Analysis of stance and understanding in sixth graders' written responses to literature in different instructional settings.

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ANALYSIS OF STANCE AND UNDERSTANDING IN SIXTH GRADERS' WRITTEN RESPONSES TO LITERATURE IN DIFFERENT INSTRUCTIONAL SETTINGS

by

Katherine Stearns

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research through the Faculty of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2000
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between literature instruction and students’ written responses to literature. One hundred and ninety-nine students from ten grade six classrooms were asked to write free written responses to a short piece of realistic fiction. Their teachers completed the Literature Instruction Profile and were assigned a score placing them in either a “high score” or “low score” category. Student responses were then analysed for stance and level of understanding. Crosstabs testing indicated that significant relationships existed between student stance, level of understanding and teachers’ instructional styles. The aesthetic stance focusing on the reader’s personal experience with the text was associated with higher levels of understanding. Moreover, a more aesthetic instructional style was linked with aesthetic response stance and higher levels of understanding for students. While student response stance and understanding were not found to be associated with gender or the use of artistic expression, longer student responses were shown to be related to aesthetic response stance and higher levels of understanding.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. General Statement of the Problem

Over the past two decades literature instruction at the junior level has undergone a significant shift in focus. With the advent of the whole language movement, many practitioners in the field of language arts have moved away from a traditional, fact-based approach to literature instruction toward a more holistic, reader-centred teaching style. The central feature in this new approach to literature study is the use of literature response techniques, both oral and written, which involve every reader in the process of personal meaning-making.

Based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1985, 1991), response-based instruction underlines the importance of individual experience in the study of literature and de-emphasizes the role of the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge. Within the reader-centred classroom student response to literature depends largely on the reader's purpose for reading. According to the transactional theory, students adopt either an efferent stance which focuses their attention on the factual information of the text or an aesthetic stance which engages them in an emotional, lived-through experience. Every reading event is unique and falls somewhere along the efferent to aesthetic continuum.

Recent research in the field of literature instruction has provided evidence that many teachers mirror Rosenblatt's transactional structure in their own classrooms. Teachers adopting a more text-centred approach to literature instruction encourage
factual interpretation of literature and depend heavily on the use of conventional literary analyses (plot, setting, characters, etc.). This instructional style slants more toward the efferent pole of Rosenblatt's spectrum. Conversely, teachers who support diverse interpretations of literature and real-life connections in the reading process lean more toward the aesthetic pole.

While these differences in literature instruction have been well documented, little empirical research has been conducted to investigate the impact of teaching style on student response to literature. Few studies have addressed the relationship between teacher stance in the instruction of literature and student stance in written and oral responses. Of the research studies that exist on this topic, the majority investigate the responses of secondary level students or adults (Many, 1991).

The purpose of this study is to explore the link between teaching style and written literature response in junior classrooms. The investigation will examine different instructional contexts as they affect the stance and level of personal understanding attained by sixth grade students in their free written responses to a short piece of realistic fiction.

B. Definition of Terms

For the purpose of clarity the following terms have been defined:

Aesthetic literature instruction (based on a score of 131 or higher on the Literature Instruction Profile): characteristics of the aesthetic literature classrooms used in this study include:

- availability of trade books on a variety of genres;
• student access to listening centres, art supplies and drama props;
• individual choice in the selection of literature;
• use of open-ended assignments based on interpretation and reflection;
• focus on small group inquiry sessions and literature conferences;
• emphasis on exploration and group problem solving;
• high degree of student control in literature study/low degree of teacher control in literature study.

**Aesthetic stance:** a focus on the personal, experiential meaning that is evoked by a text.

**Efferent literature instruction** (based on a score of 130 or lower on the *Literature Instruction Profile*): characteristics of the efferent literature classrooms used in this study include:

• use of basals/anthologies/commercial reading programs;
• assignment of specific tasks by the teacher;
• use of teacher-selected texts by the full class;
• individual-focused literature assignments;
• emphasis on factual and literal information;
• assignment of questions with right or wrong answers;
• focus on written assignments;
• high degree of teacher control in literature study/low degree of student control in literature study.

**Efferent stance:** a focus on the factual information that can be gleaned from a text.

**Junior level:** grade four to grade six.
Literature response: individual interpretation of a text that occurs during and after reading. Literature response can take the form of personal reflection, discussion with others, written response, artistic interpretation or any other form of personal reaction. For the purposes of this study literature response will refer to students' written responses.

Literary transaction: the convergence of reader and text which brings the literary experience into existence for the reader.

Mixed efferent/aesthetic stance: a focus on both the factual information gained from reading a text and the personal experiential meaning resulting from the reading.

Personal understanding: the degree to which a reader assimilates the text to create personal meaning. This degree can range from literal understanding of the facts to more abstract interpretations of the text. In this study personal understanding will be measured by An Instrument for Rating a Reader's Level of Understanding (Many, 1991).

Reader stance: the reader's purpose for reading a text or the focus of attention taken by the reader when evoking a text. In this study reader stance will be measured by An Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum (Many, 1991).

C. Significance of the Study

In the past twenty years numerous studies have addressed the issue of cognitive development as it relates to children's responses to literature (Applebee, 1978; Culinan et al., 1983; Lehr, 1988; Many 1991). While these analyses provide important information about how children's responses change over time, they do not present a full picture of the factors that impact literature response.
The purpose of this study is to provide a broader perspective on how literature is best taught by teachers and learned by students. Information from this study will be useful in considering the factors associated with high levels of student understanding in aesthetic and efferent literature classrooms. An analysis of instructional factors including teacher philosophy, the role of the student, learning activities, settings and materials will provide teachers with greater insight into how to organize and orchestrate literature study. The results of the study will also offer curriculum consultants and administrators some insight into the kinds of professional development activities that would be useful for junior level language arts teachers.

Most important, this study will provide practitioners with much needed empirical data on the relationship between teaching style and student response to literature. It is hoped that the results generated by this study will fill some of the gaps in literature response research and add to the growing body of work on this topic.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory

Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory (1978) is probably the most widely read and debated model of reader response. Although her theory saw its genesis in her earliest book, Literature as Exploration (1938/83), the transactional theory was only fully articulated in her critical work, The Reader, the Text, the Poem, which was published in 1978.

Rosenblatt’s transactional theory outlined a dynamic transaction between the reader and the text which resulted in a unique reading experience for each individual reader. Through a complex and recursive process of melding textual details with past reading and life experiences, the reader evoked a personal meaning from the text. In this way the literary work ceased to exist as an object or entity separate from its author or reader. Rather, it became something infinitely more rich than the components of its parts in the creation of a one-of-a-kind literary “poem” or experience. In the words of Rosenblatt (1985), “the reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader and a particular text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (p. 36).

Rosenblatt suggested that her transactional theory could be applied to any reading experience with any text from a novel or play to a science text or a newspaper. The difference in the reading experience depended, she argued, on the stance adopted by the reader. In taking an efferent stance, the reader’s attention was focussed on the factual
material of the text to be retained for future reference. This was the case when textual information was acquired from such sources as medicine labels, recipes or text books, for example. These kinds of literature transactions, Rosenblatt (1985) dubbed “instrumental readings” (p. 37).

Conversely, an aesthetic stance centred the reader’s attention on the organic, lived-through experience of the reading act. In such a transaction the reader attended more to the qualitative overtones of the transaction including the ideas, images, situations and characters evoked by the text. For this reason, the aesthetic stance depended more on the reader’s past linguistic, literary and life experiences. Aesthetic readings, Rosenblatt suggested, involved the reader in a back-and-forth movement between attention to the words and waves of recalled past experiences brought to mind by the text. In an aesthetic transaction, the literary work seemed to “happen” for the reader.

Within Rosenblatt’s transactional theory all reading experiences fell somewhere along this efferent-aesthetic continuum. An interest in factual details and information reflected a more efferent stance while attention to the personal emotions and images evoked by a text indicated a more aesthetic stance. Any reading experience could lean more toward one pole or the other or balance the two stances in a mixed efferent/aesthetic approach.

Central to Rosenblatt’s transactional theory was an interest in literature instruction. The rejection of the notion of a single and fixed meaning for literary texts suggested a need to reevaluate the classroom teaching of literature. Where teachers had
formerly acted as "curriculum clerks" (DeLawter, 1992) or "master explicators" of meaning (Beach, 1993), the transactional model pointed them in an altogether different direction. Instead of transmitting fixed literary interpretations to their students, it was the new role of teachers to help students reflect on their personal experiences with texts, share their ideas with peers and reinforce their understandings and insights.

Rosenblatt's primary criticism of traditional literature instruction was its focal concern with low-level, efferent responses. Providing correct answers to comprehension questions or regurgitating story facts did not indicate that students were reaching high levels of understanding. Unfortunately, Rosenblatt noted that most literature instructors adopted this information-focused, right answer/wrong answer kind of approach.

Although Rosenblatt first published her work, Literature as Exploration, in the late 1930s, it received little attention until the 1960s when her ideas began to circulate among scholars interested in literature response. The reason for this lag of interest in Rosenblatt's ideas has been attributed to her focus on the research of American as opposed to European thinkers and her difficulty in accessing male-dominated academic circles which were unreceptive to her emotion-centred approach to reading (Allen, 1991). With the clear articulation of her transactional theory in 1978, however, a new school of thought in literary criticism began to develop.

While it took three decades for Rosenblatt's work to reach a wider academic audience, her transactional theory became the impetus behind a wave of empirical research studies which further shaped reader-response theory and classroom practice in the 1980s and 1990s.
B. **Reader-Response Research**

**Cognitive Development**

Early research in literature response focussed primarily on how children responded to literature across different age and grade levels. These studies were conducted in an effort to explain how children's simple reflections about a text evolved into more complex and mature responses.

Applebee's (1978) landmark study examined the literature responses of 6, 9, 13 and 17-year-old children with reference to their cognitive development. The findings of this study provided strong evidence for a developmental model of literature response.

The data collected from 6 and 9-year-olds indicated that they responded on a literal level to the literature they read. Most of these students focussed on story synopses, retelling their favourite parts or providing a patterning of events. In contrast, 13 and 17-year-olds related stories to issues in their own lives and often provided generalizations that were more universal in scope. A string of studies followed that supported these findings (Beach & Wendler, 1987; Bunbury, 1985; Cullinan, Harwood & Galda, 1983; Hunt & Vipond, 1985, 1986; Lehr, 1988, Parnell 1984; Svensson 1985).

In their study of fourth, sixth and eighth graders' responses to two novels, Cullinan, Hawood and Galda (1983) concluded that a significant relationship existed between the age of the reader and the complexity of the response. While fourth graders were most likely to retell the story, sixth graders addressed some symbolic meanings and themes in their responses. Eighth graders were able to draw multiple meanings from the text and relate the story to personal events in their own lives.
Similarly, Beach and Wendler (1987), Bunbury (1985), Lehr (1988) and Svensson (1985) found a link between cognitive development and response. These studies reflected a linear trend in student responses to literature that moved from simple retellings in the case of young children to more in-depth literary analyses in adolescents. Adolescents were more likely than their younger counterparts to make inferences, identify themes and draw more abstract generalizations about the texts they read. Hunt and Vipond (1985, 1986) argued that prior to high school few readers had the capacity to critically interpret text as they lacked the "point-driven" orientation that allowed more mature readers to reach higher levels of literary understanding.

Hansson (1985) critiqued these studies relating literature response to cognitive development. He argued that the research failed to distinguish between the quality of the recorded responses and the readers' abilities to adequately express their true responses in verbal or written form. Bruner (1986) also questioned the validity of such studies when he suggested that the recorded differences in students' responses may have been more a product of their unique social and cultural experiences than their different ages or levels of cognitive development.

Less Proficient Readers

Another reader-related factor found to impact literature response was the proficiency of the reader. Based on the findings of a number of empirical studies, some researchers argued that response-based instruction of literature was inappropriate for less able readers. Garrison and Hynds (1991) found that poor readers tended to make irrelevant personal associations with texts that led them away from the real meaning.
Once these students encountered such confusion in their reading they disengaged from the text entirely. Moreover, because less proficient readers focussed most of their attention on decoding a text, they were rarely able to move beyond a literal interpretation (Purcell-Gates, 1991). They were reluctant to participate in literature discussions and felt uncomfortable sharing their personal interpretations of text with their peers (Wollman-Bonilla, 1994). For all of these reasons, many teachers took the path of least resistance with less able readers, providing them with alternative literature instruction which focussed mainly on the skills-based transmission model of learning (Kirk, 1994).

Another set of studies, however, provided a different perspective on literature response instruction with less proficient readers. By organizing less intimidating, small group literature discussions and providing students with repeated experiences with the same text, Nielson (1993) found that even poor readers could benefit from response-based literature instruction. Immersion in literature, peer-led discussions and response-based writing activities helped less able readers to develop more in-depth interpretations of text (Goatley, Brock & Raphael, 1995) and to move from avoidance of all reading tasks to almost total engagement with texts over time (Gerla, 1996).

In their multi-grade qualitative study Kelly, Farnan and Richardson (1996) found that even readers identified as learning disabled were able to move beyond simple retellings of literature to evaluate the text, substantiate their own ideas and relate literature to experiences in their own lives. That is, when students were freed from the constraint of having to come up with the "right" answer, they clearly moved beyond the simple decoding of words to exhibit the beginnings of critical textual analysis.
The Role of the Text

While the qualities of individual readers may have an impact on response, so too, might the texts presented to the reader. According to Rosenblatt (1938/83, 1991) the text is the initial blueprint from which develops a dialogic relationship between the text and the reader. The literature chosen by the reader is crucial in this relationship as it is through the text that the reader weaves a web of "ideas, sensations, feelings and images" (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 40). Texts help readers to reach higher levels of understanding by allowing them to build on their existing knowledge through intertextual links with previously read texts (Lehr, 1988; Beach & Hynds, 1990) or to create new knowledge through their "envisionments" while reading (Langer, 1990a, 1990b).

Pseudo-Literature v. Real Literature

Dixon (1989) argued that works of genuine literary quality including poetry, novels and plays evoked richer and more meaningful experiences than did works of "pseudo-literature" (Richards, 1929) such as romance novels and formula-based mystery stories. These works, he argued, conveyed no real literary experience but rather depended on preexisting stereotypes in the reader's mind. Squire (1994) contended that too many response-based literature programs were not using quality texts and, therefore, confused any kind of reading or response with genuine literary experience.

While recognizing the value of authentic literary texts, Farrell (1989) criticized literature-based programs that forced children to confront literary classics that were written in archaic language and did not reflect the personal realities of young readers. Such reading, he argued, did not contribute to a child's literary growth and should be left
to more mature students with genuine interest in the text. Even Langer (1992), one of the
greatest proponents of literature response, warned that children taught to read with only
literary texts would become disabled comprehenders of other kinds of texts.

Text and Literature Response

While the debate over the use of basal readers or literature in the classroom
continues within some literary circles, a number of research studies have illustrated the
benefits of using full-length stories over abridged basals with contrived and simplistic
language.

A study conducted by Bader, Veatch and Eldrige (1987) of 27 second grade
classrooms found that children responding to full-length literature selections had
significantly higher comprehension scores and higher levels of interest in reading than
did their counterparts using basal readers. Similarly, Dressel's (1990) study of 48 fifth
graders found that students listening to and discussing higher quality literature achieved
higher scores on their own creative writing in terms of both overall literary quality and
genre development than did students responding to lower quality literature. While
students in a study by Robbins and Thompson (1990) showed only a slight gain in their
reading achievement after switching from a basal to a literature-based reading program,
their attitudes toward reading were significantly better at the end of the study.

In recognition of such results Walmsley and Walp (1990) endorsed the use of a
wide variety of reading materials in the classroom with a focus on high quality, full-
length literature. By introducing students to a wide variety of literature, creating
literature response centres within the classroom and providing students with ample time
for independent reading and writing, Morrow (1992) found that readers made significant gains in their achievement levels.

Dressel (1990) defined high quality literature as "that body of writing which produces an aesthetic experience by illuminating the human condition through the elements of plot, character, setting, style and point of view" (p. 398). Where basalss tended to emphasize isolated letter sounds or language patterns to encourage the development of specific reading skills, quality children's literature used more natural, uncontrolled language and speech patterns that were familiar to children (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989).

Authentic, full-length literature was also found to be richer in vocabulary, sentence structure and literary form than basal texts which tended to use abbreviated stories or selections with contrived language or themes. The aesthetic reading event was lost, according to Langer (1992) when formulaic and skills-oriented basals were used in the place of quality children's literature.

The Role of the Environment

Even with the advent of literature response theory and increased interest in how readers make sense of text, literature instruction remains firmly rooted in the text-based tradition with a focus on fixed and literal meaning. More than 80% of the questions asked by literature teachers are information-focussed (Purves, 1989; Applebee, 1993) and almost all assessment of literature achievement depends on students being able to produce the "right" answer to factual comprehension questions (Brody, De Milo & Purves, 1989). Rarely are students being asked to engage in higher level critical thinking.
of personal interpretations of the texts they read.

Of the 27 literature teachers evaluated by Zarillo and Cox (1992) only one teacher consistently focussed readers' attention on their personal, aesthetic experience of the story. Most other teachers expected students to provide an afferent, informational interpretation of the text or a response that mixed factual points with personal feelings. Langer (1990b) even suggested that there had been no systematic improvement in literature instruction over the past 25 years:

"There has been virtually . . . no change in objectives that guide program development, no changes in the materials that guide instruction and no rethinking of what counts as success in literature classes either for teachers or for students." (p. 812)

**Instructional Context and Modes of Response**

As suggested by Smagorinsky and Smith (1992), literary understanding requires more than just a general knowledge of how to read a text. A student's insight into literature does not develop within a vacuum but rather is nourished and supported by teachers and peers (Probst, 1988; Travers, 1984). In their dealings with literature, students follow the response formats and language modelled by their teachers (Hickman, 1981; Kiefer, 1983) and quickly learn to assess instructors' expectations and conform to them.

A variety of studies on classroom literature instruction suggest that different instructional approaches elicit different kinds of responses from students (Many, Gerla,
Wiseman & Ellis, 1995; Many, Wiseman & Altieri, 1996; McMahon, 1992; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). For example, students provided with instruction that allowed them to become substantively engaged with literature including small group work, a focus on personal meaning-making and reciprocity of discussion between teachers and students showed greater academic achievement in literature classes than did those students who were only procedurally engaged with literature through full class discussion, fact-based questioning and a teacher controlled agenda (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1991).

Instructional style was also found to influence student response to literature in McMahon’s (1992) study. Students encouraged to choose topics of interest to them and to respond in ways that were personally meaningful were able to explore varied and complex themes. In contrast, students instructed to focus on reading skills and strategies produced responses that were more text-based and that lacked originality.

In contrast, however, Many, Gerla, Wiseman and Ellis (1995) found that students provided with more aesthetic, experiential literature instruction were able to engage more personally with texts than were students taught to critique texts in a more traditional, fact-based way. A follow-up study by Many, Wiseman and Altieri (1996) revealed that students receiving guidance and support from a teacher in literature discussions consistently wrote higher quality literature responses than did those students involved in student-only discussion groups.

In addition to more general studies of literature instruction such as those mentioned above, a number of researchers have begun to look at the process of literature response in closer detail. Altieri (1995) discovered that students asked to provide
written, pictorial and oral responses to literature were able to attain higher levels of complexity in one mode of response over another. New interest in the relationship between written, oral and artistic response to literature and student achievement has been the impetus behind much reader-response research over the past decade.

Written Responses to Literature

While a number of studies have found a positive relationship between the amount of independent reading children do and their achievement in school (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980), little research existed before the 1990s on the effects of writing activities on students' understanding of literary texts. While students' writing about literature had always been used by teachers as an evaluative tool in assigning grades, literary critics and researchers alike began to argue that the very act of writing about a text might provide students with a deeper literary understanding (Bruner & Olson, 1978; Odell, 1980).

A quantitative study by Marshall (1987) investigated the effects of different writing tasks on 80 eleventh-grade literature students. Marshall found that students engaged in open-ended, personal and analytical writing assignments achieved higher understanding scores than did students asked to write restricted, short-answer responses. In fact, students who engaged in no writing activity at all received test scores similar to the group of students who engaged in the restricted, short-answer writing tasks. Another study by Stotsky (1983) also indicated that the process of writing about a text in a personally meaningful way helped some students improve their reading comprehension scores.
A number of more recent studies have focussed attention on the use of literature response logs/journals in supporting literary understanding. These literature logs or journals serve as springboards for readers to record their observations, unanswered questions and thoughts about other pieces of literature (Beach, 1997). Martinez, Roser, Hoffman and Battle (1992) found that literature response logs helped students move from simplistic retellings of a story to more personal interpretive literary responses. Similarly, Hancock's (1993) study of sixth grade students' literature response journals underlined how complex and unique their responses to literature were when they were allowed to respond freely to the text throughout the reading process.

While open-ended response journaling has been shown to enhance student interaction with literature, some students still require teacher support and guidance in the process. Even when children were asked to respond freely to the text, Cox and Many (1992a) found that many repeatedly wrote a contrived 2-paragraph response outlining 1) what the story was about and 2) their favourite part. Hancock (1993) also noted that responding too frequently in their response logs actually interfered with students' engagement with a story causing them to lose interest in the text and the response process altogether.

**Literature Discussion Groups**

Another factor found to influence student response to literature was discussion. As asserted by Vygotsky (1986) literacy develops best through social interaction and dialogue with others. A poll of public school teachers (Applebee, 1993) indicated that 91% of educators reported literature discussions as the best way to foster student
understanding. Research conducted by Gambrell (1996) found that literature discussion promoted deeper understanding of texts, increased higher level thinking and improved communication skills. These findings were supported by studies of kindergarten children (Morrow, O'Connor & Smith, 1990), primary children (Many & Wiseman, 1992; Martinez & Roser, 1994; McGee, 1992), middle school students (Almasi, McKeown & Beck, 1996; Goatley, Brock & Raphael, 1995) and high school students (Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993).

Investigations of the impact of literature discussions have shown that the size of the discussion group is an important determinant of student success. While Guice (1995) found that both full class and small group discussions helped to enhance student responses to literature and promoted different interpretations of the text, other studies have indicated that smaller, more intimate literature discussions are more valuable to readers. Morrow, O'Connor and Smith (1990) found that children participating in small discussion groups were more engaged with the text and asked more questions than when in a full class setting. A qualitative study conducted by Dugan (1997) also showed that small literature discussion groups allowed students to assume more responsibility for their own reading, writing and talking and assisted them in developing a more aesthetic appreciation of the story.

Another factor found to influence the quality of literature discussion groups was the locus of control. In contrast with traditional literature instruction practices, a number of studies have shown that the most useful classroom discussions about literature are organized and facilitated by students. Almasi (1994) discovered that student-led literature
discussions used more complex and elaborate language, included higher level questioning and resolved more textual conflicts than did teacher-controlled literature discussions. Similarly, Worthy and Beck (1995) found that a reciprocal relationship existed between teacher control of literature discussions and student participation. That is, the more teachers tried to maintain control of the discussion the less likely students were to participate meaningfully.

Although research supports the use of student-led literature discussion groups, most classroom studies of literature instruction show that the teacher still controls the direction, pace and organization of literature discussions (Bruner, 1986; Marshall, Smagorinsky & Smith, 1995; Eeds & Wells, 1989). Moreover, the majority of classroom literature discussions still involve full-class, teacher-led questioning that requires students to provide short, factual answers about texts they have read (Cazden, 1988; Healy, 1990; Marshall, 1989).

Response Stance

When students respond to the literature they read, they do so from a specific stance that can reflect a position anywhere on the efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1938/83). Through a convergence of factors involving the reader, the text and the instructional environment students choose to focus their attention on their personal experience of the story or the information they gather from the text. Responses can reflect one of these "poles" or can fall anywhere along the spectrum between these two end points. The concept of aesthetic and efferent response has been reviewed and elaborated upon by many theoreticians and researchers when they refer to literal versus
symbolic responses (Svensson, 1985), informative versus literary responses (Langer, 1990), and point-driven versus story-driven responses (Vipond & Hunt, 1984).

Recent studies in literature response suggest that the stance adopted by the reader may have a significant impact on the quality of the reading experience. A number of researchers have noted that when asked to respond freely to literature, most readers adopted an aesthetic stance focusing their attention on human conditions, emotions and events that impact characters (Cox & Many, 1992b; Langer, 1990a; Many 1990, 1991; Rosenblatt, 1938/1983). Students asked to concentrate on the aesthetic elements of a story were also able to engage more fully with texts applying story events to their own lives and placing themselves in the characters' shoes (Cox & Many, 1992a; Many 1991).

A study of eighth graders conducted by Many (1990) found that students writing from an efferent, fact-based perspective focussed their written responses to literature primarily on literary elements (plot, setting, characters, etc.) and shallow critiques of the text. Conversely, students responding aesthetically showed higher level thinking skills in their abilities to hypothesize, extend the story events and reach more abstract generalizations about the story.

The importance of student stance was also underlined in a study by Many, Wiseman and Altieri (1996) investigating writing prompts. The researchers found that students prompted to write from either an efferent or aesthetic stance had difficulty moving away from that stance in their subsequent writing assignments. That is, students initially prompted to write from an efferent stance continued to respond to other texts from an information-focussed perspective even though not specifically requested to do
so. Similarly, students initially asked to respond aesthetically maintained their attention to aesthetic elements in their subsequent responses to different texts.

Stance and Level of Understanding

While studies investigating reader stance provided information on how readers responded to text, they did not provide insight into qualitative differences in readers' responses. As interest grew in the field of literature response a number of researchers began to explore the link between aesthetic/effe rent response stances and the different levels of understanding achieved by readers.

Early studies examining the link between stance and understanding found that students writing from a personal perspective were more likely to produce higher quality responses to literature. A study of college freshmen by Price (1986) found that readers prompted to respond from a more aesthetic stance produced more sophisticated responses to literature than did students expected to respond to more traditional prompts focussing their attention on literary analysis. Newell, Suszynski and Weingart (1989) also discovered that students concentrating on personal reflection in their literature essays achieved significantly higher levels of interpretation than did students writing more formal, text-centred literature essays.

A strong link between reader stance and level of understanding was subsequently established by a number of quantitative investigations. A study conducted by Many (1990) examined the stance and level of understanding achieved by 51 eighth graders asked to respond freely to three short stories. A significant relationship was found to exist between student stance and level of understanding with aesthetic responses
associated with higher levels of interpretation.

Research conducted with 130 students from grade four to grade eight produced similar results (Many, 1991). The free responses of the students to three short stories again indicated that students responding aesthetically to literature were able to reach higher levels of personal understanding than students responding in an efferent, fact-based manner. Moreover, the researcher noted that most efferent responses were trite and superficial in nature while aesthetic responses were found to be more complex and creative.

Rationale for the Study

In closing her paper “The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work” Rosenblatt (1985) underlined the need for more research on the differences between aesthetic and efferent reading at all levels. Rather than depending on traditional experimental designs involving the application of various “treatments” and the “testing” of participants, Rosenblatt emphasized the need for more content-analysis studies to provide a systemic understanding of how environmental factors influence the use of aesthetic or efferent response. More specifically she urged reader-response researchers to turn their attention to “the attitudes of the teacher, the classroom atmosphere, the selection of texts, and the procedures that will encourage students to participate freely and honestly – and ultimately, self-critically – in transactions with texts.” (p. 49). This study was designed to investigate some of these factors.

C. Research Question

The field of literature response is extremely broad in scope. To provide direction
for this study, the following primary research question was defined: Is there a relationship between teacher instruction of literature as measured by the Literature Instruction Profile and the stances and levels of understanding adopted by students in their written responses to literature? Additional demographic data including the length of students responses, the gender of the respondents and the use of artistic response were also examined in relation to student stance and level of understanding.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

A. **Subjects**

A convenience sample of ten intact grade six classrooms (including both teachers and students) was used for this study. The classrooms were selected from public schools in southwestern Ontario based on teacher interest. The participating schools were primarily from lower and middle class neighbourhoods of varied ethnic composition (Canadian, Chinese, Vietnamese, East Asian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European).

The ten teachers taking part in the study reflected a variety of educational and teaching backgrounds. All had teaching certificates and some had either completed or were in the process of completing Master of Education degrees. Their years of classroom teaching experience ranged from seven to thirty-three. Of the teachers taking part in this study, seven were female and three were male.

Like the teachers, the 199 student participants also came from diverse backgrounds. For a number of the students Canada was not their place of birth and English was not their first language. Participants came from a variety of home situations including two-parent, single-parent and foster-parent environments. Of the total student sample, 106 were female and 93 were male.

In order to ensure an accurate comparison of student responses across the ten different instructional settings, only data from participants reading and writing at grade level (as determined by the teacher) were used in the analysis. Also, only responses from grade six students born between January and December, 1986 were considered.
B. Instrumentation

The teachers participating in the study were asked to complete the *Literature Instruction Profile* (Appendix A). Using a Likert-type scale, this instrument measured teachers' practices and beliefs about literature instruction with particular reference to classroom materials, the role of the student, learning activities, evaluation procedures, classroom setting and teacher philosophy. The questions in the profile were devised to be scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with a response of 1 representing the lowest score and 5 representing the highest score. For the sake of variety, however, a number of questions were scored in the reverse (1=highest and 5=lowest). To facilitate the ranking of teacher responses, a *Scoring Key for the Literature Instruction Profile* was devised (Appendix B). A high score on the *Literature Instruction Profile* indicated a primarily aesthetic approach to the teaching of literature while a low score on the *Profile* reflected a more efferent approach to literature instruction.

The *Profile* was designed by the researcher based on Heald-Taylor's (1996) three paradigms of literature instruction. In addition to being examined by Heald-Taylor for evidence of content validity, the *Literature Instruction Profile* was pretested on a small group of teachers before being used in the study.

Student responses were rated for stance and understanding using two rating scales developed by Many (1991): *An Instrument for Rating a Reader's Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum* (Appendix C), and *An Instrument for Rating a Reader's Level of Understanding* (Appendix D).

*An Instrument for Rating a Reader's Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic
Continuum was developed based on Rosenblatt's (1938/1983) description of the efferent/aesthetic continuum and Corcoran's (1987) detailing of aesthetic response. Based on criteria outlined in the instrument, student responses were rated on a three-point scale to indicate: 1) a primarily efferent stance; 2) a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance; or 3) a primarily aesthetic stance.

An Instrument for Rating a Reader's Level of Understanding was used to determine the level of sophistication of student responses. This instrument was designed to reflect Applebee's (1978) levels of meaning and Ricoeur's (1976) interpretation theory which are considered foundational sources in the field of literature response. Using this instrument student responses were rated on a four-point scale to indicate level of understanding attained by the respondent from literal interpretation of the story (Level 1) to a more abstract application of story ideas to personal experience with society at large (Level 4). Both instruments were published for public use and examples of student responses at different stances and levels as recorded by Many (1991) are provided in Appendix E.

C. Procedures

Before the commencement of this study a number of procedural issues were addressed. Firstly, the instruments and procedures used in the study were approved by the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Education (Appendix F) and the Research and Review Committee of the participating school board (Appendix G). Secondly, letters outlining the main points of the research and requesting parental permission for child participation were distributed (Appendix H). Finally, all students were assured that their
responses would be kept confidential and that they were at liberty to withdraw at any point during the study.

The ten teachers taking part in the research were provided with the *Literature Instruction Profile* in advance of their data collection session to ensure ample time for reflection and response. The *Profiles* were collected on the day of the data collection and later scored by the researcher using the *Scoring Key for the Literature Instruction Profile*.

During one hour data collection sessions students from each of the ten classes were presented with the same piece of short realistic fiction to read. The story selected for the literature response task was *North Lay Freedom*, a chapter excerpted from the book *Underground to Canada*, written by Barbara Smucker (1978) (Appendix I). The story portrayed the lives and relationships of two slave girls living on a Mississippi cotton plantation in the mid-1800s. The piece was chosen for its attention to descriptive language, character development, interesting dialogue and its treatment of ethical issues.

After reading the text, the students were asked to respond to the open-ended prompt, "Please write anything you want about the story you just read." In a booklet provided students recorded their responses to the story. All students were given adequate time to read and respond to the text even if they exceeded the one-hour time slot allotted for response.

At the conclusion of the ten data collection sessions, student responses were randomly mixed and scored by the researcher using Many's (1991) *Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum* and *Instrument for*
Rating a Reader's Level of Understanding. Word counts were tallied for each response and the sex of the respondent was recorded. Indications of any illustrations/diagrams accompanying the written responses were also noted.

D. Reliability

The coding of all data was completed by the researcher. An independent rater trained in the use of each instrument scored a random sample of 25 per cent of the responses to check for reliability. Interrater reliability was established using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. For the holistic rating of stance the reliability was $r = .92$ and for the holistic rating of level of understanding, $r = .88$. 
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A. Literature Instruction Profile Scores

The ten teachers’ scores on the Literature Instruction Profile were divided into two categories: low level scores reflecting a more afferent teaching style (130 points or lower on the Literature Instruction Profile) and high level scores reflecting a more aesthetic teaching style (131 points or higher on the Literature Instruction Profile). The following chart shows the breakdown of the scores attained by the ten participating teachers in each of the categories of the Literature Instruction Profile (see Tables 1 & 2).

Table 1

Low Profile Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Student Role</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

High Profile Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Student Role</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the tallied results of low Profile scores and high Profile scores in the sub-categories of the Literature Instruction Profile shows a notable difference in the areas of Activities (34 points), Evaluation (28 points) and Setting (12 points). Little difference in the tallied results of the sub-categories for Materials (2 points), Student Role (1 point) or Philosophy (1 point) is evident. These figures suggest that high Profile scorers differed from their low scoring counterparts in the kinds of activities taking place in their classrooms, their approaches to student evaluation and the physical setup of their classrooms. However, the ten teachers were found to use similar materials for literature instruction and to assign similar roles to their students in the process of literature study. The scores also suggest that all ten teachers had a similar personal philosophy about literature and literature instruction.

B. Stance of Student Responses

Of the 199 pieces of student writing rated for stance the majority of students responded from an efferent stance (40.2%) or a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance (37.7%).
Only 22.1% of the students adopted a fully aesthetic stance in their written responses (see Table 3 & Figure 1). These figures suggest that the majority of student responses addressed the facts of the story (eg. character, plot, setting) or combined factual information with some personal reflection. Less than one quarter of the respondents focussed their attention on the personal emotional experience of the story in their written responses.

Table 3

Response Stance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANCE</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efferent</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Level of Understanding

Of the 199 student responses evaluated for level of understanding, the majority were rated at Level 2 (32.2%) or Level 3 (27.6%). Nearly one-quarter of the responses (23.6%) were rated at the lowest level of understanding (Level 1) and only 16.6% of the students attained the highest level of understanding (Level 4) on their written responses (see Table 4 & Figure 2). These percentages suggest that most students were able to recount the literal meaning of the story, interpret some story events or recall similarities between the text and their own lives. However, less than one quarter of the respondents
achieved the highest level of understanding which required them to look beyond themselves to reach abstract or generalized statements about the world around them.

Table 4

**Response Understanding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Understanding</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. **Stance and Level of Understanding**

A crosstabs procedure indicated that there was a significant difference in stance across the four different levels of understanding, chi-squared (6) = 95.57, p < .001 (see Table 5 & Figure 3). This difference is most striking at the lowest level of understanding (Level 1) where 91.5% of student responses were efferent in stance focussing mainly on the facts of the text. Conversely, only 6.1% of the students attaining the highest level of understanding (Level 4) adopted an efferent stance indicating that they chose a more personal, emotional reading experience. As the level of understanding increased, so too did the likelihood that the response was more aesthetic in nature.
Student Response Stance

Figure 1

- aesthetic (22.11%)
- efferent (40.20%)
- mixed (37.69%)

Student Understanding

Figure 2

- Level 1 (23.62%)
- Level 2 (32.16%)
- Level 3 (27.64%)
- Level 4 (16.58%)
Table 5

Response Stance and Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>STANCE OF RESPONSE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Count</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Stance and Literature Instruction Profile Score

A crosstabs procedure indicated that there was a significant difference in stance across the two categories of the teacher’s Literature Instruction Profile responses, chi-squared (2) = 20.52, p < .001 (see Table 6 & Figure 4). The majority of students from classrooms where the teachers received low Profile scores adopted an efferent stance in their responses (71.3%). The majority of the students from classrooms where the teachers received high scores on the Profile adopted an aesthetic stance (70.5%). Students who assumed a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance were equally represented in the
Stance and Understanding

Figure 3
low and high Profile scoring categories (low = 50.7%, high = 49.5%) That is, students in classrooms where a more fact-based approach to literature instruction was adopted by the teacher were more likely to produce fact-focused responses. Students in classrooms valuing the lived-through experience of literature were more likely to focus their attention on their personal feelings and reactions to the text.

Table 6

Response Stance and Literature Instruction Profile Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANCE</th>
<th>Low Score</th>
<th>High Score</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
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<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. Understanding and Literature Instruction Profile Score

A crosstabs procedure indicated that there was a significant difference in level of understanding across the two Literature Instruction Profile categories, chi-squared (3) = 8.68, p < .05 (see Table 7). Most striking is the relationship between low Profile scores
and low level responses. In classrooms where the teacher received a low score on the Literature Instruction Profile reflecting a more fact-based approach to literature instruction, 72.3% of the students attained the lowest level of understanding (Level 1) in their written responses. Only 27.7% of students from the high Profile score category responded at Level 1. The difference in level of understanding between high and low Profile score categories was less pronounced over the higher levels of understanding (Level 2 - Level 4) although higher Profile scores reflecting a more aesthetic approach to literature instruction were still related to higher levels of student understanding.

Table 7

Response Understanding and Literature Instruction Profile Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING</th>
<th>LITERATURE INSTRUCTION PROFILE SCORE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Low Score</td>
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<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>72.3%</td>
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<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Count</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.9%</td>
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<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>Level 4</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>45.5%</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
G. **Stance and Number of Words Written**

The relationship between response stance and number of words written by the respondents was examined using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis showed a significant difference between the stances adopted by the students and the number of words they wrote in their responses, F(2,196) = 9.47, p < .001. Post Hoc tests indicated significant differences in the number of words written between students who adopted an efferent stance and those who adopted a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance (see Table 8). A significant difference was also noted between students who assumed an efferent stance and those who assumed an aesthetic stance. No significant difference was noted in the mean number of words written between students adopting a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance and those assuming a purely aesthetic stance. In effect, students who adopted an efferent, fact-based stance in their responses wrote fewer words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Number of Words Written</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efferent</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>138.33</td>
<td>71.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>182.83</td>
<td>87.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>197.34</td>
<td>86.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. **Understanding and Number of Words Written**

The relationship between word count and level of understanding achieved by the student was examined using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis showed a significant
difference between the levels of understanding attained by the students and the number of words they included in their written responses $F(3,195) = 8.28, p < .001$. Multiple comparisons using Post Hoc tests indicated significant differences in the number of words written between Level 1 and Level 2; Level 1 and Level 3; Level 1 and Level 4; Level 2 and Level 3 and Level 2 and Level 4. No significant difference in number of words written was noted between the Level 3 and Level 4 (see Table 9). Thus, students achieving the two top levels of understanding (Level 3 and Level 4) wrote responses of similar lengths and wrote more extensively than students responding at the lower two levels, especially at Level 1.

Table 9

Response Understanding and Number of Words Written

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Mean Number of Words Written</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>124.60</td>
<td>68.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>162.02</td>
<td>73.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>193.24</td>
<td>99.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>200.24</td>
<td>71.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Stance and Gender

A crosstab procedure indicated that there was no significant difference between the stances adopted by boys and girls, chi-squared $(2) = 3.85, p > .05$. 
J. **Understanding and Gender**

A crosstabs procedure showed that there was no significant difference between the levels of understanding achieved by boys and girls, chi-squared (3) = 1.18, p > .05.

K. **Stance and Artistic Response**

A crosstabs procedure indicated that there was no significant difference between the stances adopted by those students who included some form of artistic response (drawing, diagram, flow chart, etc.) and those who did not, chi-squared (2) = 5.58, p > .05.

L. **Understanding and Artistic Response**

A crosstabs procedure indicated that there was no significant difference between the level of understanding attained by students who included some form of artistic response (drawing, diagram, flow chart, etc.) and those who did not, chi-squared (3) = 2.91, p > .05.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

A. Response Stances

The results of this study indicated that a high percentage of the 199 student participants (40.2%) adopted an efferent stance in their free written responses to the text presented by the researcher. While a similar proportion of students (37.7%) produced responses of a mixed efferent/aesthetic nature, less than one quarter of the respondents (22.1%) adopted a fully aesthetic stance in their responses. These results do not support the findings of Many (1990, 1991), Langer (1990a) and Cox and Many (1992b) that students are most likely to adopt an aesthetic stance in their free written responses to literature.

The fact that most students in this research study responded efferently to the literature selection they read may be a result of a number of factors. As noted above, students tend to adopt the stance promoted by their teachers (Hickman, 1981; Kiefer, 1983) and often have difficulty moving from one stance to another (Many, Wiseman & Altieri, 1996). Perhaps the students taking part in this study had received many previous years of efferent literature instruction and were most comfortable with this mode of reading and writing.

Alternately, the geographic area of the study may have influenced student responses. As the story of the "underground railway" is a popular one in southern Ontario, many students may have already been familiar with the ideas presented in the story. Instead of adopting an aesthetic stance to the selection, they may have been comparing their previously acquired knowledge about
slavery with the facts outlined in the story. This would account for the prevalence of efferent responses.

B. Level of Understanding

The majority of students taking part in this study showed fairly high levels of understanding with 32.2% scoring at Level 2 and 27.6% scoring at Level 3. These figures suggest that the majority of student participants were able to move beyond a restatement of the story events to include some form of critical evaluation of the text in their responses. These findings support the notion that even children are able to provide complex and thoughtful interpretations of text (Many, 1991; Many, Wiseman & Altieri, 1996).

The fact that only 16.6% of the student respondents achieved an understanding score of Level 4 suggests that the ability of a reader to draw abstract generalizations about life from a text may be related to his or her level of cognitive development (Cullinan, Harwood & Galda, 1983; Bunbury, 1985; Lehr, 1988). That is, more Level 4 responses may have been recorded had the subjects in the study been 8th graders, 11th graders or adults.

C. Stance and Level of Understanding

Crosstabs testing indicated that a significant relationship existed between student stances in their written responses and their level of understanding. Specifically, students writing from an aesthetic stance reached significantly higher levels of understanding in their responses than did those writing from an efferent stance. This result supports previous research that has linked reader stance with understanding (Many, 1990, 1991,

When students are able to focus their attention on the aesthetic literature experience rather than on regurgitating facts or analysing literary elements, it appears that they are more likely to find texts personally relevant and to engage in higher levels of interpretation. The following selections are examples of aesthetic responses that reflected high levels of student understanding:

I don’t believe in slavery. Colours don’t matter. Its what in your heart that counts. People could be red and still have a good heart. I just want everyone to be treated fairly. There is a saying “Treat people the way you want to be treated.”

Arug, Aesthetic Response, Level 4

This is probably not supposed to be on but it’s on racesime. I am one of those pepol you could call a activist. I am allso afcited by racesime. See my father is prigadis of african amirican pepol. I am so much aginst this that I went and lived with my mother. So I think that any story that show’s the terribel thing’s that the southern white man did is just great. Hopefully the littel slavery that is left is banished by that time I grow up.

Joshua, Aesthetic Response, Level 4

Being a slave must have ben harible. I mean being own like proprdy is so ckrul. I really don’t see why anybody would hate black people because of
there color. White or black no differents. If I was a slave back then I would rather them kill me than make me work for them. It must have been hard for all of thoughts peopl to get taken away from their family's, friends and their parents...One day a man came along a man who beleived he could do anything he wanted to do and become anything he wanted to be. The man's name was Marn Luther King. He beleived that some day he would have it so that in any part of the world everybody was equal. Then he had a saying. A saying that made people believe in themselfs and give them hop. The saying was “I have a Drame.” And now his drame has come true. Now it doesn't matter what colour you are, what laung you speeck or nashonality we are all the same.

Kantis, Aesthetic Response, Level 4

Conversely, students following formulaic approaches to literature response such as summarizing the story and reporting on a favourite part were less likely to apply themes or lessons from the text to their own experiences or to extend the text to make generalizations about the world around them. The following are examples of efferent responses that reflected low levels of understanding:

This story is about a girl Julilly who is a slave she makes friends with a girl named Liza. Every day they get beat and have to pick cotton. One day a Canadian comes to the house and both girls want to be free... At night the girls talk about Canada and they afraid to go there because it is so cold.
The slaves say that the Lord put the North Star up there so slaves could follow it to freedom. (List of characters followed)

Corey, Efferent Response, Level 1

What I liked about this story is that Lizia and Julilly are going to try to slip away from the slave place. What I disliked about the story is that Mr. Ross was making slavery in the U. S. of A. My favorit character is Lizia because she seemed to be braev. The era is between the 1880's to 1890's.

Jeff, Efferent Response, Level 1

While aesthetic responses were found to be linked to higher levels of understanding, a number of responses did show that students responding from an efferent stance were able to reach high levels of understanding. This suggests that some readers were able to remain personally detached from a text and still respond to it in a sophisticated and thoughtful manner. These high level, efferent responses may also reflect a “double reading” approach. That is, the readers may have first read the selections from an aesthetic stance and then gone back to review and consider the facts of the story in an efferent written response. The following are examples of efferent responses that reflected high levels of understanding:

This story is filled with things that happened in the past. In the past there were slaves just like in this story and people always thought about
freedom. White people used to torture black people just because the black people were different. I think that everyone should have equal rights and should be treated the same. Life was cruel in the past and still is today. There is still slavery. (List of characters and plot outline followed)

Maja, Efferent Response, Level 4

(Preceded by precis of story and favourite parts) I don’t think that there should have ever been any slaves but it happened. In Canada there was no slavery but colored people had everything separate for instance bathrooms, fountains and stores.

Kelly, Efferent Response, Level 4

Teachers need to be aware that encouraging students to adopt specific stances in their written responses to literature may impact the nature and the quality of student engagement with the text. The findings in this study underscore the need for teachers to direct student attention first to the aesthetic experience of the story and only then to the literary elements of the text (Many & Wiseman, 1992).

D. Literature Instruction Profile Score, Stance and Level of Understanding

Crosstabs testing indicated that a significant relationship existed between teachers’ scores on the Literature Instruction Profile and the stances adopted by their students. High profile scorers, who used a more reader-focussed instruction style, were more likely to have students that responded to the text in an aesthetic manner. Low
profile scorers who relied on a more traditional, fact-based approach to literature instruction, were more likely to have students that produced efferent responses.

Statistical testing also indicated the existence of a significant relationship between teachers' scores on the Literature Instruction Profile and the level of understanding achieved by their students. High Profile scorers were more likely to have students that achieved higher levels of understanding while low Profile scorers were more likely to have students that attained lower level responses. However, exceptions to these relationships were encountered. For example, some students of high Profile scoring teachers wrote simplistic, efferent responses while students of low Profile scoring teachers wrote more complex, aesthetic responses.

This evidence supports earlier studies that have linked literature instruction to student response (Hickman, 1981; Many, Gerla, Wiseman & Ellis, 1995; Many, Wiseman & Altieri, 1996; Many & Wiseman, 1992). In particular, the results of this study suggest that we need to look more closely at the areas that separated high Profile scorers from low Profile scorers. Instructional differences in the areas of literature activities, student evaluation and classroom setting may have some impact on the nature and quality of responses elicited by students.

**Literature Activities**

High Profile scorers indicated that they involved their students in such activities as peer literature conferences and oral discussions. Students were encouraged to engage in open-ended writing assignments such as literature response journals and were rarely asked to respond to questions that had either a "right" or "wrong" answer. In these classrooms teachers also
depended heavily on small group literature discussions and dramatizations of literature selections. These teachers also supported other modes of literature response including the use of art and music.

In contrast, low Profile scorers were more likely to assign students close-ended comprehension questions and exercises outlined in teaching guides or commercial reading programs. These teachers were less interested in creative or aesthetic literature activities such as artistic, dramatic or musical response.

**Evaluation**

High Profile scorers indicated that their student evaluation strategy centred around reader-focussed tasks. Assessment in these classrooms reflected students' personal reactions to and developing understandings of literature through the use of literature response journals, portfolios of personal writing and artistic assignments (art, drama, music). Low Profile scorers were more likely to depend on traditional means of evaluation including test scores, workbook exercises or generic teacher checklists.

**Setting**

High Profile scorers indicated that they were more likely to arrange their classrooms to facilitate small group inquiry sessions. In contrast, low Profile scorers frequently addressed the students during full-class literature instruction periods with students sitting in rows which allowed them to work independently on literature assignments.

**E. Length of Response, Stance and Level of Understanding**

Analyses of variance indicated that a significant relationship also existed between
the length of the response and the student's stance and level of understanding. Students who wrote longer responses were more likely to write from a mixed efferent/aesthetic stance or a purely aesthetic stance. These students were also more likely to reach higher levels of understanding (Level 3 or Level 4). Conversely, students who wrote shorter answers were most likely to write from an efferent stance and to achieve lower levels of understanding (Level 1 or Level 2).

These results support the findings of a number of researchers who have linked the process of free-writing to student understanding. (Kelly, Farnan & Richardson, 1996; Marshall, 1987; Newell, 1996). Where short answer questions and skills-based worksheets tended to interrupt the students' developing sense of the story, personal writing tasks allowed students to avoid the process of deconstructing the text into its component parts. Rather, students were able to draw upon their own "histories, values and sources of knowledge" (Marshall, p. 59) and respond to the text as a whole when engaged in ongoing interpretive writing tasks such as response journaling or written peer dialogues.

F. Gender, Stance and Level of Understanding

A number of studies have illustrated that males and females differ significantly in both the stance and complexity of their written responses to text (Bleich, 1986; Flynn, 1986; Hansen, 1986; Purves 1981). Flynn (1986) and Hansen (1986) found that males responded more to the literal and formal aspects of the text than did females who focussed more attention on the emotional issues and messages of the story. Bleich (1986) corroborated this finding in his own literature study which contrasted the
detached responses adopted by males with the more emotionally engaged reflections of female participants. Purves' (1981) research attributed female's higher literature achievement scores to their attention to hidden and thematic meanings in texts.

Crosstabs testing of the student responses in this study indicated that no significant relationship existed between the gender of the respondent and his or her stance or level of understanding. These results suggest that males and females in this study responded similarly to the text.

G. **Artistic Response, Stance and Level of Understanding**

While no existing empirical studies have investigated the possible link between artistic response and stance or understanding, a number of theoreticians and practitioners have underlined the importance of artistic expression in literature response. Siegel (1984) argued that the process of moving from a written response to an artistic response forced readers to represent their literary understanding in a different and possibly more complex format. Eisner (1985) also suggested that focusing on "aesthetic ways of knowing" such as artistic response to literature allowed readers to generate additional perspectives on the reading experience. In her classroom study of artistic response to literature, Whitin (1996) found that sketching provided students with opportunities for critical thinking that complemented the expressive dimension of written and oral language.

A crosstabs procedure indicated that no significant relationship existed in this study between the use of artistic response (drawings, diagrams, flow charts, etc.) and the stance or understanding level of the students' responses. Nevertheless, many pictures and diagrams included with the students' writing were reflective, original and rich in detail.

The symbols appended to Jelena's written response (Figure 6), for example, reflected
her own set of beliefs including the importance of treating all people equally. She used these symbols to emphasize the ideas she included in her written response: “I think that this story can spread a message to all of us who read it.” In addition to her commentary on the story, her illustration added visual impact to her ideas.

Similarly, Julie included a detailed and expressive picture of the two main characters in the slave cabin (Figure 7). Her artistic depiction of this scene from the story clearly illustrated how she visualized the characters and the setting. Particularly interesting is her sketch of Julilly crouched in the corner with a look of despair in her eyes. Julie praised the story which she claimed made her “see and feel and experience what it was like to be in that time and place.”

H. Limitations of the Study

As with any research, the nature of this study imposes limitations on the validity and reliability of the results. Because the investigation was causal-comparative in design, it lacked the strength offered by randomization and manipulation of the independent variable. In this case the groups being studied were already established in the form of existing classrooms and the subjects had already been exposed to the independent variable of teaching style.

Since teachers were selected based on their responses to the Literature Instruction Profile, it is important to note the limitations imposed by the instrument. It is possible that teachers completing the Profile may not have been completely truthful in their responses regarding their own teaching practices. As there is no way to enforce honesty, the responses provided by the teachers were used as they were submitted to the researcher. Any misrepresentation in these responses could limit the generalizability of the results of the study.
Figure 6

- **No slaves**
- **No whipping**
- **Free people**
- **All people treated equally**
- **No!!! Slave owners!! Yes Canada!! No!!! No!!! No!!!**

Figure 7

 Ji-li-ly looking at Li-ja while she is not asleep.
Other factors that may have influenced the results of this study were the age of the subjects and their different reading abilities. An attempt to control both of these factors was made by using only the responses of students reading at grade level and by having students indicate their exact ages on their written responses. Any subjects that differed significantly in age from the rest of the respondents were not included in the analysis.

However, the different backgrounds and beliefs of the respondents may also have influenced their responses to the literature selection presented, especially given its focus on racial tension. A more in-depth study of the personal beliefs and attitudes of the respondents may have allowed for a more accurate analysis of their responses.

The text selected for this study may also have affected subject response. Not all subjects would have had the same level of interest in the text presented in this study and this could have influenced their written responses. Although it was not practical within the scope of this research, it would have been ideal to base the analysis on subject responses to a wide range of different literature, perhaps 5 different stories. In this way the responses would have been more accurate reflections of subjects' general stance and level of understanding.

This study was also limited by the nature of the data collected. Since subjects necessarily varied in their writing abilities, it is likely that some students may not have been able to communicate their exact feelings in written form. For this reason, sixth grade subjects were chosen to participate in this study to ensure that all participants had the basic skills necessary to perform the response task.

1. Implications for Practice

While this study provided some empirical data on how students respond to literature in different instructional settings, on a more practical level it also suggested the need for a
reevaluation of how literature is taught in the classroom. Although many students involved in this study exhibited high levels of achievement and engagement in their written responses to text, the results of this research indicate that teachers can help students to become even more successful readers and writers.

In reviewing the relationships between literature instruction and student response, this study points to a number of practical recommendations:

**Encourage aesthetic reading and response:**

Teachers wield a large degree of control over how their students respond to literature. They need to be aware that the instructions they give before a reading experience and the activities they assign at its conclusion can influence student stance. By showing interest in and respect for students' initial impressions, envisionments and wonderings about a text, teachers help children to establish an initial engagement with literature. Also, by allowing students some latitude in the choice of the literature they read, teachers will show confidence in students' unique and personal interests. Building factual understanding, considering others' perspectives and relating the text to personal life experiences are all natural extensions of aesthetic reading and response.

**Provide open-ended written response tasks:**

Students should be provided with open-ended writing tasks after they read literature rather than short answer questions, workbook exercises or fact-focussed assignments. Students who write longer, personal responses to literature are more likely to "develop" their understanding through their written responses and to reach higher levels of understanding.

Literature response journals, for example, allow students to record their developing impressions of the literature they read. They can be used as a place for students to jot down
ideas and questions about a story or they can become the basis for teacher or peer-directed literature conferences. Other forms of open-ended writing activities include reflection papers, letters to story characters, predictions or the creation of alternative endings to name just a few. These kinds of activities strengthen students’ understanding of the whole text in all of its complexity rather than deconstructing it into a series of facts or vocabulary words.

Support student-directed literature discussions.

Although it can be difficult for some teachers to relinquish control of literature discussions, it is clear that students become more engaged with the texts they are reading when they are able to discuss issues and themes that are personally relevant to them. Students can come to a more meaningful understanding of the literature they study when they are able to “test” their own interpretations of texts within the “community of readers” of the classroom (Fish, 1980). Whenever possible, the topic, momentum and direction of classroom literature discussions should be left in the hands of students who have authentic interest in it. The role of the teacher in this case is to provide the scaffolding students need to enrich their understanding of literature. Teachers do this by acting as respectful and thoughtful listeners, responders and guides rather than information-givers.

Encourage creative response to literature.

Integrating creative response can enhance student appreciation of literature and provide opportunities for extending ideas presented in the text. Encouraging drawing or sketching, for example, allows students to explore and record the aesthetic envisionsments they have had with literature. Similarly, listening to music particular to the time period of a text or performing student-written dramatizations of a text using period costumes encourage students to place themselves “within” the story. Any form of response that leads students to
think more deeply about the text naturally enhances their understanding of and connection with literature.

**Balance traditional and response-based student evaluation.**

While true/false, fill-in-the-blank or short answer questions may be easier to score for teachers, they provide little insight into the depth of student understanding. It would be unrealistic, however, to suggest that all skill-based, right answer/wrong answer testing should be deserted in favour of response-based evaluation. Students still need to learn new vocabulary words and understand the details of traditional literary analysis.

By balancing traditional testing with response-based evaluation, teachers can attain a more accurate picture of student understanding. Anecdotal notes about student participation in literature discussions, periodic reviews of students’ response journals and analyses of the contents of students’ personal writing portfolios provide teachers with valuable data for making grading decisions. An ongoing evaluation process that balances traditional and response-based assessment offers a clearer indication of students’ developing understanding of literature and helps to focus attention on what students already know not on what they have yet to learn.

While this study supports previous research linking aesthetic literature experience with high levels of understanding, it is questionable whether Ontario schools will welcome response-based instruction. Although the elementary Language Curriculum document published by the Ministry of Education and Training (1997) claims that students will be provided with “many opportunities to read for pleasure, self-discovery and for self-enrichment,” no precise plan outlines how aesthetic literature experiences will be integrated into language programs.
In contrast, efferent teaching strategies designed to help students “process, analyze and absorb information” are clearly laid out. The document emphasizes the need for students “to develop a rich and varied vocabulary” and “to become skilled at using the conventions of written language.” Isolated skills are also enumerated in the “Expectations” section of the document which provides a 4-Level rubric to assess student performance in such areas as “knowledge of language structures” and “understanding of form and style.” To ensure that this rigorous, skills-based curriculum is implemented satisfactorily, the Ministry of Education and Training conducts province-wide testing at various grade levels.

Within such a framework it is difficult to see how aesthetic literature instruction will play a part in the language program.

As teachers of literature our main goal is to ensure that our students become confident and independent readers. To make this a reality, it is necessary to shift our focus from the importance of content knowledge to the processes that allow readers to reach unique and diverse understandings of a text. Supported by ongoing research in the field of literature response, perhaps curriculum designers and classroom practitioners will be able to make the transition from a fact-focused to a response-centred model of literature instruction.
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APPENDIX A

Literature Instruction Profile

Please read the following statements and circle the one response that best reflects your teaching style. (1=Never, 5=Always)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I use a collection of literature selections chosen from an anthology.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I use basals/commercial reading programs to teach literature.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students have access to a very wide range of trade books within my classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I use board prescribed literature studies in my classroom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I use study guides/aids to support my literature program.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Student</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. In my class students read the same texts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In my class students complete the same reading and writing tasks.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Decisions about what literature is studied in my classroom are made collaboratively.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Students make the decisions about what they read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Activities</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Questions that I give my students have either a right or wrong answer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students in my class participate in peer literature conferences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Students in my class respond to the literature they read through art.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Students in my class respond to the literature they read orally.  
   
14. Students in my class respond to the literature they read through drama.  
   
15. Students in my class respond to the literature they read through small group discussions.  
   
16. Students in my class respond to the literature they read in writing.  
   
17. Students in my class use literature response journals.  
   
18. I assign tasks as they are outlined in the teaching guide or reading program.  
   
**Evaluation**  

19. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through tests.  
   
20. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through workbook exercises.  
   
21. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through free-writing activities.  
   
22. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through art, drama and music.  
   
23. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated using portfolios.  
   
24. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through anecdotal records and checklists I make.  
   
25. Student progress in my literature program is evaluated through literature response journals.  

**Setting**  

26. Literature instruction takes place in a whole-class setting.  
   
27. Students in my class engage in small-group inquiry assignments about the literature they read.
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Students in my class work independently.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I read literature aloud to the students in my class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Students in my class work best when seated in rows.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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Please read the following statements and circle the one response that best reflects your philosophy about teaching literature. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

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<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>It is important that students gain factual information from the texts they read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Students should always choose literature that has personal relevance to them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Responding to spontaneous issues raised by literature takes up a large portion of my class time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Every student responds to literature differently.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Teaching literary elements (plot, characterization, setting, etc.) should be a focus of literature study.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Literature is best understood through collaborative discussion.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>My main role as a teacher is to assign tasks to ensure student comprehension of the literature they read.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Activities and assignments pertaining to literature should be very open ended.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Students should have a large degree of control in the study of literature (eg. assignments, evaluation, topics).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>I often read literature in my own leisure time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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APPENDIX B

Scoring Key for the Literature Instruction Profile

The Literature Response Profile was designed using a Likert-type scale to ensure that every respondent has a full range of response choices. Consequently, each respondent should be encouraged to provide a response for every question so that an accurate score can be calculated.

Most questions in the Profile are designed to be scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with a response of 1 representing the lowest score and 5 representing the highest. For the sake of variety, however, a number of questions have been scored in the reverse (1=highest and 5=lowest). A scoring breakdown is provided below:

| Question 1 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 21 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 2 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 22 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 3 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 23 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 4 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 24 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 5 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 25 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 6 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 26 | Never (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 7 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 27 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 8 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 28 | Never (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 9 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 29 | Always (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 10 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 30 | Never (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 11 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 31 | SD (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 12 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 32 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 13 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 33 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 14 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 34 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 15 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 35 | SD (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 16 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 36 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 17 | Always (5) | = 5 points | Question 37 | SD (1) | = 5 points |
| Question 18 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 38 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 19 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 39 | SA (5) | = 5 points |
| Question 20 | Never (1) | = 5 points | Question 40 | SA (5) | = 5 points |

**Maximum total points: 200**

A score for each respondent can be calculated using this key. A high score on the Literature Instruction Profile indicates a primarily aesthetic teaching style, while a low score indicates a primarily efferent teaching style.
APPENDIX C

Instrument for Measuring Reader Stance on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum

Point 1 - Efferent Response

Focus is on what was learned or the information gained from the reading rather than the reading experience itself. The text is analysed by breaking it down into specific parts or by placing it into a category and responding accordingly. The responses might focus on literary analysis or analysis using other standards or systems (i.e. social or historical context).

Efferent Responses

Literary Analysis - Refers to specific literary or artistic elements. Example: "The setting is in a casel a little place. Problem: The Problem i that the queen could not guse the little Mans name she could not spen stal into glod."

What I Learned - Focuses on the important message or lesson to be learned in the story. Example: "I liked the story very much because it was very interesting and there's also a lesson to learned in every story. I fill that the lesson in the story is never tell lies or promies that you promies."

Retelling - Summarizes or retells what the story was about. Example: "The story was about a little man that would make straw into gold beads for a neckless, ring, and she siald I didn't have eneything eals to give you. He proimas her to give her first born child."

Point 2 - Mixed Efferent/Aesthetic Response

Such responses include portions of both an aesthetic evocation and an efferent analysis without a primary emphasis of either. Responses might contain a mixture of either analysis or retelling, as well as selective attention to specific story parts or an emphasis on the lived-through experiences of the story.

Mixed Efferent/Aesthetic Responses

Mixed Elements - Includes distinct efferent and aesthetic elements. Example: "I think story was neat because discrispshtion was nice. The picers were Butiful because the colors
were neat. Rumplestiltskin in a ok man but he was kind of greedy because he wanted to take things away from Queen she did not want' give up."

Overall Descriptions - Makes a general, vague description without an element of specificity which indicates attention is on the story experience or on analysing the work. Example: "I liked the story. It was neat."

Undeterminable - Makes a specific comment with regard to the story but, because of brevity, a primary aesthetic or efferent focus cannot be determined. Example: "Emperor ignored the girl."

---

**Point 3 - Aesthetic Response**

Responses indicating the aesthetic stance focus on the lived-through evocation of the work. Attention is centred on the ideas, scenes, sounds, associations, or feelings called to mind during the reader-text transaction. Responses representative of the aesthetic stance might include a focus on imaging, relating associations, extending, hypothesizing or retrospecting.

**Aesthetic Responses**

Judgement - Expresses opinions towards characters or events in the story. Example: "I did not like the way they treated the little girl. They treated her like she was nothing and they did not never believe her..."

Imaging - Describes how the students visualized or perceived the story, occasionally in the form of analogies. Example: "I see a kite flying in the sky. That was scary that had sharp nails. And it had spiky hair and his hair is black."

Associations - Makes connections between the word of the text and life, either through placing themselves in the story world or reflecting on their own real life world in relation to the text. Example: "...when the girl toke the ladys head she like my sister allways wont's to not keep a primis [promise] wen she primises."

Emotions Felt - Expresses personal emotional reactions. Example: "I feelt sorry for Blanche because her mother was mean to her."

Favourite Parts - Focuses on a specific section of the story, usually in connection with a preference statement. Example: "I liked the book becuse it was neat when Blechh throw the eggs over her left shoulder and when her sister whent and tho the eggs over her write sholde but evry thang turd [turned] good when Blechh the eggs and evry thang turd bad when hers
sister throw the eggs."

Miscellaneous - Includes a mixture of elements. Responses might ramble from one topic to the next, ask questions about the story, or relate a metacognitive awareness of the story experience. Example: "I think the story was great. You mad me think that I was watching the thing. If I was the Queen I would be scaryed to get up my baby to. The part when that man said 'The deivl made you do it, Boy was that funny. P.S. You read with expression."
APPENDIX D

Instrument for Rating a Reader's Level of Understanding

**Level 1: Does not go beyond literal meaning of the story**

"I liked the story. It had me curious to where I wanted to keep reading it. I especially liked the end."

"There was two boys that bought a secret. There was a guy named Secret. He told the policeman about the idol..."

"I liked the story. I liked the setting and plot. The end was great. the place and time is ok. I like Charlie and Brian."

**Level 2: Indicates some interpretation of story events**

"...This story appears to be where a girl is in a situation where her parents don't know to show affection. It also appears that the parents have too much money and too little amount of time for the girl."

"I think this story is a type of mystery story. I think Trish will try to find out about Mr. Watts. They will probably become best friends towards the end of the story. Because thru the story when she is looking and finding out about his past she will understand why he acts the way he does."

**Level 3: Demonstrates understanding of specific story events through analogy to self or world**

"I really like this story because this sometimes happens to me. Sometimes I hate my parents because they make me do something I don't want to do. this story was very true. In this story it tells about the girls friend not trusting her and my sister is just like that. She can't trust me turning her back so if we're playing a game she makes me watch t.v. when she goes out of the room. I think this story is good for kids our age to read because I know that most of us are just like the girl in the story. I know I am."

"I liked this story because it seemed realistic. The old man in the story is a lot like old people in the real world. I also liked the setting at the gas station."
Level 4: Reaches an abstract or generalized belief about life

"I think this story is a very good, interesting story. It teaches me that to not judge a book by its cover an example for that is: Don’t judge a person wrong or write just because they [are] pretty, or ugly, fat or skinny, or boy or girl, or even black and white."

"the characters were nice. It was an interesting story the way it set up the plot. I think men shouldn't trick little boys or girls unless they want to be tricked back. Just like the boy Charlie, did Secrets in the story... And I learned a lesson from this story, if you don't want to be tricked don't trick anybody yourself."
APPENDIX E

Rating for Stance and Understanding

These instruments allow for responses demonstrating from low to high levels of understanding at both the efferent and aesthetic ends of the continuum.

Stance Rating 1 - Level of Understanding 1

"It was a pretty good story and I enjoyed it. The characters were designed pretty well but I didn't like the way the plot kept skipping time and not telling you what was happening. They picked a good setting for a plot like this one."

The analytical critique of the literary elements found in this response is characteristic of many of the responses rated as efferent. The response is rated at Level 1 on the level of understanding instrument because there is no evidence of understanding the story beyond the literal level. In contrast, the next example is also written from the most efferent stance but it would be scored at the highest level of understanding. The efferent focus is apparent in that the writer focussed on what was learned from the story, the information carried away from the reading event. The highest level of understanding is reached, however, because the student came away with an abstract understanding which was applied to life in general.

Stance Rating 1 - Level of Understanding 4

"It is a very unusual show. It tells us that we can do anything we want to. It also tells grownups a thing or two. One of the things it told grownups is: Before you step ahead make sure you've seen all the details."

At the aesthetic end of the continuum on the stance instrument, responses can also range in the level of understanding demonstrated. The next example illustrates a response written from the aesthetic stance and would be rated at the lowest level of understanding.

Stance Rating 3 - Level of Understanding 1

"I really enjoyed reading the book, it kept me curious throughout. After I was finished I kept going back and thinking about the story. I could picture what was happening."

This student's emphasis on what occurred during the evocation of the story, the fact that curiosity was experienced throughout the reading and that he could visualize the images
described, characterize the aesthetic nature of this response. The response is coded at Level 1 in terms of understanding because the response gives no evidence of moving beyond a literal understanding of the story.

Finally, as the next excerpt illustrates, aesthetic responses can also demonstrate the highest levels of personal understanding. Again the student's focus is on what occurred during the reading event. The reader is deeply rooted in the experience, to the point of putting herself in the main character's shoes. The generalization the student reaches, that life can be unfair, is indicative of Level 4 on the level of understanding instrument in that this is an understanding the student has reached about life in general as a result of this reading experience.

**Stance Rating 3 - Level of Understanding 4**

"I probably wouldn't have handled it as well as the family in the story did when she died, if my sister or daughter fell out of a tree and died when she was only eleven. The story really made you sit back and think about how unfair life can really be."


APPENDIX F

Letter to the Ethics Committee

Dr. L. Morton  
Chair of the Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Education  
University of Windsor  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9E 3L2

Dear Dr. Morton:

Please accept this letter as a formal request for permission to conduct a research study on the relationship between instructional style and students' written responses to literature in grade six classrooms. Enclosed is a description of my research proposal and instruments as well as copies of the letters that will be sent to the Windsor Board of Education and participating principals and teachers. A letter of permission to be signed by the parent or guardian of all student subjects is also included.

Should you have any questions concerning the proposal or if you would like to discuss it in further detail, please contact me at XXX-XXXX or Dr. Heald-Taylor at XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for taking the time to review my proposal. I look forward to receiving your response and any suggestions that you may have.

Sincerely,

Katherine Stearns
APPENDIX G

Letter to the Director of Education

XXXX, Director
XXXX Board of Education
XXXX

Dear XXXX:

Please accept this letter as a written request for permission to conduct a research study within the XXXX Board of Education in partial fulfilment of the Master of Education program at the University of Windsor. This study is designed to examine the relationship between instructional style and grade six students' written responses to literature. Information derived from this study will be useful in considering the factors associated with high levels of student understanding in literature classrooms. The study will also provide some insight into qualitative differences in students' written literature responses.

In order to identify sixth grade classrooms that fit the parameters of this study, I am requesting permission to distribute a survey (completion time: 10 minutes) to a number of grade six teachers within the XXXX Board. Based on their responses to the survey, teachers may be contacted to establish a convenient time for their students to complete a written literature response task (completion time: 1 hour). Permission will also be obtained from participating principals and teachers as well as from the parents of the students involved in the study. All information will be kept confidential and participation is strictly voluntary. The results of the study will be made available to any participant upon request.

Please find enclosed a copy of my research proposal for your records. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX-XXXX or my advisor, Dr. Heald-Taylor, at XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Katherine Stearns
APPENDIX H

Letter to the Parent/Guardian

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As a Master of Education student at the University of Windsor, I request permission for your child's work to be used in an educational research study. The study is designed to examine the relationship between teaching style and grade six students' written responses to literature. Information derived from this study will be useful in considering the factors associated with high levels of student understanding in literature classrooms. The study will also provide some insight into the differences in students' written literature responses.

After reading a short piece of fiction, your child will be asked to write an open-ended response to the story. The response will be analysed for its different attributes and will be used to develop a broader picture of how children interact with literature. All information will be kept confidential and participation is strictly voluntary. The results of the study will be made available upon request. Subjects can withdraw at any point during the completion of the study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at XXX-XXXX or my advisor, Dr. Heald-Taylor, at XXX-XXXX in the event that you would like more information.

Your support in this process is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Katherine Stearns

Name of Student: ______________________

__ I give permission for my child's work to be used in this research study.

__ I do not give permission for my child's work to be used in this research study.

Signature of Parent: ____________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX I

Story and Response Sheets

Name: ____________________________________________
Birthday: __________________________________________

Boy                   Girl

Teacher: ____________________________________________

*Please read the following story and write anything that you want about it on the response sheets at the end.*

Thank you very much for taking part in this study!
North Lay Freedom
An excerpt from *Underground to Canada*
By: Barbara Smucker

Julilly, Adam and Lester were sold by their original owner in Virginia to the much harsher owner of a Mississippi cotton plantation, Massa Riley. Here, Julilly makes friends with Liza, a slave of about her own age who once attempted to escape, was caught, and beaten so badly by the overseer, Sims, that she is now crippled.

Both Julilly and Liza have heard that there is a country to the north of them, called Canada, where there are no slaves. When a Canadian, Mr. Alexander Ross, appears on the scene, the girls are naturally curious. Both long to be free.

The coming of Mr. Ross unsettled the slaves. Julilly felt it like a spark, flitting up and down the rows of cotton. There was something about the way the heavy-chested Canadian had grabbed Sims' upraised hand when he aimed to strike her again that roused a hope in Julilly's mind.

She couldn't talk with Liza. Sims was too close. She began picking quickly, and when she thought it safe, stuffed extra cotton balls into Liza's low-slung sack. Without moving her head, she could see Mr. Ross talking with one slave and then another. It was a long time before he finally walked from the field with the two of them.

The slaves he chose were Lester and Adam. Julilly stopped picking for an instant just to watch. Big, fast-moving Mr. Ross from Canada had chosen Lester and Adam to help him look for birds.

Julilly knew she must talk with Lester soon. Sometimes on Sundays, she met him in the yard of the slave quarters. He was always angry, but he listened when she talked of home. Once she had told him what Mammy Sally said about Canada. He had listened hard then. His eyes were excited and he had given Julilly that same cautious look of approval that come over his face the day she helped him from the swamp in the rain.

"Don't you talk about this to no one -- just to me and to your friend, Liza," he had cautioned.

Tomorrow was Sunday. She would find Lester and ask him about Alexander Ross.
Julilly and Liza finished picking their row. Far ahead of them they could see the big Canadian with Lester and Adam enter the Piney Woods and disappear.

It was dusk when the picking and weighing of the cotton was finished. Sims was nervous and uneasy as he checked the scales. Mr. Ross was back and Lester and Adam had been sent to carry baskets of picked cotton. Mr. Ross held his shotgun loose. The grey wings of a dead mockingbird stuck out from a bag that he hung over his big shoulders. Even though he had been tramping about most of the hot afternoon hunting birds, his thick brown hair and preacher-looking suit were as neat and orderly as though he'd been sitting under the shade trees of the Big House lawn.

He stood near Sims.

"Now tell me, Mr. Sims," he asked with his fast clipped Canadian accent, "how much does each slave pick during the day?"

Sims mumbled an answer.

"An amazing crop." The Canadian patted his great stomach and chest. "You know it's too cold in Canada to raise cotton."

Sims perked up at this comment.

"I heard tell," Sims grinned, his upper lip flattened against his yellow, uneven teeth, "it's such a cold place that nothin' but black-eyed peas can be raised there."

Julilly saw a smile flicker on the big man's face.

Julilly and Liza, with the other slaves, trudged back along the dusty path to the slave quarters with lighter steps that evening. As though in some kind of celebration, a large black kettle swung over a crackling flame in the yard. It bubbled with greens and sparse strips of salt pork. There hadn't been greens to eat since Julilly came to the Riley plantation on the first day. She reached inside her crocker bag for the gourd scoop that she always carried with her, ladled out a portion for herself and poured some for Liza into a tin plate.

"Without you, Julilly" -- Liza raised her tired head where she sat resting against the trunk of a thick oak tree -- "I'd starve to death."
That night in the long slave cabin, all the girls whispered about Canada and Mr. Ross. Most of them knew about the place. Word of it had crept along the plantation "grapevines" in the places where they came from -- in Virginia and North Carolina. They shared what they had heard.

Liza knew the most. Usually she was quiet and sullen after the day's work, but tonight she felt like talking. She hunched her crippled back against the pile of rags to ease the constant pain.

"This country is far away under the North Star," she whispered hoarsely. "It's run by a lady named Queen Victoria. She made a law there declarin' all men free and equal. The people respects that law. My daddy told me that, and he was a preacher."

A girl down the line named Bessie, who was tall and strong like Julilly, moved near Liza.

"How do you know where to find that North Star, girl?" she asked.

Liza answered with certainty and precision. "You look in the sky at night when the clouds roll back. Right up there, plain as the toes on my feet, are some stars that make the shape of a drinking gourd." Night after night Julilly and Liza had been watching it when the stars hung low, sparkling and glistening.

"The front end of that drinking gourd," Liza went on, "points straight up to the North Star. You follow that. Then you get to Canada and you are free."

"Don't you talk so much, girl." Bessie's whisper was sharp now and strained with fear. "Look what happened to you when you tried to get your freedom before. You got a bent back and your legs got all beat up. I ain't lookin' for no more whippin's than I already got." She rolled onto her rags and was soon asleep.

Another girl near by crept close to Liza and Julilly. She was a timid girl, hunched up like a little mouse caught in a corner.

"I'm afraid," she shivered. "I heard a man say once that Canada is a cold country. Only the wild geese can live there. I'm afraid to go. I'm always afraid." She began to whimper. Julilly reached for her hand and held it until the girl went to sleep.

By now the other girls, sprawled along the floor, were too drained and dulled by the daily work and scant food to care or listen. Their exhausted bodies needed sleep. Like work-horses, they found their stalls each night and fell exhausted into the heap of tangled, ragged blankets.
But Liza hadn't moved from her hunched position against the wall. She wasn't asleep. Julilly could see her open eyes in the soft moonlight that spread through the cracks and open doorway of the cabin. It was late. The only night sounds were the chirping of the crickets.

Every muscle in Julilly's body ached. She spread out flat on her back close to Liza, unable to close her eyes. The thoughts in her head jumped around like grasshoppers. Was Liza trying to reach Canada and freedom when Sims tracked her down?

Free, thought Julilly. Free must be like a bird that could fly here and there and settle where it pleased...free could mean to get paid for your work like white folks...if you were free, you wouldn't be whipped.

Julilly couldn't stop her thoughts.

She finally murmured to the silent, staring Liza.

"Liza." Julilly barely moved her lips. "You thinkin' of tryin' to run away to Canada again?"

She felt Liza's body twitch. Slowly the crippled girl slid to the floor and put her mouth to Julilly's ear.

"You is my best friend, Julilly." She barely made a sound. "What I is goin' to say must not be told to anyone."

Julilly nodded her head.

"Before the cotton is finished bein' picked, I am gonna slip away from here some night."

"Are you afraid?" Julilly had to know.

"I am afraid, and I am not afraid." Liza's bony fingers clasped Julilly's arm. "Like my daddy said to me, 'Liza, in the eyes of the Lord, you is somebody mighty important. Don't you ever forget that,'"

"I'm scrawnly, Julilly but I'm tough. I think the Lord put that North Star up in the sky just for us poor slaves to follow, and I intends to follow it."

There was a long silence between them.

Finally Julilly said slowly, her heart beating so fast she thought it might snap off from whatever held it in her chest. "I am goin' with you, Liza. I'm afraid and I'm not afraid, same as you."
Response Sheets
KATHERINE STEARNS-SHEFFER

EDUCATION

Master of Education, Curriculum Studies
Specialist: Language Arts
University of Windsor

Bachelor of Education, Primary/Junior,
Specialist Certificate: Early Primary Education
Queen's University

Bachelor of Arts, Honours International Relations/Economics
(with distinction)
University of Toronto

TEACHING AND RELATED EXPERIENCE

Sept. 1998 - Present
Kindergarten Teacher, JK/SK integrated class
Queen Victoria Public School, Windsor

Research Assistant to Professor of Exceptional Children, part time
University of Windsor

Teacher, Little Readers Program and Tutor (Gr. 1 - 11), full time
Oxford Learning Centre, Kingston, Ontario

February - April 1997
Student Teacher, Grade 1/2, Full Curriculum, 7 week placement
J. E. Horton Public School, Barriefield, Ontario

Oct. - Nov. 1996
Student Teacher, Grade 5, Full Curriculum, 3 week placement
Quinte Mohawk Federal School, Tyendinaga Territory, Ontario
April 1994 - Early Childhood Education Policy Analyst, full time  
Aug. 1996 Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario

AWARDS AND PUBLICATIONS

1998/1999. Tuition Scholarships to the Master of Education Program  
1997/1998 University of Windsor

April 1994 - Cover Story and Special Article Writer, ECE LINK (Circulation 3500)  
August 1996 Quarterly Publication of the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario

Feb. 1993 "Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' and Soviet Third World Policy",  
Polis International, University of Toronto Journal of Politics and Economics