wide variety of sources including interviews, reports from others, letters, biographies and actual compositions. This information was analyzed, categorized and reflected upon. It helped to provide guidelines for the observation of the young writers and provided useful comparisons to the young writers.

#### Analysis of Information about Student Writers

Transcripts of interviews with the teachers, students, and parents were analyzed, categorized and reflected upon to achieve a sense of organization for the data. Some of the information could be organized around the research questions and other information was saved for other considerations. For example, Stacey spent a great deal of time reflecting upon the titles of her written work. She would illustrate one letter of the title to depict the theme of her story. Her obvious intrigue with titles led to an examination of

the role that the writing of titles played in the composing processes of young writers and professional writers.

Descriptive field notes were analyzed and categorized in relation to the research questions. Journal entries were to have been handled in a similar way but due to the lack of information, they were dealt with separately.

Collections of student work were used to provide memory assistance in the interviews. They also assisted in the understanding of the composing processes through the consideration of the resulting products. For example, in an interview with Melanie, she indicated that one story that she had written in Grade four was one of her best. When she brought the story to the next interview, she showed the code that it had been written in:

DEAR MINNIE,

XXMXXIXXNXXNXXIXXE

XXIXXLXXOXXVXXEXXX

XXYXXOXXUXXXXXXXXXX

Melanie then said, "Do you get it? It's in code. It's what my sister and I used so my brother couldn't read our messages." This was an example of the playfulness with language that existed in her work.

### Analysis of Information about Accomplished Writers

Information about the composing processes of the accomplished writers was gathered from a number of sources. For example, the biography of Eudora Welty, One Writer's Beginnings; the interview in Writers at Work; other published interviews; and her own writing were used as sources of information. This was categorized to match the research questions. In reporting on her composing processes, it was also important to note the influence of literature on her writing. Welty also indicated the importance of storytelling.

Information about the composing processes of Margaret Laurence was gathered from a wider variety of sources. Following her death in January, there were numerous tributes to her. It was possible for me to attend two memorial tributes where people who knew her as a person and as an author spoke of her. In this way, I felt that I was able to learn of her personal feelings about writing. Laurence was also featured in a number of films which were essentially interviews about her and her writing. The films captured the similarities between the Manawaka series of novels and the small town of Neepawa where she grew up. They also featured her personal feelings about her writing. Additionally, Laurence had written The Diviners, a story about a writer. Much of her thoughts about composing were

highlighted in this novel. As with Welty, the information was categorized around the research questions. Subsequently areas such as symbolism were researched in more depth.

The case study of John Steinbeck was prepared mainly from the letters between him and the important people of his life. There were several long collections of such letters that provided a history of his development as a writer.

(Steinbeck and Wallesten, 1975, Fensch, 1979) He declined to be interviewed for the Paris Review, but was still featured in that journal of interviews with famous writers. As well, there were several biographies on Steinbeck. I selected biographies (Benson, 1984; Fensch, 1979; Kiernan, 1979) that dealt with his work as a writer. Again, the information about the composing processes was categorized around the research questions and important areas were noted for further consideration.

Although Monica Hughes had not been featured in Writers at Work, there were numerous interviews with her published in journals and Canadian magazines. I attended the Henry Kreisel Distinguished Lecture, an annual lecture on literature given at the University of Alberta. On March 24, 1987, Hughes presented the lecture and answered questions about her composing processes in the discussion that followed. Later, I met Hughes at a conference and arranged an interview with her on May 12. The resulting two hour



interview helped to confirm many of the ideas that had been gleaned from the published interviews. This was organized as the previous studies of accomplished writers had been.

Although I was familiar with the writing of each of the authors selected, I read at least one more of their novels to renew my knowledge of their writing.

### Relating the Data

Case studies of the accomplished writers and the young writers were organized around the research questions, and included other considerations, related to the research questions. An analysis of the case studies served to highlight the major areas of consideration.

The composing processes of the student writers were compared to those of the accomplished writers.

The design of this study has involved descriptive case studies of three good student writers based on class observation, interviews and comment from parents and teachers; and descriptive case studies of four accomplished writers based on written interviews, biographies and a variety of other written material. The data was analyzed and categorized according to the research questions which were designed to explore the composing processes of the two groups of writers. Additionally, unexpected responses from all writers were noted and examined where possible.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CASE STUDIES OF ACCOMPLISHED WRITERS

#### Overview

In this chapter the data is examined with reference to the four published authors: Eudora Welty, Margaret Laurence, John Steinbeck, and Monica Hughes. The profiles of these accomplished writers contain the following information: an explanation of the selections and sources of information for the case study; biographical information about the selected author; a profile of the writer's composing processes following the organization of the research questions; and a summary.

#### Case One: Eudora Welty

Eudora Welty was selected as an accomplished writer to research because of her ability as a writer. She is a Pulitzer Prize-winning fiction writer whose work began with widely-acclaimed short stories and also includes a number of outstanding novels and essays. I have been able to gather considerable information about Welty's composing processes through an extensive number of published interviews which span a forty year period. As well, One Writer's Beginnings, the autobiographical culmination of three lectures entitled "Listening", "Learning to See", and

"Finding a Voice" provided exceptional insight into the composing processes of this writer.

Biographical Data:

Eudora Welty was born in 1909 in Jackson, Mississippi where she has spent almost her entire life, writing. Yearly trips to New York where she went to see plays and some time spent away for educational endeavors or to receive honors mark her infrequent absences from home.

Eudora Welty's works include her first short story, Death of a Traveling Salesman, published in 1936; collections of short stories including Curtain of Green, published in 1941; a children's book; and a book of her Depression photographs. She has written under a number of grants including the Rockefeller and Merrill Foundation Grants and has received the highest of literary awards and honors.

Welty is an extremely shy person who is quite reluctant to discuss anything personal about herself or her friends. She has given permission for interviews, however, to benefit a college class, to confer with other writers or on the occasions of winning particular honors like the Pulitzer Prize. Her self-awareness has been captured by many of the interviews but it is her awareness of the composing process that I wish to share here,

### Composing Processes of Eudora Welty

It appears that Eudora Welty has quite a structured way of writing and that she enjoys writing at home as revealed in an interview with Alice Walker, a writer of southern black fiction, now a recent winner of the Pulitzer Prize for The Color Purple. Walker asks: Do you write every day? and

Welty's reply is:

No, I don't write every day --I write only when I'm in actual work on a particular story. I'm not a notebook keeper. Sustained time is what we fight for, would probably sell my soul for--it's so hard to manage that. I'd like to write a story from beginning to end right through without having to stop. Where I write is upstairs in my bedroom.....I write at a desk. I have a long room with six big windows in it, and a desk and typewriter at one end. (Walker, 1973, p.133)

She continues to explain that her bedroom overlooks the street and adds that she likes to be aware of the world going on while she is working. Welty concludes: "I think I'd get claustrophobic sitting in front of a blank wall with life cut off from view." (Walker, 1973.)

When interviewed for Paris Reviews journal, Welty says that she can write anywhere but prefers to write at home because it's more convenient for an early riser. In fact she does most of her writing in the morning. She explains her process:

My ideal way to write a short story is to write the whole first draft through in one sitting, then work as

long as it takes on revisions and then write the final version all in one, so that in the end the whole thing amounts to one long sustained effort." (Plimpton, 1976, p. 290)

When asked if she uses a typewriter, Welty replies that yes, she does and that it's useful because it gives the feeling of making her work objective. She then explains her revision process:

I can correct it better if I see it in typescript. After that, I revise with scissors and pins. Pasting is too slow and you can't undo it, but with pins you can move things from anywhere to anywhere, and that's what I really love doing--putting things in their best and proper place, revealing things at a time when they matter most." (Kuehl, 1972)

It is likely difficult to observe Eudora Welty while she is actively engaged in writing. When Alice Walker (1973) asked her what she was working on Welty replied: "Well, I'm not doing anything except thinking. I haven't got anything on paper yet. I've got many things that I want to write, and expect to write." She seems to be thinking about many different pieces at the same time. It took eight years to write the novel Losing Battles partly because Welty was doing a lot of other writing at the same time and because she does a lot of rewriting, of careful writing, and of consideration until she is satisfied. She reflects on this by adding: "Maybe I keep things too long."

In discussing her composing processes, Eudora Welty talks about much of the thinking that influences her writing.

She says:

"Sometimes I go around for a long time with a theme or point in my mind. And then, suddenly, I hear something or see something, and I know in an instant that I have a bottle for the theme I've been thinking about." (Keith, 1973)

It is this thinking that will be probed further in other interviews.

In her book, One Writer's Beginnings (1984) Welty tells of her early literacy experiences, and describes how this shaped her own writing.

Ever since I was first read to, then started reading to myself, there has never been a line read that I didn't hear. As my eyes followed the sentence, a voice was saying it silently to me. It isn't my mother's voice, or the voice of any person I can identify, certainly not my own. It is human, but inward, and it is inwardly that I listen to it. It is to me the voice of the story or the poem itself. . . .

My own words, when I am at work on a story, I hear too as they go, in the same voice that I hear when I read in books. When I write and the sound of it comes back to my ears, then I act to make my changes. I have always trusted this voice. (Welty, 1984, pp. 12-13)

She knows the influence of her visual memory or what she describes as 'scenes'. In her autobiography, Welty tells of going on a Sunday afternoon drive with a neighbor and how she loved the stories she would tell because everything would happen in 'scenes'. These were frequently highlighted by the comment "the crisis had come"! Welty says that it was her dramatic instinct that then led her to take the scene which was full of hints, pointers, suggestions, and promises of things to come in order to

find out and know about human beings. They led her to both the truths and lies about them.

Welty elaborates such scenes in her interview with Bill Ferris (1975 and 1976) when she discusses the relationship that she sees between film and the short story. She explains how both can use the technique of flashbacks and memory, of a dream sequence--things that cannot be shown on a stage. She says it is possible to move backward and forward and to change the speed of the story. Welty also enjoys the techniques of Alfred Hitchcock and gives the example of the person screaming; with the sound turning into a train whistle for the opening to the next scene.

Welty's "literal memory" is discussed in the interview with Gretlund (1984) when she explains that parts of the novel The Optimist's Daughter are such a memory:

The way my uncles looked coming home at night through the far-off fields, just white shirts showing down the mountain. And the sound of the horses. All the physical sensations were memories of about age three, when you really have very sharp sensory perceptions. I still recall this and I just put it all there.  
(p.213)

In her interview with J. Griffin Jones (1981) she reconfirms the importance of memory. Jones refers to Maurice Sendak whom he quotes as saying that writing this book has made him a happy man for it put him in touch with a memory that he had but wasn't aware of.

Welty agrees heartily and adds :

I think any writer has more to thank memory for than most anything. I don't mean writing about the past. What you remember can apply just as well to something you are writing today. You learned it through something in your memory, but you use it for anything that you might wish. You might be writing about the future...(Jones, 1981, pp.334-35)

Eudora Welty has frequently been asked about her sense of place since so many of her stories take place in specific parts of Mississippi. In her conversation with Charlotte Capers (1973), also a Mississippian, she explains this sense of place as something she does in everything that she writes but in a more complicated way. She uses place in many ways-- to define people, to explain them, and to be their lures and despairs which is a little more complicated than having a story set in a place which never moves or changes. In The Optimist's Daughter, Becky, the mother, has her roots in another place which is the thing which has most changed her life and has created a feeling of being out of place. Laurel, has come from Chicago where she has attempted to change her life back into the past.

It is interesting to note that one of her familiar stories Why I Live at the P.O., began when she saw a little post office with an ironing board in the back that she saw through the window. She supposed that someone just decided to move down there but used this idea along with an exercise using the spoken word to create her story.



It is with her experiments with the spoken word that Eudora Welty excels. In her conversation with Bill Ferris (1975 and 1976) she explains:

I think the ability to use dialogue, or the first person, or anything like that, is just as essential as the knowledge of place and other components of a story. But I think it has a special importance, because you can use it in fiction to do very subtle things and very many things at once-- like giving a notion of the speaker's background, furthering the plot, giving the sense of the give-and-take between characters. Dialogue gives a character's age, background, upbringing, everything, without the author's having to explain it on the side. He's doing it out of his own mouth. And also, other things-- like a character may be telling a lie which he will show to the reader, but perhaps not to the person to whom he's talking, and perhaps not even realize himself. Sometimes he's deluded. All these things can come out in dialogue. And you get that, of course, by your ear, by listening to the rhythms and habits and so on of everyday speech everywhere.

Welty believes that writing is an internal process. She calls her work more of an "internal map" which she explains as a map of minds and imagination. Guiding the internal map are the insides of characters. (Ferris, 1975 and 1976, p. 161)

She adheres to this theory in her conversation with Charles T. Bunting in 1972. He asks her if she thinks would-be writers should have a course in literary analysis. Her reply is :

I wouldn't know because that isn't the way my mind works at all. Because writing is an internal process. You can't be helped from outside. It's interesting to see what people have done with analysis, but I don't start by saying, "these ingredients are to go in my

novel: A, B, D, 1, 2, 3," and so on. It has to start from an internal feeling of your own and an experience of your own, and I think each reality like that has to find and build its own form. Another person's form doesn't really help. It shows what they've found, but that doesn't, may not, even apply. I know it doesn't help in the act of writing because you're thinking of anything then but your story. You're not thinking, "How did Joyce do this?" that's fatal. It's all-absorbing, as it is, to bring about your own; your work needs all the sense you can master, and all the feeling, everything of yourself you can put into it. I don't mean self-conscious self. You don't think about your self either; you think about the work. To think "I, so-and-so, am writing this story" would just be fatal, more fatal than anything. (Bunting, 1972, p. 43)

She continues to explain that her use of symbols is just part of the equipment and does not exist for its own sake but that she uses them with a proper sense of proportion and with as light a touch as possible.

Similarly, she explains that human beings are incapable of being made into character, "as is". Welty uses certain qualities of people in certain situations; the qualities which make people unique. While her knowledge of people and character guide her writing, Welty draws upon this knowledge rather than wholly transplanting it. This is explained to Charlotte Capers (1973) with reference to the character of her mother:

Well, all my books are autobiographical in that I never have made up the feeling in them. I think that you have to experience emotion before you write about it, but usually I have the emotions acted out by a cast of characters and through situations that are better dramatic vehicles than my life happens to be, which is rather calm, but in the case of The Optimist's Daughter, I did draw on some of the childhood and early married experiences of my own mother. That's the only thing that is "factual"; and

the character of Becky, the mother, is not the character of my mother, but it draws upon it. At any rate, there were letters and events and traumatic things in the life of my character, Becky, which came from my knowledge of my mother. This made it both meaningful and instructive --and hard for me to write. (Capers, 1973, pp. 116-17)

In summary, it is apparent that the cognitive workings of Eudora Welty demand a sense of voice, of listening, of scenes or place and being able to call upon a tremendous memory. She blends this into the workings of her characters after formulating a theme in her mind. It seems a very complicated procedure almost defying analysis.

Eudora Welty has had a special relationship with print right from the beginning. In One Writer's Beginnings (1984), she says of her childhood:

It had been startling and disappointing to me to find out that story books had been written by people, that books were not natural wonders, coming up of themselves like grass. Yet regardless of where they came from, I cannot remember a time when I was not in love with them--with the books themselves, cover and binding and the paper they were printed on, with their smell and their weight and with their possession in my arms, captured and carried off to myself. Still illiterate, I was ready for them, committed to all the reading I could give them. (Welty, 1984, p.6)

Her parents provided her with a rich literary background for which she was always grateful.

She views her love of writing quite objectively, however.

She was quite in agreement with her father's idea of sending her to New York for a business course because they both realized that it was too difficult to earn a living by

writing. When she returned to Mississippi she was employed by an advertising agency.

Despite the economic pitfalls of writing as a profession, Welty enjoys her work. She explains to Diamonstein (1970) that her writing comes from her imagination and that it allows her choice of time and place in which to work.

When writing, she does not write for a public audience for friends or for herself and feels that if she did she could not write at all. She says, "I write for it, for the pleasure of it." However, she values the opinion of her friends: "I care about my what my friends think, very deeply - - and it's only after they've read the finished thing that I really can rest, deep down."

Writing appears to be a natural part of Welty's life. Gretlund (1978) asked her about the tradition of storytelling in her life. She explains:

Yes, on my mother's side they were big storytellers. When her brothers came here to visit, they would renew the stories of their youth, funny things that happened in West Virginia out in the country. They grew up on a farm. Every name they mentioned would bring out gales of laughter and reminiscences--and there would be songs: "Remember how we used to sing. . . ?" So they would all sing it. (Gretlund, 1978, pp. 212-13)

Eudora Welty shares much of herself in her writing. One of her greatest loves is her garden. This, too, is cleverly woven into the background of her stories as evidenced in this description from Delta Wedding (1946):

Little Battle crowded her a little as he jumped and she had to move down the board a little. They could play an endless game of hide-and-seek in so many rooms and up and down the halls that intersected and turned into dead-end porches and rooms full of wax begonias, and elephant's-ears, or rooms full of trunks. She remembered the nights-- the moon vine, the ever-blooming Cape jessamines, the verbena smelling under running feet, the lateness of dancers. . .  
(Welty, 1946, p. 8)

Welty has a great love of certain authors, particularly, Jane Austen, Anton Chekhov, and Virginia Woolf and returns regularly to reread their works. She tells of her mother's love of Dickens. The set of Dickens was given to her mother as a reward for having her hair cut when all other girls would have been given gold earrings. Her mother adored those books so much that when their house caught fire, she went back into the burning house, on crutches, and began throwing the set of Dickens out of the window to save it.

Eudora Welty maintains relationships with good friends and other authors like Katherine Anne Porter but she mentions them only briefly as is her way about friends and private feelings.

The composing processes of Eudora Welty suggest that she writes for the love of it; because it suits her life; and because it seems so natural when she has such a high regard for books, with her traditions of listening and storytelling and sense of place so firmly established. It seems the inevitable thing to do.

## Case Two: Margaret Laurence

Margaret Laurence was selected as an accomplished writer to research because of her recognition as one of the best Canadian writers. Her work represents a variety of prose including novels based in both Africa and Canada, short stories, essays, and children's literature. It is for her "Manawaka" series of four novels based on a fictional western Canadian town that she has received the highest acclaim.

From the last novel of the series, The Diviners, it has been possible to gather more information about Margaret Laurence, the writer. The Diviners is the story of Morag, a writer who grew up in the small town of Manawaka.

Laurence said that she chose writing as the profession for her central character because that was what she knew most about. Scattered throughout The Diviners are many thoughts about the writing process.

Other information has been gathered from collections of interviews and books about Laurence. Tributes to her memory following her recent death have also been used as sources of information since they include personal testimonies about Margaret, the writer and Margaret, the woman.

Information about Laurence will be grouped around the research questions to allow for comparison with other accomplished and developing writers.

#### Biographical Data

Margaret Laurence was born in 1926 in Neepawa, a small town in Manitoba, north of Winnipeg. She attended United College in Winnipeg, then married Jack Laurence, an engineer. They moved to Africa where their two children were born and where she wrote her first recognized novels. She then moved to England where she wrote many of the "Manawaka" series of novels. She returned to Canada and completed The Diviners, the last novel of the series. In 1974, Laurence returned permanently to Canada to Lakefield, Ontario. In the years before her death she wrote The Olden Days Coat, a book for children and became involved in working against nuclear armaments. She also became embroiled in a number of issues involving school districts that banned her books from their libraries.

Since Laurence's death many have paid her homage. Timothy Findley, award-winning author of The Wars and Famous Last Words wrote:

. . . She made Canadian writers aware that they are a community of people bent upon articulating something, just as the community of science is built upon its particular articulation. There is a universal exploration of the human spirit in writing -- and

Margaret Laurence was one of the great explorers.  
(Edmonton Journal, January 25, 1987.)

Composing Processes of Margaret Laurence

Margaret Laurence wrote five days a week saving the weekends for family and friends. Generally she wrote four to six hours per day except when completing a novel when she wrote longer. She also proclaims that when she is beginning a new novel, "my house is the cleanest in the country. I find all kinds of excuses to keep me away from the typewriter." She says that the blank page is frightening and describes the beginning of the writing as a terrifying challenge.

Usually she writes a first draft longhand and frequently uses scribblers for collecting her writing. She explains that she doesn't dare look back much, but when finished, she types out the longhand version. In doing this, she does some revision but mainly cuts out the verbiage. The most important revising and rewriting comes after the typescript is completed. It is at this time that she is able to distance herself from the writing. She says: "The first time through, one is inside, seeing it from the inside. In re-writing, one is seeing it more as a whole, and not from that deeply inside viewpoint any more. The second or third times you can think about it."



Some of Laurence's work was written directly on the typewriter although she expressed some distrust for that process.

Laurence describes the best writing as when "everything comes spontaneously, by itself, the characters finding the words which express themselves."

This is quite aptly described by her in The Diviners:

She had been working through the day, the words not having to be dredged up out of the caves of the mind, but rushing out in a spate so that her hand could not keep up with them. Odd feeling. Someone else dictating the words. Untrue, of course, but that was how it felt, the characters speaking. Where was the character, and who? Never mind. Not Morag's concern. Possession or self-hypnosis--it made no difference. Just let it keep on coming. (Laurence, 1974, p.404)

This flooding of words onto the page may be partly because Laurence's characters have been in her mind for such a long time before she writes her novels. She says that they have been there for several years and then qualifies it with "many years". This is how she describes the main character from "The Stone Angel", Hagar:

The character of Hagar had been in mind for quite a while before I started writing the novel which took place with surprising ease. . . I wrote about Hagar as an individual old woman, not reflecting whether she would be called universal or typical. She did come from my own Manitoba and family background but I felt she was an individual. . . (Fabre, 1983, p. 196)

done, but once started she writes quickly. She knows more about Lilac than Lilac knows about herself, but how to convey this? (Laurence, 1974, page 225)

Certainly, it appears that the subconscious unfolding of character and events leads Margaret Laurence onwards. She writes continuously as the ideas flow. And it is not until this process is finished that she begins to type and later revise.

It appears that Laurence thinks many years about her characters before beginning the writing process. When she begins to write, the characters assume some control over their speech and actions. Laurence as writer provides a form for this action and interaction and then shapes the product once it is written.

Bird in the House, a collection of stories about Vanessa MacLeod set in Manawaka, uses the background of her childhood and her grandparents. In her discussion with Michael Fabre (1983), Laurence explains the connections in this way:

My grandfather I hated when I was a kid because he was a very difficult man and only when I grew up, only when I finished the final story. . . that I had at last come to terms with him.

The "coming alive" of her characters as they assume their own voices and actions is not without some kinds of conscious planning however. Laurence says "When I am about to write a novel, I do jot down the characters and their

families, a kind of geneological table, so I know who was who and when they died and so on". (Perigoe, 1983, Because of the repetition of characters in the Manawaka novels, Laurence kept a quantity of notes on them.

The question of form occupied Margaret Laurence a good deal before she wrote because of her need to express the characterization in the best way possible. Two types that she used were the swift-paced building of scenes with action rising to a climax followed by an epilogue and the traditional method of the oral storyteller.

The building of scenes lent itself well to Laurence's "natural" way of writing. Her work is highly visual as can be noted in these excerpts:

In "Nanuck", Vanessa walks across the tracks in Manamwaka to the North End of town:

At the farthest point of the town, the CPR station stood, respectably painted in gloomy maroon colour known as Railway Red, paradoxically neat in the midst of the decrepit buildings around it. Above and beyond the station rose the peaked roofs of the grain elevators, solid and ugly, but the closest thing there were to towers here. (Perigoe, 1983)

In "The Diviners", Morag's description of Fan is explicit:

Fan Brady does, as Julie said, take some getting used to. It is impossible to tell her age, but she is probably close to thirty. She is tiny, bird-boned, but well-endowed withal, and she cares tenderly for her body, constantly smearing perfumed and pastel-tinted creams and ointments on various parts of herself, whoever happens to be present. False modesty

is one thing Fan hasn't got. She wears her flaming auburn hair in an odd assortment of ringlets, frizz and spicurls like a calendar girl from the Mary Pickford era, and yet on Fan this coiffure doesn't look old-fashioned. Her face isn't beautiful--it isn't even pretty. In fact, facially, she rather resembles a monkey. She is well aware of this, and doesn't give a damn. When she has applied her false eyelashes, green eyeshadow, orange lipstick, and multitudinous other bits of makeup, she looks weird. But from a distance, possibly, and under coloured lights, there would be a certain circus sequinned splendour about her. (Laurence, 1974, Page 308)

When discussing visual images, Laurence indicated that there were many ways that film and T.V. had helped to inform the writer. She was very aware that film could do things that writing could not and that writing could do things that film could not. (Perigoe, 1983)

Another way that Laurence enabled her characters to come alive was through the traditional method of the oral storyteller. She does this through providing first person narrative for her main characters. She also uses the techniques of a story within a story. The term 'Memorybank Movie' used throughout The Diviners is a means of relating scenes from Morag's background to her present-day experiences. Additionally Laurence uses the technique 'Snapshot' to allow the reader brief glimpses of Morag as she is growing up to bring the reader up to the beginning of the story. Both are techniques that she used consciously to provide the necessary background for the story that she is telling.

One of the reasons that Margaret Laurence is considered one of Canada's best writers is because of her ability to portray the Western Canadian dilemma and small town culture prevalent on the prairies. She downplays its importance by highlighting the characters but the sense of place still prevails.

The town of Manawaka is the town of her own making, having been in her mind since about the age of eighteen. It incorporates the general geographical and physical features of her birthplace, Neepawa. It includes the small brown river of her childhood, the cemetery on the hill, the CPR tracks and station, the church, and the local businesses. Laurence describes it:

. . . Manawaka is not so much any one prairie town but an amalgam of many prairie towns. Most of all, I like to think, it is simply itself, a town of the mind . . . which one hopes ultimately will somehow relate to the outside world which we all share. (Perigoe, 1983)

In her African writing, Laurence uses similar techniques to describe the settings. The places are recognizable because of the composites of characteristics gathered from many African places.

Laurence viewed this sense of place as being important too.

I think it is about time we started giving our kids some real sense of background of their cultural heritage. I think it is only through a literature which is truly theirs that they are going to gain a very strong sense of their own place and belonging which is here. (Perigoe, 1983.)

Like many writers, Margaret Laurence dislikes discussing how she writes. She frequently makes reference to the rising of the 'inner voice' from the subconscious levels of the mind. She refers to this experience in her conversation with Rosemary Sullivan when she discusses this inner voice coming to the surface while writing The Stone Angel:

When I wrote The Stone Angel it was really rather marvellous, because phrases, bits of idiom would come back to me that I had forgotten, that I didn't know I even remembered, from my parents' speech. (Fabre, 1983)

Laurence makes particular reference to the first five books of the Bible. She loved the King James version for its poetry. Many of the names of characters come directly from the Bible like that of Lazarus Tonnerre. Lazarus means "risen from the dead" which seemed especially appropriate for the character of Lazarus Tonnerre although the name was not chosen for that reason.

Symbolically, Hagar in The Stone Angel, the second wife of Bram Shipley, resents the first wife as the biblical Hagar resented Sarah, the first wife of Abraham. In The Diviners, Morag writes of the Three Wise Men represented by characters, Christie, Royland and Lazarus.

Such symbolism is not a conscious act but rather it occurs at a subconscious level. In her discussion with Robert Kroetsch (1983), he says "you can't go through after

putting in the symbols." She replies that you can't even think of them as being symbols and continues to explain:

... there obviously are echoes in the mind when you are doing the writing. You sense the symbols. If they are organic symbols, if they grow there, if they belong there, you sense them. But it is something you don't analyze at the time. People point out certain things in your work and say, "Well you know this particular bit of symbolism works extremely well", and you say, "Good Lord, I didn't know it was there!" But in a way, you half-knew it was. (Kroetsch, 1983)

In summarizing, Laurence's composing processes, it is apparent that she integrates the sense of place, the strong visual images and the complex characterization into her stories. Biblical references, symbolism and description assist in this integration.

She is able to manipulate language to suit her needs. When thinking about Fan, the danseuse in The Diviners, Laurence makes a reference to Carl Sandburg's quotation: "Look at songs hidden in eggs." Laurence manipulates this reference to describe Fan's story of her family history: "Look at laments hidden in eggshell skulls."

In the same book, Morag is considering the names of the wildflowers while her daughter suggests that it is only the names that she likes:

"I think it's marvellous, to find out all about them, Morag."

"Oh, she doesn't," Pique said, laughing. "I'll bet she couldn't identify more than half a dozen. She just likes the names. Isn't that so, Ma?"  
This girl knows me.

"Yeh," Morag admitted. "I guess so. But listen to some of the names. . .

Curly Pondweed  
 Silver Hairgrass  
 Old Witch Grass  
 Prostrate Pigweed  
 Night-flowering Catchfly  
 Queen-of-the-Meadow  
 Spiked Loosestrife  
 Hounds Tongue  
 Creeping Charlie  
 Heal-all or Self-heal  
 Black Nightshade  
 Sneezeweed  
 Pussy-toes or Lady's Tobacco  
 Common Mugwort  
 Rough Daisy Fleabane  
 Povertyweed  
 Staggerwort  
 Devil's Paintbrush (Laurence, 1974, p.407-8)

She confesses that one of the most difficult tasks that she must do in the writing process is to choose a title.

Laurence believes that titles should be like lines of poetry capable of saying a great deal with hardly any words. A Writer in the Nuclear Age: A Conversation with Margaret Laurence (Nash, 1985) shows her describing the process of rejecting the titles suggested by publishers for her book The Stone Angel. The original title of "Hagar" is rejected by the publishers and they suggest titles like "Old Lady Shipley", but she cannot accept them. She goes to the book of "Psalms" in the Bible, but cannot think of anything suitable. Finally she opens the book itself and finds the title within the first line: "Above the town, on the hill brow, the stone angel used to stand."



Laurence has described writing as "An attempt to come to terms with what you are." This indicates the highly personal nature of the writing act.

It is not surprising to note the ways in which Laurence must "distance" herself from the writing. When writing the first draft, she writes quickly allowing the subconscious to come into play. She then types the work cutting out much of the 'verbiage' as she types. Finally, she edits and revises the typewritten copy extensively. Such a process allows some distance between the initial writing and the final act.

Laurence began writing the Manawaka novels in England. Part of her reason for locating in England was to enable her to make connections with the writers of the world. Another reason was that she was ready to write about Manawaka but needed the distance to see it clearly. Time and space away from Canada gave her a better perspective. She described it in this way:

I think that by the time I got around to writing about a small prairie town, I could see it in much better perspective; and I could see it with a great deal more compassion and understanding than I had as a kid.  
(Sullivan, 1983)

Margaret Laurence indicated that she loved writing and that it took her a long time to realize that this was her "work" because she loved it so much.

This love of writing began at an early age. She began "writing" when she was in grade two but none of her teachers took it seriously until she was in grade five. Margaret considered herself to be a writer at a young age too, and was amused by early book reviews that described her as a beginning writer for she realized that her writing had begun when she was a child.

Her first published "work" was The Case of the Blonde Butcher which appeared on the Young Writer's Page of the Winni-~~ipeg~~ Press when she was twelve. The next year she wrote her first novel, The Pillars of the Nation. It filled two scribblers. Her first published poem appeared at the age of seventeen.

Likely it was Margaret's step-mother who provided the initial encouragement for her writing. Margaret's mother had died when she was four. Her mother's sister left a teaching career to look after Margaret following the death and then married her father. Margaret's father died when she was ten. She was provided warmth and love from her stepmother, Grandfather Simpson, and brother within a relatively stable family environment despite the loss of both of her parents.

Laurence said that her stepmother "always took my writing seriously and never laughed at it." She also encouraged Laurence to read. As Neepawa's first librarian, she

provided a wealth of literary experiences, including the habit of reading book reviews. She was understanding in a special way. For example, Margaret took music lessons as a young child and although she would practice, her stepmother could see that she didn't really love music in the way that she loved her writing and was allowed to quit.

Her university education at United College in Winnipeg was as successful as her early schooling. A number of stories and poems were published while she was there. Her roommate described "Peggy" as having the sense of independence and confidence that most young women there did not possess. Laurence remembered the years at United for the learning from all of her teachers but particularly remembered R.M. Hallestead because of his enthusiasm for the study of literature and writing and all humane causes.

Thus Laurence's early beginnings as a writer were very supportive of her as a person and as a writer. She thrived in that environment.

Laurence received support for her writing from her two writer friends, Adele Wiseman and Marion Engel. They were part of a network of writers who discussed their writing and shared their problems.

In The Diviners, Laurence makes reference to Marion Engel whom she gives the pseudonym of Ella. This illustrates the kind of sharing between them:

Ella, who was presently raising five-year-old twins, had now four books of poems and was working on a fifth. She was also doing a certain amount of freelance radio work in her spare time. Good God, what spare time? (Laurence, 1974, p. 212)

Later in the novel, Morag writes a letter to Ella congratulating her on the publication of the collection of poems and then discussing the literary references that are involved in the novel she is writing.

Margaret Laurence moved to England to enable her to access other writers and publishers. During that period of time, she wrote a total of six novels. She enjoyed her friends despite her heavy workload. A sign on her gate indicated her work hours plus an invitation to come back when they were over.

It was in England that Dave Billington, a journalist with the Edmonton Sun, met Laurence. After getting to know her, he renewed acquaintances with her in Ontario, and was in correspondence with her over the years. In his tribute to her he said, "Her home was open to all."

In the years following the publication of The Diviners, Laurence spent many hours corresponding with friends and other writers. Thus it was Laurence's love of writing that

has given us the works for which she is famous. It was her family and friends that offered the supportive environment for much of it to be accomplished.

Throughout Margaret Laurence's lifetime, writing was her work. Some of the work was very conscious and involved; the other was living the life of her characters. It was difficult emotionally as well as physically.

The gift of writing is compared to that of divining in The Diviners, processes neither Morag nor Royland wish to explain. Morag is led to question her own gift when Royland loses his ability to "divine" for water.

At least Royland knew he had been a true diviner. There were the wells, proof positive. Water. Real. Wet water. There to be felt and tasted. Morag's magic tricks were of a different order. She would never know if they actually worked or not, or to what extent. That wasn't given to her to know. In a sense, it did not matter. The necessary doing of the thing -- that mattered. (Laurence, 1974, p.452)

It was the necessary doing of the writing that has created such fine works.

Although Margaret Laurence was reluctant to discuss her composing processes it is apparent that she had very specific physical activities that helped her write. She was skilled at using techniques such as characterization through dialogue and description and she integrated her ideas into a planned form. Laurence was influenced by her family, her friends and the books that she read. She

allowed the subconscious flow of ideas to "take over" and wrote with considerable fluency. Laurence loved her work which was writing.

### Case Three: John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was selected as an accomplished writer because of his recognition as one of America's best writers of fiction. Steinbeck is known for his powerful novels about the common man, his intriguing short stories and some non-fiction pieces.

I have enjoyed Steinbeck's writing over a number of years. His characterization, the intricacies of his description, and his writing style enable the reader to 'see' the action. It seemed reasonable to study the writing processes of such a prolific and well-recognized writer.

My study of the writing processes of other authors has been derived from published interviews with these successful writers. With Steinbeck, however, no interviews were available because he seldom gave permission to be interviewed, even after winning major honors. He viewed himself as a writer, not an author and therefore declined interviews. Information about his writing processes, has been gathered from the numerous letters written by Steinbeck to his agent, Elizabeth Otis; his editor, Pascal Covici (Pat); and friends like George Albee, Bo Beskow,

Amasa (Ted) Miller, Ed Ricketts, and Carlton (Dook) Sheffield. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975) Others including his wives and people of great importance including Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Adlai Stevenson, Dag Hammarsjold and Jacqueline Kennedy have provided considerable insight into his writing habits as well. A number of biographies have also provided insights into Steinbeck, the man. (Benson, 1984; Fensch, 1979; Kiernan, 1979)

His professional writing spanned a period of at least forty years and included both short stories and major works like Grapes of Wrath (1939), Cannery Row (1945), East of Eden (1952), Winter of Our Discontent (1961), and Travels with Charley (1962). He also wrote the scripts for films of books that he had written. Script writing eased the insecure financial situation resulting from the expenses of two divorces and support for the two sons from his second marriage.

#### Biographical Data

John Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902, the third child and only son of John Ernst and Olive Steinbeck.

Because he was the long awaited boy, his parents had special aspirations for him. Olive had been a school teacher and John Ernst was the successful manager of his own grain and feed store when John was born. The family

held a fairly influential position in the community of Salinas, California.

John's birth was traumatic and he was born with rather coarse features. This contributed to his shy disposition among strangers. When he entered school, John's mother had made sure that he was able to read and write but he was still very shy and lacked the social skills necessary to be very successful with regular schooling. His school history was marked by unacceptable behavior which continued into his years at Stanford University as well. Despite several semesters at Stanford, Steinbeck did not graduate due to erratic attendance and lack of attention to his courses.

His adult life was relatively stable despite the fact that he spent much of his life as a poor man. In 1930, he married Carol Henning whom he had met at Hopkins Marine Station, while doing some writing with his friend Ed Ricketts. This marriage ended in 1942. In 1943, he married Gwyndolyn Conger. Two sons were born in this marriage. They were separated and divorced in 1948. In 1950, he married Elaine Scott and he remained with her until his death in 1968.

Steinbeck was a determined man who loved writing. Very little stood in the way of his writing. Benson (1984), Kiernan (1979), and Steinbeck and Wallsten (1975) suggest that Steinbeck was a difficult man to live with yet the



letters to his editor, his agent and his friends indicate that he was a warm and gentle man who valued his long-term friendships.

### Composing Processes of John Steinbeck

Steinbeck was almost ritualistic in his use of pencils for his writing. Many comments allude to this habit. In a letter to his friend Sheffield, December, 1952, Steinbeck says:

I'm coming to life again. I like the feeling of the pencil. The second finger of my right hand has a great grooved callus on it into which the pencil fits. And I have an electric pencil sharpener. I use about 200 a day. I love the smooth lead and a sharp point. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 462)

He noted that he preferred round pencils to hexagonal ones for they were easier on the callus. He held a pencil about six hours each day and a newly sharpened pencil generally lasted one page. He also experimented with different kinds of pencils. After trying out some pencils, he made this comment:

My choice of pencils lies between the black Calculator stolen from Fox Films and this Mongol 2 3/8 F which is quite black and holds its point well - much better in fact than the Fox pencils. I will get six more or maybe four more dozen of them for my pencil tray.

I have found a new kind of pencil - the best I have ever had. Of course it costs three times as much too, but it is black and soft but doesn't break off. I think I will always use these. They are called Blackwings and they really glide over the page. (Plimpton, 1974, p. 187)

While he did have use of a typewriter, they were mainly second-hand ones which wives, Carol and Elaine, used before submitting the manuscript to the publisher. He explained this in a letter to Elia Kazan in 1959:

A typewriter stands between me and the word, a tool that has never become an appendage, but a pencil is almost like an umbilical connection between me and the boring letters. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 624)

For paper, Steinbeck generally used the yellow legal pads or ledger books. Entire manuscripts were written in the ledger books.

A habit that Steinbeck started while attending Stanford was that of writing letters. His professor, Miss Mirrielee, had recommended letter writing to her students as a form of literary discipline. She urged her students to treat the letter writing seriously, and suggested that if they could write good letters, then they could write good stories.

Following this advice, Steinbeck's letters improved in quality and in his letters he tested sentence construction, word usage, cadences and rhythms. (Kiernan, 1979, p. 94)

The letter writing became his way of getting started in the morning for he wrote letters to get warmed up. He wrote them on anything that was available including pages torn from a ledger and hotel stationary but most usually he wrote on the yellow legal pad using a soft pencil. A

crabbed miniscule almost indecipherable type of handwriting was his trademark.

Steinbeck's composing habits were very systematic. They were so consistent that in 1960, when he changed a small part of his ritual, he commented on it in a letter to Pascal Covici:

I've made a little change in method which is very great. I used to get the papers in the morning and read them before I went to work. Now I get up at six, hear fifteen minutes of news and go directly to work unconfused and undeflected. The simple thing works so well that I shall never go back to the other. I read the papers in the evening, after work. (Steinbeck and Wallesten, 1975, p. 676.)

Other habits that were akin to Steinbeck's writing were the fact that he smoked a pipe when he worked. Because writing time also consisted of thinking time, he would carve on pieces of wood and also scratched the surface of his desk to the extent the surface would need to be refinished.

Steinbeck would spend many hours of thinking before actually writing. In a letter to a friend he explained on January 31 that he was just completing the writing of a play that he started on January 9. He then explained that the time did not include the months that he had spent thinking about it. At one point he estimated that it took twenty hours of thinking for three hours of writing. As a teenager, he was known to have sat at the upstairs window with his head bent over his writing or simply gazing out of

the window. One neighbor was irate at this when a load of wood was delivered to the Steinbeck home and John stayed in this position while his father unloaded and moved the wood by himself.

Once his ideas were firm, Steinbeck would begin to write and continue writing to completion. Then he would correct and revise. In writing East of Eden, he took the better part of one year with the last six weeks given to the rewriting.

Thus, Steinbeck's physical actions are easily described since he was so consistent. The actual composing process was more difficult for even Steinbeck to explain.

When composing, especially longer pieces of work, there would be a long period of collecting information and impressions. This was not particularly goal directed but would receive direction when an idea or awareness of some flaw in society became a theme in Steinbeck's mind. For example, the misery of the migrant worker and the infidelity of Steinbeck's second wife served as organizing themes. He would then begin composing the inner dialogue and relating these thoughts to the larger issues of history and literature like Shakespeare, the Bible, classical literature or Malory. Much of what he was reading was directly reflected in his next composition. For example, Winter of Our Discontent, was influenced by his readings of

documents from American history, collections of American poetry and the short stories of Kafka, that Steinbeck was reading at that time.

Finally, Steinbeck's mind would be so filled with ideas that they would virtually explode into writing. He would then proceed until he was exhausted. He ignored everyone around him and could hardly sleep because of the ideas. He would try to discipline his mind, slow his pace, and control the writing but had difficulty in doing so.

(Benson, 1984, pp. 874-75)

Additional insights into Steinbeck's composing process came from a letter to Robert Wallsten, dated February, 1962. He explains the fear of writing for publication and his ways of overcoming this fear.

Now let me give you the benefit of my experience in facing 400 pages of blank stock - the appalling stuff that must be filled. I know that no one really wants the benefit of anyone's experience which is probably why it is so freely offered. But the following are some of the things I have had to do to keep from going nuts.

1. Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are really surprised.
2. Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.
3. Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you

to death and in the second place, unlike the theatre, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person - a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.

4. If a scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it - bypass it and go on. When you have finished the whole you can come back to it and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn't belong there.

5. Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest. It will usually be found that it is out of drawing.

6. If you are using dialogue - say it aloud as you write it. Only then will it have the sound of speech.

Steinbeck cautioned that this might not work for Wallsten, who was like a nephew to him, but that it had mostly worked for him. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, pp. 736-37)

In a letter to Bob Anderson, the poet, he described how to get over the writers' block. What worked for him was to write poetry; not for anyone or for publication but just to get the ideas onto the paper.

Steinbeck was influenced by the books he read. His mother, a former teacher, read to him as a young child. When he was two, she read fairy tales; at three, she read passages from the Bible and English animal stories; and when he was four, ~~she~~ read books like Ivanhoe, Robin Hood, and Treasure Island. She started to teach him to read at the age of three and he remembered having a difficult time of it. Their home had an abundance of books, magazines and classical recordings.

One of the most profound influences on his early literary beginnings was the gift of a book, a version of the Caxton Morte d'Arthur of Thomas Malory. Because the book looked so difficult and boring, Steinbeck resented the book initially, but then gradually became absorbed by it. He loved the old spelling of the words and the diction no longer used. He began to develop a passionate love for the English language; and, for a period of time, Malory provided him with a secret language.

He used the stories from this book for some of his own stories. For example, in Sweet Thursday, Steinbeck retold the story of the poor knight who made a wife out of flowers and in Tortilla Flat, he likened the poor, illiterate paisanos to the knights of King Arthur's Round Table.

(Kiernan, 1979, p. 15)

He later pursued this love of Morte d'Arthur by living in England for almost a year while he researched the stories and language of the early times and began translating the Morte d'Arthur of his childhood.

He remembered other books that he had read, like Crime and Punishment, Madame Bovary, parts of Paradise Lost, and The Return of the Native as experiences or things that had happened to him rather than as reading.

His stories do not have extensive biblical references, but some are notable. For example, the title, East of Eden was decided about half way through the novel. Steinbeck described it in this way in a letter to Elia and Molly Kazan:

"At last I have a title which I like. It is East of Eden. It is perfect for this book and it sounds like a very soft title until you read the first sixteen verses of the fourth chapter of Genesis. The title comes from the sixteenth verse but the whole passage is applicable. Please don't tell my title yet. . . ."  
(Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 425)

In addition to the reading experiences, Steinbeck liked to tell stories. One of his childhood friends remembered him gathering the neighborhood children in the Steinbeck basement to read ghost stories to them. Others remember him gathering them together to read stories or poems. Sometimes he wrote poetry and presented it as a gift. He would write stories and send them to newspapers and magazines, anonymously and then search for them in subsequent publications.

Steinbeck's teachers influenced his writing. Miss Cupp, a freshman composition teacher, encouraged him by having him read his compositions to class and holding them up as a model. Another teacher, Miss Hawkins, encouraged him to chart his own course and persist with his ambition to become a writer.



When John attended Stanford University, one of his teachers, Edith Mirrielees, had a profound influence on his career as a writer. It was at her suggestion that he begin to write letters before beginning a writing session. She was demanding and critical while at the same time encouraging when encouragement was justified. One of the main faults of Steinbeck's fiction writing while a university student was a tendency to be wordy and to provide too much ornamentation. Mirrielees was known to be strict about these. Her philosophy was such that she encouraged the writer to write for she believed that some help could be given in the revision and general improvement of a story but that the initial shaping of a story was up to the writer himself.

Steinbeck developed a love of words with Morte d'Arthur that continued throughout his writing career. His respect for words that was indicated in a letter to Peter Benchley (author of Jaws) in 1956, when Benchley was a beginning writer.

A man who writes a story is forced to put into it the best of his knowledge and the best of his feeling. The discipline of the written word punishes both stupidity and dishonesty. A writer lives in awe of words for they can be cruel or kind, and they can change their meanings right in front of you. They pick up flavors and odors like butter in a refrigerator. Of course there are dishonest writers who go on for a little while, but not for long - not for long. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 523)

In 1952, he wrote to his friend Sheffield, explaining a library of 'words' that he was accumulating:

I am gradually accumulating a library which would delight you I think. It's a library of words - all dictionaries - 12 vol. Oxford, all of Mencken, folklore, Americanisms, dic. of slang - many - and then all books and monographs on words. I find I love words very much. And gradually I am getting a series of dictionaries of modern languages. The crazy thing about all this is that I don't use a great variety of words in my work at all. I just love them for themselves. The long and specialized words are not very interesting because they have no history and no family. But a word like claw or land or host or foist - goes back and back and has relatives in all directions. . . (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 457)

Scattered throughout many letters are musings about words and then dismissal of his interest since it appears that his audience does not have the intense interest that he has himself. He sent Wallsten a twelve volume set of the Oxford dictionary as a gift, another indication of his love for words.

In addition to his love of words, there is evidence that Steinbeck got his ideas from his own experiences. His writing, however is described by him and others as "personal not autobiographical".

In a sense, his work is regional. Grapes of Wrath resulted from his experiences with migrant workers moving to California during the depression. The setting for Cannery Row was in Salinas, his home town. Although the people of Salinas found the book offensive, they almost immediately

made arrangements for tour buses to take visitors to the area known as "Cannery Row". Travels with Charley is a 'coming to terms' with the geography of the whole United States.

The character of Steinbeck's mother is reflected in his writing, too. Her youth as a school teacher is used as a basis for Holly Morgan's background in the Pastures of Heaven. Many of her best qualities are given to Ma Joad in Grapes of Wrath. She is shown more explicitly in East of Eden, the story of the Hamilton family.

The stern silence of Steinbeck's father is reflected in some of his male characterizations. The character of Kate in East of Eden appears to have been created by Steinbeck's perceptions of the worst qualities of his first two wives. (Benson, 1984)

Many think that Steinbeck's first novel, Cup of Gold is the most autobiographical of all his books, a summary of his thoughts and feelings up to the age of twenty-six. In Cup of Gold, young Henry Morgan decides to leave home to fulfill his own dreams. Henry's mother, who speaks with an Irish lilt similar to Mrs. Steinbeck's, opposes his journey, preferring that he stay close to home leading a more conventional life. (Benson, 1984)

Feelings sometimes form the theme for a book like for The Winter of Our Discontent. In a letter to Dag Hammarskjold, Steinbeck discusses the feeling that forms the base for the novel:

I arrived at home for the culmination of the TV scandal. Except as a sad and dusty episode, I am not deeply moved by the little earnest, cheating people involved, except insofar as they are symptoms of a general immorality which pervades every level of our national life and perhaps the life of the whole world. . . . How can I teach my boys the value and beauty of language and thus communication when the President himself (Eisenhower) reads westerns exclusively and cannot put together a simple English sentence?" (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 653)

Steinbeck comments even less on the formation of his ideas than he does about other aspects of his writing. He mentions that he spends much more time in thinking than in writing. Perhaps he is not really aware of the sources of ideas once they have been thought through.

John Steinbeck loved to write. This is evident by the way he pursued his writing career despite obstacles placed in his way. His mother wished that he would pursue a more socially acceptable career such as banking and he attended Stanford to meet her aspirations for him. His life at Stanford, however, met his needs to be a writer for he enrolled in the creative writing courses and the classical literature which interested him. Even then, he did not meet the course requirements and despite six years of attendance didn't graduate.

His father supported his desire to be a writer although not verbally. He gave financial support throughout Steinbeck's years at Stanford. When John and Carol were married he sent fifty dollars per month and later let them live at the Steinbeck coastal cottage.

John Steinbeck worked at improving his writing until he had perfected the technique. But then he feared that the technique had taken over from the ideas. In a letter to his agent, Elizabeth Otis, he said:

Having a technique, is it not possible that the technique not only dictates how a story is to be written but also what story is to be written? . . . Will not my technique, which has become almost unconscious, warp and drag me around to the old attitudes and subtly force the new work to be the old? (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 497)

He also feared receiving major honors such as the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel prize for he thought his ideas might disappear. He declared that he knew of too many authors whose work declined after receiving such prizes. He believed that a man's writing became less good with the numbers of his honors. (Fensch, 1979)

Steinbeck expressed a concern that he should not enjoy writing. After writing the book Bear Flag, he described this feeling to Otis:

I have enjoyed writing this book, the B.F.

There is a school of thought among writers which says that if you enjoy writing something it is

automatically no good and should be thrown out. I can't agree with this. Bear Flag may not be much good but for what it is, I think it is all right. Also I think it makes a nice balance for the weight of Eden. It is of light and gay and astringent. It may even be some good things. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 472)

In the same letter he indicated that he would hate to end the book for he was enjoying the writing so much. This was a feeling that he had with many of his novels such as East of Eden. At the end of East of Eden he wrote to his friend, Bo Baskow and described the feeling in this way: "Anyway, it is done and not quite all a relief. I miss it. You can't live that intimately with anything and not miss it when it dies. Once the book was written, he refused to make significant changes for that was how he intended it to be. He suggested that it was then up to the reader to get out of it what he could.

When Steinbeck finished a book, he viewed it as a death. He grieved briefly and then went on to a new book. He described the books that he had written as "very well-embalmed corpses. They are neither alive nor mine." (Plimpton, 1976, p. 196)

In response to his publisher's questioning of the ending of Grapes of Wrath where he indicated that he did his damnest to rip a reader's nerves to shreds, and didn't want them satisfied, he said: "I tried to write this book the way lives are being lived not the way books are written." (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 178)

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Steinbeck took his work seriously. Before writing, he took notes and thought about his work for a long time. He wrote to a publisher that it had taken him five years to make notes for one particular manuscript. At a party in 1930, he embarrassed himself in a discussion with fellow writers. In the letter he described it in this way:

We went to a party at John Calvin's in Carmel last week. . . Says John Calvin, "I long ago ceased to take anything I write seriously." I retorted, "I take everything I write seriously; unless one does take his work seriously there is very little chance of its ever being good work." And the whole company was a little ashamed of me as though I had three legs or was an albino. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 30)

His opinion of himself as a writer was as an author concerned with the story and the way the story was written. Early in his career Steinbeck stated a position showing his disdain for the conventions of writing which he maintained throughout his lifetime. In a letter to friend, A. Grove Day, another writer, he wrote:

I want to speak particularly of your theory of clean manuscript and spelling as correct as a collegiate stenographer and every nasty little comma in its place and preening of itself. "Manners," you say it is, and knowing the "trade" and the "Printed Word." But I have no interest in the printed word. I would continue to write if there were no writing and no printing. I put my words down for a matter of memory. They are more made to be spoken than to be read. I have the instincts of a minstrel rather than those of a scrivener. There you have it. We are not of the same trade at all and so how can your rules fit me? When my sounds are all in place, I can send them to a stenographer who knows his trade and he can slip the commas about until they sit comfortably and he can spell the words so that school teachers will not raise their eyebrows when they read them. Why should I

bother? There are millions of people who are good stenographers but there aren't so many thousands who can make as nice sounds as I can. (Steinbeck and Wallsten, 1975, p. 19)

Despite his friendship with his editor, Pascal Covici, Steinbeck said that sending his work to him was like feeding books to the lions.

I believe that Steinbeck's feelings about writing are best described in Benson's Prologue for The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer:

Most serious writers, in their heart of hearts, have some concern for artistic immortality. But John Steinbeck didn't care about it much one way or the other. His perspective was too broad, and his sense of self-importance too small. What he cared about was writing itself. He didn't write for fame, although occasionally he enjoyed being famous; he didn't write for money, although there were times when he needed money; he wrote because he loved to write, because he was addicted to it. (Benson, 1984)

Thus, John Steinbeck is another writer who had a well-defined set of physical activities. His writing grew from his experiences and from the places he lived and travelled. He was profoundly influenced by the books he read and by his associates including his parents, teachers and wives. Despite numerous obstacles ranging from financial difficulties to marital problems and health problems, Steinbeck pursued the work he loved which was writing.



Case Four: Monica Hughes

Monica Hughes was selected as a writer to study because of her success as a writer of juvenile literature. She is a well-known Canadian writer who lives in Edmonton. Much of the information on Hughes came from a public lecture and from an interview at her home on May 12, 1987.

Biographical Data:

Monica Hughes was born in England in 1925 but spent the first seven years of her life in Egypt where her father was a mathematician. She returned to London when she was seven years old, where she attended a London school which she described as excellent. The family later moved to Edinburgh, Scotland. Much of Monica Hughes' education was at private schools. During the war she joined the WRNS, and following the war went to Zimbabwe, at that time, Southern Rhodesia. Hughes came to Canada in 1952, intending to cross Canada and then travel to Australia. She met her husband, Glen Hughes, and moved across Canada from Ottawa to Edmonton where she began writing seriously in 1971.

Monica Hughes has written and published many novels for juveniles. She has received many awards including the Beaver Award (1980), the Vicky Metcalf Award (1981) and the Canada Council Children's Literature Prize (1982). Her

books cover a range of fiction from science fiction to historical fiction. They are enjoyed by many teenaged readers because of their presentation of realistic characterization involving the difficulties involved in coming to terms with one's own adolescence.

#### Composing Processes of Monica Hughes

At the Henry Kreisel Distinguished Lecture, (March, 1987) I asked Monica Hughes about her physical activities when writing and if she used a word processor. She replied that she writes from 9:00 to 12:00 each morning. She used to write from 8:00 to 12:00 but felt that she must be faster now. She explained that she now writes in her study at home. Before her study was set up, she had written at the dining room table with her back towards the windows so that she wouldn't be distracted. She uses a black 'Bic' pen and looseleaf paper writing by hand so that she doesn't lose her subconscious. (Hughes, 1987)

Hughes explained to Gerald Rubio (1982) that writing was a very lonely business even when writing for children which she described as being a joyful experience. She expressed discomfort at confronting the set of blank pages and wondering "Why am I doing this?" when she first begins and when she confronts a difficult part in a book.

(Rubio, 1982)

Hughes has been very open about sharing her writing processes with others and is active in speaking with groups of writers both adult and children. The influences on the writing process will be discussed first followed by a discussion of her composing processes.

When Monica Hughes talks about her writing she is careful to explain the early influences of her development as a writer. She explains the love of books that were a part of her life from the very beginning. Hughes explains that she can remember things that happened when she was two, including the books that were read to her: The Adventures of Ludo, Little Green Duck, and Der Struwwelpeter, a story where a man came along and chopped off the thumbs of the bad thumb-sucking children.

Hughes gives particular credit to the London school that she attended when she was seven and eight years old. She developed an early appreciation for the development of writing when they were read stories about pre-historic man and took trips to the British Museum to see the Stone Age burials. She explained that in the year that was approximate to grade two, they learned to write on clay and wax tablets with a stylus, learned some cuneiform, studied hieroglyphs, and were taught about the Rosetta Stone. In the next year they were read aloud to from the Norse Sagas; their hero was Baldur the Beautiful. These profound

experiences led Hughes to appreciate the magic of writing, a phenomenon that she still marvels at today.

Hughes recalls that reading was never difficult for her and that while growing up she was caught up in the fantasy of the stories she read: Wind in the Willows, Black Beauty, Coral Island, and all the books of E. Nesbit. Her father had a new position at the University of Edinburgh, where he used his work in pure mathematics to do problem solving in astronomy. He talked with Hughes about the stars and gave her James Jean's Mysterious Universe to read. She said that she devoured the book not really understanding it but absorbing it almost by osmosis.

Her father provided the love of words and the sense of music in words by reading aloud to the family every Sunday afternoon. Rather than choosing children's books, which weren't very good at the time, he read what he wanted to read: Treasure Island, Lorna Doone, Kidnapped, Tales of Mystery and Imagination, and the Ingoldsby Legends.

Monica Hughes mentioned many books that she had experienced as a child. Many require considerable effort to comprehend and many were beyond her ability and interest level when she first read them.

Another influence was her schooling which required frequent writing. Hughes explained that this was before the time of

multiple choice questions and that they did much writing ~~of~~ essays at Harrogate School.

Like many writers, Hughes has a background that encouraged reading and writing. Yet she didn't start writing for publication until 1971, when she was in her mid-forties.

One of the reasons for beginning then was that she was appalled by the basal readers that her children were required to read. The "Dick and Jane" readers with their scant use of language and milky pictures both puzzled and offended her. She was dismayed by the lack of Canadian writing that children could read. Before emigrating to Canada she had tried to find out about the country by reading some of its literature. All that she found was "Anne of Green Gables" which described the rural eastern setting of 1910 in Prince Edward Island, and "Grey Owl". There seemed to be nothing that represented the present-day life of Canada. Most children's books were imported from the United States.

Hughes set out to correct this deficiency. She had attempted to write some adult fiction but felt that she was unsuccessful. It was the book Writing for the Juvenile and Teenage Market by Jane Fitz-Randolph that she happened to choose from the library one day. She realized how writing for juveniles had improved since she was that age. She read numerous good juvenile fiction books including those

by Eleanor Cameron and Rosemary Sutcliffe. She set a schedule to write at the table every day from eight to twelve with no interruptions. This was the beginning for Hughes as a writer of juvenile fiction.

She began with some "horrible formula adventures" and could not come to terms with the advice to "Write about what you know". Success came with the writing of Crisis on Conshelf Ten. (1981)<sup>4</sup> She described it in this way:

I'd watched a Jacques Cousteau program on television which had to do with setting up an undersea habitat where scientists or engineers could live for two or three days at a time while working at pressures of three or four atmospheres, and so avoid the hazards and the wasted time of continually having to decompress and surface after very, very short work intervals. It was an interesting program, but I found myself saying, "Well, what would it be like if men lived permanently in habitats sixty feet under the surface: If that were their real home for all time?" And then the crucial question popped into my mind: "What would it be like to be a boy growing up in an environment like that?" (Rubio, 1982, p. 11)

The formulation of such questions from seemingly everyday mundane situations formed the seed for other books.

In the Henry Kreisel lecture, (1987)<sup>5</sup> Hughes described the newspaper article about climatic change and started thinking about what would happen if there were a dramatic climatic change. This formed the background for Ring-Rise, Ring-Set.

Hunter in the Dark came from a simple incident in her son Russell's life. She described it in this way:

My son had been planning a hunting trip throughout the fall with his friends but every weekend something happened that they couldn't go. At the end of November, he asked his father if he could go hunting and stay away from school and of course, he didn't get permission so he played hookey from school and went up to Swan Hills to hunt where they got a little mule deer. He wrote his Dad a note and when he was asked why he did this he said "Mom, I just had to."  
(Hughes, 1987)

When she was finished being angry with Russell for skipping school she questioned his motives for going hunting and began to compare the situation to the rites of passage that are so prominent in many cultures. Hughes explained that in Britain, between the wars, when a boy would quit school and bring his first pay check home, it was considered a rite of passage into adulthood.

Hughes continues her explanation by then describing how the character of this boy began to become clear: that she knew he was called Mike but she puzzled over why he had to go hunting. She questioned the situation for a while and then it became clear that Mike had to go hunting because he was very ill and could possibly die, that he might never have the chance to become a man and that he was angry at life getting away from him without a chance to experience it. The hunt became the symbol of his manhood. (Rubio, p. 17,18)

Thus a rather simple incident became the kernel for a rather complex novel, Hunter in the Dark. (1982)

Questions have very often been a springboard for Hughes' major works. Hughes described another family incident which provided the questions necessary to think through another major work. She described it in this way:

My daughter was very neglectful of pets. One day I went up to her room and her hamster had died because of lack of food and care and I was furious with her. I thought "If I kept her in a cage for a week with no food or water, then..." and that was the idea for the story Space Trap.

Hughes described this thought process in this way: "I guess stories come out of a questioning mind and I have always had a questioning mind."

Incidents like the ones referred to have formed the ideas for stories. Hughes also uses newspaper cuttings for ideas of whole stories and for descriptions within stories.

Keeper of the Isis Light (1980) arose from a news story about David, the "bubble boy", who was a child of three at the time and condemned to spend his life in isolation from the rest of humanity. Hughes struggled with the question "Is David lonely?" for five years before setting up a situation similar to David's in which Olwen, the heroine, was marooned on a planet far removed from earth. Many modifications were made to the basic idea before the story became realized with Olwen as the central character.

Hughes described an excellent article from the Edmonton Journal which explained the Sweat ceremony of the native



Indian culture. When writing the Ghost Dance Caper, she was able to use the sweat lodge experience as described in the newspaper article. She said that she would never have been able to experience it herself in the way that it was described in the article and it was just what she needed. Hughes mentioned that she would be lost without her cuttings file that provides much of the necessary research for the incidents in her books.

Just as questions form the beginning for major works, Hughes also uses a mapping technique for planning her novels, particularly the science fiction ones. She compares it to the planning of a holiday when one takes the map and plans the routes and alternatives. She says that you take into account your budget and the time that is available. The vacation may turn out to be quite different from the plan since unexpected things always turn up. She says that writing is just like this:

. . . the writer is not only the planner but the mapmaker, and the more she has to plan into the blank areas marked only "terra incognita" or "here there be dragons," the more stimulating and, at the same time, the more scary the voyage of discovery becomes.

She said that her writing comes at the end of the process of creating the map. She has made maps of many possible future worlds on earth and out in the galaxy. She starts with "now" and moves to the immediate future with known points joined together in plausible but imaginative ways.

Like a family selecting locations to visit on a holiday map, the main characters make choices as they proceed along the routes that have been plotted on this beginning map.

These maps are just the beginning for Hughes, and she uses them along with the character development to lead the way. At times she experiences a writer's block where the journey seems to be leading nowhere but in such cases she plods onwards and lets the story take over. She describes one situation in this way:

My protagonists had reached the library and were about to open the door leading to the next section. I described the padded leather door, its stuffing leaking out. I described the forty-year carpet of dust upon the door. Then they pushed the door cautiously open, and to my enormous surprise, I saw footprints in the dust within.

Hey, what was going on? Nobody was supposed to have entered that building for forty years! Since I had no answer, I shrugged my shoulders, described the footprints, and went on. The two began to pull the books out of the shelves. A book fell to the floor with a bang and suddenly like the Demon King in the pantomime, out from behind the stacks jumped a crazy librarian!

Well, I was so startled I just sat and stared. Who are you? Where did you come from? And what are you doing in my book?

At least with all these questions to be answered, I seemed to have gotten over the block, so I granted the intruder a temporary visa into my country until I saw how he behaved. . . (Hughes, 1986, p.28)

So with a map of possible events and places, with knowledge of her characters, with broad, important questions in mind, Hughes embarks on her novels. She encounters writer's

block as many writers do but perseveres and lets the subconscious take over until she sees how this will fit with her plan.

Hughes does extensive research into the backgrounds of her novels and the characters. She indicated that one of the problems was in knowing what to keep out. For example, when she wrote Earthdark (1981), she described what life was like on the moon and how cars would work on the moon. At her publisher's request she removed the technological description from the book. When asked at a later time to describe how the cars worked she had forgotten, however the basic research lent credibility and truthfulness to the story. For this reason, Hughes does extensive research before she begins writing.

She described Blaine's Way (1986) as her husband's story. It is the story of a young Canadian boy who leaves his grandparents' farm, changes the date of birth on his birth certificate, and joins the army at age 16 to fight in the Second World War. Some of the facts pertain to her husband's situation but much research was done in the rural Ontario areas which involved interviewing the residents and looking through shoeboxes full of newspaper clippings.

Sometimes, she said:

You do it the opposite way around through research. Sandwriter began with a view on television of an Israeli art or general art and it finished up with

these wonderful sand sculptures. It had this deserty looking background. I hadn't been paying particular attention, I was just flaked out in front of the television. And through my brain, literally, sort of the book fell out of the back of my head. "Oh, that's one of the entrances to one of their houses. " Now that is obviously, a clue, that the back of my head is storing what needed to be written, which is key to something I have absolutely no knowledge of. I have no clue of what is to be written.

So the only clue is desert, so I went down to the library and did massive research on deserts. I know so much about different irrigation systems now and the history of farming in arid countries. I read and I read and I made notes. It just didn't feel like the right story at all. I went to pick up this book on the Negev Desert. A woman journalist who had written it, had had a marvelous experience of climbing up to the top of Mount Sinai, in order to watch the sunrise the next day and she spent the night there. She started musing about the importance of deserts in the Judai-Christian tradition. Places we go to get love, places that you go to meditate, places that where you go to find yourself, places where you go to hear God, you know.

And I thought "Ah ha, this is the sort of tone that I want. " Then the figure of Sandwriter suddenly appeared, fully clothed as it were, this old old shaman. Now all I had to do was ask the kind of questions that would get, first of all, at country. What country? Is there another country? Do I want a contrast? Then I started working on that. I did a lot of map-drawing on that one. I realized I was going to get contrast which is so important in writing for young people and sometimes you have to get induce as it were from outside by contrasting the desert to a continent where one is very lush.

Obviously since I had two opposites, it involved a journey. Will the protagonist go from the miserable place to the glorious place? Oh, that won't be very exciting. Just relax and enjoy life. Much more abrasive and thus more interesting to go from the lush place to the harsh place. So all I have to do is find a reason. And of course the same reasons come in, I might become the character, "Oh, she wouldn't want to do that." Now I know what she's like. And so build up. . . (Wyatt, 1987)

This explanation of the writing of a novel shows the many techniques that Monica Hughes may use in composing. They include the initial idea, the map-making, the research, the character formation, the planning of a plot and the important central idea. The questioning leads her through much of the beginning phase.

Monica Hughes is most noted for her writing of science fiction for children. Her science fiction is purposeful:

. . . I think one of the functions of a good writer for children (besides, obviously, being entertaining) is to help them explore the world and the future. And to find acceptable answers to the Big Questions: "What's life about?" "What is it to be human?" As I said before, those are questions that demand truthful answers not pat ones. So I think my chief criterion for a story for children -- it should be for all fiction in fact, of course, but very especially that written for the young -- is that one should write as truthfully as possible, even if it isn't easy or painless. One faces oneself in the darkest inside places of one's memory and one's subconscious, and out of that comes both joy and sorrow. But always -- and I think again this is perhaps the second crucial thing for children -- always there must come hope. (Wyatt, 1987)

Thus, Monica Hughes shows that she has a well-defined set of physical activities associated with her writing. She is another writer who loves her work and who has been influenced by her parents, her schooling, and her love of literature. She is very cognizant of her own composing processes and is quite willing for the subconscious to lead the way beyond her own organization.

### Summary

Research into the composing processes of the four accomplished writers: Eudora Welty, Margaret Laurence, John Steinbeck and Monica Hughes indicates that there are many similarities amongst them. Such findings may not be generalizable to a entire population of published writers but may assist in understanding the composing processes of other professional writers and has helped in the observation of student writers.

All writers showed preferences for particular physical settings. Eudora Welty liked to write in the mornings in her second story bedroom where she could look out of the windows to the world. Her stories were almost entirely handwritten. Margaret Laurence scheduled specific hours five days per week for her writing. From the time that she was a young child she used pencils and scribblers for her compositions. Like Laurence, Steinbeck also set a working schedule, however he usually started by writing letters to friends and associates, a habit that was encouraged by his college teacher. He required several sharp pencils and paper from a ledger or yellow legal pads. Similarly, Monica Hughes requires specific writing tools: a black 'Bic' pen and looseleaf paper. Like Welty, she schedules the hours of 9:00 to 12:00 each morning for her writing.

3 She uses the same chair at the dining room table sitting with her back to the garden.

Both Eudora Welty and Margaret Laurence indicated that they required quiet time with few interruptions to facilitate their writing. Although Steinbeck did not indicate a preference, he led a quiet life while writing. When Monica Hughes began her writing career, she scheduled time while her children were at school, presumably to avoid being interrupted.

All of the published writers composed their first drafts "by hand" and would then type a second draft of the original handwritten piece. They explained the notion that they were better able to revise on copies that were once-removed from the handwritten piece. The accomplished writers wrote the first drafts completely before engaging in any kind of revision.

In reference to planning their stories, they suggested that the stories had been in their minds for months and sometimes years before writing could occur. Laurence indicated that the sights and sounds of northern Manitoba had been in her mind for years before she began to write the "Manawaka" series. Similarly, Hughes indicated that she had kept many ideas such as the story of David, the "bubble boy", in her mind before it formed a story. Hughes was the only writer who shared any physical type of plan

for writing. She often used sophisticated mapping procedures in planning. Laurence indicated that she kept many notes on her characters for her Canadian series, but that she was surprised when the voices from her past would appear and provide direction to her characters.

Because the accomplished writers viewed writing as an "internal" process, they occasionally referred to times when the subconscious would take control and the voices of the characters would direct the writing. Although they were reluctant to discuss it, all of the writers suggested that they enjoyed this aspect of writing.

Study of the accomplished writers showed that literature and reading had profound influences on their writing.

Welty recalled the influences of the storytelling of her mother's family and the values that were placed upon good books. Margaret Laurence and John Steinbeck were also influenced by their literary backgrounds. Both, for example, used biblical symbolism in their writing.

Steinbeck was particularly influenced by a version of King Arthur's story that he had received when a child and credited it for the beginning of his love of words. Hughes also noted that many books had influenced her love of writing. When she began to write for juveniles she read widely in the field of contemporary adolescent literature. Another important influence was her understanding of the



history of writing which began with her visits to the British Museum when she was seven. She noted her intrigue with the cuneiform symbols and the hieroglyphs.

All writers became involved in the manipulation of language as a part of composition. Eudora Welty tried to create different feelings through the use of dialogue. Laurence used different structures within her novels including flashbacks and the building of scenes to create an effect. Steinbeck's love of words was demonstrated in the language of the people he characterized in his writing. Monica Hughes' writing was frequently derived from questions she pondered.

A sense of confidence existed amongst all of the professional writers. They received support from their families that encouraged them to pursue writing as a career. Such support generally began when they were young children when the parents provided rich literary backgrounds. Each writer cited teachers who had encouraged and helped them with their writing.

Some similarities existed in the writing itself. Each published author presented a strong sense of place in his/her writing. Welty is famous for her representation of the Mississippi area; Steinbeck, for his portrayal of the Salinas Valley in California; and Laurence, for her graphic description of a small town in Western Canada.

Much of Monica Hughes' writing reflects contemporary rural and urban Canadian settings or Isis, the planet of her science fiction trilogy. Two writers, Laurence and Steinbeck, showed concern for their choice of titles. All of the writers used symbolism although they were frequently unaware of its use at the time of composition.

Perhaps the most important feature of this study was that every writer 'loved' to write. Although Margaret Laurence and John Steinbeck referred to writing as 'work', there was a unanimous feeling of enjoyment expressed.

Thus, although this selection of authors represents writers from different geographic areas writing for different audiences at a different time, there are many similarities in their composing processes.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CASE STUDIES OF DEVELOPING WRITERS

#### Overview

In this chapter three developing writers, Stacey, Milan, and Melanie are considered. The profiles of these young writers contain the following information: presentation of the background of the young writer including biographical information and an explanation of the classroom setting; a profile of the young writer's composing processes following the organization of the research questions; and a brief summary. Similarities amongst the student writers are noted in a concluding summary.

#### Case One: Stacey

##### Background

Stacey, a bright and attractive grade five student attends a small elementary school in Edmonton. Balmoral School is located in a well-established upper middle class neighborhood. Stacey lives with her mother in another community but attends school in the district that her father and stepmother live. She has an older sister, grown and away from home, and a younger brother, two years old.

Stacey dressed in colorful up-to-date clothing. Her glasses had a small balloon and a musical note at the bottom corners, indicative of her fun-loving nature. One day she had a back pack that matched her outfit. She did not flaunt her clothing but appeared at ease in what she wore.

She had an excellent relationship with her parents. At home, with her Mom, she liked to write or do homework while her Mom read. Stacey explained that her Mom read a lot of books, and that she would someday like to write books like those that she read. Each morning, her Mom took her to her Dad's in Balmoral community, then Sarah, her stepmom, drove Stacey to school on her way to work at the university. Stacey appeared to be very content at her Dad's as well. Although there was plenty of activity associated with her two year old brother, Stacey spent many evenings and weekends there. She had her own room. Several of her drawings were framed and prominently displayed. Sarah frequently helped Stacey with her writing.

This was Stacey's first year at Balmoral School. In January she was already an accepted member of this community of learners that had been established. When she read or shared her writing, her classmates were eager to respond to her stories. She was named in many of their

stories. In a Discovery Ship drama in February, she was quickly accepted into a group for the drama activity.

Five of Stacey's teachers stated that Stacey handled herself very well. She showed a maturity that was unusual for eleven year olds. For example, last year she decided that she no longer needed to attend day care. First she complained about the quality of the food and then decided that she would not go. Her parents determined that it had been her own decision.

The school was an important part of Stacey's writing world because there were so many opportunities for language learning. One week the class was involved with writing stories with the kindergarten children. This was part of a school-wide theme on magic. Another day, the local college drama group presented Little Red Riding Hood. Two students thanked the performers and all students were given opportunities to ask questions of the performers at the end of the play. They wrote personal responses in their journals and thank-you letters.

The classroom learning environment also encouraged language learning. When I began each morning's observation, the students were usually involved in sustained silent reading. Their writing was frequently shared either at the beginning of the writing time or at the end. The children listened attentively to the reading and responded with positive

comments followed by a few questions or concerns.

Frequently, Mrs. DeLaurier would use the children's writing as examples for techniques and strategies that she wished to teach. For example, one day she had written one student's story on the blackboard. The children were asked to read the story and respond with positive comments first. She then asked the children to make suggestions for improving the story. After suggestions for revision were made, Mrs. DeLaurier indicated that the student could either accept the suggestions or not. Each student was then asked to choose a story from their writing folder and make appropriate revisions. Mrs. DeLaurier scheduled individual conferences while the students were involved in assigned and non-assigned writing tasks. Due to the extended French program in the school, the time for teaching Language Arts was somewhat restricted, however there was a scheduled time for the reading of stories as well.

#### Stacey's Composing Processes

Stacey was observed in the writing process with a yellow HB pencil and lined paper, either foolscap, loose-leaf or lined paper in a scribbler. She proceeded by writing a few lines, reading what she had written, and then writing more until she was finished a major section of her piece. If she stopped for any reason and had time to start again at a

later time or the next day, Stacey reread a larger portion of the writing, usually a paragraph or two, and then proceeded with the writing and reading sequence again.

When Stacey wrote a title, it was almost as if she knew what her story would be about. She often decorated a letter of the title at the very beginning of her writing. This she did first in pencil, then when she had finished the first draft she would color her drawing. Titles, The Secret Magnificent Lilly where the 'L' of the 'Lilly' was made to look like a lily and Beautiful Jewel of the Peacocks where the 'P' of 'Peacocks' was made into the tail feathers of a peacock, are examples of this use of decoration.

When Stacey had completed the first draft, she frequently decided to revise and proof-read and completed the final draft. In a parent-teacher conference this fall, Mrs. DeLaurier had suggested that Stacey's parents could help her with the spelling and revisions when completing this final copy.

Stacey typed her final draft. She received an "IBM roller-baller" typewriter for Christmas this year. In January, she typed her first story on the Sunday following my initial interview with her. Because she had so many errors, Sarah helped her by retyping her story. For one of her major stories completed near the end of my observation

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time, Stacey typed about two thirds of the first page but then became bogged down with the logistics of the typing until Sarah completed the typing while Stacey did the illustrations.

Stacey demonstrated that she could write almost anywhere. She said that she liked to look out of the window when she was writing at school where there is a row of windows along one side of the classroom. She can also look out of the window when writing at either her Mom's or her Dad's. When participating in a drama involving a pirate ship and a ship loaded with treasures and maps, each student had access to a bunk and candlelight while writing. Stacey found a spot under a desk with a candle by her paper and wrote lying on her stomach with her feet up. She barely moved until she had finished. In the classroom, she seemed to be able to block out any disturbance and proceed with little distraction until she completed her writing.

Sarah confided that Stacey's lengthy story The Secret Magnificent Lilly was written on the steps at the school when she dropped her off at 8:15 each morning and in the washrooms until she was discovered and sent outside again. Stacey said that she liked to write at school so that her two-year old brother couldn't bother her. At her Mom's she liked to write between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. when it was quiet because her Mom was reading. Her Dad indicated that even



as a young child, Stacey spent long periods of time working on her own in her room.

Stacey indicated a preference for cursive writing on several occasions. She openly told me that she hated to print and was "so happy" when she learned to write. She didn't enjoy writing with Ryan, her kindergarten partner, because it was necessary for her to print so that he could read it. She commented : ". . . and we had to print and my printing is really lousy and I hate printing and I never print, only when I have to." On one occasion the class was writing a log entry from a discovery ship. Many of the students had chosen special scripting that resembled the script of times long ago. One classmate asked Stacey why she wasn't printing her letter. Stacey carefully considered the idea and then firmly rejected it again. She wrote in her usual cursive writing style but made the letters more wiggly to show the swaying motion of the boat. She also spilled wax over her paper to represent what might have happened while one was writing using a candle as a source of light.

Stacey showed a definite preference for long stories. In a way, the children measured writing expertise by length. Before beginning one story, Stacey stapled fourteen sheets together, already planning that her story would be a long one. On February 9, her story was nine pages long. When

she shared a story about Lambourgreny, she said: "I could go Part One, Part Two and keep on going." The class had an opportunity to choose some tiny books in which to publish their stories. Stacey commented that she didn't like those "teeny little books" because she would need about forty pages to complete her story.

Some of her journal entries were up to three pages in length and she indicated in her comments to Mrs. DeLaurier that she needed more time to finish her journal entries. One day when there was a positive comment at the end of the journal, Stacey's reply was "Today, I had time to finish."

Much of the revision and editing of stories was done at home. Mrs. DeLaurier always read and responded to Stacey's compositions. She frequently gave her enough help to proceed with the revisions on her own. In completing The Secret Magnificent Lilly, Stacey worked with Sarah from 2:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. one Sunday afternoon. Sarah set everything aside and helped Stacey complete the task so that it was in final form for Monday morning.

Stacey completed her writing assignments in a similar task-oriented manner. Whether it was a story or questions to answer, she started at the beginning and continued until she had finished. After that, she was ready to share by having someone else read her work or talk about it. In a science assignment which required questions to be answered

and illustrations drawn, Stacey worked in sequential order. Stacey proceeded in the same manner when writing her Social Studies Test. She started with the first question and worked throughout recess until she had finished. When she had finished, she made some revisions and edited before handing it in.

To summarize Stacey's physical activities while composing, I observed that Stacey liked to use lined paper and an HB pencil to write long stories. She liked to write where it was quiet and where she could look out of the window. She preferred cursive writing to printing. She would write, read what she had written and continue in this manner until she had completed the task. Stacey generally shared her writing with an important adult, usually her teacher or her parents, when she had finished, but she also enjoyed reading her stories to the class and to her friend in another school. She would then do whatever revisions and editing that were necessary, frequently at home. Her writing habits helped to facilitate the writing process.

Stacey indicated that planning for writing occurred in her head. While there was little evidence of any written plan, Stacey revealed she had a wealth of sources for ideas and was able to effectively integrate the requirements of an assignment with her own ideas. For example, her story Beautiful Jewel of the Peacocks is based on a list of

spelling words that Mrs. DeLaurier gleaned from all of the children's writing in the previous week plus words from the content areas which she thought the children should know how to spell. First, Stacey listed the words along the side of her paper. She began with two spelling words in the title: 'beautiful' and 'jewel'. As she was thinking about the topic, Jean-Paul, one of the students, had made an excellent drawing of an aquarium and was showing it around the classroom. Stacey decided that a beautiful jewel could be hidden among the stones of an aquarium. This gave her the setting for her story. To create a plot, she thought of a book that her mother was reading called The Aliens which has a memorable picture of an alien on the front cover. She then decided that the aliens needed the beautiful jewels that were hidden in the stones of the aquarium and created the plot from these elements. Two spelling words which caused her some frustration were the homonyms need and knead. She decided to put them into some conversation that didn't have to make sense, however she expressed her frustration because the rest of the story included meaningful contexts for the spelling words.

Before the Christmas break, the students had read many fables about how something came to be created and had written one such fable. Mrs. DeLaurier asked them to write another fable and they brainstormed for ideas of what could be created. To get ideas for her story Stacey was looking

at the amaryllis on the shelves by the windows. It was a beautiful plant with five blossoms at the top of a very long stem. Stacey described her thoughts in this way:

I was looking and I didn't know what to write and I wondered what it would look like if it didn't have any blossoms - it would look really sad"

She then wrote the story How Plants Got Their Blossoms.

Some of Stacey's ideas came from playing with language. Most of the children in the class quite enjoyed playing as shown by a joke that went from one student to the next:

Billy: What is the first letter in the word "yellow"?

Stacey: Y

Billy: Because I wanted to know.

Students were asked to bring their favorite rocks or rock collections to school for the science unit on "Rocks".

Mrs. DeLaurier then read them the story: Everybody Needs a Rock by Byrd Baylor. After discussing their favorite rocks, the students were asked to work together or individually in writing conversations between rocks or to create a story about their rock, possibly taking the rock's point of view.

Stacey chose a green rock which she named "Lambourgreny" because it was green and was shaped like the Lamborgini sports car. She also had a purplish colored egg-shaped rock which she named "Purple Egggy". She created her story from these two names.

Stacey created a map in her first draft of The Secret Magnificent Lilly, where she reversed the letters of each of the locations to create interest. She wrote "PAM fo yllilL" for the title of the map which if reversed means "MAP of Lilly". The name of each location had a similar pattern to it. Although Stacey did not stay with this plan in her final draft, it showed her willingness to experiment with language in an interesting manner.

Throughout her writing, Stacey demonstrated explicit use of language. She was able to form visual images for her readers with statements such as "He was going to put me as a decoration on the guillotine." Her log book entry following a drama begins:

My dearest husband Jerald,

Life is worth giving up, four of the  
crew have fallen into the mouths of the  
hungry Atlantic.

She showed control of the dialogue format that many of  
her stories were written in:

. . .  
As I was on my way to my friends house, I heard  
faint whispering voices.  
"I wonder what that was?" I said to myself.  
Then I heard them whisper, "She is a good human.  
Let her into our world."  
"No, no! She will destroy us!"  
"But we need her help."

"Alright. We are taking risks no matter what we do."

Suddenly, I felt some kind of instinct, "I must go to my backyard and through Mom's rose bush. .

(The Secret Magnificent Lilly, page 1, Appendix H)

In describing her writing, Stacey said that her ideas "just poured out" of her head. After writing a first draft, she usually revised her writing. Mrs. DeLaurier had suggested that her parents could help her with spelling and punctuation. Sarah frequently worked with Stacey on this.

Stacey's writing showed a flare for what sounded right, an area in which she was beginning to gain control. For example, in the story The Secret Magnificent Lilly, she revised her first draft to remove repetitions of the word screamed and replaced them with words that were more appropriate to the tone of the story. In her next story, "Beautiful Jewel of the Peacocks", Stacey no longer repeated any words but the words that she chose were not necessarily appropriate to the situations or characterization that she presented:

Her mom greeted Lilla at the front door. "Hello, sweetie, did you remember the rocks?" shrieked Mrs. Hunter. "Yes, and look, they are peacock blue!" shrilled Lilla. "Good, now you can't go to the store for fish today, because it's too dark." advised Mrs. Hunter. "I'll tuck you in your bed. You have to go to church, tomorrow so

I'll wake you up at 8:00 am," announced Mrs. Hunter. "Oh, yuk," mumbled Lilla.

In substituting new words for "said", Stacey demonstrated that she was still learning about choosing words that were appropriate for the action and characterization. 'Shreaked' and 'shrilled' are not likely the words that Stacey would have chosen to demonstrate how she would like her characters to be talking.

At times, Stacey miscued on the pronunciation of words such as 'confidence' and 'obnoxiously', and although they fit the meaning of the story, she was unable to give a definition for these words. On February 9, Stacey asked me to tell her the difference between the words: 'metal', 'medal', and 'meddle' which were spelling words for that week. She understood that 'meddle' meant to interfere in the affairs of others but was unsure of the words 'metal' and 'medal'.

As a developing writer, Stacey showed marvelous control of the English language yet was still learning about the way it worked. These particulars about her learning of vocabulary demonstrated that she used words that seemed appropriate without truly understanding the meanings of the words.



Stacey's composing processes were influenced by the books she read. Story reading influenced her writing as early as grade two. Interviews with Mrs. Kornacki, her grade two teacher, and discussions with Stacey revealed that Stacey had modelled some of her story ideas from stories read during that year. For example, "Stacey and Her Pets" was modelled after a filmstrip shown that year called "A Kitten For Kim". The story was personalized so that it was about herself however. Another story called "The Leprechaun's Gold" was modelled after a story that Mrs. Kornacki had read to them which Stacey remembered. In the same book of favorite stories that Stacey had written, were some poems by Shel Silverstein which she enjoyed.

Many ideas in Stacey's written work in grade five showed an influence of the literature to which she was exposed. In January, the principal read Baba Yaga by Ernest Small to the class explaining that it was a story within a story. She also explained the concept of 'reality - fantasy - reality' present in Baba Yaga. Stacey immediately used the idea of the 'story within a story' in Lambourgreeny, her composition about the rocks. It is interesting to note that although she had the opportunity of using the ideas from "Everybody

Needs A Rock" by Byrd Baylor, she chose the story structure from Baba Yaga instead.

Stacey continued with the idea of 'a story within a story' in "The Secret Magnificent Lilly". She also managed to keep a sense of mystery in the story when she wrote at the end of her first draft:

All of a sudden I was in my own bed, at my own house. As my mom walked in my bedroom, she smiled. "Darling, are you alright." I found you in the backyard, in my rosebush! "You were laying there as still as a mouse." I brought you her, you slept for 15 hours." "It's time to go to school! my mom expained. "Oh no my homework!" "I had 3 pages of math!", "I screamed. "Oh they are on the table you already finished them, they are all correct too. As I slipped on my jacket for school, I wondered if I was dreaming or if it was really true.

When one of her classmates asked who had finished her homework, Stacey replied "That is for you to figure out."

The influence of literature was evident when Stacey wrote a story for her kindergarten partner, Ryan, during the school theme about Magic. She chose an antique pot and together they decided that the story should be called "The Blue Genie Pot" because they both knew about genies. They were thinking of the ideas from Aladdin's Magic Lamp. Stacey wanted the genie to grant only three wishes as a storybook genie

would likely do but Ryan wanted the genie to grant one hundred wishes.

When Stacey was writing her story, The Secret Magnificent Lilly, she said that she was thinking about some little people like The Littles on Saturday morning television. This is a cartoon based on the story series The Littles by John Peterson. I asked where she got the idea of "T.T.F.N." which means "Ta Ta For Now" mentioned in the same story. Stacey explained that it came from Tigger in Winnie the Pooh. It is likely the film version which Stacey remembered since she also recalled him bouncing through everything.

Throughout her stories, Stacey used other techniques that authors use. She incorporated chants and songs into a number of her stories such as her first draft of The Secret Magnificent Lilly:

. . . As we walked in, bottles with bubbly green, purple, blue liquids were all in a row on a shelf. The Keeper took out spiders, bubbly purple liquid, smelly herbs and a lions paw and put them in a big black cooking pot. As it gurgled and brewed on the table, the Keeper chanted:

Bubble! Bubble!  
Steep and brew  
Go to Earth with a Earthling too!

We shared the idea that many stories have songs or chants in them and discussed Charlie and the Chocolate

Factory and Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator, both by Roald Dahl, which have chants and songs scattered throughout. Stacey said that Charlie and the Chocolate Factory was her favorite story.

Thus it is apparent that Stacey was able to adapt ideas from literature to help her write stories. In the same way, she was able to glean much from her experiences to weave into her writing.

The letter following the drama involving life aboard the discovery ships is an example of her ability to integrate ideas from a number of sources.

May 3, 1492

To my dearest husband, Jerald,

Life aboard the Mayflower is very wet. The drinking water is horrible and so is the salty meat. I sure wish I was home to celebrate our 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary. I love you. A few of us have barfed out but I haven't yet. My cloths are soaking with salty water that is giving me a uncomfortable rash. Otherwise everything is dandy. I do think the world is round, I shall return with cotton, silks and other luxuries.

Love, Annabella

Although inaccurate in some places, Stacey shows compassion for her husband on their second anniversary and also reveals knowledge about why they are on this voyage, that is to prove that the world is round and to get luxuries for themselves. Some local

colloquialisms, like "barfed out" and "everything is dandy", show that Stacey may not be completely in role or aware of the language of the time but she does capture the essence of the intentions of the letter.

She demonstrated an ability to use previous learning in new situations. This is also evident in her Social Studies Test dated February 20 in answer to the question, "Who were the voyageurs? Describe their life and whether or not -- and why -- you would have liked to spend a week or a month with them as they used to be." Stacey replied:

The Voyageurs were men who sailed in canoes and sang. I would not like to spend time with them because they only ate corn, banic, bread, water and wine. I would also hate to have to carry the 450 pd canoe or the 90 pd back packs. But I would have liked to sing and dance and drink wine and be as merry as they were.

Throughout her written work it was evident that Stacey effectively integrated ideas from a number of sources. She made the ideas work for her purposes and seemed to be able to use a number of sources for her purposes and adapt them to the task.

Stacey's composing processes showed her love for art too. As a young child she already loved to draw. Although her parents had not kept any samples of her early writing, they saved many examples of her drawing. She won an art contest at K-Mart as a

pre-schooler and in grade one won The Edmonton Journal contest for a picture that illustrated the Universiad athletic contest. She integrated the Universiad Logo into a drawing of dancers with mountains and the sun in the background. She also won a school contest in grade one for her drawing of "Wugie", the Universiad mascot. Her Mom mentioned that her early writing had all kinds of drawings scattered amongst the writing. This is still evident in some of her writing.

This experimentation with differing art forms can be observed as she advances through the grades. One very interesting story was created at one of the "fantastic" activity centers in her second grade classroom. Her story is entitled "The Birthday Party" and she used the printing stamps from the activity centre to create a rebus type of story, where the pictures on the stamps represented the words in her story. Her work in grade four also showed this blending of creative thought with assigned task when much of the writing evolved from science and social studies' projects. Her folder for a project on water has the edges scalloped with a little sailboat floating and bubbles coming from the title "Water".

Many of the projects that Stacey participated in showed this trend. She created the name "Witosha" for

her little people in the story, The Secret Fantastic Lilly. The map in the story was based on what she could see on the kitchen table while she is writing. She illustrated words such as 'zoom' in a special way that showed their meaning.

In analyzing Stacey's writing over a number of years, one can see that she has ideas of her own and that she can effectively express them in ways that are innovative and creative.

It was difficult to determine the source of Stacey's ideas and her thoughts as she wrote. I noted that she spent more time in writing the title than on other parts of the writing and that she wrote with considerable ease until she has completed the first draft. She received help in revising and editing from her teacher and her parents and she liked to share her work with them as well as her classmates, a friend close to home, and her Dad.

When questioned about her ideas for stories it was apparent that some of her ideas were influenced by visual images such as the plant on the shelf and a classmate's drawing.

Stacey showed that she was not totally aware that ideas like the songs or chants within a story were

influenced by any outside source until it was suggested. For example, she remembered that Roald Dahl used songs and chants in her books following my questioning of his influence but I'm not sure that she could recall them without a prompt. Most ideas seemed to be truly internalized.

She used original visual images while composing.

Stacey said: "I don't write down what I'm going to do, I just keep it in my head and when I was writing my story, I had in my head the picture of Lilly and Simon and little creatures." When I asked if the picture was in color, she appeared puzzled and added "No, it's just in black and white. I have a picture but I never thought of it being in color. It's just there."

Her Social Studies test also illustrated this fact. In her answer to the question that asked the respondent to indicate what native cave drawings might mean, Stacey used the pictorial symbols rather than writing the verbal description. It appeared that visual images were important in originating and sustaining her writing. This would make sense in view of her early and continued interest in illustrating.

Stacey showed confidence in her own abilities to make decisions while expressing her thoughts through writing. This confidence had grown over a number of



years of positive learning experiences and close relationships with family, friends, classmates and teachers.

In her journal on February 14, Stacey described how she composed a song for "The Canadian Kids' Party" for one of three groups that presented ideas to make life bearable for kids in school. The students then voted for the party that gave the best presentation. There was active campaigning for a few days before the vote took place. Stacey wrote in her journal: "They sang it wrong, but that's show biz." The fact that Stacey was able to compose a song for public performance and that she was able to accept the fact that they sang it differently than she intended showed extraordinary maturity...

She seemed to be able to do anything that she set her mind to. Mr. Holm told me about Stacey receiving C's in physical education last year yet won a top level Canada Fitness award. Her parents felt that her athletic abilities were underrated the entire year because she was able to skate, swim and do other physical activities extremely well. To receive a top award confirmed the feelings of Stacey and her parents about her ability to excel in physical education.

On Wednesday, January 14, the Grant MacEwan college students presented a play called Little Red Riding Hood. Stacey quite accurately described the performance in her journal entry for that day. Her teacher's comment was: "You might consider writing a play for children and then acting it or directing it. The talent show is coming up!" Stacey replied: "I don't know. I might be too scared!" and she illustrated the 'c' of scared by showing an expressive face with the hair standing on end. This was one of the few indications that Stacey lacked confidence to carry out a task since everything else appeared to come so easily for her.

Stacey did not waiver in her decision-making but made decisions as she thought through each facet of the writing process. Such decisions were seldom influenced by the opinion of others. For example, in her story The Secret Magnificent Lilly, the guards in the new land hold styrofoam cups. When I questioned this rather strange concept, Stacey explained: "Well, I just thought, for weapons, I didn't want to have daggers or shotguns, so I thought of rainwater cups because they had been there for a long time, 9000 years. So they probably got a little thirsty." It probably didn't occur to Stacey that they likely didn't have styrofoam cups 9000 years ago, but it did

make sense to exclude violent weapons in this story.

It was logical that the guards would be thirsty after 9000 years.

Stacey was able to keep to tasks. Her journal entry on learning to ski showed this perseverance:

. . . . I learned how to ski and how to turn, walk with skis, snow pile, stop and have fun. I went down the small bunny hill first. On the bunny hill I was pulled up by a rope tow. I went down that hill three times. I then headed to the challay for my bagged lunch with Marla and Sarah. After lunch, I headed to the bigger hills. I went with Lisa on the T bar. Going up it is very fun! As I was skiing down the hill, I got scared and went down the hill on my bottom. I had enought currage to go on it agian. The man told me to hold on as if I were water skiing. As I was going up, I lost controll. I was being dragged, then I let go and rolled into the bushes. I took my skis of and walked up the hill. The man handed me my ski poles that flew when I was being dragged. I put my skis on and went down the hill succcessfully. Then Terri took me on the chair lift. I was so scared! We jumped on and as we were lifted up, Terri dropped her ski pole. At the top ther was a little hill, as I went down it I fell. Then I went down the left hill. I was going down it fine untill I did three summer salts and landed on my face! I got right up and headed right for the chair lift. (I must have been crazy!) I went on the chair lift and T bar some more. Then it was time to go back to school.

This portion from Stacey's journal about learning how to ski showed how Stacey tackled most learning. She was not afraid to fall on her face or make mistakes. She kept going back and trying again. She seemed to welcome new challenges. She handled composition in the same way except that in grade five, the risks may

not have been as great because of the success she's experienced.

Stacey has had some excellent relationships with her teachers. Her program in grade two was an activity centered approach and Stacey described the centres as being "just fabulous!" She had frequent opportunities to write and by studying her journal, one can notice great improvements in length and quality as the year progresses. This was an important aspect of Stacey's growth in writing. Sarah thought that Stacey had really become a writer because of the journal that she started then. She explained to me that the teacher used the journal and did not correct the mistakes rather she let the children learn through fluency and by making their own mistakes. Sarah used the example of when Stacey wrote that she had gone to McDonald's for supper, that Mrs. Kornacki had responded with a comment about how it must have been fun to go to McDonald's. Mrs. Kornacki had spelled McDonald's correctly to show a model of correct writing. Stacey's collection of stories from that year showed that writing was a highly valued component of the Language Arts program.

Stacey maintained an excellent relationship with her teacher in grade four as well. She said that it was

easy to do Math because Mr. Murray had taught them everything about Math last year "without even using the book". When I interviewed Mr. Murray, he said that she was a "delightful" child and was so glad that I had considered her for my research. Stacey's parents suggested that Stacey had been his "pet" last year, that she had really done well with him.

Stacey has also maintained a good relationship with Mrs. DeLaurier. There was a mutual respect for each other. Mrs. DeLaurier listened to Stacey and responded to her needs. For example, when Stacey asked for more time to write her journal Mrs. DeLaurier provided more time. Stacey received almost immediate feedback to her creative responses. Her parents were very pleased with the way the librarian and Mrs. DeLaurier directed Stacey to good books that they would have not otherwise known about.

Stacey received appropriate praise for her accomplishments. When she completed her story, The Secret Fantastic Lilly, Mrs. DeLaurier said, "Boys and girls, I would like you to hear a really fine masterpiece." and Stacey read the story to the class. This was done subtly so that other students in the class would not feel badly about their own efforts. For example, at the end of Language Arts time on

February 11, Mrs. DeLaurier said: "I'm glad to see that some of you have made so much progress." This was a compliment to Stacey and others in the class without singling out anyone in particular.

Encouragement was given through Mrs. DeLaurier's responses to Stacey's writing. She most frequently responded to the content and will also give help with spelling or other easily corrected mechanical errors. In Stacey's story, Beautiful Jewel of the Peacocks, where she had placed a letter within the story, Mrs. DeLaurier's comment was: "What a thrilling letter!". In the same story, Stacey had written: "P. S. Part two coming soon. . . ". Mrs. DeLaurier's response was "I can't wait."

Similarly, Mrs. DeLaurier offered guidance to Stacey about her feelings. On February 13, Stacey wrote about the voting for the various groups that would offer advantages to students if elected. She said, "I'm not going to tell you who I voted for because I might hurt some feelings. I voted for the group I thought was best."

Mrs. DeLaurier confirmed Stacey's feelings by responding, "That's what you were supposed to do! Two pages for a journal entry is a fine effort! Onward, Stacey!"

Stacey then replied, "Thanks, this time I had enough time."

There are numerous examples of this mediation of thought and discussion. A trusting relationship had been built over the months.

Stacey said that she doesn't share her writing with friends because they don't seem to care very much. She did share with one friend, Viola. They also played Barbies and went on outings together.

Stacey's parents provided models for her writing. Sarah writes letters for her job in research and marketing at the university. She recalled having to do quotation marks and grammar in fourth grade and avoiding writing stories because of it and then learning to write well in grade eleven. Because of her own difficulty in learning to write Sarah encouraged Stacey to write, valued her fluency and gave help in proof-reading and revising.

Diane, Stacey's natural Mom, reads a great deal. Stacey looked at her books and said she would like to write books like that some day. She was quite explicit that she would prefer to write stories like that rather than stories for children.

Stacey's Dad responded to her writing by being the uncritical reader. He did not involve himself in the writing process but valued Stacey for herself and everything that she did. He encouraged her by buying the typewriter for her just as he bought the many kinds of paper and art supplies for her drawing when she was a young child. The framing of Stacey's art was a reflection of the encouragement that she received.

The environment that surrounded Stacey was encouraging and presented excellent models for her to learn from. Stacey's teachers, her classmates, her parents and her friend all contributed to this environment. This, combined with her own confidence and ability have influenced Stacey in becoming the writer that she is today.

Thus, Stacey demonstrated well-defined preferences for the physical activities of composing. She preferred an HB pencil and lined paper; and liked to look out of the window while writing. She showed that she could write almost anywhere but preferred quiet surroundings at school or home. Stacey showed little evidence of any written plan, but planned in her mind before writing the title and beginning to compose. Many of her ideas came from visual images in her mind. She



showed that her ideas were influenced by books read. Stacey would revise after writing a first draft, often receiving help from her parents or teachers. She enjoyed writing and approached it with the confidence and task-oriented behavior that characterized much of what she did. Composing took place in the supportive environment provided by her parents, teachers, and friends.

### Case Two: Milan

#### Background

Milan is an eleven year old boy in grade five at Balmoral school in Edmonton. He is in the same class as Stacey, one which encourages the use of language and which provides an encouraging learning environment. Milan is considered to be a very good writer by his classmates and his teachers. He enjoys writing and is able to write quickly.

Milan did not speak English until he moved to Canada from Yugoslavia about five and a half years ago. His parents, both architects, decided to move to Canada to improve their living situations. They had received academic educations in Yugoslavia where they learned to speak French as a second language. At that time, English was not the preferred language as it is now with the advent of computer technology.

Mr. and Mrs. Milanovich explained that in Yugoslavia, it is expected that children come to school knowing how to read and to write. Before Milan was six, he had learned two alphabets: one that was similar to the Russian alphabet and the other similar to the Latin alphabet. They showed me the two Yugoslavian alphabet charts used to teach the grapho-phonemic relationship that were very similar to alphabet charts in Canada. The difference between those systems and our alphabet is that the Yugoslavian alphabets are more highly phonetic so that a child can learn to read very quickly just by knowing the sounds made by the letters: The difficulty in learning to read and write is in gaining control of the syntax or grammar of the languages.

Mr. and Mrs. Milanovich indicated that Milan was a "special" child, choosing a Yugoslavian word and explaining to me that it more closely describes the meaning of "special". When I noted the beautifully hand knit sweaters that Milan frequently wore, Mrs. Milanovich said that they were sent to him by her sister-in-law who gave Milan special considerations. They said that he had always been a favorite of their friends and being the youngest grandchild, was also given special treatment by his grandparents. In his journal, Milan said that he was looking forward to a visit from his grandmother this spring especially because she makes the "best" chocolate cake.

Until they moved to Canada, Milan had always been cared for by grandparents or relatives and had never attended day-care nor any kind of pre-school program in Yugoslavia. His first school experiences, in Canada, were quite negative because he was unable to communicate with children his own age. His first school was a Catholic School in East Edmonton which provided plenty of help in learning English. Milan's older brother learned quickly and enjoyed school but Milan was very frustrated and did not like to go to school. This frustration may have been due to a combination of circumstances including not understanding English, the socialization in an institution, and living in a new country away from his grandparents.

Milan's mother indicated that Milan and his brother had returned to Yugoslavia last summer and that it had made a difference. She suggested that both boys felt more settled in that they could now see that there were advantages to living in both Canada and Yugoslavia and that they had adjusted to life in Canada. She said that when they first arrived in Canada the boys wanted to go back for the weekend.

Milan and his brother are bilingual since it is the Serbian language that they speak at home. Mrs. Milanovich gave examples of how she writes her shopping list in their home language and then asks the boys to add to the list or read

it to her. She has a recipe book that she gets him to read to her. Mr. Milanovich doubted whether their boys could still write the language although they had tried to keep it alive by using it orally.

When I began my observation of Milan, I knew that he had come from Yugoslavia and that his parents were both architects who valued an academic education. All outward appearances were that Milan was like any other child with similar experiences, likes and dislikes. In many ways, he was like my own two boys. He liked playing sports including basketball, soccer and hockey. He swam for the Olympian Swim Club. In fact, he begged his father to allow him to become involved in the swimming. He loved computer and electronic games. He liked to play board games with his friends. He enjoyed reading, watching movies, and drawing. He liked to express himself orally. My observations were reflective of the different cultural background but did not dwell on the differences.

#### Milan's Composing Processes

Milan liked to write where there was quiet in the room. He had a favourite place at the back of the classroom, usually facing out to the windows but sometimes facing inwards underneath the shelves behind the sink. He frequently chose a particular old oak chair with a straight back that he moved to his favorite writing spot. Once, I was sitting

on his chair and he stood around me not saying anything. When I moved he took the chair to his place by the window and began to write. When the table from the back and the chairs were moved to the front of the classroom, Milan did not move with the chair but instead took another chair to the back of the classroom so that he could work at the counter. Milan also liked to write with a friend, particularly Matt whom he described as being "quiet".

He said that he liked to write using a "Paper-mate" pen. He also liked to write using calligraphy pens. During the two months of observation in this classroom, I noticed an increased interest in the calligraphy pens. One weekend, six boys went out to purchase them. At that time, Milan was using the pens for much of his writing. I noticed that if Mrs. DeLaurier was using a calligraphy pen, so was Milan. If she was using a fine ink pen, so was Milan. He told Mrs. DeLaurier that his new calligraphy pen was "excellent", a term used to indicate the best of the best.

He indicated that he liked to write long stories. Three stories that were written prior to my observation exceeded ten pages in length. Although much of Milan's other writing such as letters and the answers to questions were very short, most of the unassigned topics tended to be lengthy.

Milan said that he preferred to write at school. He wrote quickly and shared his work immediately and then proceeded to do his revisions. His parents said that he was more likely to draw at home than write. He also liked to draw at school and when given a choice would frequently choose a drawing activity in preference to a writing activity.

In observing his composing processes, Milan showed little evidence of any written plan. The extensive talk that preceded the writing of stories and the talking and planning that preceded the writing of his "Advanced Dungeons and Dragons" story showed that he did plan but in a manner that may not have been obvious to a casual observer.

It has been difficult to get information about his writing processes from Milan. Some things he did not like to talk about. He would willingly discuss the story that he was writing but did not wish to talk about where he obtained his ideas. He said: "I don't stop and think, I just know it off by heart, like subtraction and multiplication, I don't have to think about it." About his writing, he said, "It just does."

Milan showed that he obtained his ideas from a variety of sources. For example, his ideas for Ghosts, a story that he wrote before my observation, came from a dream. Other students who were interviewed in this class had also

indicated that they got their ideas from dreams. For example, Scott said that he got his idea for the story of Indiana Raccoon and the Temple of Weasles from a dream.

Darcy indicated that most of his ideas for stories came from dreams.

Milan's story, Ghosts, Part II which he wrote at the beginning of January was influenced by a number of sources. The general plot of the story very closely resembled the plot of the movie: Raiders of the Lost Ark, a movie that Milan said he had seen "millions" of times. It also resembled the sequel: Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, which he had seen only a couple of times. It was like Scott's story Indiana Raccoon and the Temple of Weasles which appeared to be an original idea for Scott. There were many other boys in the classroom who tried out this plot idea after Scott's success with it however.

Many ideas for Ghosts, Part II came from Ghosts!!, Milan's first story. The characters were the classmates that Milan had included in the first story. Both stories contained quick-moving action. In many cases, the sentences lacked end punctuation because they seemed to flow from one activity to the next. They differed in that the first story was like a computer game where you move from level to level conquering opponents and encountering evils like

zombies and ghosts. Ghosts Part II was like the Indiana Jones movies where they were looking for a treasure.

Milan explained his story during our first interview. Throughout the explanation, he was highly animated and explained the sounds of the action as he described what was happening. This excerpt from our interview illustrates the storytelling behavior that took place before he began to write:

Donna: This is your story "Ghosts, Part II". Where are you going to go with this story?

Milan: Well, we're going to end up in another world where all beings are different and we're going to search for the lost temple. And in the lost temple there's a treasure.

Donna: Is that like Indiana Jones?

Milan: Ya well, there's this room and and I don't know how expensive it is, but it's an idol and that's guarded by Aztecs and two gods. Well they left traps so they have to go down and there's monsters, cobras and tarantulas - there's little tarantulas that when they pass you, you have to squat down; then they can't hurt you; if you go up they go CUCK and then they fall down again and when you go down a level there's even harder monsters. There's Tyrannosaurus Rex and . . .

Donna: There's quite a variety!

Milan: And there's a box, you open the boxes and you can find stuff. If you prime the proffer-voster; if you take it you can find all kinds of dynamite, pistol, machete and bullets. And the ancient Aztec guys, you can shoot bullets. There's octopusses too and they're very big and you have to shoot them. You can't kill them any other way. So you have to sneak them back and shoot them. You don't have everlasting bullets, you can only have seven pieces of dynamite and seven bullets. And if you're trapped, there's walls that are coming in that are filling up with



water and you crouch down, stick out your hand like that, put the dynamite in and run away and then it blows a hole and then you have to jump through the hole and then you're at another level. And when you find the idol. Um the easy part is finding the idol. And the hard part is getting out.

Donna: Oh, once you've got it?

Milan: Ya, and when you get out you find out how much it's worth. The faster you get it, the faster you come out, the more it's worth.

Donna: And who decides that?

Milan: Well the guy who sees it. And there's crocodiles and there's big tarantulas: big guys, that big, that crawl up and there's little ones. There's scorpions. The big guys don't kill you but they hit you and you fall down and if they touch you again then you're dead. And the big Tyranna saurus Rexes, they kill you, one shot. And the only way you can escape from them is to shoot them, kill them with a machete or just crouch down like that and they can't hurt you.

Donna: It sounds like you have some good ideas. Where do you get all of your ideas from? Just thinking? Where did you get the idea of the tarantulas? That's not in Indiana Jones is it?

Milan: They have spiders mostly.

This highly animated conversation showed that Milan had the story planned in his head and it was just a matter of writing it down to complete the writing phase. It showed the influence of both the movie Indiana Jones and the computer games Ultima Three and Ultima Four which involve movement from level to level as each obstacle is overcome. He spent the next day working with Matt at the back table telling him the story in just the same way that he was telling me. He wrote the story after that.

In writing the story, Ghosts II, Milan used many sources. He used the characters and basic action from his story Ghosts. The actions of the characters and the plot of the story was changed somewhat so that it clearly resembled the plot from the "Indiana Jones" movies and seemed to have been influenced by Scott's story Indiana Raccoon and the Temple of Weasels. The plot also resembled two computer games. Milan participated in the telling of the story at least twice before he began to write it which likely served to clarify his ideas.

The talking out of a story was not a limited experience. Milan was in the planning stages of another long story when we had an interview on February 16. On separate pages in his duotang, he had listed the characters of his story who were named after his classmates. Details about the action of each player were also written.

Milan had been playing the game, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons with his older brother and his brother's friend. It is quite a complicated game that requires several hours to play and which generally continues from time to time. When interested, players can participate in the same game for several months. The guidelines for the game are provided within a series of books. Characters are given descriptions and then the play proceeds by laying plans and using strategies and counter-strategies in achieving goals.

Milan assigned character roles to himself, Colin, Matt and Billy. They included the name of the character, his strength, dexterity, interest, wisdom, coordination, hit points, armour class, and magic ratings. The names of the weapons were also determined.

Milan began to write the adventure that was planned but then decided to spend some time in publishing his best stories and so had not completed the writing of the adventure. It seemed very complicated however and perhaps more sustained involvement in the game would have provided the details for the adventure that he had chosen to write.

While explaining the story, Milan also made references to the computer games, Ultima 3 and Ultima 4 which require characters to advance by levels, in time travel defeating monsters and other such obstacles as they proceed.

These conversations and the written samples showed that Milan used ideas from a number of sources, including movies, computer games, and other games to create stories. Planning occurred in the play-like dialoguing that occurred before he started to write. It was interesting to note that the story was also personalized to include characters from the classroom and provided continuity of characterization from story to story.

The themes that are represented in Milan's stories seemed to be quite gruesome. This year he has written two lengthy stories about ghosts, one about a haunted house, one about a troll and was in the process of writing one using the themes from Dungeons and Dragons. Even his parents noted that he seemed to be preoccupied with such themes. When I asked Milan "Why do you like to write gruesome stories?", he replied: "That's just my style."

Milan revealed that he enjoyed being challenged. He said: "I like to try things that I have not tried before." He explained that he once swam into the danger zone in the ocean in Yugoslavia which was marked off by a net adding that there were sharks beyond the net. Then when I asked if there were things at school that he had never tried before, Milan replied that one time he had climbed on the roof. I then asked what he might do when he grew up and he said that he'd like to be a sky diver although he thought that he would probably be an archeologist. Milan also said that he had been on the "Sky Screamer", a high water slide that is sloped at an 85 degree angle at the Water Park at a local shopping mall. One journal entry described this experience on the "Sky Screamer" proclaiming the 85 degree angle of drop and saying that a person going down would be moving at two hundred miles per hour. He then drew a picture to accompany the journal entry.

Milan had been kept in after school several times for disobeying the rules. In his journal he had written: "I am in because...". Entries on different occasions followed such as: "I was humming in the library. . . pushing when we went jogging to the revine and back. . . not paying attention when you said to take out our Social Studies' books. . . walking when we were supposed to be sitting down." Entries such as these were scattered over the months.

Milan also indicated that he had taken a thick book that had more than three thousand pages from the adult section of the library. It had taken him more than six weeks to read it and he had had to renew it. He also explained that if playing a game like soccer that he never liked to play by the rules; that he liked to break the rules.

His writing reflects some of these extremes in behavior. Milan liked to write stories about gruesome topics and he liked to write long stories.

While this may be suggested by Milan's actions and descriptions, Mr. Milanovich explained that Milan would take risks but he also remained quite safe. In sports, he had never been hurt because he stayed within his limits. For example, although Milan tried the "Sky Screamer" once, he did not go on it again and at his birthday party did not

go on the slide even when encouraged by the other children at the party.

This was also true in his writing: he took some risks but still remained in safe territory by seeking approval from his teacher and his classmates. The talking through of his story was one way of gaining approval.

While I was seeking information about how Milan obtained his ideas for composing, he said: "Ideas come when I'm playing." This was evident in the highly animated talk between Milan and Matt that occurred prior to the writing.

This sense of play was also evident when he and Scott were working on a Social Studies Report. Each member of the class was given a grid to collect information about a particular explorer from a variety of sources. Milan's topic was Eric the Red while Scott's topic was about Leif Ericson, both Vikings. Scott set out and diligently filled in the squares of the grid design. At the end of the class Milan had not touched the grid. He participated in some play talk about Leif the Lucky and Eric the Red, similar to dialogue between the two characters. At the end of the class, he had written three points of information and was beginning to write about the Vikings. He wrote:

Eric the red

-Eric was born in Jaeren, in southern Norway

-When Eric was 10 years old his father was outlawed for manslaughter

-Eric became involved with several quarrels and killing and was exiled from Iceland for three years.

### The Great Invasions

Late in the 9th century the vikings laid

It appeared that Milan required the creative play with the character of Eric the Red to achieve some understanding.

He also participated in language play. Following the reading of an article about life aboard the Discovery Ships, the class performed mini-dramas in pairs. They were then asked to write an entry in a typical log book that they might have had aboard ship. The following word play illustrates Milan's experimentation with the time element and what he knew about letters home. At first Milan seemed to be concentrating, then he said aloud:

"Dear Mom, This journey is terrible. I'm getting sick everyday.

Stephen: What's the boat called? Santa Maria?

Milan: U.S.S. Enterprise. It has M 60s rockets. Fifty knots an hour. We're coming to Canada to get those Indians. (He chuckles to himself as he makes this reference to Star Trek)

In another situation it was interesting to observe that Milan had already decided on the content of the letter and that all the time available was spent in meticulously

lettering the message. Then from Milan's group, I heard him sing out "Hello, Mother, Hello, Father. . . ", the traditional camp song by Shelly Berman as he performed a little twisting motion.

Thus it is apparent that play was a very important part of Milan's composing process. He used the dialoguing of the characters, the playing with language, and the play associated with discussion with his classmates to help him work out the story in his own mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Milanovich were somewhat surprised at my interest in Milan's writing because they felt that he preferred to express his ideas through drawing. There were numerous instances of art being the preferred form of expression. For example, on the Monday following the weekend of Milan's birthday party, Mrs. DeLaurier asked him to complete the final copy of the booklet he had chosen to publish Ghosts, Part II. At the beginning of the class, however, he had asked to go to the art storage room to get some paper. She felt that he likely wanted to draw the experience of his birthday celebration. It did not seem to be a problem to Milan however for he sat at the back of the room, drew lines on his booklet and wrote his story in good form. As he was doing this, he was talking to Matt about his birthday celebrations. When he had completed the task



and had a conference with Mrs. DeLaurier about his final product, he went to the art storage room for the paper.

While writing one day, he paused and quickly made funny little drawings on his fingers.

On February 18, the class was given a choice of activities to complete but with certain guidelines. Milan's name was on the top of the list to complete his spelling corrections. Instead he started the picture of the dragon that was the optional activity to accompany the story in their reader, "George and the Dragon". Milan worked at the back of the classroom by the windows with charcoal and a large piece of paper. He completed the drawing before recess and showed it to me right away. It was the first creative piece of either writing or drawing that he had shared with me voluntarily. Mrs. DeLaurier mounted and displayed the work immediately. The spelling corrections were not completed while I was observing that day, however Mrs. DeLaurier would frequently check that Milan had finished the required assignments.

When the class was given time to complete the log entries following the mini-drama sessions, Milan was looking at a large book that contained many styles of print as the explanations and some of the drama activities were going on. At times, he could hardly see because of the darkened room. Finally, he exclaimed: "Hey Scott, I found Old

English". While writing the log entry, he took particular care in forming the letters in old English style. At the end of the writing time, he had not finished his message because of the time spent in lettering. He printed:

AUG 1704

AFTER A LONG TIME  
OF JOURNEY AND FIGHTING.  
WE ARE RETURNING  
HOME SEE YOU SOON!

SINCERELY,

BLACK BEARD

Later, Milan wrote another letter about the voyage on the discovery ship. He wrote four foolscap pages beginning with the old English script with a calligraphy pen but then changed to printing using fine black ink. He then rolled the letter into a scroll and wrinkled it as it may have been wrinkled if written under the conditions of long ago.

During the period of observation, Milan wrote with a black inked calligraphy pen much of the time. This showed the pride he took in the appearance of his work.

In summarizing Milan's composing processes, it was evident that he had a well-defined set of physical activities associated with his writing. There was little evidence of any physical plan, but it was apparent that much of the planning took place as he told the stories to his friends and to me. Milan obtained his ideas from various sources

including movies and games that he played. He frequently included the names of his classmates in his stories. He was willing to accept the challenges of composing in the same way that he enjoyed the challenges of the sports he participated in and experiences in school. Throughout the composing process, Milan demonstrated the importance of play. He had fun experimenting with language in different situations. It appeared that he particularly enjoyed drawing. This was evident in his free choice activities and his preoccupation with the script of his written work.

Additionally, he was influenced by the home and school environment that provided the context for his writing. Milan had a very supportive home environment where all kinds of expression were encouraged. Because his parents are both architects he had access to many different kinds of art media. His Dad gave him the calligraphy pens to write with and it was his Dad's book that showed the different kinds of writing styles.

Mr. and Mrs. Milanovich encouraged Milan's involvement in sports activities. They praised his soccer coach for understanding Milan and providing a good learning atmosphere. They indicated that the writing research had been a good thing for Milan because "he thrives on attention and seeks approval of others in order to learn."

He received support in the classroom. Mr. and Mrs. Milanovich were very impressed with the one-on-one instruction that was provided in his classroom. They were pleased with the structure that Mrs. DeLaurier provided but worried that Milan might take advantage of the good nature of his teacher.

In a survey of the writing process, Milan indicated that the best person to read his story was his teacher. That was very apparent in the classroom. As soon as he had finished any written piece, he immediately went to Mrs. DeLaurier's desk to share his writing.

It was the good relationship that Milan had with his teacher, that I think encouraged him to be the good student that he was. In almost every instance that I observed, Milan wrote in an atmosphere that was conducive to writing. For him, it meant that he was able to have a quiet setting away from the rest of the class at the back of the room but was also able to confer with his classmates when necessary.

When he wrote, whether first draft or final copy, he went immediately to Mrs. DeLaurier to share his writing. For example, on the day that he wrote his letter to Uncle Bob who had been a guest in the school, Milan wrote a first draft of the letter beginning at 9:15 . When he had completed the first draft, he took it immediately to Mrs.

DeLaurier who discussed it with him and suggested changes in content and conventions. By 9:32, he had written the revision of the first letter and had taken it back to her for a second look.

Mrs. DeLaurier provided the scaffolding or temporary framework and the mediation that were necessary to learn how to write effectively. She highlighted the good qualities of a piece of writing and then suggested changes that could be accepted by a child providing the learning experiences necessary for growth. Milan described it in this way: "I never give enough information to Mrs. DeLaurier but she always likes my ideas in the end."

From Mrs. DeLaurier, he received all kinds of encouragement. For example, she commented on his letter to Mr. Werner, the caretaker: "You need a good copy, Milan, with some of your finest writing." He was frequently encouraged to do more as with his kindergarten story: "I'd like you to add more about the big good wolf who is wearing magic shoes!"

After reviewing his writing folder in November, Mrs. DeLaurier wrote, "You obviously enjoy writing and I hope you will 'bind' some for the children to read." Like all children in the class, he was asked to read his stories to the class.

Milan also received criticism when it was due. When he didn't complete his assignment in science as well as he could have, Mrs. DeLaurier's comment was: "This is rushed and careless. I would have expected better results from you, Milan." In the Social Studies test that he missed in the morning but then completed in the afternoon, Mrs. DeLaurier was disappointed with his approach to the questions. He finished part of the test which she marked and then commented: "And now for page 5. I hope you're going to give it all you've got. . . . You have 20/50 so far."

He received the help that he needed from frequent, short conferences and responded immediately to the direction that he received.

A statement from the drama shows the respect that Milan has for his teacher. When the children decided that Mrs. DeLaurier should be the captain of the ship, Milan responded with the comment "And can I be the first mate?" These comments indicate the very special relationship that Milan has with Mrs. DeLaurier. It is a relationship that would promote learning. Similarly, Milan was encouraged by his parents and schoolmates, particularly Matt.

Thus, like Stacey, Milan exhibited definite physical activities while he was composing. He showed little evidence of any physical plan but it was apparent that much

of the planning occurred in his mind. The dialogue that he participated in with his classmates and others likely served as a type of planning process prior to his writing. His ideas were influenced by movies, by his peer group, and by the games he played. Play was an important aspect of his composing process. Milan showed that he experimented with language and learned from such play. Milan enjoyed drawing and was often preoccupied with the type of script that he chose to represent in writing. Milan was encouraged by his parents and by his teacher. His teacher provided a learning atmosphere and mediation that were important aspects of his composing environment.

### Case Three: Melanie

#### Background

Melanie is a bright and attractive grade five student at Dupuis Elementary School in Edmonton. The community has a range of housing available for all income groups. Melanie's family consists of her parents, a younger brother in grade three and a twin sister. Jennifer and Melanie are 'mirror-image' twins. Melanie is left-handed, Jennifer is right-handed, and their hair curls in opposite directions. They have been in different classrooms for the last three years.

Melanie and her sister were born in Toronto but the family moved back to Edmonton when the girls entered kindergarten. Mr. Travis travels for part of each month and Mrs. Travis looks after the home and family. She is an active school volunteer. They provide a strong Christian upbringing for the children by participating in daily family devotions and regular church attendance.

Melanie is considered to be a good all-round student. She likes to play sports like soccer and enjoys swimming and skating. The two girls take music lessons and since the family doesn't have a piano, they go to their grandmother's to practise. Melanie does well in all her school subjects.

The school is an important part of Melanie's writing world since most of the writing she does is at school or is started at school. In my interview with Mrs. Travis, she indicated that the school had been a wonderful learning environment for all three children. She said: "I really like this 'whole language' approach." She indicated that the school provided a very encouraging environment and that ~~they~~ could take the risks to be wrong. She thought that the 'mind-maps' that the students did were really neat. She was impressed with the library since they learned research skills at a very young age and they had access to many good books.



Dupuis School is very supportive of language learning. One day, when I entered the school there was a gathering of children, parents and teachers in the story-reading pit of the library. In the center, there was a chair where a boy in grade two was reading a book he had written to those seated around him. A number of other children had already read their stories or were waiting to read. The boy had an exceptional beginning that provided the setting for the story and then proceeded to the details of the plot which involved a crab chasing the boy. At the end of the story reading session, they celebrated with drinks and doughnuts. This was not an unusual occurrence at Dupuis School since this sharing occurred every third Wednesday at noon throughout the year.

While I was at the school, the teachers and students prepared a writing display with writing from across the grades for a nearby shopping mall. Each year the school has a full day Author's Fair, where students display and share their writing with parents, teachers and administrators from the school district. Most of the teachers have attended workshops in Language Arts and writing. Donald Graves has worked with some students at the school as a follow-up to workshop sessions.

These examples show the value placed on literacy in Dupuis School and it was evident that every child could be a

"member of the literacy club". Reading and writing was encouraged in many ways throughout the day.

Melanie's classroom was one which encouraged literacy. The students were studying a novel, Mystery at Cranberry Farm (Manuel, 1981). Mrs. Thompson read to them from a book each day. In addition, they were given about a half hour of sustained silent reading each day. Books were evident in student desks, on shelves and lined across a sill for display. The students had also been working in a current reading series which stressed reading and writing strategies.

Melanie had many opportunities to write throughout the day. One on-going activity was what they called "Conference Writing". It was a time that everyone looked forward to which was demonstrated when they cheered whenever it was announced. This consisted of a time for pre-writing in which students were given a chance to discuss their ideas with each other or with the teacher. After this time to get started, Mrs. Thompson would ask the class to be silent so that everyone could write with as little disturbance as possible. Sometimes she timed the activity. Towards the end of a half or full hour session, the children could then share what they had written in small groups. They were often given an opportunity to share with the whole class.

Each child also kept a journal and they were generally given time on Monday to write about their personal activities and feelings.

Sometimes, during writing time, they were given assigned writing tasks. While I was observing in the classroom, the student teacher assigned writing a tall tale to go along with a story about Paul Bunyan. Following a three-day environmental field trip to the Bennett Centre, the students wrote stories about their experiences. They wrote letters of opinion following a study of letters to the editor in the Edmonton Journal and were given cards with writing activities that accompanied their study of the newspaper. Mrs. Thompson led them through an experience of writing directions and then integrating them into another written format such as a story. They wrote letters to a neighboring school class to thank them for the operetta that they had attended. Within each of the assigned topics each child learned about a different format but was given choice of content.

#### Melanie's Composing Processes

Melanie liked to write by herself. When given a writing task, she generally talked with classmates for a few moments before beginning but then started writing almost immediately. I had the feeling that Melanie participated in discussion so that her classmates would not disturb her

once she started to write. This discussion generally involved talk about the other person's writing since Melanie seldom asked for help from anyone else.

After the brief conversation, Melanie would sit at her desk, take out her writing binder, and put a clean sheet of looseleaf paper on the top of the binder. She would choose an HB pencil that was sharp but not too sharp and have an eraser ready. She liked to use a large "hand-size" eraser for corrections. Melanie would frequently start by putting her name and the date in the top right hand corner of the page. She would then leave room for a title and begin by writing sentences, silently reading what she had written and writing some more.

Almost all of the writing that Melanie did was by herself. She would help others by reading their work or by providing editing but sought very little help from anyone else. One day, as I was observing from the back table, Teri and Melissa asked what kinds of questions I asked Melanie in our interview sessions. I replied that I wanted to know where she got her ideas from, who she liked to write with, and what she thought about when she was writing. They said, "Melanie likes to write by herself, doesn't she?".

When I asked Melanie why she liked to work by herself, she replied that she liked the quiet. Another reason

which was difficult for her to divulge because she is so modest about her abilities, was that she didn't feel that she was able to get much help from anyone else. On one occasion, she shared with Sharon, a girl who had just transferred into the class, but Sharon had only written two sentences. Sharon asked Melanie a question about the topic of cleaning the hamster cage about why she hadn't given the hamster water. Melanie replied that it was because she had written about cleaning the hamster, not feeding the hamster. When she shared with Jean-Ann, Jean-Ann liked to put Melanie to work in correcting her spelling and giving her help with sentences. Fiona wanted Melanie to give her ideas of what to write about and Melissa just wanted Melanie's approval for her own writing. Sometimes she would share with Nicole, a close friend, and sometimes she would share with Lana who could help her with revision.

If Melanie didn't know what she was going to write about, she would plan using a 'mind map' to allow her to relate one event to another. Sometimes she would just write a couple of points as reminders for what she was going to write. She carefully explained that only she could understand the meaning of such plans.

In most cases, Melanie would start writing her draft at the beginning of the story and write quickly until she was

about mid-way through. At this point she frequently stopped and reread all that she had written, then made other decisions before writing again.

Thus, like Stacey and Milan, Melanie showed definite physical activities associated with composition.

Observation of Melanie as she composed, revealed little evidence of a physical plan. Much of her planning occurred while she was thinking about her stories.

Melanie showed little awareness of her own composing processes. The following discussion will highlight those processes through illustrating the composing processes involved in one story.

When Melanie wrote the story Fiz Whiz, she had heard Fiona talking about the invention of Cherry Coke. Melanie then decided that she should write about the invention of a special drink which she tentatively labelled as the "brilliant drink". About half way through her composition, Melanie wrote the recipe for that special drink. She felt frustrated though, because she was having difficulty relating the recipe to the rest of the passage and was also "having a bad day". When she went home she expressed her frustration. Her Mom suggested that she think about it for a while. The rest seemed easy, to quote Melissa: "So I started thinking and then I just wrote it down and saw if it made sense and then I made the

good copy." It was in the process of thinking, that Melanie solved her problem of where to put the recipe. She wrote two concluding sentences to finish her story.

When I asked Melanie if she usually planned, she replied:

Not really. Sometimes I have too many ideas stuck in my head and I have to put them down on paper. . . I have to write them down before I forget. I sometimes plan in my head too far ahead and then I forget, and then sometimes it snaps back and sometimes I have to bring back another idea."

Since it was evident that Melanie would stop in the middle, I asked her if she planned the ending while she was thinking. Her reply was:

Sometimes I don't have an ending planned but usually when I get into the middle, I stop and think about an ending before I put lots of details in. So then I can kind of foreshadow."

Occasionally, Melanie would go back and rewrite the beginning to suit the ending that became evident as she was writing as she did with Fiz Whiz. More frequently, she would proceed and make necessary changes to the next parts as was the case with her romance story.

Melanie began writing the romance story on January 19 and was still working on the last two chapters in May. There was no evidence of planning, except that she wrote the epilogue (really the prologue) and the 'blurb' which described the plot before beginning to write the first draft. Melanie wrote this story during "Writing

Conference Time" and whenever she had a free choice of what to write. Because there were sometimes gaps of time between writing sessions, she would reread the previous page and then begin writing. There was no evidence of revision following any of the rereading phases. Unlike Stacey, she did little of her 'school writing' at home.

Melanie's revising techniques were like her planning techniques in that they took place in her mind. One way that she revised was to read her written work over to see if it "sounded okay". She made very few changes. In most cases the second draft had neater handwriting and was easier to read because she used heavier pencil pressure. Melanie was an exceptionally good speller. She would sometimes find and correct her spelling errors, which were few. One revision was a change from "had found an idea" to "came up with an idea" because she had written "had found an idea" twice in the same paragraph. Another revision was from "His trial is going to be held on Tuesday next week." to "His trial is on Tuesday next week."

Usually, at the end of each writing session, the children were given a chance to share their written work with the whole class. Melanie would listen carefully to other children reading but she seldom asked a question. I did not see her volunteer to read her work even once during my



observation time. Last year when the children were selected to share their written work with a few people in a special session, Melanie considered it an honor to read her writing. More often, she would share with Mrs. Thompson for it was from her teacher that she was able to get the help she needed.

One of the lessons in writing was to learn how to write an explanation. Mrs. Thompson had been to a session on writing in the content areas given by Taffy Raphael at the local International Reading Association Conference in April. After receiving a lesson in informational writing, the students were asked to write an explanation. On Wednesday, Melanie began the writing assignment immediately. She began by describing the background to the explanation of how to clean the chalkboard and then started to write the explanation. At that point she put up her hand and asked Mrs. Thompson if she should start a new paragraph. Mrs. Thompson helped Melanie decide by explaining that one part was the background and the other part was the actual explanation. Melanie then began a new paragraph.

On Friday, the class was to write an explanation about a topic of their own choosing. Melanie began writing immediately and proceeded with the writing, rereading and writing as was customary. She then put up her hand to see

if Mrs. Thompson thought that she should start a new paragraph and Mrs. Thompson agreed.

In my interview on the following Monday, I asked Melanie if she was having difficulty in figuring out where to start a new paragraph. She replied that she knew that she was to start a new paragraph if she changed speakers and if the next topic was about something else. She said, "I don't remember having trouble with them before we started taking them." (meaning the class was doing some exercises on paragraphs).

On the Friday of the same week, Melanie was writing a thank you letter for the operetta that they had attended. Melanie asked if the description of the two characters that she had enjoyed should be in one paragraph or two paragraphs. Mrs. Thompson's answer was that if she told a little bit about the characters, it could be in one paragraph but if she explained about one character and then the other character, each description would have its own paragraph. Melanie solved her problem by enlarging on the description of each character and making two paragraphs in the final draft.

This example is cited to show how Melanie was able to learn about one composing technique with the help of a supportive teacher. Together they solved the problem of paragraphing so that Melanie gained from the learning

experience. These instances illustrate how Melanie integrates her learning experiences into her writing. They show Melanie's concern for form in composition.

In addition to learning from instruction, Melanie showed that she was influenced by stories that were read to her and that she read on her own.

Melanie was an early reader. Although Mrs. Travis was uncertain as to whether Melanie was able to read before she started school, she was aware of her attempts at getting meaning from print. She remembered the two girls reading the Berenstain Bear's 'B' Book and Melanie looking at a word and figuring out the 'B' when they were five. She indicated that they read a lot of Dr. Seuss books and watched repeat sessions of "Sesame Street". Mrs. Travis explained that "there isn't a lot that you can do with three preschool children except to read books and watch T.V."

Both Melanie and her sister Jennifer were good readers in grade one. Melanie recalled them being bored and frustrated as they waited and listened to others read in their reading group when they could hardly wait to read themselves.

Melanie continues to be a good reader. Mrs. Travis indicated that she wished they had more time for reading.

They likely read more than the average family since they have no television. Additionally, Mrs. Travis helped the school librarian on a regular basis and read much of the juvenile fiction that Melanie and Jennifer might be interested in. She told me that she liked the books by Laurence Yep, Jane Yolen and Madeline de L'Engel. She liked to recommend books to the girls that would help in teaching some moral values. Melanie indicated that she liked to read the books that her Mom had read; that she was pleased with her Mom's suggestions of good books to read. Melanie kept lists of the books she read and indicated that she could be reading more than one book at a time.

According to Melanie, one book that had an influence on her writing was the book Voyage by Adele Geras. She started reading it because of a particular "mushy" part that several girls in the classroom had shared. Melanie read the mushy part and then went back to the beginning and read the book in its entirety. The book is the story of a group of immigrants coming to New York in a ship and their trials while on board. Two romances are started on board the ship and it is the one romance that Melanie uses as a basis for her story.

After reading Voyage, Melanie decided to write a romance. She used the name of 'Danny', a main character in the book

and also the name of her cousin as the boy in her story. All of the other names were names of classmates. This did not seem unusual in this classroom since there were several students who were writing "chapter" books with main characters named after their classmates.

There weren't many more similarities except in the use of chapters. Melanie decided to delete kissing scenes from her writing because she thought that everyone would be embarrassed. In deleting them however, she was aware that she had to retain the closeness of a romantic

As the impetus for a story of romance, the mystery at Cranberry Farm had led Melanie to write a mystery story too. Melanie indicated that she would also like to write some comedy. When she was in grade four, she wrote a Valentine Story with a special coding to figure out secret love messages and ended the story with a laugh line: "You phoney baloney!"

Melanie's extensive reading has probably contributed to her knowledge of language. In her story, The Disappointed Couple, she has used \* \* \* \* \* to show that time has passed. When I asked her where she got that idea from she showed me Gordon Korman's book No Coins Please which uses those symbols to show that time has passed.

I was surprised when she talked of the concept of 'foreshadowing' and asked her to explain it. Melanie said that it was what they did in the Hardy Boys books. She said:

I just finished a book on Hardy Boys and it's called Sinister Signpost and there was a man named Barto and he wasn't very important and there was his brother Vilnos and he was sort of important and I didn't really think of him as a criminal till later on. Finally they searched Barto's room and they found fingerprints on the telephone and it was his brother Vilnos'. So the author was foreshadowing Vilnos at the beginning.

Melanie shared her folder of stories from grade four with me. One section of the folder indicated the editing skills that Melanie would be responsible for doing in her own writing. They were:

1. Capitals - on proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences.
2. Periods, question marks
3. Quotation marks for conversation.

I then asked Melanie to explain what she knew how to do now that she was in grade five. She indicated that she knew how to write interesting sentences; and to eliminate the 'ands' and the 'thens'. She said that she knew how to write description. Her story The Disappointed Couple shows her ability in this area:

About an hour later Shannon woke up. She looked at the clock. 5:30. She rubbed her eyes and said "5:30? I better get dressed and going if I'm going

to make it to Loi's party." Shannon got up, sighed and walked drearily to her bedroom. She went to the closet and opened the doors. She was looking for a dress that would attract fine young-looking men. She pulled a red satin dress out of the closet. She put it on and looked in the mirror. It came up to the shoulders and went around to the back. The dress went to the waist, and at the waist it spread out a little wider but it clung around her legs. She took off the dress and looked in her closet for another one. None of them looked appealing to her, so she decided they wouldn't attract men. Shannon decided to wear the red dress. She went to the bathroom and started fixing her nails. She then put the red dress on. She got out her makeup kit and added, "I think I'll put on rose red blush, rose red lipstick and pink eyeshadow. Uhhhh yes. Now the final touch. My diamond necklace! Now I better get going!" Shannon raced to the door and put on her red high heels. Shannon put on her fur coat, grabbed her purse, and dashed out the door.

When I asked Melanie what she was expert at, she said spelling and reading. Melanie had very few spelling mistakes and was able to give other children help with spelling. The class was not using any spelling series this year which Melanie thought was "just fine". When I asked her how she learned to spell so well, she explained that when she was in grade two, the teacher said to spell the word the way you think it should be spelled and then put a cloud around it and she would give the correct spelling.

Despite Melanie's knowledge of what constituted good writing, it was interesting to note that most of the obvious revisions were to handwriting and the appearance of the written piece of work.

Discussion in my interviews with Melanie revealed that she understood and implemented many writing techniques. She found it difficult to discuss where she obtained her ideas or what thoughts were in her mind as she composed.

Melanie is a very sensitive and shy child. I felt almost cruel in asking her to divulge her preference to work alone rather than with others because she was not gaining that much from working with other classmates.

In the journal, where I had requested that the students write about their thoughts and ideas as they were writing, there were two pages filled. On one page was a drawing of the dress that Melanie had planned for the main character in her romance story. Melanie showed that discussing something as natural as writing was a difficult task.

Thus, Melanie demonstrated definite physical activities when composing. Although she was reluctant to discuss her composing processes, it was apparent that she was influenced by her reading and by class instruction. She implemented many ideas from reading and was looking forward to trying various types of genres. She wrote a romance story following the reading of a romantic book and was looking forward to writing a mystery story following the class novel study of a mystery. Her close relationship with Mrs. Thompson allowed her to learn about writing which she demonstrated in her learning about



paragraphs. It was equally difficult to determine her feelings about writing.

In observing Melanie's writing processes, I noticed the ease with which her writing took place. There was no avoidance of the task at any time. Melanie started immediately and always completed her work. She indicated that writing was easy and said that she didn't understand why other students might have difficulty with writing. In observing Melanie writing in the classroom, assigned topics were as successful and as easy as her own choices. I got the feeling that for her writing was as fluid and natural as speech.

When I asked Melanie which were her most successful pieces of writing she answered, the Valentine Story from grade four because she had never written a story centered around Valentine's Day. She also named two probes that were given for writing assessment. One was a picture of a little girl looking into a barrel; the other, 'a story starter that began: " I had walked past this wall many times, but I had never seen a door in it. There it was, open just a little. Slowly, I pushed it open, and. . . ."

Despite the ease with which Melanie wrote, she did not have an easy time of explaining her processes.

Melanie was being encouraged as a young reader and writer in many important areas of her world. At home, Melanie's parents valued reading and writing. They encouraged her endeavors. At the end of grade four, Melanie and Jennifer brought their stories home and read them to one another. Mrs. Travis has saved all of Melanie's writing since she was a young child. She didn't fret over the writing backwards of the preschooler and she didn't worry about the errors in grade five. Mrs. Travis encouraged Melanie by exposing her to good literature by good writers. She encouraged the writing by giving support.

At school, Melanie's teachers had an understanding of the importance of language in education. Melanie was encouraged to be a risk-taker because she knew that her best efforts would be rewarded. She was writing a romance during the weeks that she was observed but she was planning to write a mystery story and some comedy. She knew that her efforts would be accepted and that she would receive the help she required.

Melanie enjoyed writing. It was easy and she was learning more about writing as she read and wrote stories. In the short time that I observed Melanie, she had learned much more about paragraphs and had written several chapters of a romance story, self-censored to suit the classroom

audience. She was considered an expert in the classroom, an accepted member of the group.

In summarizing the affective influences of Melanie's composing processes, it was apparent that Melanie composed in a supportive environment provided by her family; her teacher, Mrs. Thompson; and the school. Her classmates realized that she was an excellent writer although reluctant to share her stories. Melanie felt that writing was very easy and enjoyed composing yet has difficulty in discussing it. This was demonstrated by her reluctance to share with other classmates. She was reluctant to write about her composing processes in the journal provided and was very shy about discussing them with me as well.

Melanie's composing processes were affected by her reading and the planning which took place in her mind. Although she had a well-defined set of physical activities associated with writing, there was little evidence of physical plans. Revision of her writing frequently involved correcting her spelling and making the handwriting more legible with little evidence of changes in organization or content. Melanie enjoyed composing and demonstrated that it was easy in the encouraging atmosphere provided by her family and teachers.

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## Summary

Research into the composing processes of the three developing writers, Stacey, Milan and Melanie indicates that there are many similarities amongst them. Despite the similarities, these findings may not be generalizable since they are three individuals with differing backgrounds and interests. As a group, they are quite different from the accomplished writers in that they are in the process of learning how to write and have had fewer years in which to learn the craft of writing or experience life. This summary, organized around the research questions, may assist in observing other developing writers and may provide useful comparisons to the published writers.

All student writers demonstrated preferences for a particular physical setting and showed definite preferences for particular writing tools and paper. All suggested that they liked to write in quiet surroundings. Stacey preferred an HB pencil and lined paper indicating that she 'hated' to print. She liked to write away from interruptions where she could look out of the window. Milan liked to write at the back of the classroom sitting in a particular old oak chair at the table or counter. He said that he liked to use a "Paper-Mate" pen, but he frequently used a black calligraphy pen for his final drafts, particularly if his teacher was using one.

Although he indicated that he liked to write where it was quiet, he often wrote with a peer, especially Matt, a quiet friend. Melanie showed no particular preference for a place in the classroom, but she placed a sheet of paper on a binder, put her name in the upper right hand corner of the paper, and dispenses with any outside interference before she started to write. She preferred pencils that were "sharp but not too sharp" and lined looseleaf paper.

None of the developing writers showed evidence of much written planning. They suggested that most of their planning was "in their heads". Stacey spent considerable time in thinking of a title before she started to write. Although Milan had few written plans, he participated in several storytelling sessions prior to and during his composing phase. Melanie admitted that she would plan "only occasionally" by writing a 'mind map' or by jotting a few points on paper to help her retain her ideas.

Observation of many sessions of composition showed that both Stacey and Melanie had similar patterns while writing. They would begin to write, read what was written, write, and continue in this mode until they had either completed the composition or had no time left. Milan's pattern for composition was less obvious. At times, there was frequent dialoguing with a classmate as he wrote. At other times, he would write quietly by himself.

All students indicated that they liked to write long stories. Concern with length seemed to be a measure of success for the children in both classrooms.

Following the writing of the first draft, few revisions were made by the developing writers with most being revision of spelling or improvements in handwriting, mainly for appearance. Each writer demonstrated interest in revising another facet of composition, frequently with the guidance of the teacher. Stacey worked at choosing better words for 'said' obtaining guidance from her teacher and help from her stepmother. Milan received guidance and help from his teacher for providing more information about his ideas. Melanie sought help from her teacher on paragraphing which became a focus for revision during the period of observation.

The composing processes of the young writers were influenced by some of the same things as the accomplished writers. Two of the developing writers were influenced by the books they read or had read to them. Stacey's stories showed the effect of the structure of 'a story within a story' that she borrowed from Baba Yaga. She used many other ideas from literature as well. Melanie showed the influence of a particular romance she read before she wrote her own romance. Similarly, she planned to write a mystery and some comedy resembling stories that were read. Milan

was less influenced by books than by movies and games. His stories represented similar adventures to those experienced in movies such as Raiders of the Lost Ark, the game Dungeons and Dragons, and computer games such as Ultima

The developing writers participated in delightful language play. Examples are Stacey's illustrating of her titles and the word play involved in her story Lambourggreeny. Milan experimented with the type of script used mainly for his final draft versions. One piece was printed entirely in Old English script. Melanie showed an interest in learning to write different types of stories including romance, mystery and comedy.

All of the student writers demonstrated an apparent lack of awareness of their composing processes. Although they were prolific writers, none completed more than two pages of a journal designed to record metacognitive thoughts. They were often unable to give the source of their ideas and when asked about the formation of ideas, the common reply was: "I don't know, the idea just came."

All of the students enjoyed writing. They were encouraged in their efforts to learn to read and write by supportive families, friends and teachers. Their schools provided literary experiences which encouraged language learning.

Each developing writer showed a close relationship with his/her teacher.

Thus, although each of the students represented differing backgrounds they exhibited many similarities in the composing process.



## CHAPTER VI

### EXAMINATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE CASE STUDIES OF THE ACCOMPLISHED WRITERS AND THE DEVELOPING WRITERS

#### Overview

In summarizing the data from the observation of the composing processes of three young successful writers, I identified the major themes which evolved. These themes are organized around the research questions and the findings related to the themes which emerged from the study of the accomplished adult writers. The small sample of students as well as the personalized selection of recognized authors may limit the extent to which the findings may be generalized however many will relate to other studies in the field of writing and will be reported where applicable.

#### Findings of the Study

The findings of this study of four accomplished writers and three young writers will reflect the research questions that provided guidance for the case studies. The findings will include the physical activities that the writers participated in including their patterns of activity, their preferences for a particular writing environment, the length of the products, and preference for a type of script. The cognitive processes of the writers will be

reported including the planning and revision processes. As well, a number of perceived influences on the writing processes will be discussed. This study was designed to achieve an understanding of the metacognitive aspects of the composing processes and the role of the affective domain on the composing process which will be discussed in this section. As each of the research questions is discussed, comparisons will be made between the accomplished writers and the young writers. The case studies of the accomplished writers revealed elements of the composing process that were not observed amongst the young writers. These will be reported briefly in a separate section.

#### 1. What physical activities does the writer participate in?

##### Patterns of Physical Activity

Each young writer showed a well-established pattern for composition.

Stacey preferred a yellow HB pencil and lined paper, either looseleaf or paper from a scribbler. She spent some time thinking about a title and then proceeded with her writing. She wrote, then read what she had written and continued with this sequence until she had finished the piece. Although Stacey demonstrated that she could write anywhere, she liked to look out of the windows at school and would

seek quiet surroundings away from her toddler brother at home.

Melanie's pattern was similar to Stacey's. She too, liked to use a pencil with a sharp point. She preferred lined paper, usually looseleaf, which she placed on a book before beginning to write. Melanie liked the quiet solitude of her own bedroom and showed strategies for obtaining relative quiet for writing in the classroom.

Milan indicated a preference for a "Paper-Mate" pen for his writing. He frequently chose a calligraphy pen to complete the final draft. Composition took place at the back of the classroom where he would choose a particular old oak chair with a straight back and use either the counter or the table for his writing surface. He too, liked to write where it was quiet. He was frequently seen writing with Matt, a quiet friend.

As well, each published author showed a preference for a particular physical setting for writing.

Monica Hughes prefers a black 'Bic' pen and lined looseleaf paper. She formerly wrote at the dining table with her back to the garden. Now, she has a study where she indicated that she was 'learning' to work. She maintains a schedule of daily writing from 9:00 to 12:00 now, although

when she first persued writing as a career in the early 1970's, she wrote from 8:00 to 12:00 each morning.

Eudora Welty indicated that she liked to write in her second story bedroom where she could "look out to the world." She said that she could write anywhere but preferred to write at home because she is an early riser. Most of her writing is done in the morning. Welty's revision process is very physical too in that she writes very quickly by hand and then, if she can, completes the entire piece in one sitting. She then types the piece and makes revisions on the typewritten copy. She uses scissors and straight pins in a very deliberate revision stage, suggesting that the pinning allows more flexibility than if she pasted a change in organization.

Margaret Laurence expressed a preference for pencils and scribblers for her writing. Her manuscripts for novels consisted of several scribblers all written in longhand. She would write five days a week for four to six hours per day except when she was completing a novel when she would write longer. After completing the piece, she used a typewriter to make revisions to the handwritten copy.

John Steinbeck preferred several sharp pencils and paper from a ledger or yellow legal paper. He developed a callus from the daily writing which took about six hours each day.

Generally, Steinbeck would write lengthy letters to friends and associates before beginning his compositions.

All writers expressed a definite preference for writing tools and paper and exhibited a specific way of writing. Published writers were able to adhere to a specific schedule that allowed for extensive periods of uninterrupted writing time. The demands of a school day and timetable scheduling necessary to complete the requirements of the curriculum made it almost impossible for students to implement a schedule for their own writing.

It appears that the idiosyncracies of the writing craft contribute to the 'magic' of the composing process at a very early age. It is perhaps necessary to control the physical environment in order to deal with the complicated and abstract nature of the composing process. Very little attention has been given in other research to the physical process. Further research that would compare the physical processes of good and poor writers may lead to insights in this area.

#### Preferences for a particular writing environment.

Each of the student writers indicated that they preferred quiet surroundings for their writing.

Stacey had a two year old brother at her Dad's home where she stayed part of the time. She liked to be able to get

away from him and write where it was quiet. Much of her writing was done in an upstairs bedroom or at her Mom's where it was frequently quiet. At school, Stacey showed that she was able to write almost anywhere, although she preferred to look out the window.

Melanie also has a younger brother. She said that much of the writing that she did at home was upstairs in her bedroom so that she could get away from her brother. She also demonstrated strategies for gaining some quiet time at school. She would spend the first part of each writing class in quiet conference with another student either helping or just reading the other student's work. She would then proceed with her own work, uninterrupted.

Milan moved physically away from his classmates so that he could work quietly on his own. He frequently chose Matt to work with because Matt was quiet. Each boy would talk through their compositions, then proceed to work quietly on their own.

Few comments regarding the need for quiet working time were gleaned from interviews with the published authors. It can be noted however, that each writer established a scheduled time for writing. Margaret Laurence established working hours which were posted on the gate at the front of her cottage in England, presumably to avoid interruptions. She indicated in The Diviners that she disliked interruptions

from friends and neighbors yet felt guilty about feeling this way.

Monica Hughes commented only that the work of an author was "a very lonely business" despite the fact that she regards writing for children as being "very joyful". When she first began to write professionally, Hughes established working hours to fit the schedule of her family of husband and four school-aged children. She has varied little from that now that her children are grown and away from home.

The structure of the two classrooms where I observed allowed the student writers to be able to write in relative quiet. Both classrooms allowed for extended writing time where it appeared that encouragement from the teacher and agreement by students resulted in quiet writing time. Mrs. Thompson used a timer, which she set for at least five minutes resulting in quiet time for student writers. Additionally, each writer devised their own methods of being able to work in quiet with few interruptions. Thus, it appears that extended quiet time was an important environmental factor for the good writers.

#### Length of Product

All of the student writers that I observed wrote long stories and indicated pride in being able to write long stories. Although the teachers of the students involved in

the study, did not once indicate that length was an important criterion for good writing, several students in both classes indicated that the students that I had selected to study and other students not selected were good writers because they could write at length.

Stacey enjoyed writing long stories. At the beginning of the composing phase, she would staple twelve to fourteen sheets together planning long stories. Milan, too, preferred to write at length. On my return visit to the classroom for the purpose of celebrating the children's writing, Milan selected his Ghosts series to share with classmates. They were somewhat dismayed when they realized that no one else would have time to share their writing because his collection of stories was so long. Melanie was also involved in writing a long story. She had started writing the story in January and on May 1 was working on the fifth chapter, anticipating writing two more chapters before she was finished.

These students valued long stories and showed that they were capable of writing at length for sustained periods of time. It seemed that length was a measure of their own persistence and ability. They were also capable of writing shorter pieces. Each student showed competence in writing brief letters. All could effectively write a



paragraph-type answer to questions in social studies and science.

Published writers, on the other hand, showed no concern for length and it was only the needs of the publisher that dictated any kind of length. To the published writers, the length was determined by the story they wished to tell.

It appears that the ability to write at length may be a phase in the development of the composing processes of students. Questions occurred to me: Are long stories the result of an attitude that being able to write at length is valued over being able to write succinctly? Is writing at length one stage in the long developmental process of learning to write? Is the ability to write at length an example of fluency before control, an observation of written language development as well as oral language development? Because these eleven year old students differed markedly from the published authors in this respect, research on the length of student writing may yield needed information and answer questions about length of manuscript.

#### Preferences for a Type of Script.

Related to the physical activities of composition are preferences for types of script. Each writer expressed some need in this regard.

Stacey indicated that she would always use cursive writing because she 'hated' printing. When I began my observation in her classroom, Stacey had just received a typewriter for Christmas. She was making valiant attempts to use the typewriter for final drafts, but because of typing errors, Sarah, her step-Mom, would help her by typing most of the final copy.

Milan frequently chose printing for his mode of expression. He seemed to be very conscious of the script and for one assignment was so preoccupied with the use of "Old English" script that the content of his written work was very short and exhibited several errors in sentence construction. Milan frequently used his calligraphy pen for first draft writing, and almost always chose calligraphy for his final draft.

Like Stacey, Melanie showed a preference for cursive writing. She was very conscious of the final draft in that she took special care in making the handwriting legible and dark enough to be readable. Melanie was looking forward to the completion of her long story because a parent helper would type it for her and she could then have it 'published' - put in a final form with hard covers, title pages, dedication pages and notes about the author.

Of the published writers, the miniscule script of Steinbeck is most notable. All of the published writers studied

began by composing "by hand" and then typed the second draft of the original handwritten piece. All expressed the notion that the typing of the piece removed the personal qualities of the composition and to that extent it was easier to revise when once-removed from the original. Margaret Laurence did some original composition on the typewriter but confessed that it didn't feel quite right to her.

Again, it appears that writing is an artisan's craft. In Writer's At Work, editor Cowley illustrates this point by citing the example of Ernest Hemingway who used to have the feeling that his fingers did much of his thinking for him. After a car accident in which his right hand was damaged, he was afraid that he would have to stop writing. With Hemingway, as with many other writers, the hand was viewed as an important extension to the written product and the final product was viewed as another important part of the composing process. (Cowley, 1958)

Writing appears to be a mixture of conscious and unconscious elements. Many writers try to maintain control over some of the conscious elements. Truman Capote even retains some superstitious elements: he shuns yellow roses, will never travel on an airplane with two nuns and will not allow three cigarettes in an ashtray. He says: "It's endless, the things I can't and won't. But I derive some

curious comfort from these primitive concepts." (Cowley, 1958, p.298) While Capote's needs may be extreme, it is interesting to note that all writers that were observed showed tendencies towards a control over the physical environment of their writing.

An examination of the physical activities associated with the composing processes of good young writers and professional writers showed that each writer demonstrated a definite preference for a particular manner of writing, including the selection of tools and paper for writing, the choice of a time of day to write and a particular habit in drafting and revising. Each writer showed a preference for quiet surroundings. The young writers differed from the professional writers in their preference for writing lengthy pieces. The selected professional writers, while certainly able to write at length did not state length as a criterion for good writing.

This research suggests that teachers of writing need to become aware of providing for the diverse physical needs of their students. Students should be able to choose tools and paper for writing. The classroom environment may need to be modified to provide the quiet setting and the extended time that good student writers appear to require:

## 2. What Are The Cognitive Processes of the Writer?

To gain an understanding of the composing processes of the writers studied, the elements of planning and revision were observed. Additionally, there appeared to be ways in which the composing processes were influenced. These influences will be reported separately. Finally, metacognition of the composing process was researched and will be reported. Although the elements of the composing process are reported separately, they are interrelated and as such, the reader must understand that the impact of their interrelatedness is much greater than the sum of the elements.

### Planning

Among the student writers, there was little evidence of any written plan, however all admitted to thinking about their writing beforehand. Stacey indicated that she planned in her head and that it took her quite a long time to decide on a title. Once she had decided on a title, the thoughts just "poured out" of her head. Milan showed little evidence of any written plan. The talk that he participated in may have been a rehearsal type of planning for in his interview with me he told the story that was depicted in his writing. His discussion with Matt on a subsequent day was an identical retelling of the writing that he had discussed with me. He was very familiar with

the format which was similar to Raiders of the Lost Ark, a movie he had seen "millions of times".

Melanie showed more written plans than any of the student writers, but that may have been because the class was required to show plans for their written work. She demonstrated her ability to produce a 'mind map' that showed a networking of related ideas. Most of the time, she said that she had too many ideas in her head and she just needed to write them down. Once when she had difficulty in thinking what she should write about, her Mom encouraged her to sit and think about it. That solved her problem and she then changed the original idea of her story. It was interesting to note that in her lengthy story, the prologue and the "blurb" were written before the story thus giving the essence of a plan prior to writing.

Studies of the planning processes of writers have focussed on the number of minutes of planning time following the assignment of a topic or choice of topics. For example, Stallard's (1974) study found very brief pre-writing times: an average of 4.18 minutes for good writers and an average of 1.2 minutes for average writers. Perl (1979) found that the prewriting time following the assignment of a written task to five college students averaged only four minutes. Mischel's (1974) study of a single high school student, Clarence, indicated that he took no more than two

to three minutes in going over a subject and deciding on a topic. Each of the studies by Stallard (1974), Perl (1979), and Mischel (1974) is based on the planning time for assigned tasks. Observation of Stacey, Milan, and Melanie is based on both assigned and non-assigned tasks. The findings are similar however.

Bereiter and Scardamalia have added other insights to research on the planning process. They hypothesize that children will more readily adapt closed oral schemata, such as narratives to writing than they will the relatively open schemata such as argument. They are cognizant that expressive writing will produce longer texts because it is additive and associative and can be extended in this way rather than according to a particular plan that may be demanded by other types of writing. Matsushashi (1981) suggests that her writers are able to move "confidently ahead to report an event" because they are "guided by years-long familiarity with a script for narratives of personal experience". Scardamalia and Bereiter (1982), using the protocols of think-aloud, also claim that young children provide little evidence of planning.

These studies by Scardamalia and Bereiter, (1982) and Matsushashi (1981) suggest that the type of planning may be related to a great degree to the type of genre selected; that because narratives relate so much to personal

experience extensive planning may not be necessary. The case studies of the three good student writers would reflect similar findings. While there was little evidence of extensive planning, much of what was written was personal narrative.

My study of the planning strategies of accomplished writers indicated quite different planning strategies from the student writers. Monica Hughes explained the sophisticated mapping procedures that she used in writing many stories. Some stories started from an idea that occurred after some research. For example, with Sandwriter, the kernel of the story began with the desert scene from a documentary that she was "half-watching" on television. Hughes then did extensive research on deserts and commented that she now knew a great deal about irrigation systems and styles of living in desert countries. The idea for the story did not occur to her until she thought of a situation that presented itself in one of her readings. It was then that all of Hughes' ideas were able to combine into an appropriate story form. In this case much of the planning took place in the mind. Similarly, it was many years of taking the newspaper clipping of David, the boy who lived in the bubble; and walking around with it and thinking about it, before the idea for a story actually occurred.



Both Eudora Welty and John Steinbeck described the idea of having a story in mind for months and sometimes years before writing could occur. Laurence was surprised at her memory for the sounds and sights of northern Manitoba that came to the fore when she began writing about fictionalized "Manawaka" and its people.

Janet Emig defines prewriting as "that part of the composing process that extends from the time a writer begins to perceive certain features of his inner and/or outer environment with a view to writing about them - usually at the instigation of a stimulus." (Emig, 1971, p.39) Emig's definition may account for the extensive 'planning' that may occur for months and years in the minds of professional writers. In this study, one cannot compare the planning strategies of student writers to professional writers in the respect that the period of observation was not lengthy enough to determine writing that was planned months or years previously. The demands of the classroom learning environment are such that a student must complete written assignments which may not be a reflection of what would be written if extensive planning time was or could be permitted.

Additionally, Emig found very little evidence of elaborate outlining among the professional poets and novelist she queried.

It appears that in the study of the composing processes of student and accomplished writers that planning occurs in the minds of the writers. Storytelling strategies as exhibited by Milan and having the dialogue in mind as in the writing processes of Welty, Steinbeck and Laurence are evidence of one internal type of planning. The need to put "the whole thing down on paper" expressed by Stacey and Melanie and the accomplished writers is evidence that much of the story is planned before writing can occur.

This leads to other questions about planning: To what degree does the classroom environment dictate the need to plan? Is planning a teacher requirement? How is planning related to assigned or non-assigned writing tasks? Would instruction in planning techniques such as webbing, outlining, mind-maps, brainstorming and lists of vocabulary lead to greater evidence of planning? Is the degree of external planning related to the type of genre selected? Does narrative require less planning than a less familiar and personal type of writing?

My observation of planning within the composing processes of student and accomplished writers shows a lack of external evidence of a plan but an awareness that each writer plans quite extensively internally. Ways to research the internal process of planning may be necessary.

### Revision

For every writer there are always elements that need changing. Sometimes changes occur because of the writer's need to communicate clearly and other times at the insistence of a teacher (for student writers) or publisher (for accomplished writers).

Many studies of revision strategies of student writers considered the number and kind of revisions. Studies by Stallard (1974), Pianko (1979), and Perl (1979) of high school students and college freshmen suggest that there are few revisions and that most of the revisions are at the word or sentence level. •

In contrast, Bridwell's (1980) study of one hundred randomly selected high school seniors, found that if given the opportunity, students will make extensive revisions - an average of sixty-one revisions per student. She employed a sophisticated seven level classification system with four to ten subcategories for each level to analyze the revisions. Most revisions (56%) were at the surface-level or word-level stage. The remainder were at the phrase or sentence level with none at the text level. Bridwell noted that there were more opportunities for revision at the lower levels which may account partly for the high percentage of low level revisions.

A study by the National Assessment of Education Progress (1977) asked nine, thirteen, and seventeen year olds to write a composition in pencil and then revise in pen. When the revisions were classified, categories used most frequently were that of mechanical, informational and stylistic. Those used least were cosmetic, organizational and holistic. Revision for mechanics was again the most common type of revision.

In the study of student writers, I noted that few changes were made following first draft writing. Some changes were made following the reading of the story to the class when ideas didn't "sound right". Some changes were made at the insistence of the teacher as in Milan's case when he explained to me that Mrs. DeLaurier liked his ideas but always wanted him to write more about them. Mrs. DeLaurier also noted that Stacey had used the word 'screamed' instead of 'said' throughout her story, The Secret Magnificent Lilly. Stacey went back to the story and changed the word 'screamed' to other words that could be used for 'said' however it was not until Sarah helped her to understand the meaning of the use of words like 'said', 'declared', and 'screamed', that Stacey could truly engage in a kind of revision of content.

Some changes were made when the students noticed a need for change as when Melanie noticed that she had not been using

paragraphs to assist the organization of her stories. When she realized the purpose of a paragraph, she expanded her ideas to fulfill the needs of two paragraphs.

Most changes were made to accommodate the need for acceptable conventions. Every student writer showed an ability to use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization and legibility. Much of the revision still focused on the editing for mechanics. Melanie's second draft had minor changes but showed correct spelling. Her handwriting was neater and darker. Stacey typed her work and worked with Sarah on paragraphing correctly when using dialogue. She corrected the spelling and made vivid illustrations to accompany the writing. Milan chose a black pen and printed his stories neatly in a number of different final forms. One story was written in a little book for display at the side of the room. The same story was added to the collection of stories that was being saved within attractive colored pages.

Thus it appears that the three case studies of student writers show similar findings to those of other studies: that students make few revisions (except those in Bridwell's study), and that most revisions are at the mechanical or lexical levels.

Graves (1983) links revision to children's perceptions of the writing process. He gives the example of Mary who is

at first sensitive to spelling changes because this is the dominant category in her understanding of the writing process. Soon after, her focus moved to handwriting and the general appearance of the page. Graves suggests that with good teaching, Mary will progress through mechanical changes to changes in topic, in selecting information, and then in drafting her writing. (pp.152-53)

In her study of Susie in Lessons From A Child, Calkins (1983) suggests that revision strategies are at first, concrete actions, then become internalized so that children use them in "easy off-hand ways".

The explanation of Graves and Calkins seems most plausible in light of the case studies of Stacey, Milan, and Melanie. Revisions which are made, reflect the dominant perceptions of the writing process. Stacey needs help with spelling and word substitutions and concentrates on that for the moment. Melanie has no difficulty with spelling but becomes aware of a need for paragraphing which she then concentrates on. Milan adds to his work following a conference with his teacher because she advises that his work should be more fully explained - she has made him aware that he does not write enough although he has good ideas. He concentrates on the calligraphy because this is his perception of writing for the moment.

It appears that the teacher is a key factor in the revising process, for it is the teacher who helps to direct the child's attention to the various aspects of the writing process. If the teacher is concerned chiefly about spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, then the student is most likely to revise at this level. If the teacher helps to focus the child's attention on organizational skills such as paragraphing or sequencing for meaning, the student is more likely to revise for those aspects of the writing process.

The accomplished writers in this study were involved in more extensive revision than the student writers. Each accomplished writer wrote the first draft completely before engaging in any kind of revision. It seemed important to get all the ideas on paper while the thoughts were flowing. In most cases, the work was then typewritten and some revision occurred while the work was being typed. Each writer viewed the typewritten copy as being "once-removed" from the original handwritten version and each felt that there was not as much of a personal investment in the typewritten copy.

Her classmates realized that she was an excellent writer although reluctant to share her stories. Melanie felt that writing was very easy and enjoyed composing yet has difficulty in discussing it. This was demonstrated by her

reluctance to share with other classmates. She was reluctant to write about her composing processes in the journal provided and was very shy about discussing them with me as well.

Melanie's composing processes were affected by her reading and the planning which took place in her mind. Although she had a well-defined set of physical activities associated with writing, there was little evidence of physical plans. Revision of her writing frequently involved correcting her spelling and making the handwriting more legible with little evidence of changes in organization or content. Melanie enjoyed composing and demonstrated that it was easy in the encouraging atmosphere provided by her family and teachers.

The first page of Stone Angel (Appendix G, Example 2) by Margaret Laurence illustrates the extensive revision in which she engaged. (Perigoe, 1983) Steinbeck revised on a typewritten copy. He spent several months in writing the manuscript for East of Eden and then allowed himself a few more months for the revision of the original. Welty's revision process is very physical too in that she writes very quickly by hand and then, if she can, completes the entire piece in one sitting. She then types the piece and makes revisions on that typewritten copy. She uses scissors and straight pins in a very deliberate revision



stage, suggesting that the pinning allows more flexibility than if she pasted a change in organization.

The professional writer has internalized many, many aspects of the writing process and makes revisions accordingly. It appears that aspects of the writing process like word choice and mechanics require very little concentrated thought, since these are already in control.

Thus it would be important in further research to observe the revision processes of different groups of writers in relation to the tasks presented and the directions received. It appears that student writers make few revisions, and those are at the mechanical level; but also that revision is greatly affected by the perceptions of the student of what is important in the writing process. The influence of the teacher can also be noted.

Revision processes of accomplished writers differ greatly from those of student writers. They differ in part because the published writers have already internalized much of the revision and are able to control the writing by using their extensive knowledge of writing and considerable ability to shape their intentions.

### Influences on the Writing Process

A discussion about the composing process would not be complete without comment on the perceived influences on the writers' composing processes.

Numerous examples of the effects of exposure to literature were scattered throughout the interviews and were evidenced in the writing. The students were not always aware of this influence and the effect was not always immediate, but its impact was perceived to be strong.

The language patterns of the stories that Stacey wrote in grade two showed a close resemblance to the stories that she experienced in her classroom. Even two and a half years later, Stacey's grade two teacher was able to identify the stories that paralleled Stacey's stories. In two of her narratives, Stacey incorporated the concept of the story within a story from Baba Yaga that her principal had read to the class. She used the idea of the chants from Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator. She patterned one chant from O Canada. Stacey's stories closely resembled the literary language of the storyteller, hence she has written statements like "he was going to put me as a decoration on a guillotine" in Lambourgreeny.

Milan's literary references are less obvious since he usually chooses to write action-packed adventures. Plots tend to resemble those from films like Raiders of the Lost Ark and Ghostbusters and games like Dungeons and Dragons and computer games.

Melanie, like Stacey, reads many books. One book, Voyage by Adele Geras, had a profound influence on the writing of her love story. One particular section prompted her to attempt to write a love scene and she even retained the name of one of the main characters. Melanie would like to write a mystery story next. This may be because the class has just completed a novel study of Mystery at Cranberry Farm which Melanie enjoyed immensely. The technique of 'foreshadowing' was one that she learned from reading the Hardy Boys mystery books. She has incorporated the symbols: \* \* \* \* \* into her stories to show that time has passed which she learned from Gordon Korman's book, No Coins Please.

These findings relate to the growth of writing abilities in students as they learn to combine the internalized speech of expressive writing with the language of books and film. James Britton (1972) notes that a child learns to write by gradually acquiring the form of written language. In the N.C.T.E. Distinguished lecture, Britton cites the example

of a friend who has been scribing the stories of her young son.

In the story, the child says: "The king went sadly home for he had nowhere else to go." Britton suggests that at this young age the boy has internalized a form from written language because it is very unlikely that he would hear this in everyday speech. In explaining this example, Britton suggests that written language is learned in a similar way, by bridging the internalized language with that from literature.

Bill Silver, a teacher-researcher of fourth and fifth grade, was studied by Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson (1986) following a summer workshop in writing for teachers. Silver suggests that students at this age are fascinated by patterns, structure, forms and even TV formulas. He thinks that part of the pleasure of writing comes from being able to use the recognizable patterns like the suspenseful endings of the Hardy Boys books, the beginnings from fairy tales, and episodes from series stories. Silver noted that some students borrowed formulas from TV series or movies or adventure stories, then filled them out with characters and plots of their own inventions. One student in Bill's classroom was like Milan, in that he used a plot from a movie:

"Rocky IV became Jeffrey's big project for the year, from September through May, he added to the script,

revised it, discussed it with friends, typed and retyped it, and eventually, published it in a class anthology." (Perl and Wilson, 1986, p.198)

Frank Nolan's (1978) study of six able writers in Grade six noted similar findings. The able writers in his study showed a heightened awareness of literary technique which they were able to apply in composing. Nolan suggested that such techniques were unlikely to have been taught formally, rather, through their wide reading, the children acquired an awareness of technique which they applied to their own writing, (Nolan, 1978, p.234)

These findings would be congruent with the findings of Carol Chomsky's (1972) study of the language development of children from six to ten which suggests that language learning continues as an active process throughout the school years and that a strong correlation exists between reading exposure and linguistic growth. Chomsky explains:

"The written language is potentially of a more complex nature than speech, both in vocabulary and syntax. The child who reads (or listens to) a variety of rich and complex materials benefits from a range of linguistic inputs that is unavailable to the non-literary child." (Chomsky, 1972, p. 23)

Like the student writers who showed that literature, reading and viewing influenced their writing, study of the accomplished writers showed that reading literature had profound influences on their writing but in different ways.

Monica Hughes noted that her love for books influenced her writing. One of the reasons that she started to write was that she was disgusted with the quality of the stories that her own children were exposed to in the basal reading series. She remembers books that were read to her when she was two years old, the Norse Sagas that she experienced when she was seven, and the Sunday afternoon readings by her father with 'his' choice of books. When embarking on her writing career, Hughes read many books by accomplished writers of juvenile literature, especially those of E. Nesbit and Rosemary Sutcliffe. She notes their "beautiful use of language".

Eudora Welty also noted her love for books saying: "(I) cannot remember when I was not in love with them." She indicated that she held them in such awe that she was disappointed to find that they were actually written by someone. Welty continues to read favorite authors. Another influence was the storytelling of her mother's family. Welty chooses to rely on her auditory and visual memories for the scenes of life that she integrates into her stories.

John Steinbeck was profoundly influenced by his reading. One book, Morte d'Arthur provided the themes for other stories. The Bible also provided symbolic references for his writing.

Similarly, Margaret Laurence, another avid reader, was influenced by the Bible. Her characterization and symbolization have biblical foundations. She recalled that reading book reviews was like eating salted peanuts, when you sampled one, you could not leave the rest alone.

All of the accomplished writers displayed a love for books and the language within. In comparing them to the student writers, I sensed a depth and breadth that would be just developing in eleven year old children. Margaret Meek (1982) refers such a "confident" reader in this description:

The experienced reader is confident he can read and he expects to understand. He makes guesses about what is not at first obvious or explicit, knowing that if he reads on more will become clear. . . He models his writing on authors he knows well.

Meek concludes with a plea that "if your child is a good reader, be glad, give encouragement, space and time for all his reading, and keep him well supplied with writing tools." Such advice would be in agreement with suggestions from this study.

Another influence that could be noted was that the young successful writers were also affected by their sense of experimentation and playfulness when dealing with language. This was apparent in both their choice of words and the physical presentation of the product.

Stacey's story entitled, Lambourgreeny, combined the green color of the rock with the sportscar-like shape of the rock causing her to combine the words Lamborghini with green for her title. She experimented with the literary language of a particular genre. For example, her letter written in the role of an occupant of a Discovery Ship more than a century ago begins: "My dearest husband Jerald". She used vivid images like "He was going to put me as a decoration on the guillotine" and ". . . then I saw a head roll down the ramp". Stacey also illustrated one letter of the title of her story to create a special effect. She spilled wax over her ship's journal entry to suggest an effect of writing by candlelight.

Milan also experimented with language. He showed a sense of story language when writing the story of Sir George and the Dragon: "A long time ago when there were knight and dragons, lived a King. He had a most beautiful daughter. Her name was Stacey and she always got what she wanted." He was able to write action stories and he could glean important information for a report such as the one he wrote in January:

#### VIKINGS

Vikings settled in Greenland in 1000 A.D..The Vikings were hunters, they also would go to a church and rob them of there gold. The vikings were mostly interested in the profit they made from the gold they had. . .



Much of Milan's experimentation came with the type of print he used. He spent most of his writing time in perfecting the Old English script that he had selected for writing the letter from the Discovery Ship following a class drama experience. In presenting his journal entry that would illustrate his day aboard a Discovery Ship, he taped several pages together end for end to form a scroll, wrinkled the scroll, then made a tremendous effort in making each letter of his journal entry in crooked format to suggest that the ship was very unstable and shaky.

Melanie was interested in experimenting with genres. In her 'best' story from grade four she implemented a code form to make her story more interesting and humorous. She used a code that she and her sister had devised to write secret messages away from the eyes of their brother. As mentioned previously, she wanted to write a mystery story next. She knew that she could write a poem. Melanie was involved with learning about paragraphing when I was observing her. She tried various ways to improve her skill in paragraphing.

While the work of the accomplished writers is much more sophisticated than that of the student writer, there was a sense of experimentation with language among this group too.

Eudora Welty experimented with dialogue. Margaret Laurence experimented with form and devised at least two ways to create a story: that of the building of scenes to a climax followed by an epilogue and that of the traditional storyteller which allowed for flashback scenes. Much of her experimentation took place in her mind. Much of Monica Hughes' writing is derived from the questions that formulated in her mind. Steinbeck admitted a love for words and made collections of words.

There appear to be significant differences in the sense of experimentation between the two groups of writers. It is apparent that young writers are involved in trial and error methods that allow them to choose language and form that best suits their need to create meaning. They are, however, limited by their experiences with print and with life. For the same reasons that accomplished writers may engage in more comprehensive revision, much of their experimentation occurs in their minds and they exhibit greater control over the techniques and forms of composition.

Thus, the reading, listening and viewing appeared to be major influences on the composing processes of the young writers. As well, they engaged in some experimentation with the language and the print as they composed. Because the accomplished writers were also strongly influenced by

their literary backgrounds, it would appear that providing rich literary experiences would be essential to helping children become readers and writers. Additionally, children should be encouraged to experiment and play with the language they use and they should be provided with plenty of time to pursue their interests in reading, writing, and oracy.

### Metacognition

This study had instituted a student journal for the recording of metacognitive observations. All three students were unable or unwilling to complete the task. Each student writer had recorded only the thoughts that were required in the first day's log. Following several interview sessions, I asked the students if they would record some of their thoughts about their writing processes in this journal but this was never done. Milan took his journal home and didn't bring it back despite several requests to return it.

Although this method of gathering data about metacognition was unsuccessful, there were still indications that the students had an understanding of their composing processes. Stacey showed an awareness that her difficulties in editing were in spelling so she asked Sarah to help her with this task. She was also aware of her own physical processes;

that she liked to look out of the window and that she liked to use an HB pencil and lined paper to write.

Milan showed little awareness of his own composing processes and was reluctant to write about them or even discuss them at interviews. In our first interview, Milan explained his story to me and it was much like a storytelling session. In subsequent interviews when I would try to shift the focus of the interview to thoughts about his composing process and questions about where he got his ideas, he would remain quite uncommunicative, shrug his shoulders and mumble "I don't know." He seldom discussed his writing yet seemed to quite enjoy the sharing of his compositions.

Melanie appeared to have considerable awareness of the writing process. This may have been partly due to the instruction that she had received this past year in grade five and the two previous years. The teachers at the school were familiar with the 'Graves' method of teaching writing and used the terms of prewriting, drafting, revision, editing and publishing to denote the activities of the students and parts of the instructional and learning processes. Melanie's writing folder in grade four helped to make her aware of her strengths because there was a place for the strengths in writing to be listed. For example, she knew that she could effectively use

punctuation in dialogue. It was listed in her folder and she discussed it with me in an interview.

Melanie used a number of literary terms like 'foreshadowing' when she was discussing her writing and used an example from a Hardy Boys mystery book to explain the concept. She was attempting to use the techniques that she learned through reading or through class instruction in her writing.

Metacognition of the published writers was discussed very little in the interviews and discussions that were reviewed. Margaret Laurence had some difficulty in discussing her writing because her characters were sometimes in her mind for several years before she would begin writing. She explained the joy that she received from writing when the subconscious took over and the writing would just flow, almost out of her control.

Monica Hughes also mentioned the idea of the subconscious taking over. Hughes was very aware of the sources for her ideas and did extensive research so that her books were true and honest. She was also aware of the techniques that she employed in writing. Hughes related the conscious efforts, but also the joy and wonderment associated with writing when the subconscious was in control.

John Steinbeck seldom discussed his writing processes.

Like Margaret Laurence, he kept his ideas for characters and stories in his mind for months and years before writing. Later in his career, he expressed concern that he had perfected his technique to the extent that he felt the technique was the driving force behind his writing. His reluctance to discuss his writing came from a concern that he might lose the 'magic' of composition by discussing it. Steinbeck was more open about the physical activities involved in his writing. Most of his efforts focussed on content. He was quite direct when he explained that the work of a writer was to write and not be concerned about spelling and punctuation. He felt that an editor could look after such notions.

Eudora Welty views writing as an "internal process." Many examples throughout her autobiography, One Writer's Beginnings, illustrate her use of scenes and sounds that she had collected in her mind. Particularly interesting is her comment to Charles T. Bunting in 1972 regarding a course in literary analysis. She said that such a course could never be beneficial to her at all "because writing is an internal process. You can't be helped from the outside." (p.44)

This study of three good student writers and four accomplished writers suggests that metacognition is not a prerequisite to good writing nor a companion of it.

A review and evaluation of current knowledge-based and process approaches to the study of writing by Nancy Stein suggests that many conclusions about the nature and development of writing skill need reevaluation. Stein seriously questions the assumption that poor writing results from lack of metacognitive knowledge. (Stein, 1986)

At a conference session on the composing processes K - College, Linda Flower reported on her recent research that indicated that the writing process was hard to remember and therefore hard to report. She suggested that the writer has a "private, internal voice that is hard for us to see." (Flower, 1986)

This study of good writers would confirm Stein's apprehension and Flower's findings. Only one student writer showed a profound awareness of the writing process; only one accomplished writer was explicit about her writing process beyond the physical activities. My familiarity with the context of writing suggests that awareness of the writing process has little to do with the quality of the writing. Metacognition enabled the students to discuss their composing processes by providing the vocabulary for discussion. I believe that it was the discussion of the

writing that enhanced the written work rather than the awareness of the process itself.

### 3. What Role Does The Affective Domain Have on the Composing Processes of the Writer?

All of the student writers enjoyed writing. They developed confidence because it was easy for them and they were successful. They received praise from their classmates, their teachers, and their parents.

Each child had a special relationship with one of his or her teachers. Stacey had had successful writing experiences from the time that she was in grade two as evidenced by a hardbound collection of stories and a journal that contained many positive responses from her teacher. She continued to receive encouragement from teachers in grade three and four, each requiring different types of writing. She received help and praise and encouragement from Mrs. DeLaurier in grade five, for example when Mrs. DeLaurier asked her to read saying: "Boys and girls, I would like you to hear a really fine masterpiece." Within the classroom, Stacey was a popular and accepted member of the group of learners. Her classmates liked to hear her stories and included her as a character in their own stories.



At home, Stacey received help and encouragement. In the same way that her pictures were framed and displayed throughout the house, her stories were read by her parents. Her parents had purchased a typewriter for her for Christmas to encourage her in her writing and Sarah would often spend Sunday afternoons giving Stacey help with revision, spelling, and typing of the final copy.

Milan also received positive help and encouragement from Mrs. DeLaurier. He immediately took his work to her for approval and explained to me that Mrs. DeLaurier really liked his ideas. There were positive comments written on his first and final drafts. His teacher looked after his writing needs by providing frequent short conferences. Students in the classroom liked to listen to Milan's stories because they were so interesting. They recognized him as being one of the better writers in a classroom that had many good writers. Milan also received encouragement from his parents. They were extremely pleased with the progress that he had made in this school.

Melanie also received help and encouragement from Mrs. Thompson. She was different from the other writers in that she didn't like to share her work with the whole class and didn't feel that she could learn from peer conferences with her classmates. Mrs. Thompson met her needs with frequent short discussions about her writing. She received positive

comments from her classmates. Melanie was an accepted member of that classroom. They included each other as characters in their writing. Melanie was one character most commonly named. Melanie's parents provide a warm environment. They are very supportive of the school and applaud the efforts of the school in encouraging the risk-taking that encourages their children to learn. They think that the "whole language" approach has helped Melanie learn to read and write well.

The encouragement that each of the student writers received from the school and from their parents is similar to the findings of other researchers. In a continuation to Gordon Wells' longitudinal study of the language development of pre-school children in Bristol, England, Barry Kroll (1983) studied the reading and writing development of eighteen students at age nine. He noted that the most powerful predictors of writing attainment are parental interest in literacy and student knowledge of literacy. In indicating the importance of parental help, Kroll suggests that the school is still the place where the vast majority of children learn to read and write and that it is necessary to explore what conditions best support writing development.

Graves (1983) believes that the teacher is key to a child's learning to write. In Writing: Teachers and Children at

Work, he suggests that teachers want to be active participants in children's learning. He indicates that conferences with the child would promote such active involvement and thus align the teaching more closely to the child's intentions in writing.

○ Following their case studies of a number of teachers across the grades, Perl and Wilson (1986) indicate that if the teacher views the child as a writer capable of learning, then the child can learn to write:

"If for example, teachers see in students competent human beings, they seem to act in ways that naturally enable their students to explore, to grow, to stretch themselves beyond their limitations. If they do not, if, as a result of classroom problems or their own assumptions, students appear to them as incompetent or incapable, no technique or approach they use appears to be particularly effective. . . . And when they view their students as capable and competent, when respect for each learner is fundamental to their way of seeing, they naturally create with their students powerful contexts for learning - contexts in which the techniques they have learned can be of real benefit.

In our view, what effective writing teachers do, first and foremost and then over and over again, is to offer invitations to their students to become writers. There is no specific technique or form of knowledge required to accomplish this feat. What seems essential, rather, is that teachers embody the belief that students, in their eyes, are already writers. Once students are willing to see themselves as enabling teachers see them, they can, with help from these teachers, fashion for themselves new skills, new roles, and new identities: as members of a community of inquirers, as thinkers who shape and reshape what they know, and as writers who discover how to communicate, often movingly and effectively, their own views of the subjects they are studying, the concepts they are learning, the many worlds they are inhabiting." (Perl and Wilson, 1986, pages 258-59)

Moirra McKenzie suggests that classroom contexts where children's efforts and their attempts at language were received and valued and which resulted in self-confidence, were the most effective in encouraging literacy. This, she notes, is controlled by the teacher. (McKenzie, 1985)

Like McKenzie, Denny Taylor suggests that context is key to learning how to read and write. In her case studies of family literacy, Taylor (1983) emphasizes the social significance of the context in which written language is learned. Written language was a natural part of life for the families studied. Parents read newspapers, wrote reports for work, wrote notes to family members, read to their children as a matter of course, and the children interacted in many of these occurrences.

While much of the research on the affective domain is necessarily ethnographic in design, involving few subjects, one study by Ernest Steidle (1977) involved 920 students in grades four, five, nine, and twelve and examined the effect of students' general attitudes towards school on their writing ability. Using the Virginia Affective Assessment Questionnaire and the Deiderich Composition Rating Scale, a direct linear dependency was found between the effect of students' general attitudes toward school on their writing ability. Steidle suggests that instilling a more positive

attitude and encouraging a healthier self-image increases the desire to write and thus the quality of composition.

Thus, much research cites the importance of the family and school contexts in promoting reading and writing. The family and school histories of the accomplished writers would also support these findings. All accomplished writers came from families that supported literacy:

Margaret Laurence's stepmother was a teacher who accompanied her to the library as a child and shared book reviews with her when she became older; John Steinbeck's mother taught him to read before he entered school and during the lean years, his father provided him with a monthly allowance which allowed him to continue with his writing; Monica Hughes noted the Sunday afternoon readings of literature by her father; Eudora Welty can remember the storytelling of her mother's family and the encouragement received from her mother, also a teacher. Scattered throughout the biographies of each of the accomplished writers are references to particular teachers and schools who provided encouragement to the budding writers.

Each student writer showed confidence in his/her own ability as a writer. Stacey's Dad was not surprised at her success for she was capable in almost everything that she did. She exhibited confidence and persistence in learning how to ski as evidenced in her journal entry. She was

willing to try something new, such as composing a song for the Canadian Kid's Party. Although she had not composed a song for anyone else, she was willing to give it a try.

Milan enjoyed the challenge of trying something new or extreme. He loved to write long stories and took pride in the fact that his stories were longer than anyone else's. He liked to write gruesome details in his stories, explaining that "It's just my style." He liked to challenge the rules of the school and of playing in community sports. Writing provided an additional challenge.

Melanie also showed confidence in her abilities. She found writing easy and realized that she was good at it. Melanie welcomed the challenge of learning new things about writing. When she had finished the love story she was going to try to write a mystery story.

For all of the student writers, writing was a pleasurable experience where they could be successful. These findings would be supported by the research by Seidle (1977), Graves (1983), and Taylor (1983).

Similarly, all of the published writers enjoyed writing although many viewed it as being hard work. It is interesting to note that the writing continued despite the fact that it was not always economically rewarding.

Margaret Laurence had commented on the difficulty of convincing others that writing was her life's work, especially since she had enjoyed it so much. John Steinbeck too, commented that he loved writing and wrote not for the recognition nor for the money but just for the love of it. Eudora Welty writes for the pleasure of it. Early in her life, she recognized that she might not make a living from writing, yet she continued to pursue it. Monica Hughes also loves to write but is very aware of her audience because she wishes to share the meaning of some of the important issues of life through her writing.

Support from parents and teachers were important affective influences. The success associated with writing helped both student and professional writers maintaining the confidence to continue writing.

#### 4. How Are the Physical Activities, the Cognitive Processes, and the Affective Influences of the Young Writer Different From Those of the Accomplished Writer?

The study and explanation of the composing processes of student writers permitted comparisons between the young writers and the accomplished writers but there are some differences that have not yet been highlighted. The accomplished writer is the writing expert who has proven his/her worth through recognition and fortune. The developing writer has still many areas that he/she needs to

master whether or not they ever become professional writers. A number of areas distinguished the accomplished writers as a separate group.

No accomplished writer showed concern for the conventions of writing. In fact, John Steinbeck showed disdain for conventions commenting that a good stenographer could look after these needs. Research on good writers confirms the ideas that good writers focus more on content and organization and less on mechanics and conventions.

(Hillocks, 1986; Pianko, 1979; Sawkins, 1971) The young writers in this study showed some concern for spelling and conventions, but also that they were concerned about content and form.

There were numerous examples of the accomplished writer showing concern for the choice of title. For example, Margaret Laurence had some difficulty in choosing the title for The Stone Angel, and was extremely unhappy with the publisher's choice of Old Lady Shipley. John Steinbeck chose the title for East of Eden from a verse in the Bible and felt a great relief when he had decided upon a title. Student writers showed little concern for the choice of a title except Stacey who chose her title before she started writing. She also illustrated a letter in the title. This may indicate that accomplished writers show more audience awareness than the young writers or that they view titles



as more significant functionally and suggests an area that could be investigated in future research.

Symbolism was a feature of the writing of accomplished writers although they were sometimes unaware of the symbolism that existed. Student writers showed little awareness of symbolism in composition. This may be related to the more extensive backgrounds and literary experiences of the mature writer. Again, it is an area that requires further investigation.

Accomplished writers spent considerably more time in planning, research, or just thinking than student writers. While much of the research suggests that little time is spent by students in planning, this would also be influenced by the time available to student writers plus the expectations of the teacher and curriculum. Deborah Sumner (1982) addresses this issue by referring to Katherine Paterson's comment about the use of time:

"On the good days, you're totally lost (in the story). Those are the days you love. The days when somebody has to wake you up and tell you where you are. But there are lots of days when you're just slogging along. And you're very conscious of your stuff and the typewriter is a machine and the paper is blank. You've got to be willing to put in those days in order to get the days when it's flowing like magic."  
(Sumner, 1982, pp.155-56)

Sumner then goes on to explain that as a writing teacher:

" As I gain a better sense of writing as problem solving, I give children more time to write, more time to experiment

and to see choices within a piece of writing." (Sumner, 1982, p.156)

Every accomplished writer was noted for the development of a sense of place. Eudora Welty is famous for her stories of the Jackson, Mississippi area; John Steinbeck for his stories of the Salinas Valley in California; Monica Hughes for her Canadian stories, some based in Edmonton and others involving the magical place of Isis; and Margaret Laurence for both her stories of Africa and particularly for the Manawaka stories. This well-developed sense of place was not apparent amongst the student writers.

In his talk, "Writers in Their Place", Bruce Bennett (1986) alludes to the neglect of the sense of place in writing research:

"A general neglect of place in literary criticism has its counterpart in educational research on writing. . . as teachers, we should be more aware of the function of place in the formation of the self and hence in our own and our students' writing; and that as researchers who write about writing, we should resist the temptation to gloss over differences between places in our description and interpretation of writing processes and products."

Bennett continues with a discussion of the importance of the sense of place to published authors including Eudora Welty. He also cites a study by Paquette in 1981 which analyzed the journals of eight London East End adolescent students, before, during and after a trip which they made to Canada. Paquette's case studies showed the ways that

writing could change in response to new stimuli in a different environment. In conclusion, Bennett stresses the need to study how the self responds to, and is in turn influenced by its environment.

A final difference that was noted was that student writers were still very self-centered, relating to their own experiences and often including the names of their classmates in their compositions. This would be confirmed by the research of James Britton (1975), Glenda Bissex (1980) and Marie Clay (1975) who recognized the process of decentration as students mature.

In the differences that have been highlighted, it is apparent that many of the differences between developing writers and accomplished writers are due to the differences in maturity and experience. It is important for teachers to be aware of such differences and accommodate them.

Despite the differences that have been highlighted there are many ways in which student writers are similar to accomplished writers. The similarities and differences should be appreciated and supported. Perhaps, the study of professional writers will assist us, as teachers, in achieving a better understanding of the composing process and those who write.

## CHAPTER VII

### IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Overview

This research in two classrooms observing three students has implications for teachers of writing. Additionally, the study of the composing processes of professional writers with comparisons to the composing processes of successful young writers may lead to a greater understanding of composing processes in general perhaps resulting in some change in instructional practices. Since research of the composing processes is relatively new and not comprehensive, suggestions for further research are also given. I have concluded this study with a brief comment about the research itself.

#### Implications

Because both student and accomplished writers who were studied had a definite set of physical preferences, teachers should be made aware of the importance of these preferences in order to accommodate them to the classroom environment. If, for example, it is important for a student to use lined looseleaf paper and a sharp pencil, then looseleaf paper and sharp pencils should be provided.

Each writer expressed a need for extended writing time and quiet writing time. Despite the demands from other curriculum areas, it is important for teachers to provide more time to write and to make provisions for children to have a quiet atmosphere. To satisfy these requirements, it may be necessary to provide larger blocks of time for writing activities.

There was little evidence of a physical plan amongst the good student writers. It appears to be important to provide knowledge of a variety of plans that a student may use to plan. An awareness that much of the planning for writing may occur in the minds of students and that evidence of a written plan may not be a precursor to good writing suggests that written plans may not be a necessary requirement for writing assignments. Acceptance of this idea may assist students in the act of composing. Also, teachers may wish to help students with their thinking, through discussion of the writing.

Much of the student revision of writing was at the mechanical and word-choice level. It appeared that the students would revise in areas that they perceived to be important. Thought should be given to providing writing instruction that would assist students in understanding the higher levels of organization and sentence structure

especially when students have a good understanding of the basic conventions of writing.

Students were influenced by their reading and listening to literature and to some extent by their viewing of television shows and movies. Because these seemed to have such a profound influence on their writing, schools must continue to highlight the use of children's literature by stocking excellent libraries with a wide choice of materials and continue with programs such as U.S.S.R., D.E.A.R., and S.Q.U.I.R.T. that allow children to read for extended periods of time. Television and movies should be considered viable experiences that students may choose as models or sources of ideas.

A sense of experimentation and playfulness with language was a perceived influence. It would appear that schools should encourage this experimentation by providing frequent opportunities to write whilst exploring a variety of genres. Models of a variety of uses for language should be provided. At this level, grades four to six, it appears to be important to reach beyond the realm of the narrative to experience a variety of expository styles and also to explore areas of writing involving humour including cartoons, puns, spoonerisms, and styles.

It is important for teachers to understand the composing processes of developing writers. Teachers should be

encouraged to increase their understanding of children's writing by reading current research, by observing their students and perhaps by conducting research within their own classrooms. It is important, too, for parents to understand the role that they have in encouraging their children to become effective writers. Support of their children in the developing stages of writing and continued sharing of family literacy events are necessary. There needs to be close communication between home and school about the ways that the child is learning to use language. Such cooperation will help instill a sense of confidence in the child, a necessary prerequisite to good writing.

To improve the teaching of writing, it may be helpful to help students in understanding the cognitive processes of "real writers". They need to know that real writers experience difficulties such as writer's block and problems in character development. Students need to realize that writers must make choices in the development of their compositions. Programs that give students an opportunity to meet with the writer of both recreational and textbook reading material provide an orientation that encourages comprehension and also enhances the writing ability of the students. The "Writer-in-Residence" programs that are offered in most universities should be extended to include schools and community libraries.

Both the student writers and the professional writers in this study exemplified "good writing". The writing processes of such writers and the conditions for good writing may offer direction for working in classrooms. For example, if it is important for writers to have a specific set of physical activities, we as teachers may need to help all students become aware of their physical needs then provide for them.

An understanding of the composing processes of professional writers may provide advice on better ways of teaching writing. Following the advice of accomplished writers, teachers may need to provide more choices of assignment in form and content in written assignments. Perhaps textbook publishers could also learn from the study of the accomplished writer so that more effective writing programs might be planned for students at all levels. For example, publishers of texts for the teaching of language arts will need to be aware that good writing can be influenced by providing good models of literature. Every effort must be made to encourage the current trend in textbook publication to provide good literature to our students.

In any research study, there is a danger of segmenting the area by focussing on certain elements of the study. So it is with the study of writing. There is a danger of segmenting the teaching of writing by considering the areas



of physical activities, planning, revision, and influences as separate issues. It is my hope that the teachers of writing would combine all of the elements with a better understanding of the entire process through an increased understanding of the elements. Accomplished writers expressed a fear that the magic of writing would disappear if they discussed them. I fear that the magic may disappear by dealing with only a few of the elements of writing.

#### Suggestions For Further Research

Research on the composing processes of student writers aged nine to fifteen is sparse. Much of the research on the composing processes of elementary school children has focussed on the beginning writer. While the progress of beginning writers is astounding and we can benefit from an understanding of their language development, we need more research on the composing processes of students in the upper elementary grades because there is a uniqueness in their development too.

Little research has been conducted on the physical processes of the writer, yet it was apparent that even at the age of eleven, the student writer had clearly defined physical processes. We know little about the physical processes of the poor writer. Perhaps comparisons between these two groups of writers would be helpful.

The writers in the classrooms of my study viewed 'length' as a major criterion for good writing. Is the length a requirement of the teacher? Is participating in lengthy writing a way of exploring the writing process for the student? This area needs to be explored more fully.

The context for writing is clearly very important. These good student writers all had supportive families and teachers who understood writing well. They were able to write at length in well-managed classrooms. Further research on contexts for good writing need to be explored.

What are the effects of instruction on planning and revision? It is important to determine the relationship between instruction and what the student is able to accomplish in their writing. Is there a positive or negative correlation? What types of instruction net results? Is pro-active instruction or re-active instruction better for helping the child improve his/her writing?

Metacognition or awareness of the writing process, had little effect on the composing processes of either the good student writers or the accomplished writers. The professional writers were very wary of such an awareness, because they felt it would interfere with the subconscious. Based on the results of this study, I would question the

value of extensive research on the metacognitive elements of the composing process.

The composing processes of professional writers have not been fully investigated by research. To question the composing processes of professionals more closely than we have in the past would help teachers of writing and literature.

Many questions have resulted from this study. Clearly what is needed in research is the funding that would allow for such questions to be answered. There is also a need for bodies of research to be related to one another. One of the best ways would be to provide for more research within the classroom context.

#### Comments About This Study.

The complexity of the writing process and the interrelationships of its components have been underestimated by many educators. Descriptive case study research allowed me to gain a better understanding of the complex nature of composition by studying only a few students.

For my work with teachers, this research has helped me to develop the observation skills that play such a critical role in teaching. This diagram illustrates the role of observation in making the connection between theory and practice:

DIAGRAM REMOVED

DUE TO COPYRIGHT

I believe that descriptive case study research has assisted in my understanding of the language that children use in writing and will enable me to share appropriate methodologies with teachers who are working with children on a daily basis. My feeling can be summed up by this statement by James Britton (1982):

There are great opportunities for us, provided we see that interactive learning applies to teachers as well as to those we teach; provided we see our role as helping each other to theorize from our own experience, and build our own rationale and convictions. For it is only when we are theorizing from our own experiences that we can, selectively, take and use other people's theories. (p. 214)

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMATION TO PARENTS

. . . . . School  
March 17, 1987

Dear Parents;

I am conducting a study of the composing processes of good writers. The purpose of my study is to complete the thesis requirements for a Master's degree in Elementary Education. More importantly it will help to inform educators about the ways to provide good writing instruction to elementary students.

The thesis proposal involves the study of the writing processes of three good writers. These students will be selected from a number of Edmonton classrooms that have been chosen for their excellent writing programs.

Mr. . . . . and Mrs. Thompson have accepted my request to observe in her classroom. I will probably observe approximately 4-5 hours per week for about 6 weeks.

One or two students will be observed and interviewed about their writing processes. These students will be asked to keep a journal about their writing and all written work completed during the observation time will be saved. I will get permission from the selected students and their parents, before beginning the observation.

As is usual when conducting educational research, the names of the students, the teachers and the schools involved will

be anonymous. Results of the research will be available to all involved when it is completed.

This proposal has been submitted to and accepted by the ethics committee at the university and by the research monitoring division of Edmonton Public Schools.

My reason for studying good writers is that much of the research on good readers has helped to improve the understanding of and instruction of reading. Recent research in the field of writing has involved observation of children as they composed. This research has resulted in more effective instruction in writing. I hope that my study of good writers will help to improve the understanding of children's composing processes and assist in developing effective instructional programs in writing.

While observing in Mrs. Thompson's classroom, I hope to interfere as little as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about my presence in your child's class, would you please contact me by leaving a message at the school or by calling me at home at 459 6761. Thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*Donna Wyatt*

Donna Wyatt

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE: PERSONAL PREFERENCE IN WRITING



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### SUMMARY OF PERSONAL PREFERENCE IN WRITING

1. When you write, what kinds of paper and pens or pencils do you like to use?

2. Where do you like to write? At home? At school?

3. When do you like to write?

4. Please circle the correct response. I usually plan before I write. YES NO

If you do plan, what kind of plan do you usually make?

5. If I could finish it, I would like to write:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a short story
- \_\_\_\_\_ a poem
- \_\_\_\_\_ a play
- \_\_\_\_\_ a T.V. script
- \_\_\_\_\_ a song

If you would like to write anything else, can you please explain?

6. The longest uninterrupted length of time I have spent writing is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 - 10 minutes
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10 - 30 minutes
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30 - 60 minutes

If longer, could you tell about how long.

7. Once I start writing I usually continue until I'm finished.

YES

NO

SOMETIMES

8. I write only when I have to. YES NO

9. The three best compositions that I have written are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

10. I like having my work displayed. YES NO

11. The best people to read my writing are:

12. The type of writing I enjoy doing most are:

\_\_\_\_\_ stories

\_\_\_\_\_ poetry

\_\_\_\_\_ plays

\_\_\_\_\_ research reports

\_\_\_\_\_ other

APPENDIX C

PARENTAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview

I have a few questions that I would like to ask you about your child's writing and reading as it relates to writing. I hope that you will allow me to tape record this interview.

1. What do you think makes a child a good writer?

2. Is your child a good reader? How do you know? When did he or she learn to read?

3. Is your child a good writer? How do you know? When did he or she learn to write?

4. What are some of the experiences and opportunities that your child has that you feel support the development of reading and writing?

5. What would you like your child to do better as a reader?

- as a writer?

6. Do you have any favorite stories about your child's writing that you would like to share?

7. These are more general questions: Does your child have any hobbies? Does . . . . . play sports? Has the family travelled very much? Are there any experiences in . . . 's which have greatly affected him/her?

8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me which may help me to better understand his/her composing processes?

Are there any questions which you would like to ask me about this study?

Thank you for your cooperation in this study and for the time you have taken in answering my questions.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION OF ONE DAY'S OBSERVATION

February 11, 1987

When I entered the classroom, Mrs. DeLaurier was discussing yesterday's Social Studies topic with her class. They had discussed what life aboard a ship on the many voyages of the explorers must have been like. For homework they were asked to read the following passage which served as the stimulus for the brainstorming session that I observed:

*Background  
Information*

#### LIFE ABOARD THE DISCOVERY SHIPS

Conditions of life aboard during these lengthy voyages were appalling, not only by modern standards but by the standards of the time for life on shore. All the ships leaked; even with regular use of the pumps, water was constantly sloshing in the bilge which was further fouled by the casual sanitary habits of the age. Roaches and rats swarmed everywhere. No sleeping quarters were provided, save perhaps for the master and pilot: ordinary ~~seamen~~ slept on or below deck wherever they could find room. There was no water-proof clothing. . .

Sheer discomfort and stench probably did not mean much to those who were used to the sea as traders or fishermen. But voyages of discovery created major problems in the way of food supply. In part this reflected the large number of men needed to handle the sails of the early exploring vessels and for whom stores of food that would last for the whole voyage had to be carried. But there were other factors that added to the difficulties; the tendency of grain and ship's biscuit to become sour or to swarm with weevils; the speed with which even the best-made wine or water casks sprang leaks under the continual lurching of the ship. .

Shipboard menus consisted of dried or salted meat, salted fish, biscuit, rice, dried peas, cheese, onions, garlic, oil, vinegar, water and wine. . . . Eating at sea swung from frugality during voyages to gluttonous orgies after making a landfall, a pattern that corresponded exactly to eating habits

ashore. The difference for the sailor lay in the terrible quality of the food during the times of scarcity; the putrefying water; the fresh food petering out after a few days; then a diet unhealthily salty; then a time when even salted and dried provisions turned into a slimy mess, undulating with worms.

Kanata Kit 5 Canada: A Meeting of Cultures,  
Page 36

In their brainstorming session, the following list was made on the blackboard:

- rats, leaky ships
- worms in food
- sleep wherever there's space
- no dry place to sleep
- no waterproof clothes
- wine and water casks leaked
- water became stagnant

The word stagnant was discussed. Most of the children understood the word stale, but Mrs. DeLaurier explained that the word stagnant was used with water.

*Teacher*  
*Influence*

They also talked about scurvy and how the sailors would use limes for Vitamin C and in fact that was where the term "limey" came into existence.

- smelly from unsanitary conditions

Scott mentioned this concept and said that maybe he shouldn't talk about it. Mrs. DeLaurier encouraged his comment and wrote the above entry to describe the bathroom habits of urinating in the bottom of the ship. She then explained that the term used was called a euphemism for those who were interested.

*- Literacy*

*- Vocabulary*

She then began almost the beginning of a drama in which she said that we would go aboard ship, sail out into the bay, across the Atlantic.

We will have a big feast, then try to have a sleep.



She suggested that they could write two letters, one at the beginning of the voyage when there was lots of food; and another when they were well out to sea and in fact could see nothing but ocean and sky and when they were running out of fresh food.

She suggested a number of people that they could write to including husbands, wives, sisters, parents, grandparents, and friends.

She said: How can you write?

In order to create atmosphere, the blinds were pulled down and a number of candles were made available so that they could work in groups around the candles. A blind was left open so I could see but one of the students felt it wasn't realistic so shut it again.

Darcy had the idea to move the desks to the side of the room so that they would have room and so that they could pretend that the desks at the side were bunks.

While everyone is getting ready Milan is looking at an Art book that has a lot of different styles of lettering in it.

Milan continues to look at the Art book and suddenly shouts out to Scott: "Hey Scott, I found old English".

Mrs. DeLaurier helps set up a fairly large group with Scott, Milan, Matt and Stephen. Some of the children bring in mats for bunks and so they can be more comfortable. Robert and finally Douglas join the group of boys in this setting. Every boy in the group has a calligraphy pen to write with.

*recurrence of theme?*

As the class is working there are some interjections from Mrs. DeLaurier:

"You'll be able to hear the waves rolling"

This serves as a way of quieting the activity and settling them into the task.

*I remember  
enjoying this  
style of  
writing in  
Grade 5. We  
used the  
United Church  
hymnary for  
a model*

*preoccupied  
with Art?*

"Be very honest, tell us what it sounds like, what it looks like, what it feels like."

Milan is concentrating. He says aloud:

"Dear Mom, This journey is terrible. I'm getting sick everyday."

Robert: My Mom is thirty.

Matt: My Mom is thirty-three.

Stephen: What's the boat called? Santa Maria?

Milan: U.S.S. Enterprise. It has M 60s rockets. 50 knots an hour. We're coming to Canada to get those Indians. He chuckles to himself.

Mrs. DeLaurier: Billy is using a rather antiquated language. You may wish to use that too.

One boy: Milan, where did you get that? (I think he is referring to the book)

Milan: My Dad gave it to me.

It is interesting to observe that Milan has already decided on the content of the letter and that all the time available is spent in meticulously lettering this message.

Dear Mom,

This Voyage

From Milan's group, I hear him sing out "Hello, Mother, Hello, Father. . . " and does a little twisting motion.

The boys laugh about Douglas' "I think, I think" writing.

Milan looks to Scott's letter and reads it.

He then moves over to Billy to read his and share.

*Does this have anything to do with composition? Did I miss something?*

*- fun  
→ - playing with ideas*

*(I } same as calligraphy pens. Is father a model?*

*} playing with language*

*} Community of writers*

Milan: He's getting laughing sickness.  
Let's throw him over the edge.

Milan: Let's sleep now.

(no response)

Mrs. DeLaurier: For those of you who have no ideas, put your head down, close your eyes, and think of where you are and what is happening.

Milan goes over to the "bunks" and covers himself with a gym mat and lies down on top the desks and tries to coax the others but again there are no takers.

*Milan uses  
his own  
drama to  
get into  
the mood.*

Milan: Are you going to send your mail by C and N?

Milan: Hit the sack guys!

He starts placing the mats one on the other

"I'm getting the beds ready"

Conversation throughout the morning has mentioned Mrs. as a good choice for captain of the ship. It is mentioned again and Milan jumps up to her and says "I'll be first mate, okay?"

*→ relationship  
with Teacher*

At the end of the class most of the children had worked at decorating their writing by dribbling wax on the page, crumpling the paper to make it look old and by cutting or tearing the edges for a similar effect. Most of the children worked by using a print type that might be similar to what one could see in letters written long ago.

At this point it is recess and although most of the children would like to continue it has been decided that they may continue tomorrow but that in the half hour after recess, that they could read their letters.

After recess, a number of the letters are shared with the rest of the class.

A number of mats are piled at the front of the room for the reader to sit on when they read.

Mrs. DeLaurier asks Christina to read first. Christina has written two letters from different parts of the voyage after settling herself behind Mrs. DeLaurier's desk. The writing is excellent and shows that she has really assumed the feeling of that time and place.

→ *seeming lack of involvement*

Milan cuts paper while Christina reads.

Milan notices the wax reflections from the dripping of wax on her paper and says: Let's see the picture. What's that on the back?

→ *artistic interest*

Douglas refuses, Stephen refuses, and so does Matt W. Someone says Typoon and Milan corrects him by saying you said ty poon and it should be ty phoon.

*Peer group banter*

Nicola and Darcy also read.

- *listener*

Milan is asked to read and he does saying "It's short, Don't worry."

- *apologized for length!*

The class looks forward to continuing the writing. At recess Mrs. DeLaurier and I talk about the frustration of being unable to continue due to the timetable where she is teaching French while her class is getting Math.

APPENDIX E

○  
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH ONE STUDENT WRITER

all knew exactly how to get started and spent a little time in discussion before beginning the writing. One thing that occurred that was quite interesting was the return of a former classmate who had moved to Calgary. He walked into the classroom chewing gum dressed in a white suit with the pant legs rolled up. With a black and white sweat shirt below the suit jacket. A miniature Mr. Miami Vice. He didn't say much until Mrs. Thompson noticed him and then was invited into the classroom. He was given paper and pen so that he could write as well. He noticed that the blackboards were green. The idea of making the family strange occurred to me. The students in Mrs. Thompson's class also noticed how different he was.

Melanie started to write and actually got quite a bit of her fourth chapter completed. I let her work for about a half hour before we began the interview.

Melanie had brought her writing from other years and we discussed it as she shared it with me.

As Melanie was showing me a book report that she had written in Grade 3 (Phantom Tollbooth) she explained that she used to keep track of all the books that she read. She showed the list of books that she had kept for that year.

Melanie had kept both copies of the book report and it appeared to me that there wasn't much difference between the two. It seemed that Melanie thought that the good copy meant that it had been written with neater handwriting.

Donna: And this is from Grade 3?

Melanie: Grade 3 or 4 I can not remember.

Melanie: And here is my writing folder with all my good copies in it. And here are my journals from Grades 2 and 3.

Melanie: (starts to laugh) And here's a note that I gave to the tooth fairy. (She begins in a rather sing-song type of reading) "I lost my tooth when I was brushing my teeth. My tooth fell out in the sink and went down the drain." See I used to write backwards when I was little. "Can you still give me a nickel? (She giggles)

Donna: Oh and your Mom noted when that was written, April 3, 1982. (It must have been written at the end of kindergarten)

Donna: Are you sure?

We look through a lot of the writing.

Donna: Look at all the writing, WOW! Grade 3 , WOW!

Melanie: Sometimes my hand, that I wrote with would start to hurt because I wrote so much.

Donna: Did your teacher give you a lot of time?

Melanie: Oh, yah, five, ten minutes.

Donna: You must have written every day. I read the dates of the journal but it appears that the writing of journals was at least two or three times per week.

Melanie: I wrote some poems in there.

Donna: I noticed that in Grade 2 your teacher corrected a lot of things.

Melanie: In Grade 2, she said that if you have trouble spelling words, spell it the way you think and then put a cloud around it and then she'll correct it for you.

Donna: Did you like that idea?

Melanie: Ya, It was good.

Donna: Look at this; four journals in Grade Three.

Donna: What about Grade 1, do you remember writing in Grade 1?

Melanie: I don't think we did the journal in Grade 1, we just did vowels and sheets and stuff like that. Me and Jennifer were the best readers in Grade One and we got so bored and frustrated because we had to sit and listen while others read and we could hardly wait until it was time for us to read and they were so slow.

Donna: Did you have to listen to boys and girls while they read?

Melanie: Ya, like she'd take a group of people to the back of the room and we had a curtain around us so we wouldn't get nervous when we were reading, so the other boys and girls couldn't look at us. And then we'd start to read a

that's how we would read in Grade one.

Donna: Oh, I see. Which group were you in?

Melanie: Benjamin was in my group, Jennifer was in my group, I think Heather was in my group, I can't remember anybody else.

Donna: And this is your Grade Four? I like this idea.  
(refers to the multi-faceted folder)

Melanie: This is where we keep our rough copies. This is for editing and then on the other side, here's my good copies. We did Hinky Pinkies, Mrs. Sawyer gave us Hinky Pinkies, she would say a scary fairy and then we would write the Hinky Pinkies. Here is my favorite one: She gave us the cool ghoul and I put "What do you get if you put a monster in a freezer?"

Donna: And Limericks?

Donna: Who typed this for you?

Melanie: Ms. Sawyer.

I discussed with Melanie the fact that someone was going to come into the classroom to type up the good copies. I thought it may have been Melanie's mother but it wasn't.

Melanie said that they had a typewriter to use at home and also that their grandmother had a big typewriter at her place that they can use.

Melanie: I started to type the book on the Sundance ( they were to tell what the Sundance was) and we made it up and I started doing it in Grade 3 and Grade 4 but we didn't have any white-out.

Melanie: (Refers to another piece) This I really enjoyed writing. It was "How the Bluebird Became Blue". It was blue because he played a trick on somebody and they decided to get him back.

Melanie: This I think was, what do you call it, I think, a summary. You have to make it so that you don't include all the details but you have to make it like , she called it a little story. (How Summer Came To Glooscap's Land)

Donna: And what's this? ( I refer to a little dictionary that has the correct spelling of words that author's use)



Melanie: A dictionary but I never had to use it.

Melanie: And this is for every day that I would write and I would need to know these things so I would read through this so that I would know what I had to fix up.

Donna: Do you think that you still know how to do all these things?

Melanie: I know how to do all those and I know how to make interesting sentences now. Instead of and, then, , I try to find a word instead of then like after, now or whenever.

Donna: And do you know what all of those mean?

Melanie: Ya,

Donna: Do you use this same kind of folder system in Grade 5?

Which kind of folder do you like best?

The Writing Folder had several parts to it including:

MY IDEAS FOR WRITING

MY PERSONAL DOOZERS ( She had nothing written in this section)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR (Very little was written here either except for the fact that she had not published yet.)

EDITING SKILLS

1. Capitals - Proper nouns and at beginning of sentences.
2. Periods, questions marks
3. Quotation marks for punctuation

Melanie: This one (from Grade 4) because you have lots of room for putting your stories, like the finished copies and the stuff that needed editing and then if you had time you could put it in the box with the stuff that needed typing.

Donna: (I refer to the words, environmental and species, that are written on the front of the folder) These must be the words that you needed to know?

Melanie: They're words that friends needed to know and when I looked them up in the dictionary I was right.

Donna: Good. So you must be quite a good speller, are you?

Melanie: I love spelling.

Donna: But you don't have spelling exercises do you?

Melanie: We used to but Mrs. Thompson doesn't give us the exercises and barely ever gives us a spelling test. And on this spelling test that we just had, there were 40 words and I got one wrong.

Donna: And what was it?

Melanie: It was forecast and I forgot to put the e.

Donna: Do you think that you're just as good a speller without a spelling book?

Melanie: Yah, (and then we start to look at a book that has an Easter story except the illustrations have not been finished. ) I was thinking of coloring them or finishing the illustrations but I don't draw like I used to but it wouldn't be the same and you could tell that I just drew later.

Donna: I suppose that even if you wrote later that someone would be able to tell?

Melanie: Oh, yah.

Donna: How do you think you'll write next year?

Melanie: Handwriting.

Donna: In terms of style, do you think that your style will change?

Melanie: Yah, Our friends that we know from church, keep a book that they have people write in when they come over to church. They keep a book that has your signature in and when you come again, you can look and see how funny your writing used to be.

Donna: This is your special story that Mrs. Sawyer thought you should have published? Would you still like to have it sent away for publication?

Donna: It looks like you put a lot of work into it . . . dedicated to your parents.

Melanie: Oh, I really enjoyed doing it.

Donna: Did you? Why?

Melanie: I liked doing the illustrations, there were lots of parts I like, and I liked coloring titles, and decorating them when I was in grade 3 and I still do.

Donna: This is an interesting note here.

DEAR MINNIE,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXIXXLIIIOXXVXXEXXX

XXYXXOXXUXXXXXXXXXX

- - - - - !

Melanie: Ya, this is the code that me and my sister use for each other. But my brother has figured it out already.

Donna: What is the code?

Melanie: You're supposed to figure it out later in the story. You're supposed to cross out the X's and then you get the word. "MINNIE I LOVE YOU".

Donna: Would you say that this was one of the best stories that was written in your classroom last year?

Melanie: Yes, because, everybody liked it in my classroom and I got to read it at the end of the year. It wasn't like the author's fair, I got to sit on the table with one of my classmates, who was going to read one of his stories. It was a good story. The spotlight was on you in the music room and you got to read your story.

Melanie: Kevin's story was too long. He had written a story on Knights and he's still writing about knights. He's doing a series on it.

Donna: So he's an expert in knights?

Melanie: Oh yes.

Donna: What would you say that you're an expert on?

Melanie: Spelling, reading.

Donna: Any special area that you like to write about?

Melanie: Well, I like to write about things that happen to me like the Valentine's story. Like Valentine's was coming up so I decided to write a Valentine's story like some other kids were. I decided to give it a try because I had

never done a story about Valentine's, Christmas or Thanksgiving so I decided to try it out.

Donna: I haven't read it all but I will talk to you after I have read it.

Melanie: It's interesting because right at the end, it gets exciting.

Donna: How did you make it exciting at the end?

Melanie: Well, I decided to put some humour in it right at the end. That's the joke, it goes:

"Minnie circled the table on both questions. The next day Minnie did not see any notes, so she knew that everything was settled. After school George came up to Minnie and said, 'I've got a joke for you.'"

"Okay," said Minnie, "go ahead."

"Okay. What are the names of two people standing here that love each other?"

Minnie thought for a second. Then she said with a little bit of laughter and a smile, "You phoney baloney!"

Donna: Was George trying to say that he loved Minnie?

Melanie: Yah and she was trying to say that she loved him.

Melanie: But she was sort of embarrassed by the joke, cause her friend was there.

Donna: Yesterday you were working on Chapter 4. Would you like to tell me about it.

Melanie: I decided that they needed to get to know each other better before I put in Chapter 5 which is the wedding plans.

And I was deciding to put in that they kissed or something but, the kids would laugh and stuff so I decided not to put it in. So they had to get into conversation or something like that just to say that they're really good friends and they want to get married.

Donna: Then, in a sense, are you writing for your audience?

Melanie: Yah, cause I didn't want to put that they kissed because, if I did then they would freak! Some people put that in and I enjoy reading like my story here. I read the story "Voyage" and it had a little bit of mush and that's okay.

Donna: And if it were being read by someone who didn't know you, then it wouldn't bother you to put in what they had kissed?

Melanie: No.

Donna: How do you know about these things?

Melanie: Well, I read a lot of books, My Mom reads books and if I've finished a book, I go up to my Mom and say: "Have you finished any books that are any good?" And she goes, "Ya, Here's one that you might want to try. Most of the books that she's read, I find pretty interesting. One that Lana read, she said "Here's the mushy part" and I read it and it was pretty good so I decided to read it from the beginning.

Donna: So you're almost finished chapter 4?

Melanie: Yah, they just have to go out for lunch and then back to Danny's house and then I have to decide what they have to do to get to know each other. I might put in: "A month later they decide to get married." It will be easier.

Donna: What are you going to do when your story is finished?

Melanie: Well, Melissa wanted to read my story and she asked if I was going to publish it and I said yes.

**APPENDIX F**

**GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW WITH MONICA HUGHES**

### Interview Questions for Monica Hughes

I'm interested in the composing processes of good writers at the upper elementary school level. In my research, I have observed and interviewed three children to provide me with information about their composing processes.

Additionally, I researched the composing processes of four accomplished writers: Eudora Welty, Margaret Laurence, John Steinbeck, and yourself. I hope to make comparisons between the two groups of writers.

Ultimately, I hope that a better understanding of the composing processes of both groups will help to improve instruction in writing in our schools.

1. You indicated that when you write you use a Bic pen and lined looseleaf paper. Can you describe your ritual of writing? Has this changed since you started writing? Did you have any kind of writing ritual like this when you were a child?
2. You indicated that you dreamed of being a writer when you were about 10. What were your aspirations as a beginning writer?
3. In your interview with Margaret Hunsberger, you mention that your childhood was in "a secure world that appeared to be going on forever." Do you think that such a world contributed to your becoming a writer? In what ways?
4. Do you recall when as a child, whether writing was difficult i.e. something that you really worked at or whether it was quite easy, something that was as expressive as speech might have been?
5. What would you say were the major effects of your schooling on your writing today?
6. John Steinbeck recalls the books that he read as a child as things that he experienced rather than books that he read. You have made reference to many books that you have read as being influences. Did you feel like John Steinbeck in this regard?
7. You have mentioned questions and situations as 'jumping off' points for your novels. Do these questions stay in your mind for quite a long time before you begin writing? Is it after the questions are formulated that you begin to research them or are they somewhat tied together?

8. You have talked about the making of maps, particularly in writing science fiction. Could you tell me more about how they are used in your writing?

9. How does the subconscious take over when you are writing?

10. You describe Blaine's Way as being your husband's story. Is it a story that he told orally? What license did you take in telling the story? Is it his character? I felt so sad for him with his weak parents and their inability to give of themselves.

11. In My Name is Paula Popowich, I think that you have dealt with the themes of living in Edmonton, i.e. the dilemma of recognizing your own cultural backgrounds or denying them. You have also highlighted the inability for cultural groups to accept one another, like in the German/Ukrainian lack of acceptance. It reminded me of some of the stories that my mother-in-law told me about when she was a girl growing up in Edmonton. Was this your intent or was this something that I drew into the story?

12. Do you think that your novels have a strong connection with place?

13. In your interview with Margaret Hunsberger, you mentioned that British editors accept your books with little editing or change? Is that different with Canadian and American editors? How do you feel about this?

14. On March 24, at the Henry Kreisel lecture, you made reference to the need for international workshops like Music Master classes. What do you mean by this? What kinds of focus would the workshops need? Do you think that our school children could benefit from such approaches?

Please feel free to comment about anything regarding the composing process that you think is significant but not yet mentioned.



Appendices G to J were deleted  
because of poor reproductive quality.

Appendix G contains samples of writing from the accomplished  
writers. Appendix H contains samples of Stacey's writing,  
Appendix I contains samples of Milan's writing, and  
Appendix J contains samples of Melanie's writing.