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It's not as thick as it looks: Unpacking the rehearsal practices of theatre professionals and the significance for the teaching of reading and writing

Dale Lorraine Wright

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It's not as thick as it looks: Unpacking the rehearsal practices of theatre professionals and the significance for the teaching of reading and writing

Abstract
The purpose of my study was to identify and describe the components of theatre rehearsal and their implications for the teaching of reading and writing. Using qualitative methods of inquiry such as direct and participant observation and group and individual interviews, I documented the rehearsal process and literacy practices of members of a professional theatre company that performs only in academic environments. In analyzing the data I used Anderson and Jack’s strategies for listening and determined that there are four major components of theatre rehearsal: chunking (the breaking down of the script into smaller, more manageable pieces), repetition (the constant, purposeful repeating of the text), encouragement (the acknowledgement of the actor’s effort), and response (the verbal or non-verbal reaction to the other three components). These components provide opportunities for collaboration and discussion; they provide time to think about and discuss the choices being made; and they provide opportunities to use other tools and strategies such as visualization, inquiry or exploration, and self-evaluation.

I believe using these rehearsal strategies to teach reading and writing can provide the same opportunities for our students. There is much discussion in the field of education about creating communities of learners. Rehearsal can help us create such communities because it can provide us with opportunities to teach our students that learning is a constant rehearsal. We must teach our students to do more than just choose the appropriate response. We must teach them to recognize what they know about their own learning and thinking, and we must provide them with opportunities to demonstrate what they know about reading and writing. We must give them the chance to demonstrate not only that they can read and write but that they understand what they are doing when they read and write.

Keywords
Education, Curriculum and Instruction, Education, Reading, Language, Rhetoric and Composition

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IT'S NOT AS THICK AS IT LOOKS:
UNPACKING THE REHEARSAL PRACTICES OF THEATRE PROFESSIONALS
AND THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING AND WRITING

BY

Dale L. Wright
B.A., University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 1973
M.Ed., University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 1997

DISSERTATION
Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Reading and Writing Instruction

September, 2001

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Dr. Paula M. Salvio
Associate Professor of Education

June 26, 2001
Date
DEDICATION

To the memory of my parents, Sarah and William Wright, who taught me to read my first book, who took me to see my first play, and who understood and encouraged my passion for both. I am what I am today because you loved me. Thank you Mama.

Thank you Daddy.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We sat,
You, me, children
We sat.
Our shadows merging into One
A Oneness like
The candle-light!
Flame
Wick
Wax

--from "Candle-light" a Ugandan poem
by Grace Birabwa Isharaza

In the creation of this work there have been many people whose shadows have
merged with mine in the candle-light and I take this moment to say, "Thank-you."

To Almighty God for the blessings and opportunities you have given me. To Trinette,
for always giving me a reason to smile and a reason to keep going. To my brother Bill for
always believing in me and just for being the best big brother ever. To Polly for your
support, encouragement and love. To my advisor, John, for the support, encouragement
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through this process, and for always having the time to listen and to talk. To the
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ABSTRACT

IT'S NOT AS THICK AS IT LOOKS: UNPACKING THE REHEARSAL PRACTICES OF THEATRE PROFESSIONALS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE TEACHING OF READING AND WRITING

by

Dale L. Wright
University of New Hampshire, September, 2001

The purpose of my study was to identify and describe the components of theatre rehearsal and their implications for the teaching of reading and writing. Using qualitative methods of inquiry such as direct and participant observation and group and individual interviews, I documented the rehearsal process and literacy practices of members of a professional theatre company that performs only in academic environments. In analyzing the data I used Anderson and Jack's strategies for listening and determined that there are four major components of theatre rehearsal: chunking (the breaking down of the script into smaller, more manageable pieces), repetition (the constant, purposeful repeating of the text), encouragement (the acknowledgement of the actor's effort), and response (the verbal or non-verbal reaction to the other three components). These components provide opportunities for collaboration and discussion; they provide time to think about and discuss the choices being made; and they provide opportunities to use other tools and strategies such as visualization, inquiry or exploration, and self-evaluation.
I believe using these rehearsal strategies to teach reading and writing can provide
the same opportunities for our students. There is much discussion in the field of
education about creating communities of learners. Rehearsal can help us create such
communities because it can provide us with opportunities to teach our students that
learning is a constant rehearsal. We must teach our students to do more than just choose
the appropriate response. We must teach them to recognize what they know about their
own learning and thinking, and we must provide them with opportunities to demonstrate
what they know about reading and writing. We must give them the chance to demonstrate
not only that they can read and write but that they understand what they are doing when
they read and write.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe key components of theatre rehearsal and their implications for the teaching of reading and writing, and to suggest possible applications to classroom practices. The first part of the study describes the theatre rehearsal process as the cast moves from the reading of the script to the performance of the production. Using qualitative methods, I observed the rehearsal process of a professional theatre company that performs only in academic environments and reflected on my personal experiences as a professional actress. I conducted interviews to inquire into the literacy practices of the company members and asked each member to keep a record of his/her reflections. The latter part of the study addresses the implications for using these rehearsal techniques in the teaching of reading and writing based on my observations, information gathered from interviews and my own personal experiences in working with emergent readers and writers in the classroom. The specific aims of this study were:

(1) to identify the various components of theatre rehearsal through observation of a professional theater company and personal experience.

(2) to describe, analyze and interpret these observations and experiences focusing on the literacy practices and beliefs of the actors.

(3) to discuss the implications for the use of theatre rehearsal techniques in reading/writing teaching practices.
In the fourth century B.C. Aristotle (Aristotle, 4th Century. p. 7) wrote that the purpose of any good technique of acting is to help the actor perceive the action of the character he is portraying and to recreate that perception in his own thought and feeling. Rehearsal provides the actor with the opportunity to develop these good acting techniques by giving multiple opportunities for trying out various characterizations and postures. George Bernard Shaw (1958) wrote that rehearsal provides the director with the opportunity to make the players do it (the play) well. Harold Clurman (1972, p. 1) suggests that rehearsal gives the director and the actor time to let the script “work on you before you work on it” (p. 24). There is more to rehearsal than simply learning lines (memorizing the script) and blocking (the directed movement on stage). During rehearsal actors, directors and technicians are constantly thinking of ways to present and subsequently improve the production. There is discussion before, during and after each rehearsal to allow actors and directors time to share and negotiate choices regarding such issues as character and movement. Clurman cites the Russian director, Eugene Vahtangov, when he states that “though rehearsals are the period reserved for mistakes, it is also true that rehearsals are intended to reveal the effects of one’s thinking” (p. 126). When the actor retires for the day, he/she should think over what has been said and done during the day’s rehearsal.

My training in theatre was greatly influenced by Shaw. As a neophyte actor, I came to appreciate the rehearsal process as the most important part of the theatre experience. As a professional actor, I relished the rehearsal as a time to fine-tune the development of my character as well as develop a rhythm with the other characters on
stage. For me, the multiple readings of the script were opportunities to dig deep into the possibilities of the text. I had permission to talk to the text, to ask questions such as "What is the subtext of this statement?" or "What is the character thinking as he/she makes this move?" I also could use this time to read the text repeatedly and explore the vocabulary and language of the text. I could spend valuable time learning the meaning and pronunciation of new words. If necessary I could explore the history of the characters and setting in the text. The rehearsal period provided me with time to take time to get to know, understand and appreciate the text. I learned to value the director’s notes and see them as opportunities to improve my acting skills. Early in my acting career I learned to come to rehearsal with the tools I would need for the day’s work: knowledge of my lines and blocking, a pencil, and a willingness to try. For me the rehearsal was where the director, the actors and the technicians worked together as a unit to achieve a goal.

Rehearsal was not just a time for me to work through the text alone, but it was a time for me to work through the text with my colleagues in the theatre. It was a time to try out new ideas, to question our choices and to make a decision about a particular choice. There has been much research on the importance of collaborative learning. Vygotsky (1978, p. 79) considered collaborative learning to be significant to the process of the social construction of language; Mueller and Fleming (2001, p. 80) suggest that the structure of collaborative learning in the classroom determines how and what students learn from the experience; and Chinn, O’Donnell and Jinks (2000, p. 81) believe it is important to consider the structure of peer discourse as a mediator of what students learn from peer interactions. Students also recognize the significance of collaboration to their learning. In
the Mueller study, students reported that they "learned better when they were able to 'do something' in contrast to 'just reading the textbook' and 'answering questions at the end of each chapter'''" (p. 263). In addition, students admitted to not always liking the idea of working with others but recognized that "it's a good skill to have," and they acknowledged the importance of "doing it ourselves and learning from our mistakes" (p. 263).

Rehearsal is also the time to reflect on the work that has been done and the work that lies ahead. Throughout the rehearsal I thought about what I had done, what I was doing and what I would do next. Recently I found my copy of the On the Verge script and looked at some of the notes written in the margins. Some were directions given by the director while others were notes to myself taken from the director's comments. For example, one of the most difficult things for me in this play was presenting the illusion that things that were familiar to me were unfamiliar, and things unfamiliar were familiar. In one scene I was to discover a clipping from The New York Times caught in a tree and I needed to deliver the line with a sense of excitement and relief, that all was not lost in this new world if one could get the Times. In the margin I wrote "think home." Each night as part of my homework, I would think reflect on the work we had done in rehearsal and how I could make the necessary changes to improve my character. Thinking about home was one of the tricks I used to remind me of excitement or sadness. My reflections on home would either take me to the moments when I was home with my family and surrounded by their love, or to those times when I had to be separated from them and missed them terribly. This kind of reflective work helped me make sense of the script...
and project the right attitude to the audience. Reflective work is as important to the development of the actor as it is to the cognitive development of a child. In cognitive development one moves from empirical abstraction, the physical knowledge of objects, to reflective abstraction, the understanding that an action on an object can be constructed through manipulation of the object either physically or mentally. This understanding is the result of recognition and reflection. At the conclusion of the Mueller study, students identified three criteria for effective group work; at the head was that participants be given sufficient time to talk and work out their ideas. It is through recognition and reflection that the child and the actor come to understand what they know.

In his book *On Directing* Harold Clurman (1972) discusses the necessity of rehearsal and the need to have time for it. "I refuse to create a sense of haste. But for any but the most rudimentary script, four weeks of rehearsals are insufficient. Apropos of this, I cannot refrain from citing a Stanislavsky quip: 'No matter how long one rehearses one always needs two more weeks'" (p. 90). It is during the rehearsal process that the neophyte actor begins to develop the techniques and strategies that will assist him/her in the production. It is during the rehearsal process that the proficient or experienced actor continuously hones and improves her/his techniques and strategies. As a professional actress and a teacher I am very aware of the importance of preparation and rehearsal.

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1997, p. 21) defines rehearsal as (1) something recounted or told again; and (2) a private performance or practice session preparatory to a public appearance. Both definitions are appropriate when discussing theatre rehearsal. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this point is to walk through the
actual rehearsal process. First, let me state that every rehearsal process will be different based on the actors, the director and the play. What I describe below and in subsequent pages is based on personal experience in theatre rehearsals and is intended to give the reader a general view of the theatre rehearsal process.

The first step in theatre rehearsal is the read through. This is the first time the ensemble has met as a full unit. The object of the read through is to introduce the members of the ensemble to one another and to read the script through from beginning to end. This first read provides an opportunity for each member of the ensemble to hear the script spoken aloud in voices different from his/her own, and it signals the official beginning of the rehearsal process. Often the read through begins with the director introducing the members of the cast and crew to one another. He/she then lays out the plan for the read through. This usually includes assigning the stage directions and other nonessential text to the stage manager to be read. It may also include setting the pace for the actors and reminding them that this is a first rehearsal and, therefore, is not intended to be perfect. This may also be the time when the director informs the cast how much improvisation with the script will be allowed. In my experience improvising the script was a rarity. Most of the directors with whom I worked insisted that the script be followed verbatim. This is the unspoken rule and unless the playwright or agent has given written permission, it is followed. For example, I know from personal experience that Tony Kuhne (Angels in America) has it stated in the contract for his play that the director must adhere to the script as it is written. This means that not one scene can be
cut, not one word can be changed without the written permission of the playwright. I believe this is standard for most plays.

For most of the cast members in traditional rehearsal, this will not be a cold reading. Generally, everyone has had the script for a while, anywhere from several days to a couple of weeks, and brings his/her own ideas about the character to the process and tries out these ideas at the read through. Various actors will attempt to use the voices and characterizations they have developed prior to this first rehearsal. For the most part, these characterizations have been created in a vacuum, or in isolation, and as the read through progresses, slight changes are made in the characterizations as actors attempt to respond and interact with other characters. These changes will continue throughout the rehearsal process and even during production.

Subsequent rehearsals are focused on blocking (the position of the actor and the props at a particular moment), the handling of props (objects used by the actor during the play), costumes, and line memorization and delivery. Blocking rehearsals are the first several rehearsals after the read through. The director guides the actors through each scene, giving specific directions on placement and movement during the scene. In my own experience in theatre, I have worked with directors who give the blocking for the entire play and then work each scene and others who give the blocking as they work each scene. Generally, blocking is given to the actors orally. A director will say, for example, “In this scene I want so and so to move stage left towards the chair. At the end of the line you will exit through the door.” Most actors do not attempt to trust their memory to remember these directions. Instead they write them down in the script, preferably in the
margin next to the lines affected by the blocking. The playwright may provide some
blocking directions, and the director may or may not choose to follow those directions.
Additionally, as the blocking directions are given to the actors, the stage manager is
writing them down in the stage manager's notebook. This is very important because it
provides a record for the actors and the director in the event an actor or the director
forgets what the movement should be. Any blocking changes will be recorded in the stage
manager's notebook. The stage manager's notebook is the script separated page by page
with each page having deep margins on the sides for the writing of blocking and other
directorial notes associated with a scene. These notes may include information on needed
props, costumes, lighting and sound. These are not the notes that are given to actors at
the end of a rehearsal but are notes used by the director to enhance the production, much
like a teacher's manual.

In an effort to help actors create more believable characters on stage, many
directors engage the ensemble in various theatrical exercises. Uta Hagen (1991) in her
book A Challenge for the ACTOR, says these exercises should be part of the homework an
actor does before rehearsal and before a performance. One such exercise is the
development of a life history for the character, created by the actor. Several directors I
know use what is called a “W” sheet. This sheet requires actors to answer several “w”
questions: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. My friend Susan gives this sheet to her
cast members immediately upon casting them in a show. Her directions to them are to
create a history of their characters by answering the questions before the first rehearsal.
Often she has required that the history be written. At her read through she asks each cast
member to give a brief history of his/her character based on his or her answers to the questions on the “W” sheet. This character history can be very useful as rehearsals progress, and as an actor tries to make determinations about a character’s development. It can provide the actor with information to assist in responding to the director’s questions regarding the choices the actor makes with regard to tone, pace and movement. In the documentary Looking for Richard (Pacino, 1996), the importance of understanding the character’s history becomes apparent. In one segment the cast is discussing the scene where the queen is having a discussion with her sons. The director and several cast members question the actress’s delivery of her lines. They take exception to the tone she uses which they think is too confrontational and suggest that her tone should be more subdued. She counters with the response that the queen is well aware of the underlying intentions of the sons. Therefore, she will not respond to them in a tone that implies she is buying what they are saying. Her tone is confrontational as well it should because she has determined, that her character would indeed respond in this manner.

Once the blocking has been completed, the real work begins. Up to this point the work has been a prelude to what is to come. Scene by scene the director guides the ensemble through the script, observing line delivery, entrances and exits, body language and interaction with other actors on and off stage. Bruce Taylor (1999) refers to this as staging. “Blocking is framework, staging is detail” (p. 83). Each scene is worked and reworked, over and over again, until both actor and director are satisfied and feel ready to move on. During the early stages actors will refer to the script for lines and blocking. This is called being on book. During this time the actors walk through the rehearsal with
the script in hand, sometimes reading the lines directly from the script, making notations that relate to the blocking, the props or the language. Later, usually by a time specified by the director, scripts are put aside and the actors will rely on memory and training to retrieve lines and blocking. This is called off book. Early in the process “extras” such as props and sometimes a working version of the costume are added. This is to give the actor time to get used to these extras so as not to be distracted by them during the production, and, of course, the longer the actor has to work without the script the more comfortable he/she becomes with the character. The director or an actor sometimes calls line rehearsals if it appears warranted. A “line rehearsal” is one during which the actors rehearse the lines from a particular scene or section of a scene in order to set them in their heads. The lines are repeated over and over in a setting very similar to the read through until the actors are satisfied the lines are set. If music and dance are a part of the production, those rehearsals are held separately, often weeks before rehearsals on the script begin.

Once a scene is worked to the satisfaction of the director and actor, it is set aside and work begins on another scene. When that scene is complete, it is combined with the previous scene and those two are worked, then set aside. A third scene is worked and then combined with the previous two and so on until the act is complete. This cumulative format continues until all scenes and acts have been worked and set; then the rehearsals focus on run throughs of an act or of the entire play. A run through means exactly that—the running through of a full scene or act without stopping to make adjustments or corrections until the end. This process is repeated until the entire play...
has been completed in segmented run throughs and the cast is ready for a complete run through. As opening night draws near, the rehearsals become longer and more focused on details such as costumes, sound, lights, set, and running time. Dress rehearsals are designed to put the actors in full costume and makeup on stage with the lighting to ensure there is a good fit. Technical rehearsals are held for the crew to mesh the action on the stage with the lighting, sound, and props. While the actors are present during these rehearsals, they only walk through the scene for the benefit of the crew. The crew adjusts lights, determines sound volume, works out the details of set changes and with the director determines the light and sound cues (when the lights and sounds come and go).

Final dress rehearsals or preview rehearsals are rehearsals that are held one or two days before opening night with an invited audience. These rehearsals provide the actors with an opportunity to hear fresh reactions to their performance. Through the long weeks of rehearsal the jokes have become stale, the dramatic scenes have become predictable, and everyone knows what everyone else is going to say. An audience helps the cast keep things fresh.

Each move toward the final dress rehearsal takes the actor farther away from reliance on the written script and closer to total reliance on the understanding and interpretation of the text by the ensemble. There are several stages the ensemble will go through to get to this point. As each actor becomes more comfortable with his/her character, he/she moves farther away from relying on the script for characterization and begins to rely on himself or herself. This movement becomes apparent in the conversations about character and choices being made in movement and line delivery. As
each actor becomes more certain of the development of a character, the actor becomes the character and the character becomes real. As this happens the ensemble begins to look less like a group of actors putting on a play and looks more like a group of people who are telling their story. The actual script now becomes a reference book when questions arise regarding lines or blocking. The director may suggest the actor take a look at it to refresh his/her memory, but it is no longer needed to move the rehearsal forward.

The final step in every rehearsal from the first read through to the final dress is the giving of notes at the end of each session. While often the director may give notes to the technicians and designers, and actors may also receive notes from the costumer or property master or mistress, for the purpose of this discussion I will focus on the notes the director gives to the actors. The director gathers the ensemble around and gives notes to each one. These notes are not designed to embarrass but to teach and help the actor make choices. Notes are the director's responses to the ensemble's work, very much like the responses a teacher gives when reading student papers or observing presentations. They are not general comments; they are specific to the work of each actor at each rehearsal. In addition to giving the actor a response, it sends the message that the director is honestly paying attention to what each actor is doing. When I was doing my undergraduate work in theatre, we were told that actors were expected to show up at every rehearsal with a notebook and a writing instrument. During rehearsals these tools were set aside. At the conclusion of every rehearsal they were retrieved and used to write down the notes given by the director. Woe be unto him or her who was observed attempting to "remember" the notes by relying solely on the mind! Going over the notes
and making the necessary adjustments are part of the homework the actor must do each
and every night. During run through rehearsals notes are given at the conclusion of each
run through and the scene or act is run again. At the conclusion of the day’s rehearsal
final notes are given.

Every part of the rehearsal is important. If any one part is overlooked, it could
spell disaster during the production. Rehearsal is also the time when apprentice or
emergent actors observe and learn from more experienced or proficient actors. Many of
the implicit rules are taught during the rehearsals. Experienced actors model these rules
for the neophytes and neophytes approximate what they see. This modeling and
approximating provides opportunities for both experienced and apprentice actors to
question and discuss the rules and the superstitions. Recently I was reminded of one of
the most important rules of theatre, and I wasn’t even in a play. I was the lector for the
Saturday evening Mass at my church. One of the duties of the lector is to read the
Prayers of the Faithful. Lesson number one in the theatre is “do your homework.”
Lesson number two is “check your props.” I forgot lesson number two, and when the
time came for me to read the prayers, they weren’t in the book. I’d failed to check the
book before Mass and was caught “on stage” without a very necessary prop during the
production. And, unlike in theatre, where the actor might be able to make up something
or improvise to cover up the missing prop, there was no escape in the church. The
avoidance of this type of situation is why rehearsal is so important. If an actor forgets to
check a prop during rehearsal, it may delay the rehearsal, but it is not a disaster. If an
actor forgets to check a prop before a performance and it isn’t there when needed on
stage, it can create a lag in the production and disrupt the performance. Rehearsal helps to lock in the routine.

In traditional theatre the set is mounted and left standing until the final production or strike. There is a set designer and a crew for building and mounting the set. During strike everyone in the production is involved in breaking down and packing the set, props, and costumes. In smaller companies the actors may be asked to help load in the set on the day they are scheduled to move into the performance space, but for the most part the actors are not involved in the moving of the set until strike.

It is important to understand why I chose to focus on the rehearsal process rather than the performance. Let me state that while I do believe performance is the ultimate outcome of rehearsal, it is a very small part of the process. I am convinced that rehearsal is the most important part of performance. It is the place where actors, directors, and technicians come together to create, explore, and discover. They try out new ideas and suggest new ways of thinking and working to themselves and one another. In Chapter One I will outline the purpose for this study and how I came to the decision to focus on the rehearsal process. In subsequent chapters I will discuss what I learned in the study and how I came to understand what it meant.

Chapter Two discusses the literature of both the theatre and pedagogical use of theatre in education. The discussion on the literature of theatre rehearsal addresses what theatre professionals such as Shaw, Clurman, and Hagen have to say about the importance of rehearsal in the mounting of a production. It is important to note here that there has been very little written by theatre people about the rehearsal process. Although,
I am not certain why this is, it is my opinion that theatre people believe that rehearsal is not something you can discuss but something you must experience in order to understand it. The discussion on the education literature looks at what has been written on the uses of drama in the classroom (Edmiston, 1998; Stephens, 1994; Warren, 1993; Wilhelm, 1998; and others). Again, the information available on the use of theatre rehearsal techniques in the classroom is sketchy. (Wilhelm mentions it but doesn’t delve into its importance.) The discussions generally tend to focus on the outcome, that is, the performance, rather than the process of rehearsal. Chapter Three outlines the methodology of the study. I discuss my reasons for selecting the theatre company and the site of the study. There is a brief introduction of the members of the company and the various tools of inquiry I used to collect the data. I present a time line of the interview schedule and a discussion of the analysis of the data. Chapter Four begins with a description of Key Players rehearsal process and the difference between traditional scripts and the scripts used by the company. The reader is then taken through a typical rehearsal schedule for the company, which is compacted into several days as opposed to a traditional theatre rehearsal schedule which may be anywhere from several weeks to several months. This chapter also includes the findings from my observations and interviews. In this chapter I discuss the four components of theatre rehearsal (chunking, repetition, encouragement, and response) that emerged as key themes as I analyzed the data and that I consider most important. I present examples from the research that show the literacy practices of members of the company that led me to my conclusions. In Chapter Five I discuss what I believe are the implications for using these techniques in the
classroom to teach reading and writing. The four components—chunking, repetition, encouragement and response—are reciprocal and recursive. I believe they are reciprocal in that each one generates another and they are recursive in that they are constantly repeated in the process but not necessarily in any particular order. The final chapter, Chapter Six, is a discussion of final thoughts about the study and plans for future study of the uses of theatre rehearsal techniques in the classroom. Future plans include designing a longitudinal study that looks at what, if any, impact teaching students how to use these components of rehearsal as strategies for reading and writing has on their reading and writing.
CHAPTER 1

THE AUDITION

Statement of Problem and Rationale for this Study

Why is rehearsal so important? What goes on during the rehearsal process in theatre that allows the cast to move from the reading of the script to the performance of the production? As I pondered these questions, I began to examine the process of theatre rehearsal itself. What are the components that make up the rehearsal? Are there some pieces that are more important than others, and if so, what are they and what makes them more important? How do these components work together to create the final product?

As an actress I am aware of the components of theatre rehearsal. In my career I participated in theatre rehearsal, but I had never closely analyzed the process. I knew what needed to be done when I went to rehearsal and I did it. As a teacher I believed in the importance of using theatre techniques with my students that included rehearsal, particularly with my reluctant readers and writers. Gail Tompkins (2000) calls these students less capable readers, defining them as students who struggle with word recognition, strategy selection and the like. I prefer the term “reluctant,” seeing them as students moving toward fluency and automaticity. As time progressed, I became convinced that it was the rehearsal process that made a difference with these students’ reading and writing. The question was WHY?
I began to look at this question from a research perspective in the spring of 1997 as the action research project (Wright, 1997 p. 83) for the completion of my Master’s degree. At that time I went into a second grade classroom in a year round school in Wilmington, North Carolina, to work with the students in a version of Reader’s Theatre. Traditional Reader’s Theatre is a presentation by two or more persons reading from scripts and using body tension to inspire the audience to imagine the setting, characterization and action (Laughlin & Latrobe, 1990). Instead of performing scripts students would perform stories and in the final phase of the project would write their own stories to be performed for an audience.

On my first day in the classroom I explained what we would be doing over the next six weeks; then I conducted an informal reading and writing survey with the students. This survey allowed me to determine which stories I would use to demonstrate Reader’s Theatre and assisted me in my approach with the class. By asking questions such as “how do you feel about reading for fun at home?” or “how do you feel about getting a book for a present?” the survey provided information regarding the students’ reading habits and attitudes. In general, the males hated reading and writing and only did it “when the teacher makes me.” The females liked reading and writing “sometimes” but often “found it hard.” All of the students were willing to try this new thing called Reader’s Theatre. The goal of this project was to move students from the act of performing stories to writing and performing their own works. This called for much rehearsal on the part of both the students and myself.
I believe there are many advantages to using drama in the classroom; collaboration, empowerment, and critical thinking are just three of the benefits. Drama is not just about producing a play or about acting out a story. Drama is about thinking (Heathcote, 1967). I know this from experience as an actor and from my work as a teacher. I also know this from observing the members of KEY Players during their rehearsals. As an actor I was constantly thinking about what was happening at that moment or what was going to happen next. During rehearsals and performances I considered my options and made choices based on what I knew about my character and the response of the other actors around me. The second graders who were part of my Action Research project demonstrated this when they were making decisions about their presentations of the stories. One group of students needed a representation for water. Out of the prop box they pulled a piece of blue cloth to place on the floor to represent the water. During their rehearsal of the reading a reference was made to flicking water on the people. The student reading the line tore a piece of the cloth to represent the droplets of water. This decision was made by the student, with no input from the classroom teacher or me. The actors in KEY Players shifted performance space several times a day while on tour. Each shift in space meant the performance would be different in some way. The actors were given very little time to size up the space and make decisions about their performance. I will talk more about these advantages in Chapter Five.

Brian Cambourne (1988) argues that there are seven conditions that are present in the learning of language (immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, approximation, employment and feedback), and these same conditions should be present
in the literacy classroom. My experience in theatre and the observations made during my research has shown me that these conditions are consistently evident in the theatre.

Throughout the process, in no particular order, these conditions are met. The rehearsal process immerses the actor in his/her role from the first read through to the final production. Often the director stops rehearsal to demonstrate for an actor how or where a movement should be made. The actor assumes responsibility for learning the lines and employing the blocking (the directed movement) from the moment he/she accepts the role. Actors read the script repeatedly to learn lines, remember cues and study blocking. All of this must be meshed with remembering costume changes, what prop is needed when, and where the light is. Every actor has his/her own way of doing this. Some actors just read the script in sections, close the book and try to repeat as much as they remember. Others tape themselves reading the lines and then play the tape over and over again, talking along with the tape. Others, and I am one of them, don’t even attempt to try to memorize lines until the blocking has been given. This helps to connect the spoken word with the movement and, for me at least, helps me connect and memorize the two at the same time. Everyone in the company engages in discussions relating to the production, actors write down the notes from the director and reread them later as part of the homework assignment, they read and reread the script countless times, they make choices regarding a character, a prop, or a costume and they discard choices. I believe that sometimes a rubric is created in the head of the actor, director or technician to help in making these choices. Will this choice move the production forward? How will this choice move the production forward? What does this character think about this choice? Is this choice consistent with
the development of the character so far? Everyone in the company works to incorporate these conditions in the rehearsal process.

As I explained earlier, neophyte actors learn the rules of theatre by observing and interacting with more experienced actors. Vygotsky (1978, p. 4) developed the model of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain how learners move beyond their existing knowledge to more sophisticated efforts with the assistance of a more experienced or knowledgeable learner. According to Vygotsky, the young learner observes the more experienced learner and makes moves towards expertise as the information is gained. This learning with assistance is one of the cornerstones of the theatre process.

Neophyte actors learn their craft by participating in the process and by observing more experienced performers. During rehearsals one may observe an experienced actor using a particular gesture during a monologue; later in a subsequent rehearsal one may see a less experienced actor using the same gesture. One may also observe young actors questioning older actors about technique and style or asking what one can do to ensure he/she is ready to take on the “big role” when it comes. Older actors may offer suggestions to younger ones about technique, style and line delivery. Dorothy Heathcote (Wagner, 1984) in her work with drama in the classroom takes the ZPD a step farther and suggests that the student assume the role of expert even before all of the necessary information is in place. Heathcote posits that students should be encouraged to wear the mantle of responsibility so that others may see it and recognize it. In other words, the young actor should be given the opportunity to take on the “big role” before he/she has learned all of the rules. Heathcote believes that when students are put in the position of being the expert they rise
to the occasion and do what is necessary to get the job done. In doing so the students learn the skills that make it possible for them to be given the label of expert.

Heathcote also believes that drama is not just about doing—it is about thinking and it is giving students the opportunity to think that moves them to the level of expert. Barbara Rogoff (1990, p. 57) echoes this when she speaks of thinking as more of a process than just the storage and retrieval of mental objects. She does, in fact, define thinking as problem solving. Kathleen Warren (1993, p. 13) believes that drama enables children to shift their thinking as they confront different situations. Eliot Eisner (1992) states that the arts come closest to being the key to educational reform because they have much in common with problems encountered in real life which seldom have a single, correct solution, are often subtle and ambiguous and oftentimes involve ethical dilemmas. I believe that, of the many things that take place during theatre rehearsals, shifts in thinking are key and drama moves the participant, both the actor on stage or the student in the classroom, beyond simply acquiring information or skills to maneuvering changes as an activity develops. As you will learn in the discussion of the findings, there are four key components to rehearsal that I believe create the environment and the opportunities for thinking and problem solving to occur. It is this multidimensional aspect of drama that makes it an effective teaching and learning tool.

Brief Description of the Study

Following is a brief discussion of the methodology used in the study. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. The theatre company selected as the site for the research was chosen because of my prior knowledge of and my belief in their work.
KEY Players is a professional touring theatre company that performs only in educational environments. The company consists of an Executive Director, Artistic Director, Touring/Production Coordinator, and Managing Artistic Director as well as four cast members. The season generally runs from September through April.

Through the use of ethnographic and qualitative methods of inquiry such as direct observation and participant observation, individual and group interviews, videotaping, field notes, analytic notes and reflections, I documented the reading, writing and rehearsal activities of the members of the theater company. Company members were asked to keep a reflective instrument that focused on their thoughts about reading and writing as they were reading and writing both professionally and personally.

The rehearsal process of the company was the central component of this study, and I spent a great deal of time observing the daily rehearsals before the company went out on tour. In addition, I accompanied the actors on tour and observed their performances.

In compliance with the IRB review process all of the participants signed written consent forms which gave me permission to interview them for this study, to audio and videotape the interviews and rehearsal process and to collect the data and keep it as part of my research materials.
CHAPTER 2

THE READ THROUGH

The literature on theatre rehearsal is limited and sketchy at best. In the theatre world the literature is almost non-existent and in the literature on the use of drama in the classroom rehearsal is either mentioned briefly or not discussed at all. While the reason for this oversight in the literature is unclear it is certain that the subject of theatre rehearsal needs to be discussed. In this chapter I discuss how my study relates to the existing literature.

The Drama Literature

Truth is what we all strive for in acting. Yet acting can never be truth, it has to seem to be truthful, but carefully observed, selected, and then conveyed to the audience in movement, costume, voice and action (Gielgud, 1991).

Rehearsal is where the actor works to make the acting seem truthful. “In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will discover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies” (Aristotle, 4th Century). There is more to rehearsal than simply learning lines and blocking. During rehearsal actors, directors and technicians are constantly thinking of ways to present and subsequently improve the production. Eugene Vakhtangov (Gorchakov, n.d., p. 33) said rehearsals are the period reserved for mistakes. Rehearsals are the time for actors and directors to work out the business of the script or as Clurman (1972, p. 1) put it, “to let the script work on you before you work on it.”
Letting the script work on the actor or director is not a process of osmosis, although there have been times when I wished it were so. Yet there is something exhilarating about taking a piece of text and watching it change as you make decisions about how to interpret the words, the movements, the actions and thoughts of a character. I have always found it interesting to watch my own thinking change as the rehearsal progresses. Clurman contends rehearsal should reveal the effects of one's thinking. Thinking and work are two words most lay people do not associate with the world of theatre, but the theatre people I know (actors, directors, technicians) and have spoken to insist they are, perhaps, the two most important words in the business. In the documentary "Looking for Richard" (Pacino, 1996), we are invited to observe the cast as they rehearse the Shakespeare play, "Richard III." Pacino tells us that the purpose of the film is to show the purpose of rehearsal, which is for the actor to analyze, approach from different angles, play out scenes and communicate his/her understanding about the play. In observing scenes from the numerous rehearsals of this play, the viewer observes firsthand the work and thought processes of the actors as they struggle with language, costumes, movement and understanding of the time in which the play was written. Rehearsal is hard work and requires a great deal of thought and preparation on the part of everyone involved in the production.

Earlier I mentioned Rogoff's definition of thinking which is that thinking is problem solving. I agree with this whether it is in the theatre, in the classroom, or in life in general. When we are confronted with a situation that requires a resolution as adults, most of us have learned to think it through first and then act on it. In theatre actors,
directors and technicians think about the next move before the rehearsal begins, but during the rehearsal the decisions that have been made about these moves may change. As an actor works through a scene, some of the decisions about character development will be determined by his/her reactions to the other characters on the stage. The notes given by the director, as well as things such as the position of a light or the design of the set, may also influence those decisions. Whatever the influence the actor must think about what will be in the best interest of the character and of the production. Proficient readers and writers also understand that thinking is problem solving. That is one of the strategies we use to determine our next move when we encounter language or text that is unfamiliar to us. We think about the problem and consider what outcome we desire and that determines our next move—do we look it up, do we ask someone, do we attempt to get the meaning from the context, etc. We usually call the length of time it takes us to learn the strategies and skills we need to problem solve the period of “trial and error.” I call it rehearsal.

Uta Hagen (1991) discusses the derivation of rehearsal as being from the word *rehearing*. She prefers the German *die Probe* “because it implies everything a rehearsal should be about: PROBING, TESTING, TRYING AND EXPLORING—A DISCOVERY.” This is exactly what rehearsal is supposed to be—a time to discover what can be done. It is a time to explore the possibilities, to try different ways of saying and doing and thinking. My own acting experience leads me agree with Hagen and the dictionary definition. Rehearsal is both a private and a public exercise. The private aspect is the work the actors and directors do before rehearsals begin and the homework
that is done after each rehearsal. Rehearsals are also private because they are generally closed to anyone other than people who are directly involved with the production. Rehearsal is considered public because it is conducted in the presence of others, i.e., members of the cast and crew, so that eventually the ideas the actor has for the development of the character must be seen and appraised by others. The public aspect of rehearsal forces the actor to think his/her private thoughts about the character publicly.

Some years ago I performed in the play *On the Verge*, by Eric Overmeyer. At the first read through we members of the cast knew we had our work cut out for us. The play is about three women who travel forward in time from the later 1800s to the mid 1900s and their experiences with the changing language. The read through was peppered with nervous laughter as we each stumbled over words that were unfamiliar to us. At times, even the reading strategies would fail us. I remember the rehearsal when we first encountered the word “palaver.” Our initial attempts to pronounce the word placed the emphasis on the wrong syllable. Sounding it out didn’t help, nor did trying to use the context of the sentence. The problem was not that we could not pronounce the words but that we didn’t know what they meant. But this was the read through, and the director let it go. In the early rehearsals as we struggled to make sense of the language, the director forced us to probe deeper into the meaning of the language and discover what worked best for our character. At every rehearsal three large dictionaries were placed on the director’s table, located in front of the stage area. Whenever we were unsure of a word or delivered a line in a tone or manner that caused the director to believe we were unsure of a word, we consulted the dictionary. Quite often, the visit to the dictionary...
was preceded by the director’s question of “What does that mean?” or “Do you understand what you are saying here?” Too often the response from one of the actors was “No, I have no idea,” at which point we would be guided to the dictionary to look up the word and consider possible ways of conveying the meaning to the audience. One of the first props we used was a journal. In the play each woman kept a journal of her travels, but for us, the journals were full of questions about the text that we wanted to discuss at the next rehearsal, words that we did not understand, and thoughts about our character. The journals were also a form of rehearsal for they were where we put our first attempts at thinking about the text. The first rehearsals were laborious but necessary because we knew that even though over time we would understand the strange words in the play, many of our audience members might not, and the only clues they would have were our tone and our actions. In other words we would have to make certain they would get the meaning from the context. It was intense, hard work but so exciting and rewarding when the moment of discovery was achieved.

Marni Gillard (1996) talks about rehearsal as a way of negotiating the mental and the physical. In the beginning stages of rehearsal the actor is performing with the head more than with the body. Rehearsal allows what is in the head to move through the body. This negotiation takes time for it is during the rehearsal process that the neophyte actor begins to develop the techniques and strategies that will assist her/him in the production. The proficient or experienced actor continues to hone and improve techniques and strategies. Learning to read and write requires the same act of negotiation. If we watch a child learning to read or write, we can see the concentration on his/her face as he/she
thinks about what to do next. As the child learns to recognize certain words, the concentration becomes less obvious until he/she encounters an unfamiliar word. As the reader becomes more fluent the thinking becomes less obvious, what we call automaticity. Cecily O’Neill (1995) suggests that rehearsal provides an opportunity to “establish the authority, style and personality of the director; suppress the actors’ inhibitions; encourage risk taking; and generate a sense of collective identity and community” (pp. 8-9). O’Neill goes on to say that if rehearsal is done skillfully the actors will develop a deeper understanding of the world of the play. It is the development of this deeper understanding that makes rehearsal crucial in the theatrical experience. I believe this is also true of reading and/or writing text. Providing readers and writers, especially emergent ones, multiple opportunities to rehearse their reading and writing allows them the chance to develop their voice, their style and it also generates a sense of collective identity and community, which Paula Salvio (1996, p. 58) contends is not done enough in classrooms. “There is a lot of discussion about bringing students’ personal experiences into the classroom but there is not enough talk about creating collective experiences.” I agree that theatre encourages a class to act as an ensemble of players to create experiences together in the classroom, to which they can refer over time. I believe rehearsal provides opportunities for these collective experiences to be created.

George Bernard Shaw (1958) considered rehearsal so important he believed it should always be closed to the public. In an essay titled Rules for Directors Shaw insists,
Rehearsals should be most strictly private. When for some reason it may be necessary to allow strangers to witness a rehearsal, no instruction nor correction should be addressed in their presence to a player; and the consent of every player should be obtained before the permission is granted (p. 283).

Shaw’s directions for directors covered everything from how the rehearsal should be approached to how and when the director should correct a player. He believed that actors should be allowed to use rehearsals to explore and consider new ideas about his or her character.

Unlike the performance, which belongs to the public, rehearsal is the actor’s private space. Rehearsal is the actor’s time to prepare, to discover, to make attempts, and to make mistakes. Rehearsal is the place where the actor prepares before going in front of an audience. It is the place where the actor learns to think in conjunction with his fellow actors and to use the strategies necessary to remember lines and blocking during the performance. Likewise, I believe rehearsal is crucial to the language and literacy process. Students need a place and time to prepare, to think, to make attempts and to make mistakes; and they need to be able to do these things freely and repeatedly.

The Education Literature

Schiller and Veale (1993) contend that the arts are the real business of education and that they should be an integral part of all school curricula. In stating their position the authors list three reasons: (1) the arts give students opportunities to explore the possibilities and boundaries within one medium; (2) the arts provide opportunities to integrate those possibilities and boundaries with another medium; and (3) the arts provide an opportunity for students to describe things which are aesthetically pleasing to them.
which awakens them to what Maxine Greene calls a “sense of presentness.” Rehearsal has the potential to provide students with multiple opportunities to explore and to integrate without immediate concern for the performance.

There has been much discussion in the literature about the use of theatre performance techniques in the classroom but very little about the use of rehearsal techniques. Rehearsal in the classroom helps students learn to negotiate the many sign systems used to make meaning—speaking, writing, seeing, listening, and thinking. In an article titled Empowering Children Through Drama Kathleen Warren (1993) discusses the ways drama can be used to help children learn about problem solving and conflict resolution. This is important because “learning to take control over our own lives is a crucial developmental task for all people” (p. 83). Drama helps children learn to do this by enabling them to shift their thinking as they confront different situations. Dorothy Heathcote (1967) states that, “Drama is not stories retold in action. Drama is human begins confronted by situations which change them because of what they must face in dealing with those challenges.”

In other words drama is about thinking and about doing. Shelby Wolf (1998) studied the use of drama in the classroom and concluded that as students moved through the processes of creating a classroom theatre, they shifted in their thinking of themselves as readers and in their linguistic capabilities. The study observed a class of school-labeled remedial readers as they made the shift from a language arts program that used round robin reading as the primary form of instruction to the construction of a classroom theatre in which they interpreted and performed literary text. Through the use of theatre
techniques such as gesture, pantomime, improvisation, role-playing and interpretation the
students were provided with a sense of what it means to be literate. The students and the
teacher used drama to reconstruct their understanding of what it means to create meaning
from text and in so doing reconstructed their understanding of themselves as readers.

Eisner (1998) argues that using the arts in education contributes to the
achievement of the mind because they require a memory of forms related to the one being
encountered. “There is a connection between the content and form that the arts take and
the culture and time in which the work was created.” In helping children learn to read and
write this relationship of new encounters to old forms is essential. I am reminded here of
a second grade student who had difficulty participating in class and as a result felt
ostracized by her classmates. Through the use of theatre she was able to find her voice
and participate in class in a way that made her feel like a valid member of the community.
As she and the other members of the class learned to respond to one another and to work
collaboratively, they discovered they could connect their ideas about the current work
with information from previous work and create something new.

Helping students connect to prior knowledge is an important strategy in making
meaning. Diane Stephens (1994) insists that when we teach we must understand that we
are helping children make meaning and must teach them in ways that will help them to do
so. Wagner (1998) says drama is a mental state. Participants in drama are instrumental in
creating the event. Jeffrey Wilhelm (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998) agrees, saying that
“drama creates a virtual world—or mental model—from the textual symbols called words”
(p. 31). By encouraging students to use drama as a means of interpreting the text, we
provide them with a tool for making the text visible or bringing it to life. This visibility of the text then allows the student to experience the text in a way that is unique to him or her, by situating it in a way that fits in with his/her perceptions of the world. David Booth (1987) observed a class of eighth graders and concluded that authentic drama experiences allow students to create personal meanings and explore concepts that make us human. Drama moves the participant beyond simply acquiring information or skills to maneuvering changes as an activity develops.

Drama is the one art form that not only encompasses every aspect of literacy development but also provides the possibility for use of every aspect of the curriculum. In drama one uses the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, and representing. Additionally, the uses of other aspects of the educational curriculum are incorporated into the process. “Drama is an invaluable tool for educators because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support every aspect of literacy development” (McMaster, 1998). In the play On The Verge the action moves forward in time spanning the 1800s through the early 1950s. To make the play realistic, the cast, the director and the technicians must research history, geography, music and dance. The language of the play shifts dramatically throughout, and words that are today considered archaic are used commonly. The cast must acquaint themselves with the new and sometimes strange language (words such as palaver) and be able to pronounce the words as if they have been saying them their entire lives. For me, this play connects the importance of rehearsal to literacy instruction. What happened for me in this play is what I believe we want to have happen for our students. In the second grade class where I did my Master’s project, one
group of boys wanted to write their story about twisters. They knew very little about the subject and proceeded to research. They went to the library and read books on the subject, they watched a documentary on television that just happened to air during this period, and they contacted a local television weather personality and questioned him. They delved into the topic of twisters and entertained their classmates with a story that made it all seem real. We want our students to learn from the text but we also want them to live the text as they are reading it. Louise Rosenblatt (1994, p. 59) describes this as efferent and aesthetic reading. Like an actor’s reading of the script, a student’s reading of the text will be informed by the previous read. In addition, the purpose for the reading will influence the way the student reads the text. When a student reads “efferently” he/she is reading to gather information, to remember or learn something. This is similar to an actor reading to learn the lines. The aesthetic reading of the text occurs when the student reads to experience the text, to feel the emotions of the characters, to have sense of being in the text, just as when the actor “becomes” the character. It is my belief that rehearsal provides the place for this to happen.

Summary

Intelligence is hooked with language and when we speak with no feeling we get nothing out of our society. We should speak like Shakespeare; we should introduce Shakespeare into the academics because then the kids would have feelings. We have no feelings, that’s why it’s easy for us to get a gun and shoot each other. We don’t feel for each other. If we were taught to feel we wouldn’t be so violent. He (Shakespeare) did more than help us, he instructed us

—Observer of “Richard III
An observer of the “Richard III” (Pacino, 1996, p. 47) rehearsals made the above statement. Shakespeare indeed invokes us to feel and to think. The use of drama in the language arts curriculum encourages students to do the same. The use of theatre rehearsal techniques in the curriculum can help students feel the text in their bodies; it can provide them with opportunities to experiment with the language. Providing students with theatre techniques to use as strategies for reading and writing gives them another tool for learning. The use of drama techniques can potentially also help students understand how they learn and what works best for them.

Drama can teach students to see and to do, to look beyond what is there and to look to what can be. It challenges them to read, to think, to talk and to write about what they see and this challenge helps them to develop stronger thinking, speaking, reading and writing skills.
CHAPTER 3

THE SET DESIGN

The Site and Reasons for Selection of This Site

The theatre company selected as the site for the research was chosen because of my prior knowledge of and my belief in their work. For several years I served on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Arts Council in various capacities, which included being a site evaluator and chairperson of the theatre panel. I became familiar with the work of KEY (Keep Empowering Youth) Players through this process. I had a professional relationship with KEY Players and had come to know the Executive Director and the Artistic Director quite well. KEY Players is a not-for-profit professional theatre company incorporated in the state of North Carolina in 1990. It was organized to present issue-oriented theatre to school children grades K-12, particularly the works of playwright Peg Wetli of CLIMB theatre in St. Paul, MN. KEY Players has secured exclusive rights in North Carolina for Wetli's works—more than fifteen issue-oriented plays that speak to concerns of today's youth. KEY Players' adult actors perform plays and lead theatre-based workshops that serve school children and educators throughout North and South Carolina and parts of Virginia (Players, 1999b). In addition, the Company is located in a state that provides an economic, ethnic, and racially diverse population that I felt would add richness to the study.
KEY Players is a professional touring theatre company that performs only in educational environments. KEY Players theatre differs from traditional theatre in that: (1) it uses the principles of theatre, psychology and education to change the thinking and behavior of its audiences; (2) it is interactive theatre where actors and audience members actually talk with each other; and (3) it incorporates objective methods (beyond number/makeup of audience) for measuring the success of the theatre/teaching/learning experience. KEY Players meets these criteria by (1) using the work of Peg Wetli; (2) engaging their audience in the conversation of the play; and (3) conducting follow-up workshops with the students after each performance. The company defines its work as Instructive Theatre, theatre which “can be written for any audience and must also be: (a) relevant to and understood by the audience; (b) capable of being performed outside of a theatre at sites and through agencies having dominion over the audience; and (c) affordable to these agencies (Players, n.d. p. 84).” KEY Players believes that the accessibility of Instructive Theatre “empowers youth to change or expand their way of thinking or their behavior in ways that benefit themselves individually or society in general” (Players, 1999b). Topics such as recycling, harassment, and feelings are constant in their work.

The Company consists of an Executive Director, Artistic Director, Touring/Production Coordinator, and Managing Artistic Director as well as four cast members, two males and two females. Two of the cast members are persons of color. The ethnic and gender makeup of the cast is important to the administration of the company because of the school populations they serve.
At the beginning of the performance season the Company gathers for what they call KEY Camp. It is a weeklong event that involves everyone working with the company on productions. The camp is the beginning of the bonding process for the cast members who up until this time have not spent a great deal of time together. These four people will spend the next nine months living and traveling together. KEY Camp is designed to give them strategies for coping with the day-to-day issues that will arise with living in the same house, as well as the strategies and techniques they will need for mounting professional productions. Ongoing training sessions, which include weekly discussion about the plays and workshops and how the company can make the work more effective, are held throughout the season.

The Actors and Members of the Company

KEY Players is comprised of a cast of four and an Executive Director, an Artistic Director, a Managing Artistic Director and a Touring Coordinator. These eight people are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the company. The cast members are called actor/educators, which the Company defines as “taking the active role, not just performing but taking issues and empowering them [the students]” and are hired for their ability to bring those two elements together (Players, 1999a).

The four actors are comprised of one white male, one African-American male, one white female and one Native American female. All of the cast members are in their twenties. Three of them have bachelor’s degrees and one has a Masters of Fine Arts. All of them are considered professional actors and have had some professional acting experience prior to joining KEY Players. In addition to their responsibilities as
actor/educators, the cast members have one of the following assigned technical roles: Site Coordinator, Data Coordinator, Props/Costume/Set Coordinator, or Transportation Coordinator. These roles are essential to the smooth operation of the company when the actors are on the road. All of the actors live in the same house during the theatre season and travel together when on tour.

The administrative members of the Company are three white females and one white male. All have college degrees, and two have worked at Lenoir-Rhyne College in North Carolina. The Executive Director and Artistic Director founded the company during their tenure at Lenoir-Rhyne and have maintained the vision and the growth of the company; they are also husband and wife. The Managing Artistic Director was a member of the founding cast and recently rejoined the company. All members of the administrative staff are also actors and when necessary will be pushed into duty as actor/educators. During KEY Camp everyone learns the performance and questioning techniques unique to KEY Players.

The Tools

Through the use of ethnographic and qualitative methods of inquiry such as direct observation and participant observation, individual and group interviews, videotaping of rehearsals, field notes, analytic notes and reflections, I documented the reading, writing and rehearsal activities of the members of the theatre company. Company members were asked to keep a reflective instrument that focused on their thoughts about reading and writing as they were reading and writing both professionally and personally. In addition to field notes taken during KEY Camp and company rehearsals, I videotaped several
rehearsals so that I could have the opportunity to examine the rehearsal process in more
detail and make determinations about what rehearsal concepts appeared to be prevalent
and most important to the process and to see what literacy elements emerged as key
themes. I identified the four components (chunking, repetition, encouragement and
response) by using these tools. The participants' reflective instruments, as well as the
interviews, provided a wealth of information regarding patterns and common elements in
the literacy and rehearsal practices of the participants. Every one of them spoke of
visualizing the test in some manner, no matter what they were reading. "I found myself
reading the script and seeing the action happen on the ER set and watching all the action
to see how it played" (Ray in his reflective instrument). "When I read a novel I'm
envisioning it. I see it in my head like I would a play or a movie" (Laura in interview #1).
They each initially spoke of how they did not believe themselves to be proficient readers
and/or writers. "Are you a proficient writer?" "I would say no. I edit myself too much
and I'm too much of a perfectionist. I get frustrated and annoyed" (Larry in interview
#1). "I don't like to read. I struggle with it a lot. I have to sit down and concentrate on
one thing and it's so hard for me" (Shemeca in interview #1). The videotapes helped me
find patterns in the rehearsals such as the chunking of the text that occurred in each first
rehearsal and the way the director conveyed this to the actors.

I audiotaped all group meetings, including read throughs, tour debriefing sessions
and group interviews. I also audio taped each individual interview and took field notes.
During individual interviews I asked participants to discuss such issues as their reading
and writing in relation to theatre materials (scripts) as well as non-theatre materials
(novels, magazines, grant proposals, etc.). “How much reading/writing do you do in your role with the company?” “How do you see your reading/writing of theatre material affecting your reading/writing of other materials?” I also asked them about their history as readers and a writers. “Do you consider yourself a reader/writer?” “Are you a proficient reader/writer?” “How do you define literacy?” This information was used to help me in the search for patterns regarding theatre persons as readers and writers.

**Direct Observation**

The rehearsal process of the company was the central component of this study and I spent a great deal of time observing the daily rehearsals before the company went out on tour. The first set of rehearsals was six days long and averaged nine to ten hours per day. In addition I accompanied the actors on tour twice and observed the performances. The tours provided me with an opportunity to observe the actors’ non-theatre literacy practices and to listen in on non-rehearsal conversations.

Having worked in theatre both as a performer and as a stage manager I know the importance and the difficulty of focusing on the specific while observing the total. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and Bonnie Sunstein (1997) suggest field workers must teach themselves to see in new ways, learn to establish a “gaze.” A “gaze” is the way a field worker looks at the research. “They test what they think they see against their preconceptions and assumptions” (p. 60). In an effort to establish a gaze for myself I needed to know at each rehearsal what I was looking for and why I was looking for it and how I would recognize it when I saw it. My experience in theatre might hinder me rather than help me. Instead of looking at rehearsal through the eyes of a theatre professional, I
chose the gaze of teacher. My familiarity with using drama in the classroom with both teachers and students allowed me to be comfortable with taking this stance. This lens helped me ask questions of myself for clarification as I observed the rehearsal process of the actors and the administrators. Considering questions such as “Why is it important to say the word using that tone?” or “What is the purpose for the adjustment of the actor’s stance in this scene?” forced me to look at the rehearsal process in the way a non-theatre person might. When I sat observing Margie prepare the boxes of materials the actors would take with them on each tour (one box for each site visited), my teacher lens caused me to observe how she organized the multitude of materials that needed to go into the boxes so that each box would be complete. Not only did she have a checklist with the items listed but also she reviewed the list of items in the box with a colleague to ensure everything that was needed was there.

My experience in working with teachers who have had little or no theatre experience led me to believe this would be the ideal stance for me to take. The lens of the teacher forced me to question more closely what I thought I was seeing and to question why I thought I was seeing it. It also gave me permission to ask questions that a theatre professional would consider elementary but a teacher might consider necessary. It was important to me that I be able to ask myself such elementary questions throughout the process. I was certain I had chosen the right tack when one day during a Trash rehearsal I wrote in my notes the questions, “Why is she making such a big deal over the delivery of that line? It sounds fine to me.” When I began to analyze my data and read that entry, I was shocked for a moment until I realized I was reading it through my actor’s lens. As an
actor I knew what the problem was with the line delivery—the timing was off. The actor in me understood that the actor delivering the line didn’t have his rhythm yet. The actor in me would have offered a suggestion on how to resolve the problem. By looking through my outsider lens, I could allow myself to sit and wonder what the problem was and wait to see how the actor and the director would resolve it. Through the teacher’s lens, I could see the chaos and the uncertainty that existed in the process and believe that the outcome might not be good. The teacher lens caused me to look at how the director maintained a sense of order in the rehearsal. I paid attention to the way she announced the start of a rehearsal. “Okay, as soon as Degel gets back we will start with Larry’s entrance.” I watched closely the way she helped an actor work through a section of the script that was giving him/her trouble and at the same time keeping the other actors on task. “You three might want to run the lines for that last scene while I work with Larry on this, then we’ll run the entire scene again.” As an actor I would never have considered the possibility that the outcome would be anything other than what the company intended. As an outsider I could consider the possibility that this production might not happen, that order might never reign, and that all might be hopelessly lost. As an actor I would feel obligated to review the rehearsal with the caveat in my head that the show must go on. That is what actors are taught; it is the main rule of the theatre. Whatever happens, however you may feel, when it is time for the curtain to go up, the curtain goes up. Rehearsal is the place where this mantra begins. Actors come to rehearsal, and they come to rehearsal ready to work because the show must and will go on. My new way of looking at theatre rehearsal gave me the opportunity to see rehearsal in a way I’d never
before considered. I was able to ask why and look for ways in which each rehearsal was
different from the others. As an actor I would have made certain assumptions about each
rehearsal. As a teacher I listened for the director's instructions to the actors to learn the
focus of each rehearsal. This direct observation provided me with opportunities to focus
on the activities of the actors as an ensemble and as individuals. Looking at each rehearsal
through my teacher's lens helped me to observe the scene and simultaneously pay
attention to each actor just as I would do in the classroom.

I understood going into this study that I would have to be aware of what Alan
Peshkin (1988) calls the "subjective I/eye (p. 17)." In giving the dictionary definition of
subjectivity Peshkin noted that the "quality" affects the results of all of the investigation
not just the observational ones. Peshkin holds the view, and I agree, that contact with the
research phenomenon releases personal qualities which have the capacity to "filter, skew,
shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a
project to its culmination of the written statement" (p. 17). In an earlier project for a
class I took several years ago I became familiar with my own subjectivity, so this was a
major concern in this study for several reasons. The first was my relationship with the
Executive and Artistic Directors. Would I be able to maintain the necessary distance as a
researcher in order to see through a clear lens? The concern proved to be unfounded.
With the help of the Executive Director I was able to maintain my focus as a researcher
and keep our friendship intact. This was probably due more to her experience as an
Executive Director than to my expertise as a researcher. Throughout the study she made
no inquiries into the work other than to know if I was getting what I needed from the
process. She did not ask to see my notes and she made the Company available to me in every aspect. The second was my conception of theatre people as readers and writers, which was based on my own experiences as a reader and writer and as an actress. This was perhaps my biggest supposition. I entered into this study with the belief that most theatre people are proficient readers and writers and truly enjoy reading for any purpose. I based this on my experience in theatre and my knowledge of myself. As I was to discover, this may be more the exception than the rule. My third concern was the passion I feel for the theatre and the importance I attribute to the rehearsal process. In my own experience as an actor I always found the rehearsal more satisfying than the performances. For this study I would need to be able to look at rehearsal objectively in order to separate the parts and evaluate their possibilities for use in the classroom. As Peshkin suggested I would need to be aware throughout the duration of the study of my own subjectivity and notice when it was influencing my observations.

As I stated earlier, the rehearsal process in traditional theatre is generally extended over several weeks. During that time the actors and director methodically work through the script to create the best product possible. Scenes are worked and reworked until the director and the actor are satisfied the piece is solid. Lines are repeated and recited using different tones and inflections until the right choice is made. One day's rehearsal can focus on one scene and it can take a week or two to get through one act. However, for the members of KEY Players this extended rehearsal is compacted into several days, generally not less than three and no more than seven. During that time the actors must learn their lines verbatim, learn the blocking (which will need to be adapted to the space in which
they are working once they are on tour), and learn how to assemble and disassemble the
set for each production.

During this study rehearsal for the first tour began the day after KEY Camp
ended. On the morning of rehearsal the actors were given the script only for the play
they would be performing on that particular tour, Trash. Sitting around a table in the
Company’s office, they did a read through of the play. In traditional theatre rehearsal the
actors have had access to the script for some time before the read through and have had
time to consider the possibilities for their characters. For the actors in KEY Players the
read through is a cold reading; in other words, the actors have no time to prepare prior to
seeing the script and must rely on instinct and ability to make decisions regarding the
reading of a line. During the months I spent observing the actors this first step in the
rehearsal was one of the most intriguing.

A word about script differences. In traditional theatre the script can be bound in a
book, which most actors will pull apart and place in a notebook with room in the margins
for writing blocking directions and notes. The length of the play can be one or more acts
and each act can be comprised of one or more scenes. Lillian Hellman’s play The Little
Foxes is comprised of three acts and each act is comprised of one scene. In contrast, the
scripts KEY Players uses are unbound 8 1/2 x 11 pages with deep margins all around for
placing in a notebook and for writing notes. Peg Wetli’s Trash is one act, which consists
of fourteen scenes. Traditional scripts generally have brief, if any, character description, a
synopsis of the scenes and a description of the set. The Wetli scripts KEY Players uses
give detailed character descriptions of every character and a list of the items for the set.
It was during the read through that one of my initial beliefs about actors as readers was challenged. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, one of my assumptions was that all actors are readers. It is after all what actors do, they read scripts and perform them. I am an actor and I like to read. My friend Susan is an actor and she likes to read. My friend Grenaldo is an actor and a playwright and he likes to read. In fact, most of the actors I know like to read. I thought that this was a common attitude until I met the actors of KEY Players! Shemeca informed me that she did not like to read, she considered reading hard work and she did it as little as possible. When I pointed out to her that she reads for the theatre she insisted that reading for the theatre was not reading, it was work and there was a difference. For Shemeca reading is what one does for pleasure, it is something to be enjoyed. Work is what is done because one has to and enjoyment is not necessarily a requirement. As I was to discover in this study actors are like students, they are all different.

Participant Observation

Participant observation requires the researcher to immerse herself/himself into a group or situation and acclimate herself/himself both physically and socially to the surroundings (Wax, 1980, in Cieurzo & Keitel, 1999). During the first week of the season at KEY Players everyone in the company participates in an orientation session called KEY Camp. I participated in this weeklong session, performing the activities and exercises with the members of the company. This included speech activities, performance enhancement techniques, quick thinking exercises, questioning techniques, as well as group discussions and such things as a scavenger hunt to find our way around the city.
Each of the components of KEY Camp is designed to provide the actors with the tools necessary to learn the script and mount a professional production in a very short period of time. Like Sondra Hale (1991) I had to consider my objectivity or lack of, because, as Hale suggests in her essay on interviewing Sudanese women, everything the researcher does, including participant observation, is tempered by what one knows and has done before (p. 124). A great deal of my knowledge about theatre comes from my having worked in it. My decision to participate in the camp was fueled by a desire to understand what the structure was like and to fully comprehend the pace at which the actors would be working once rehearsal began. I anticipated that camp would also give me a greater appreciation for what we would face once we were out on the road.

Camp began each day at 9:00 a.m. and usually ended between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. with a one-hour break for lunch. At the conclusion of each day we were given a written copy of the schedule for the following day. This schedule showed the activities and topics that would be covered, the staff member who would be facilitating the activity, the time allotted for the activity and the location. (See Appendix A.) The schedule was strictly adhered to from the beginning and no detail was overlooked, from the way one dressed to the way one spoke and moved. At the beginning of the day the either C. Jane, the Executive Director or Ray, the Artistic Director would go over the schedule and make any necessary adjustments. Then we would begin with some warm up activities to get our articulators going and bodies ready to work. These warm ups included vocalizing ah’s and oh’s and stretching exercises.
This attention to time and detail from the beginning was crucial to the actors’ development of what would be required of them once they began the tour. The majority of the day was spent doing some type of activity geared to improve articulation, breathing, stamina, speed and thinking. There were also team-building activities to help the actors adapt to living and working with one another. One of the activities was called “I statements/You statements.” This activity was used to help the company members learn how to reduce and resolve personal and professional conflicts. In this activity we were put in pairs and given a card on which was written a potential problem like: ‘You go into the bathroom to take a shower and notice your roommate has left his/her hair in the tub. Talk to your roommate about this problem using I/you statements.’ Each pair worked on the statement while the rest of the group watched. The object of the exercise was to communicate with your partner without put downs or blame. So a good statement might sound like this: ‘I feel disrespected when you leave hair in the bathtub after your shower because it makes me feel the bathroom is dirty and I need for you to rinse the tub out when you finish using it.’ This particular exercise was important because the members of the company, especially the actors, spent a great deal of time together. The actors lived in the same house, traveled and lived together during tours, and much of their free time was spent together. Conflicts were inevitable and if they were not resolved properly and quickly they could lead to problems during a tour. The success of a tour relied on the collaboration of the members of the company. At the conclusion of each day’s camp the ensemble would retire to the actors’ house to discuss house issues such as cleaning schedules, rules, and the like. Since I did not live in the actors’ house I was not in
attendance at these meetings but was given a complete rundown of the previous evening’s meeting by at least one of the actors.

As a member of the ensemble I participated in all of the activities during KEY Camp. We were given information and quizzed on everything from the history of the company to techniques on how to ask questions and choose volunteers. At times the information was given in the form of a talk like on the first day when C. Jane spoke to us about the history of KEY Players. This was information that we would need to know once we were out on tour. The company has a high visibility rate wherever they go and people ask questions about who they are and what they do and why they do it. The history lesson was important. There were exercises on how to include every student in the production activities as well as exercises on ways to make certain everyone heard a compliment during classroom workshops. We learned about the “Golden Circle” which is the way questions were to be asked of the students. The idea is to be sure when a question is put forth to the audience and a student answered it, the student was to be thanked. This was true even if the student responded incorrectly or needed help answering the question. The actor/educator was to be sure to go back and thank the student who made the first attempt. For example, in the play Trash the students are asked if they can name the three R’s. At one performance one student answered “Reduce, Reuse and……” He could not remember the last “r”. Degel responded, “That’s okay, who can name the third ‘r’? When another student responded “Recycle,” Degel responded with, “That’s right! Thank you.” And then he turned to the other student and said, “Thank you.” He’d closed the Golden Circle. This was important to help the
students feel they were part of the learning and the teaching. We learned body and voice warm-ups and techniques to stretch the imagination. This activity helped us visualize, a strategy that is important when working with text. For example, on the first day one of the activities we did was called “making the chair into ten different things +5...+3...+2.” Each person had to go before the group and make a chair into first, ten different objects, then five, and so forth. In addition we could not repeat an object. Every so often we could hear a groan as the person who was up used an object that someone else was thinking of creating. After each exercise we discussed our feelings as the exercise progressed. What common feelings did we share as the exercise progressed? Everyone expressed feelings of nervousness, relief, and tension. We all felt the need to communicate with one another to help relieve the tension and the nervousness, which was compounded by the fact that we could not speak during the exercise. We each felt relief as we completed the task and managed to be creative.

The goal of KEY camp is to prepare the actor/educators for the fast pace of the touring season. It is essential to be able to think and shift gears quickly, and the actors must make the decisions because, just as in traditional theatre, the director is not there once the curtain goes up. KEY Camp taught us to rely not only on ourselves but on one another, we learned to trust that our fellow actors would help us if we were in trouble, we learned how to talk to one another and work out differences and we learned that we were all in this together.
Interviews

In the book *Researching Drama and Arts Education: Paradigms and Possibilities*, Phillip Taylor states, “this method is particularly useful...interviews permit the researchers to follow up hunches, to probe complexity, and to understand why certain behaviors were demonstrated” (1996, p. 45). For this study I conducted two different types of interviews, group and individual. (See Figure 1.) The interviews were conducted more as interactions than as information gathering sessions, what Anderson and Jack define as oral histories (1991). According to the authors the possibilities of the oral history interview cause the researcher to focus on the process and on the dynamic unfolding of the subject’s viewpoint. This type of interview was ideally suited for this study because it allowed the participants to have a conversation as opposed to just answering questions. It also provided opportunities for me to listen to what the respondent was saying and to follow up with appropriate questions. I used the interviews as a tool to create an oral history of the participants. “An oral history is an approach in which personal recollections of events, their causes, and their effects are gathered” (Creswell, 1998). While this was not a biographical study, a history of the literacy practices of the participants was necessary in understanding the influence these practices had on their reading and writing of theatre and non-theatre material. For example, I learned that many of the participants visualized the text when reading a novel or a magazine. Ray pointed out that he often “saw” the text he was reading as if it were a television show. I also learned that often the reading of a text led a participant to explore or research in order to learn more about a particular subject. “The spoken memory can
often be more immediate and powerful as a way of capturing the spirit of the past (O'Brien, 1996)."

![Figure 1. Interview Schedule](image)

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Individual interviews with administrators ...
Individual interviews with actors 
Group interviews 

Figure 1. Interview Schedule

The individual interviews gave the participant and me opportunities to speak specifically about issues that were relevant to the participant and to the researcher.

Participants were encouraged to be honest in their responses to the questions and in their thoughts on reading and writing. I believed it was important to stress this with all of the participants because at our first meeting one of the actors asked, "What do you want us to say about reading and writing?" Throughout the study they were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers to either the questions during the interviews or to what was written in the reflective instruments. Repeatedly they would ask, "Is that what you want?" My response was always the same, "There is no right or wrong response, there is only your response." I considered the time spent with each participant our private time to look at the individual's literacy practices and consider what that meant to him or her. For some of the participants the individual interviews seemed to be therapy sessions where they were able to speak freely about their concerns about their own literacy. It was during one such interview that Shemeca discussed her frustration with her difficulty
in concentrating when she is reading non-theatre material. She was not looking for answers; she just needed to talk and as I listened she began to talk about the strategies she could employ to help her when she reads. I interviewed each actor three times and each administrator twice.

The group interviews were conducted to provide opportunities for the participants to talk as a group about their reflective instruments and issues of literacy they were uncovering during the study and included all members of the Company. These group interviews often became roundtable discussions where the participants talked and I took notes. There were four group interviews, including an exit interview. All interviews (individual and group) were no less than thirty minutes and no longer than one hour and were conducted either at the KEY Players office or at the rehearsal site. The individual interviews with each administrator were conducted in September and November; the individual interviews with the actors were conducted in October, November and January. The group interviews were held in October, twice in November, and January.

The first interview with each member of the company was to gather background information. This interview was approximately forty-five minutes long. Questions during this interview were designed to find out about the subject as a person, her/his educational background, thoughts about reading and writing, what he/she likes to do for fun, her/his position within the company and so forth. (See Appendix B.) Subsequent interviews were approximately thirty-minutes long and the questions designed to specifically discuss the reading, writing and rehearsal techniques of the subject. I queried interviewees about
strategies they use when reading scripts for production and how those strategies were similar to and/or different from how they read non-theatre material. (See Appendix C.)

The first group interview was held on the second day of KEY Camp and served as an opportunity to introduce the company to the concept of interviewing and the opportunity to answer questions as a group concerning literacy and theatre. During this interview participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the process and the goals of the study. This was the longest of the interviews lasting one hour and thirty minutes. The final group interview served as a debriefing for the company and an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participants' final thoughts. The middle interviews were held to give the group opportunities to share thoughts and questions from their reflective instruments with the researcher and other participants.

**Reflective Instruments**

I asked each member of the Company (actors and staff) to keep a reflective instrument that documented in some way his/her thoughts regarding him/herself as a reader and writer. I chose to call it a reflective instrument rather than a journal because I did not want it to feel like work for the participants. It was a wise decision, since several of the participants told me in interviews that they did not like to keep a journal. Because the reflective instrument could be in any format they chose, it did not feel like a journal to them. After some discussion with the Managing Artistic Director, I decided to leave the form of the instrument to the discretion of each subject (written journal, audio journal or video tape). Six of the members elected to do a written journal, one did videotape and one kept an audio journal. I believe leaving this choice to the participants helped them to be
more responsive to keeping a journal than they would have if I had insisted it be done in a particular way.

Larry’s audio journal was a rich conversation that gave some wonderful insights into his literacy practices and what he thought of himself as a reader and a writer. When Larry was asked if he thought of himself as a good reader he said no. His definition of a good reader was someone who enjoys sitting down and reading the book. Yet in his reflective instrument, which was an audio journal, he spoke of all of the literature he has read. He spoke of reading anything and everything from medicine bottles in the bathroom to whatever signs are up wherever he is. “I always thought of it more as a curiosity thing than being a reader.” As he continued to think about his literacy practices he acknowledged that he knew something he would not admit aloud to anyone else, “The more I read the better it is on me. Weird, because it doesn’t encourage me to read more but I do read better if I give myself more constant reading.”

In her instrument C. Jane wrote “I don’t have a lot of reading time, so I make up for that by reading all the time.” This is something she had not paid attention to before she began to keep her journal. She also admitted she was a procrastinator when it came to writing but because of it she was able to write anything “from a grant proposal to a press release to a workshop in a very short time.” Of course, she has to do her research in advance and think about what she wants to write, so the procrastination is not necessarily a bad thing. The keeping of the instrument moved C. Jane from seeing literacy as just being able to read and write, to being able to communicate to an audience the necessary information.
Megan kept the most expansive reflective instrument using art and words. Megan made many discoveries about herself in her journal. She realized she was a skimmer when she reads and she liked keeping a journal. Perhaps her biggest discovery was that when she writes she uses at least two adjectives or presents the reader with at least two options of words, such as “discussion and contemplation.” In one entry she explored this and considered that perhaps her work in theatre causes her to always look for other options or to have as many plans as possible on hand.

Of all the participants in the study Laura had the most difficult time with the reflective instrument. Several times during the study she asked if it was absolutely necessary for her to keep an instrument. She insisted that she did not like to write and didn’t want to keep a journal. Interestingly she opted to keep a journal and discovered that “the repetition of writing so many papers while in school has caused me to adopt many habits or processes as second nature and without much thought or effort.”

Prior to each group interview and at the conclusion of our time together, I asked each member to write a précis of the reflections, a summary of what he/she had written and her/his thoughts about it. Periodically during the process I collected and reviewed the reflective instruments and returned them to the company without comment. My review involved my reading, viewing or listening to the entries made by the participant and noting comments in the instruments regarding the subject’s literacy practices during rehearsals and at other times, such as Ray’s comments about visualizing the text like it was on film. I also made note of any concerns the participant stated regarding his/her literacy, for example, Shemeca’s exploration of the harassment text. These comments

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were included in my field notes and were used in the analysis of the data as I looked for themes and patterns among the participants. One theme that seemed to be consistent among all of the participants was their judgment of themselves as lacking in proficiency as readers and writers. This theme was echoed at the beginning of every reflective instrument. Over time, as they became aware of their literacy practices both in and out of the theatre, most of the participants said they believed they were proficient readers and/or writers. At the conclusion of the data gathering I collected all reflective instruments and they became part of the research materials.

**Analysis**

The first step in analyzing the data was to transcribe the audiotape interviews and review the videotaped rehearsals. After transcribing the tapes I categorized the information into two major sections—Rehearsal and Literacy Practices. From these emerged four major themes: Chunking, Repetition, Encouragement, and Response. The themes emerged from the analysis of the rehearsal data and of the literacy practices. These themes and how I arrived at them will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Using Anderson and Jack’s (1991) three strategies for listening, I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews several times. The first reading of the transcriptions was to identify specific strategies described by each subject in his/her reading practices and to “listen” for the moral language of the participant. How did the participant judge himself or herself as a reader and a writer? The next read was to “listen” to what Jack calls meta-statements, “the places in the interview where people spontaneously stop, look back, and comment about their own thoughts or something just said (p.21).” These statements
alert the interviewer to the interviewee’s awareness “between what is expected and what is being said” (p. 22). The third listen was to attend to the logic of the narrative. This listen provides insights on the assumptions and beliefs that inform the logic and guide the interpretation of the participant’s experience. Subsequent studies of the transcriptions allowed me to compare the information gleaned from previous reviews of the data and look for similarities among the participants. These studies were also compared to the field notes and the analytic memos written to myself. Reviews of the analytic memos and field notes helped me to keep my focus as I sorted through the data and kept me aware of my subjective “I.” To help make the process clearer I used a triple entry journal in which I listed the concept I was reviewing, the primary source in theatre literature and the primary source in educational theory. On a regular basis I did a reflective writing on the connections I was making among the three. One such entry related to the concept of “chunking.” In both the reflective instrument and in his interviews, Larry spoke of his need to chunk material he reads as a way of learning and understanding. In my journal I wrote the concept of chunking in one column, what Shaw and Clurman say about it in another, and what Bruner says about it in another. Underneath the columns I wrote, “Larry uses chunking to help him understand what is going on in the text. Chunking gives him the chance to answer questions about the text such as, what does this mean? and what does the author want me to get from this? For him chunking is essential to his learning lines and comprehending text.” This organization became crucial once I began to discuss the findings of my research.
CHAPTER 4

OPENING NIGHT

The Process

In the Introduction I described a typical traditional theatre rehearsal. In order to fully appreciate what I was seeing during the observations of KEY Players, I think it is necessary to describe here a typical KEY Players' rehearsal. Rehearsal days are long, beginning at eight or nine o’clock in the morning and lasting until eight or nine at night. The schedule is strictly adhered to and any time loss due to actors returning late from lunch or a break is made up; the pace is fast, at times appearing almost frenetic; and the attitude is professional. Everyone comes to rehearsal ready to work, having done the homework (lines and blocking learned, egos outside the door).

On the first full day of rehearsal the actors have a read through in the morning. This read through includes the full reading of the script and a discussion of the multiple characters each actor will portray. The actors are reminded of the character hook exercise they did in KEY Camp. Because of the multiple characters each actor will play character hooks are an important tool for differentiating each character. For example, in the play Trash, Megan plays “Joan” (the well-behaved, well-read, very bright sister of James), “Lucy” (a spoiled, very pretty, “sexy” sixth grader), and “Mrs. Smith” (a very old kindergarten teacher). In order to help the audience see a different character each time she entered she used a different voice and physical action for each character. “Joan” had a
taunting, teasing voice and always put her hands on her hips; "Lucy" spoke with a middle school sultry voice and flipped her pony tails; and "Mrs. Smith" walked slowly and somewhat bent and spoke with a frail voice. Megan worked on developing these character hooks nightly until she was able to call them up as quickly as the character changes happened. Before she could develop these character hooks Megan had to read the script and visualize each character and what they might look like in action. She also had to take into consideration the audience she would be performing for and how best to convey each character to them. (*Trash* is written for elementary age students.)

This rehearsal includes a discussion of the scheduled tour for this play and the type of school(s) the actors will be visiting. The director gives the actors a summary of the play, the purpose for the play and the schools where the actors will be presenting the play that are scheduled for this particular tour. If there is any special activity associated with this production, it is discussed with the actors at this time. For example, in the play *Expect Respect* there is a rap the actors will teach the students as part of the production. Before the first read through the director teaches the actors the rap. Actors are given a synopsis sheet, an evaluation sheet and a curriculum packet. These handouts are used when the actors conduct workshops and in-service activities in the schools, which must be rehearsed as well. Those rehearsals take place after the actors have learned the play. Workshops are conducted with the students in their individual classrooms after they have seen the production. The rehearsals for these workshops and for the teacher in-service activities that may take place several weeks prior to the production are held after completion of rehearsals for the play. Workshop rehearsals are also scripted but are
shorter and focus on ways to engage the students in the activities to reinforce what they learned in the play. They are easier for the actors because they are familiar with the play and pull from their knowledge of their work in the play.

After the read through and a lunch break the ensemble meets in the rehearsal space and begins the rehearsal process. Directions are given for the opening scene, the director tells the actors how far to go in the scene and the actors begin the task of making meaning from the text. The directions given to the actors are clear and precise; expectations are stated from the outset so the actors know what is expected of them. For example, at the first rehearsal of *Trash*, the director explains exactly what the main character “James” should be doing in the opening scene. The tone of the mother is set and the teasing between “James” and his sister is explained. The director models blocking for the actors when necessary, suggests line delivery and the like (Appendix E). Each segment of the script is worked repeatedly until the actor and director are confident it has been set. As the rehearsal progresses, the set segments are put aside and a new segment is picked up. By the time this rehearsal is completed most if not all of the script will have been rehearsed. At the conclusion of the day’s rehearsal, some nine to ten hours after rehearsal began, the director and the actors sit down for notes. The most important note is to go home and learn lines. This note is not unexpected by anyone in the rehearsal, but when a note is given to an actor, he/she understands the significance. This ensemble has only a few days before they will go out to give their first school performance. They must know their lines. Other notes are given as well regarding blocking, pronunciation, projection and
the like. From experience I know that many of these notes will be repeated until the opening performance.

Day two of rehearsal finds the ensemble adding in the music sound track for this play. Just as in traditional theatre, the actors are distracted at first by this new addition, as well as their attempts to go off book. After several false starts everyone settles down, and the rehearsal goes a little more smoothly. By lunchtime most of the lines for the first third of the play are set, the blocking has been adjusted accordingly and the actors and the director appear to be satisfied with their progress. After lunch the ensemble continues to work on the remainder, of the play and the Executive Director arrives with costumes to be tried and fitted. This rehearsal sees the beginning of the attention to detail that usually occurs much later in traditional theatre. The action is stopped to correct blocking errors, to make adjustments for an actor's comfort, and to help the ensemble look at and speak out toward their audience. The director stops rehearsal numerous times at the request of an actor to start over and rework a section, even if the director felt it went well. This rehearsal is like all rehearsals, a time and place for making mistakes. Mistakes are made, mistakes are corrected, and everyone has his/her moment.

The third day of the rehearsal is for run throughs. The run through for KEY Players is more like a final dress rehearsal. The entire play is run through several times without stopping. After each completion the director gives notes and the actors ask questions, make suggestions and the process begins again. Strict attention is paid to every detail from the way an actor enters the scene to the preciseness of the lines. There can be no adlibbing in these scripts. The playwright has worked with a committee of
psychologists, educators, parents and artists to choose the right words for each audience age level. A change of one word can change the entire meaning of a line and create controversy for everyone. Adherence to the script is critical.

This rehearsal is also focused on the actors connecting to the audience. Each time the actors perform they will be in an elementary, middle or a high school. The performances are designed to be interactive, so the actors must be able to engage their audience in the production. Some of the exercises that were learned in KEY Camp are now put to use. The actors must be able to think and react quickly; there will be no backing up and doing it again once they are out on the road. This is live theatre and just as in traditional live theatre, once the curtain goes up, there is no stopping until the show is over.

The fourth day of rehearsal is a full run through. It is also the day the actors begin working with mounting and dismounting the set. Up to this point, the set has been put up and stayed. Later, over the weekend they will learn how to pack the van and do a load in and a load out. The ensemble must mount the set as a team in order for the tours to run smoothly. Everyone has his/her job, and mounting time will vary depending on the space in which they will be performing. The set is a system of curtains suspended on bars and pulled taut at top and bottom. There are braces to hold the bars in place and depending on the show there can be a sound and video system. Boxes, suitcases and canvas bags hold costumes, props, and set pieces. Everything that is needed for the production is brought in the van; nothing is left to chance.
This rehearsal is like the final dress rehearsal and the play will be run several times before the day is over. Everything that will be used in the actual production is being used and for the first time there will be an audience. In the morning the actors run through the complete show without stopping. The director does not stop to fix anything during the run through. The actors must help one another get out of line and blocking jams. The director makes notes of errors, trouble spots and the like to give to actors at the completion of the rehearsal. The purpose of this run through is to check timing and pace, to set lines, blocking and costume changes. This is the rehearsal where everything that doesn't work will be corrected or thrown out.

Each run through on this day has a different focus. The last rehearsal of the day focuses on energy and volume. The actors are reminded of their audience, young elementary school students who can quickly become restless if the action on the stage is dull or boring. They are reminded that when students cannot hear what is going on they create their own conversations. They are given tips on what to do when a line is forgotten; ask the question “What makes sense?” This is the final rehearsal before the actors leave on tour. In just four days this ensemble has gone from having no connection to the script to creating a viable product that they will perform over the next four days, giving nine performances in seven schools.

The Observations

After spending a week in KEY Camp with the ensemble, I was as anxious as the actors to begin rehearsals. As a researcher I was interested in how many of the techniques learned and the information discussed during camp would be used. I was also interested
in the differences and similarities of rehearsal in KEY Players and traditional theatre. Additionally, I wanted to know what I would find in KEY Players rehearsal techniques that would suggest implications for teaching practices in reading and writing.

The first observation I noted was the way the director gave directions before beginning the first working rehearsal. She laid out for the actors specific expectations and directions. Her language was very clear and precise. "In this scene, James is coming in from school and mom is reminding him to put out the trash. Larry, remember you are a middle school student, high energy and the last thing you want to do is to put out the trash. Shemeca, you are the mother and you want that trash out NOW." Larry and Shemeca knew exactly what was expected of them from the outset.

In his early twenties, Larry is not that far removed from the thirteen-year-old James in the play. He bounces onto the set, headphones on, singing the song and imitating the hottest movements on the dance scene. Shemeca, although not yet a mother, knows what a mother sounds like when she wants something done immediately. From behind the set she shouts, "James," in a voice that leaves no doubt in anyone's mind that she means business. This kind of explicit direction is given to the actors throughout the rehearsal process.

The next observation I made concerned the business of modeling. During the first day of rehearsal the director would stop the work and model for the actors a suggested way of speaking a line or making a movement. Given the limited rehearsal time, these suggestions gave the actors a starting point for character development.
progressed, the actors would make changes and refine the movements and line delivery to make it seem more natural.

By its very nature rehearsal is repetitious, but in the rehearsals for KEY Players repetition was a constant. During the first two days of rehearsal the director was the person who generally requested things be repeated. By the end of the second day the actors were requesting a stop in the action and a repeat of the previous work. At one point in my field notes I wrote, “repeat, repeat, repeat, then repeat some more.” That seemed to be the modus operandi for these rehearsals. All requests by an actor to back up and rework something were honored, and the actors rarely grumbled when the director made a similar request.

In every rehearsal the director and the actors were supportive of one another. In particular, the director encouraged and praised the actors’ attempts as they made progress. For instance, before she released the group for a break, Laura told them they had done a good job. “You guys are doing a great job! This is a hard play and you guys are really moving along.” As the actors worked, they repeatedly praised each other’s work. “Nice move, Larry.” “Hey, Megan, you sound just like a bratty kid sister.” During breaks the conversations were about the work and quite frequently one actor would tell another something he/she liked about the work. This encouragement and praise provided an environment where the actors could feel free to be creative. This became evident as I observed the actors making suggestions to the director regarding the blocking of the characters. “What if I move over here when he says this, then I’m set for my next line.” It was also evident as I observed James and Shemeca create the dances for each of
their characters, and watched Megan and Degel work through the character hooks for their multiple characters.

The Findings

I am beginning to see how a play, the script, is actually broken down and worked and reworked so that it begins to make sense to everyone. I am also beginning to see the process actors use to learn lines, remember blocking, develop characters, etc. There is a real process to this (Wright, 1999).

When I was collecting the data and writing my field notes I wondered on occasion if anything would come of all this work. I entered into this study with certain assumptions about the literacy practices of theatre people and I was about to discover if they were true. Along the way was a surprise or two, and the discoveries I made about the theatre rehearsal process reaffirmed my belief that theatre is hard work that requires one to think as well as speak and listen. This is consistent with the pedagogical idea that critical thinking is the heart of the receptive and expressive language arts.

After observing eight rehearsals, conducting twenty-four interviews, and maintaining countless field and analytic notes, I determined that there are four major components to the rehearsal process. These four components are chunking, repetition, encouragement and response. There are indeed other things that happen in rehearsal, such as wait time, collaboration, and modeling, but I contend that these take place within the context of the four major components I have identified. In this chapter I will discuss each component and its relevance to literacy.
Chunking

In rehearsal the script is broken down and worked in smaller, manageable pieces. I call this breaking down **chunking**. Chunking occurs on two levels. First, the director must decide how the script will be chunked for work during each rehearsal. For example, the decision to chunk the script scene by scene or act by act is determined in part by the length of the parts of the script and the director’s and the actors’ experience and by the amount of rehearsal time there is from the read through to opening night. The second level is how the actor chunks the script in order to learn lines. Every actor has his/her own technique. Some work the script page by page until those lines are set and then move on. Others work the script scene by scene. As I observed theatre rehearsal and from my own experiences as an actor I believe the manner of chunking is not important, what is important is that chunking occurs. The manner of chunking will be determined by the purpose for the chunking which will change with each rehearsal of the text. Ray pointed this out when he talked of how he chunks a script differently when he is preparing to direct a play than he does when he is just reading the play for the sake of reading it. As a director, he chunks the script in a way that will allow him to cover as much ground as possible during a rehearsal. In this instance he chunks the script by scene and then groups the scenes. When he just reads the script he chunks it so that he comprehends what the text. The script it chunked by themes.

George Bernard Shaw (1958) considers chunking an essential part of the pre-rehearsal process. It is the time when the director works out the business of the play, and he insists that though it is laborious work, it saves valuable time later (1958). This is true
for the actor as well. Chunking the text when first learning lines helps line retrieval later.

I can remember times during a rehearsal when I couldn’t remember the line but could “see” the page. Harold Clurman describes chunking as “reading with interruptions” (1972).

Reading with interruptions is a deliberate act, a way of slowing down the process to give the reader/actor time to think about what is being read. For KEY Players chunking was particularly essential because of the short rehearsal time frame.

For Larry chunking is essential to his ability to learn lines and to comprehend what he is reading whether it is theatre or non-theatre material. He also believes it a necessary strategy to achieving proficiency. When he is unable to chunk he has difficulty learning and remembering the reading. This was evident in the rehearsals of the first play Trash. Larry was having trouble remembering his lines, particularly as the play progressed. During one interview we discussed this.

Well, like when I go to memorize the script, I go into it normally in sections. I had more trouble with this script because I was trying to learn it with other people and normally I don’t do that. But since I was living with the four actors in the show and they all wanted to run lines together, I was like, okay, sure, why not. But I have a process of section. I read over it, and I look over it and I go okay know that section and move to the next. We’re gonna learn this section up to here and I read it and look at it and get to know it and get the feel of it and get the rhythm for it and boom, I know it. And that was lost when I was doing it with the group because it it would start with high energy but people would get distracted if they weren’t in that part of the scene and I think that’s why I’m having problems with the later part of the script.

Larry chunks in sections, working each section until he feels comfortable in his knowledge of the material and is ready to move on. He links the chunked passages with his blocking and this connection helps him remember his lines. When he is forced to learn
lines in a manner contrary to his method he loses his rhythm and a way of linking the
lines in his head. I observed this during one rehearsal when he was having a difficult time
remembering a one section of a set of lines. Each time the cast went through the scene
Larry would get to that set of lines and fumble. Nothing seemed to work, not repeating
the lines over and over; not working the scene over and over; nothing, and he was
frustrated. After lunch however, when he reached that section of the script the lines
flowed smoothly and easily. When I asked him about it later, he said at lunch he had gone
off by himself and worked that particular section of the script his way. "What do you
mean, your way?" I asked.

Well, you know how the line goes 'Instead of being stinky, useless
garbage, buried, doing damage to the land, and water, ...? Well see, there's
a rhythm and this morning I couldn't get the rhythm right when we were
working the lines last night. I can't learn my lines with other people for
that reason, so I went off at lunch and learned them my way. I had to put
the pieces together so I could get the rhythm right.

As a director, Laura uses chunking in a different way.

To me directing is the dessert. I love having the whole picture and helping
create the whole picture and see how all the different areas go together and
all the pieces fit together and helping each area focus on whatever their
specific is and then bringing it all together as a whole piece.

Before she begins rehearsal she has decided how the play will be chunked to make the
best use of the rehearsal time.

During the first rehearsal for Trash she explains to the actors how the play has
been chunked. This is the order in which the play will be rehearsed. She does not use the
term "chunking" but this is what she does. "We will begin with scenes one and two,
James' entrance and work up to James sitting on the bed. After that we will take the
beginning of scene three up to the chase.” This second chunk encompasses two pages of scene three which is five pages long. The remainder of scene three is chunked as is the remainder of the script. The chunking of the script is determined in part by way the script is written. Each chunk contains a single theme, for example, the first scene is one chunk and is the entrance of James. The second chunk is scene two and introduces the theme of the play, which is garbage. The third and fourth chunks divide scene three into two parts, the first part reinforcing the theme of garbage and introducing the speech, and the second part is the speech and introduces the terms reduce, reuse, recycle. As rehearsal progresses it occasionally becomes necessary for Laura to revise the chunks. Her decision on revision is based on the actors’ response to the rehearsal, to their progress with remembering lines and blocking, and the development of their characters. Before the day is over scene three will have been chunked into four different sections.

Megan finds chunking useful in cold readings. A cold reading is one in which the actor is given a passage from a script (called a side) and asked to read it with minimal or no prep time. This is usually the case at auditions but for the actors of KEY Players this is the case at every read through. Cold readings are difficult and unnerving for the most seasoned actor and almost certain disaster for the novice. Megan finds that chunking helps to calm her nerves and gives her a sense of control over the text.

If I look at this page, this paragraph I get afraid. It is a solid paragraph of nothing but words. But if I go this is an idea, and this is an idea and break it down then I get less afraid of reading it aloud.

Megan’s way of chunking the text involves locating the dominant idea in the sentence or paragraph. Each new idea marks a break or chunk in the text and these breaks allow her to
make the unfamiliar material appear familiar. Megan also associates chunking with being a good reader because it helps one make sense of the text.

For me a good reader is someone that is able to put it out there, no holds barred, make a choice and not stumble over themselves. They make sense of the line as they are approaching it. Even though they’ve never read that thing before. Did you listen to our reading through of Trash yet? I was really amazed because I don’t consider myself a good out loud reader. I go to cold readings and everybody always says your cold reading skills are weak. But I felt like I was one of the better cold readers in our foursome. It was like, an awesome feeling. I could just relax and read when someone next to me is stumbling.

As I observed this particular read through I was aware that of the four actors Megan was having the least difficulty with the reading. She appeared to be more in control of her reading than the others from the outset and became more comfortable with the script as the reading progressed. Like the other actors she was seeing the script for the first time, but her reading of the script was smoother and she had fewer miscues than the others.

The other actors, Larry in particular, seemed to struggle with the script from the beginning and by the end of the read through seemed relieved that the agony was over. It would appear that Megan’s sense of seeing a solid paragraph as nothing but words was true for all of the actors. As the season progressed they would all get better at the cold reading but only Megan would seem in control of it. By the time the read through for Expect Respect (the last play to be rehearsed) took place everyone, including Larry, had fewer miscues and appeared to be less stressed about reading aloud. As Larry put it, “I sort of have the hang of it now.”

At every rehearsal of the play Trash the script was chunked in a different way. In the first rehearsal the script was chunked primarily by scene. “Let’s finish scene
three.” “Scene ten is where you come in Degel. Let’s take this all the way through to the first time you question the audience.” Because some scenes were several pages long the chunk might break the scene into thirds or halves. Chunking the script by scene helped the actors set the continuity of the play. The second rehearsal chunked the script by entrances. “We’ll work this from James’ entrance to where Joan comes in.” This form of chunking helped set entrances and exits for the actors. The third rehearsal saw the script chunked from sound cue to sound cue. This was chunking was needed for the actor on stage who needed the sound and for the actor backstage who would start the sound.

Because there is no stage manager to call the cues in KEY Players productions and no sound or lighting technicians to implement the cues, the actors must rely on one another. The timing of the cue is business that must be worked out in rehearsal and an entire rehearsal is given over to it. Once the business is set it is integrated into the remaining rehearsals. The fourth, fifth and sixth rehearsals find the chunking being done from start to difficulty. In other words, the rehearsal begins and stops only when the director or an actor feels there is a problem that needs to be addressed. These problems may be with lines, as was the case when Larry, who played James had difficulty with the line, “Instead of being stinky, useless garbage, buried, doing damage to the land, and water…” After several attempts to help him deliver the line, the rehearsal was stopped and Larry was sent off to the side to work the line by himself. This chunk required him to repeat the line ten times to himself and then ten times to someone else. It worked and throughout the tour he remembered the line.
Chunking is not the only component of theatre rehearsal essential to the success of the rehearsal. It is a major requirement, however, and in my experience, both as an actor and as a researcher, rehearsal is virtually impossible without it. Chunking makes the task of working with the script more manageable for both the director and the actor. It gives the actor a sense of control over the text and provides the director an orderly means of guiding the cast through the script.

Chunking is also valuable in helping the actor visualize the play. Ray often finds himself stopping in his reading to visualize the scene, "I sometimes stop reading and go into a stare and see the story (in my minds eye) in front of me like watching TV." For me learning to visualize the text required me to visualize in chunks. I can remember, even in college, taking the script and, like Larry, dividing it into sections. After reading each section I would close my eyes and try to see the scene in my mind, recalling the glimmers that had come to me as I’d read. Eventually, I was able to visualize the scene as I read, but when I want more detailed pictures I still chunk the text.

Repetition

While chunking is probably the first step involved in working with the script for both the actor and the director, it is almost impossible to do so without repetition. As stated earlier, rehearsal by its very nature is repetitive. However, this repetition is always for a purpose; it is never repetition for repetition's sake. Directors do not assign busy work. Repetition is a repeated, purposeful activity, which can be used to examine a particular gest or mode of speech (Brecht, 1964); or to settle the business in the actor’s mind (Shaw, 1958). In theatre repetition is used by both the actor and the director to set
lines, blocking and the use of props. Laura believes repetition is how one becomes proficient.

The repetition of doing the reading or writing and finding out what works and carrying that over. When I first started reading plays, I can't recall it now but I can only imagine that I read it differently than I do now after reading them for so many years, because once you know the format you don’t have to look and see who’s speaking all the time because once I know who the characters are I know who’s speaking by what the characters are saying. Because of the kind of character they are I know what they’re saying. I don’t have to read ‘Sally, colon, tab’ and then read. I know by the way it’s written somebody else is talking now. But when I first started I’m sure I read every word.

I like to think of this repetition as the Dr. Seuss principle. In the Dr. Seuss books there is a purposeful segmentation and repetition. For example, the book *Green Eggs and Ham* (Seuss, 1960) opens with a repetitive chunk: *I am Sam. Sam I am. Do you like green eggs and ham?* This repetitive segmentation continues throughout the book in some form and other segments and repetitions are added. Perhaps the most famous of the cumulative stories is *The Gingerbread Boy* (Galdone, 1975). The phrase, “I've run away from. . .” is repeated over and over in the text and with new information added to the old until the final climax of the story. Eric Carle (1996) also uses this format in many of his stories.

One of my favorites is *The Grouchy Ladybug*.

At six o'clock it met a yellow jacket.
“Hey you,” said the grouchy ladybug.
“Want to fight?”
“If you insist,” said the yellow jacket, showing it’s stinger.
“Oh, you’re not big enough,” said the grouchy ladybug and flew off.

The same wording is used on every page with changes in the time and the object of the ladybug’s challenge until the final climax. Earlier I discussed KEY Players’ rehearsal
process. During rehearsal the script was chunked and worked in segments. These segments were worked and reworked until the director and/or actor was satisfied the work had been set, they then moved on to the next segment. Repetition was constant in the process. Each rehearsal repeats the work done in previous rehearsals. The repetition of lines, entrances, exits, and sound cues remained constant even as the chunking shifted. The purpose for the repetition changed with and during each rehearsal. In one day the actors walked through a segment saying their lines. At the conclusion of that segment the director gave more direction and modeled for them what she expected, then the actors walked through that segment again. This routine was repeated several times until the actors and the director were satisfied. Over the next several days the rehearsals were a repeat of the first day.

Repetition is also a way to make discoveries. "In theatre we crave the search, we love to fumble around bumping into ideas and new ways of looking at the world." In her reflective instrument Megan considered the idea that this fumbling and bumping around forces theatre people to consider that a failure or a mistake is how we learn. During rehearsals the actor makes countless mistakes and experiences many failures, the line needs more expression, the character still feels flat, something just doesn't feel quite right; but by repeating the rehearsal and going over the same scene or line, discoveries are made about line delivery, about who the character is, about that something that hovers on the edge. These discoveries take time and repetition buys that time.

As beneficial as repetition is, not all actors like doing it, especially outside of the theatre. During one interview and in her reflective instrument, Shemeca expressed
passionately her dislike of repetition when she is reading non-theatre material. She considers herself to be less proficient a reader because of this.

I struggle with reading a lot. Even when I'm reading to myself I have to force myself to sit there and concentrate on it because sometimes I have to go back and reread it and I hate going back and rereading because it takes more time and I have to sit there longer.

This struggle with repetition was apparent even during the read through. During the read through of *The Choice is Yours* Shemeca struggled with some of the phrases. Unlike the other actors who would back up and repeat a passage, Shemeca would barrel right through until the director would insist she go back and reread the passage. But during rehearsals she would often be the first one to request a repeat of a scene or a line. Even though she resents the repetition when she is reading she understands and acknowledges its importance in the rehearsal process.

According to Larry repetition is important for comprehension also. "If it's something I need to know I will go over it again because I will stop and take time to understand it and process it. I'll read a passage three or four times before I go on because I need to know it." Shemeca echoes this belief in her reflective instrument. While she doesn't consider herself a good reader she does know that the more she does it the better she gets at it. For Shemeca this means having to reread the text often. One of the benefits of repetition in rehearsal is comprehension. The constant repeating of lines and scenes and reading the script repeatedly aids in the comprehension of the text. As the actor comprehends the text better his/her interpretation of the script improves.
The repetition of the script is relative to the chunking of the script but is not dependent on the chunking. Chunking will involve repetition but repetition can occur without chunking. Both of these components lead to the final two components I will discuss encouragement and response.

**Encouragement**

It is difficult to discuss encouragement without discussion response because one generates the other. However, I will attempt to do so here for the purpose of explaining the function of each in the rehearsal process. The Miriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines the word encourage as follows: *to inspire with courage, spirit or hope; to spur on; to give help or patronage to.* Any of these definitions is applicable to the purpose of encouragement during rehearsal. As Laura said in one interview, “I love to help actors be the best they can be. I am passionate about doing it.” During rehearsals the director for KEY Players stopped often to encourage the actors. Every attempt, every effort was rewarded with an acknowledgement. The actors were encouraged to try new ideas.

- “Larry, I like the way you come into the house, lots of energy and movement. The students will relate to you right away”, or “Shemeca, let me see your Trash dance, let’s see what you came up with.” Repeatedly Laura tried to encourage the actors and motivate them to keep trying. Her comments were directed toward the smallest improvement, the most minor attempt. Encouragement is important in any rehearsal to motivate the actors and give them hope they are making progress towards the ultimate goal, the production, but for KEY Players it was the juice that gave the ensemble the mental energy to keep going long after their physical energy had waned. Rehearsal days
were long and intense. There was a lot to be learned and very little time in which to learn it. The encouragement the cast received spurred them on to repeat the scene once more and try to get it right. At every rehearsal every actor heard a compliment about his/her work. Even when the work was interrupted to correct a line or a movement some kind of compliment was given. When Larry was told to repeat a line ten times to himself and then ten times to someone else, he was told he was doing a great job. Laura told him, "You’re doing a really good job, Larry. You’ll get the lines, you have a lot to learn in a little time. Don’t worry it will come. Before you take your break..." This encouragement helped the actors keep up the will to try.

Encouragement was given not only from the director but the actors encouraged one another and often an actor would be heard encouraging himself or herself. In the play Trash, one of Degel’s characters was the representative from the waste management commission. His role required him to learn a lot of information about recycling, information that was unfamiliar to him in a technical sense. As a result he struggled with the lines in the early rehearsals growing more impatient and frustrated with himself. The encouragement from Laura, the other actors and even the researcher seemed to bring him no comfort. During one break I listened in as he sat alone, in a corner of the room reviewing his lines. “Come on, Degel, you can do this. I know you can,” he told himself. A few minutes later, “Okay, good, got that one, now let’s try this one.” It was important to Degel to convince himself he was doing a good job. As human beings we look for the approval of our colleagues and our peers. In theatre the ultimate approval comes from the audience but during rehearsals we seek it from the director and other cast members. Often
the approval is spoken but there are other times when the approval is shown in the way another character responds to the line delivery, or the way one crosses the stage. Among the lessons learned early in theatre is never turn to the director during rehearsal and ask if you did a good job. The unspoken meaning is that if you do a good job the director will let you know and if you don't do a good job you will know that too.

To give encouragement is not the same as giving a compliment. To compliment is to offer an expression of esteem or praise. As noted above to give encouragement is to prod or to spur on, to get the receiver moving forward. In theatre rehearsal this may mean telling someone the effort is noted but the goal has still not been attained. Shaw insists that an actor should be given suggestions, not orders (p. 283). In KEY rehearsals this directive was consistently evident, as was Shaw's recommendation that the director not make any corrections unless he/she had a suggestion to replace what the actor was doing. KEY actors were asked for their suggestions on how to best make a scene work. When notes were given to make a correction the actors were given specific directions. For example, when Shemeca's Trash dance did not appear to be working, the director explained why it was not working, choreographed the new section and taught it to Shemeca. Each rehearsal day concluded with the director and the actors complimenting one another on the work done for the day and offering encouragement for the work that lay ahead.

Even in theatre one likes to hear a compliment every now and then, the difficulty lies in being able to accept it when it comes. In KEY Camp we learned different methods of giving and accepting compliments. These methods applied to the ensemble as well as
to the students in the schools. One of these was The Compliment Chair. In The
Compliment Chair one person sits in a chair and listens to the compliments everyone else
makes about her/him. The only response the person can make is “Thank you.” Everyone
in the room must pay the person in the chair a compliment, such as, “Degel, I like the
way you went to the child in the back of the room today,” or “Megan, I like the way you
accepted it when I said you weren’t speaking loud enough.” The purpose is two-fold, the
person in the chair hears nice things being by his or her peers; and the individuals giving
the compliments learn to look for something positive in the person and in the day. The
Line of Goodness has a similar purpose. In this activity the person being complimented
takes one step towards a predetermined line as each nice thing is being said about her/him.
Again, every one in the room must say something positive about the person being
complimented and the only response from the person is the step towards the line. The
idea in both of these methods is to learn to accept and give compliments. It is not as easy
as it sounds. As a participant in KEY Camp and as a presence at rehearsals I participated
in both The Compliment Chair and The Line of Goodness. While it was easy to find
something positive to say about the others, it was difficult to sit and listen to people say
what a good job one had done and not be able to deny the praise, but it was essential to
the success of the ensemble that the members be able to accept encouragement and praise
quietly as well as give it to one another.

Response

For the purpose of this discussion I use the word response rather than feedback.

While on the surface they may appear to be the same, for me they are not. Feedback
implies judgment or arbitration. Response implies a discussion, a conversation, verbal or non-verbal. In theatre, the director's response is generally given in the form of notes. He or she observes the rehearsal and at the conclusion gives notes on every aspect from the actors work to the technical concerns. As I see it, response is the final component in the rehearsal process. The other three components generate response. Response is the theatrical tool of assessment. "Good directors are rarely dictatorial and will be sensitive to an actor's needs, leaving room for a fruitful dialogue and the actor's participation in the creation of his role" (Hagen, 1991). In the ideal rehearsal response is given throughout the rehearsal, not just at the end of the day.

In KEY Players actors were given notes at the conclusion of each rehearsal segment. After the notes were given, the actors took a few moments to process them and the chunk was repeated. These responses were often accompanied by a discussion between the actors and the director. During one rehearsal for a workshop accompanying the play Choice one such response lasted ten minutes. Laura gave a note regarding the final exit of the actor-educators from the classroom and a discussion ensued on whether the actors should sit or stand when talking to the students.

A/E: Do we sit or stand when we are talking to the kids, I mean students?
Laura: Whenever possible you should position yourself so you are eye level with the students. This makes it easier for them to follow along with you and makes them more comfortable.
A/E: What if there isn't room to get eye level?
Laura: Like I said, whenever possible that's what you do. If you can't then you get as close to eye level as you can. That might mean you need to kneel, but kneeling is better than standing if you're working with a group of kindergartners.
At the conclusion of most rehearsal days the ensemble would sit in the rehearsal space and respond to one another’s questions and answers about the rehearsal, the upcoming tour, and any other subject they felt needed to be discussed. Often Laura would generate the response session with the question, “Tell me where you are in your work?” This provocative question opened the floor to a flood of concerns and ideas. This was the forum where the actors brought out concerns about their performance during the rehearsal, this was the forum where they offered one another encouragement and suggestions for improving their performance.

One such session was held at the conclusion of the first day of rehearsal for *Expect Respect*. The ensemble sat down in the rehearsal space and Laura asked the question, “Where are you in your work?” There was silence. “Tell me how things are going with your lines.” After a pause, Shemeca announced she was having some difficulty getting into this one, the subject matter made her feel uncomfortable. This play was about different types of harassment and for some reason this made her uncomfortable. (See Appendix E.) Her concern was that her discomfort was getting in the way of her being able to function even in character. Several of her colleagues offered suggestions on how she might overcome this discomfort and Shemeca agreed to try them as part of her homework later in the evening. She responded to this same issue in one of the entries in her reflective instrument but she was more forthcoming than she had been during the response session in rehearsal. In her reflective instrument she pointed out that she was uncomfortable with the character who is harassing her being close up on her so much. “I know my character is supposed to be uncomfortable but this makes even me, not just my
character, uncomfortable.” On further exploration she acknowledged that personal space was very important to her and that this play violated that rule. The struggle with this discomfort lasted throughout the rehearsal and the tour but she was able to use the response sessions during rehearsal and her reflective instrument to try to work it out.

Response may occur during any of the other components of rehearsal and it is the response from either an actor or a director that provides opportunities for some of the other things that happen in rehearsal to take place. A director’s response may, at times, require further explanation. For example, during the read through for Expect Respect Laura explained that there was a rap song in the script and all of the actors would have to learn it. She then proceeded to say the rap and model for the actors how to perform it. She did this several times, first at tempo and then more slowly as she taught the actors the movements. Their response determined how long she continued to model for them and when she felt they were ready to try it on their own. This particular scenario would be repeated when the actors toured this play as they would teach the rap to the students and teachers in the schools they visited.

Response also creates opportunities for collaboration. Of course, in my view, theatre is one huge collaboration. The mounting of a production requires the efforts of everyone, from the lead actor to the building custodian who locks and unlocks the doors. Even a one-person show is not truly a one-person show; there may be many supporting the one actor on stage. There is someone to manage the building while the performer is on stage. This collaborative work demands that the participants respond to the needs of one another if the production is to be successful. For example, when Shemeca expressed
concern about her discomfort with sexual harassment her colleagues offered suggestions for exercises she might try, they offered time talk it through with her. Often during the time I spent with KEY Players I heard the comment, “We’ll get through this together.”

Even my work was caught up in this collaborative spirit. Frequently I would be asked if I was getting what I needed. The company saw my study as their study. We all wanted it to succeed. And then there is the audience. I believe the audience provides the ultimate in response and the audience is the final piece in the collaboration. For KEY Players audience response was essential to the success of the production because of the interactive nature of their plays. In every play the students became part of the action either by participating in a rap, answering questions asked by the characters, or becoming characters themselves such as the “Super Hyper Cool Kids” complete with a cool sign and a line. For KEY the collaboration went beyond the cast and company into the communities in which they worked.

Finally, response generates wait time. In theatre when the director asks an actor to do something or gives a note, he/she expects an appropriate response. Sometimes that response is in the form of a question, other times it is in the form of an action. The essential element here is wait time. In Key Players wait time was discussed during KEY Camp and during rehearsals because of its importance to the production. When the production called for a character to ask the audience a question, such as, “If someone in the audience can name the 3 R’s, raise your hand and I’ll call on you,” the character had to wait for the audience to respond. The rule here was to count to five and if no hands were raised, ask the question again, in a different way. The same was true during the play.
when something funny caused the audience to laugh. The character with the next line had to wait for the laughter to subside before delivering the line so the line would be heard. Wait time does not mean things drag along, but it does mean one gives the respondent an appropriate amount of time to respond. Wait time gives the respondent time to think about what he/she has read or heard and consider his/her response to it.

**Benefits**

Chunking, repetition, encouragement and response are four separate and distinct words completely and totally connected and interwoven in the rehearsal process. The root of the word rehearsal is *rehear*, to hear over again. In her book, Hagen (1991) talks about the French word for rehearsal, *la répétition*, which means repetition. She prefers, and I agree, the German *die Probe*, "because it implies everything a rehearsal should be about: probing, testing, trying and exploring--a discovery" (p. 255). In the theatre rehearsal is a constant discovery, a work in continuous progress. Even after the final rehearsal the discovery continues. The four components named above are essential to that discovery process. This is true in the classroom as well as on the stage.

In theatre consistent, constant rehearsals help to develop fluency in the actors' performances. That means they are able to portray the character in a way that is believable to the audience. They are able to deliver their lines in character and move about the stage with confidence in what they are doing. The same is true in the classroom. Research has shown that fluency in reading and writing is developed through constant opportunities for practice (Tompkins, 2000; Allington, 1998). Fluent readers comprehend better what they are reading, and they read with more expression. Fluent
writers are able to form letters quickly and spell words automatically. Fluent readers and writers spend less time thinking about how to form letters and how to say words and, as a result, they are able to spend more time comprehending the text. I believe chunking and repetition can assist students in attaining fluency. Reducing the text to smaller, more manageable chunks and having the opportunity to reread each chunk until it feels comfortable can help the student recognize the strategies he/she uses and it provides multiple opportunities for the student to read text that over time becomes familiar to him/her.

The repetition of rehearsal provides the ensemble with opportunities to bring to life the visions they have created in their minds when reading the script. Visualization is a strategy actors use to help with sensory perceptions. It is a valuable tool, helping the actor get in touch with the feelings of the scene. I discuss it as a subset of repetition, rather than as a theme of rehearsal because, unlike chunking, repetition, encouragement and response, visualization occurs independently for each actor, not necessarily in collaboration with others. At some point during the study every member of the company spoke of using visualization both in their theatre work and when reading non-theatre material. Ray spoke of using it in reading scripts and novels.

I read a play with the intent to produce an event using the play as a guide. Early in my theatre training I was told to visualize the actors and scenery as balanced parts of an overall pleasing stage image. I saw these stage pictures when I read the script and as I grew in experience I saw the movement between the balanced stage images. I see the events in my minds eye and can replay them when rereading sections or whole books. I sometimes stop reading and go into a stare and see the story (in my minds eye) in front of me like watching TV.
Degel believes visualization is the mark of a good writer; when he looks for non-theatre material to read he looks for material that will let him “see” the action. For him, being able to bring the text to life is what makes it worth reading and writing.

“When you read a play you’re given a setting but you’re allowed to visualize in your mind. Playwrights give you a lot to work with and they allow you to do a lot of the work yourself. Good writers of non-theatre (material) allow you to visualize things in your mind. They give you what you need and let you run with it.”

C. Jane hears the voices of and sees the characters in her pleasure reading, creating a play of the novel; Margie visualizes how the scene might be set up or which character she might identify with most and Laura believes that visualization is the reason she does not always stop to look up words she doesn’t know, preferring to ask someone so she doesn’t interrupt the flow. (See Appendix E.) When the members of the company were made aware that they used this strategy in all of their literacy practices (theatre and non-theatre) they were not extremely surprised. Visualization is a strategy that many theatre people use in their theatre work, and some of them transfer it to their non-theatre work.

Visualization can be equally valuable in the classroom. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) in their book Mosaic of Thought, talk about the use of sensory images to enhance comprehension, how visualizing the text brings forth memories in one’s life, and the text comes alive. When the students in my multiage class were asked to write, the writing almost always related to their lives. When we read a story they would find a way to connect the story to an event in their lives. By helping students access their prior knowledge of the text we help them to visualize the text. Using theatre exercises can help
students learn to visualize. One such exercise is Boal’s memory exercises (Boal, 1992). Participants are asked to remember an event in their lives, such as the very first time they went to school. Schlusberg (1994) suggests using improvisations in which the actor or student is “placed” in an environment such as a movie theatre and must describe the sounds, the smells, and the look of the place. One of my favorites was an exercise used by one of my professors in college. She read us a story; as she read she asked us to close our eyes and visualize the picture in our mind. When she’d finished reading the story she asked us to keep our eyes closed and to describe the scene as we saw it. There were six students in the class, and we each saw a different scene. The purpose of these exercises is to help the student remember as much detail as possible. The ultimate goal is to have the student learn to become more aware of the text and the world around him or her.

Perhaps Megan said it best when she quoted a speaker at a theatre conference who said, “artists see in color, they perceive the world in color and other people see it in black and white.” I cannot help but wonder what would happen if, as teachers of reading and writing we taught our students to “see” in color.

Another benefit of rehearsal is inquiry or exploration. In character development it is important for the actor, the director and/or the technician to understand the historical and political frame in which the play was written, which may explain the rationale for the character’s actions and speech. For the director and the designer this inquiry may help determine the set design, the costumes, etc. Some theatre people refer to this as research. Often this need to do further exploration to understand the text spills over into the non-
theatre life of a person. For Shemeca this proved true even before she became a professional actor and carries on today.

A perfect example is Macbeth. It's one of my favorite Shakespearean plays. And I was like, you know what, I'm going to look up stuff on witches and I remember doing this when I was 7 and 8 years old because I saw it at a community theatre. When I was at Tecumseh I was all about Native American culture, their language, their dress, their customs. After I left Tecumseh I went and I looked up stuff, I even went to my grandmother and I'm like hey, I know you're not Shawnee but tell me about the Cherokee. Just different things I found out because that show influenced me to read up on non-theatrical materials.

The telling thing here is that Shemeca doesn't like to read a lot outside of theatre. She finds it difficult, but she admits that if she has a purpose for the reading she will do it willingly, as will many students. Larry's curiosity leads him to research plays he is working on, movies he has seen and books he is reading. On one occasion his research helped another actor better access his character.

We did Sondheim's Assassins, and I was in the show. I understudied one of the assassins, and I got to a point of reading up on all of the assassins, about their lives and what they'd done, and it was interesting. The director used to do what he called the assassins' support group where everybody who was playing the assassins would be in a therapy session with him. One day he had the understudies come and sit behind the particular assassin they were understudying. I realized how much I'd read and learned about the characters when during this session the understudies were supposed to be the assassin's conscience. I kept talking into my assassin's ear telling him he was the only person worthy for doing what he did. I realized my reading about the characters helped me to understand all the other characters in the room and to play his conscience well enough that it prompted him to say things and think about things in a different way. He came to me later and told me how great it was, that he'd found so much more in the character after I kept saying those things in his ear. It made me feel good.
Giving students the opportunity to conduct research is just as important in the language arts curriculum as it is in the science and math curriculums. Research can provide students with their own purpose for the reading and writing. It can also extend their understanding of the text beyond the boundaries of the text itself. Schlichting and Cirincione (2000) found that by having third grade students read multicultural literature in researching diversity, they came to understand diversity in a broader sense than they would have just from being told about it. Inquiry helps students develop critical thinking skills and provides them with opportunities for self-assessment. As the student researches a particular subject, he/she must determine what information is relevant to the topic being studied and decide what will be used in the work and what will not. Research also gives students moments to do repeated readings of a text. Just as in theatre, where each reading of the play is informed by the previous reading and the actor brings something new to each reading of the script, the student rereading text for research brings new information to each reading and will learn new information with each subsequent reading.

Perhaps the most obvious outcome of rehearsal is the collaboration and/or sense of community it creates among the participants. The eight members of KEY Players were strangers to one another when the season began in September. By the end of the first tour in early October the actors were working together as if they had been an ensemble for a few years rather than a few weeks. At one point during the first tour, Shemeca was uncharacteristically quiet after a performance. We all noticed it and since the performance had appeared to go well her brooding didn’t make sense to the rest of us. On the way
back to the hotel the actors talked about what went right with the show and I noticed Shemeca was saying nothing. After a few moments, Megan asked her outright, “What did you think of the show Shemeca?” With a shrug Shemeca said, “I guess it was okay.” The actor in me sensed Shemeca was unhappy with her performance, but the outsider who had been observing could find no reason for her to be unhappy. Her performance had seemed flawless. What was wrong? Megan and Larry knew that they needed to help her voice her concern. I watched as they continued to talk about their own performances that day (they’d done three shows and one workshop) and what they felt had improved as the day had gone one and what had gotten worse. Their comments were interjected with, “Don’t you think so, Shemeca?” “Do you agree, Shemeca?” When we arrived at the hotel I heard Shemeca say to Megan, “I think I was off in that last school. It just didn’t feel like I was in sync with everybody else.” They continued their conversation as we each went to our rooms. In my notes I commented that several weeks earlier, Shemeca’s silence would have gone unnoticed, or at the very least passed without comment from her colleagues. Later that evening, at dinner, I asked Shemeca if she was feeling better. “Yeah, I just was beating up on myself ‘cause I thought I’d let the group down. But Megan and Larry talked to me and I know I was okay. And tomorrow will be better.”

At the November group interview I brought up this incident and asked Megan and Larry why they worked so hard (which was my observation) to get Shemeca to talk that day. “Well, you know, as the Site Coordinator, I feel responsible for these guys when we’re out on the road and I think it’s my job to make sure everyone’s okay,” answered Megan. Larry chimed in, “Yeah, you know, we’re a team. If one of us is not okay, all of
us are not okay. We have to stick together.” “And besides,” said Megan, “We can’t help each other if we don’t talk to each other.” This group had become a community in a very short time.

In her discussion on culturally relevant teaching Gloria Ladson-Billings states that culturally relevant teachers encourage a community of learners (1994). Students are encouraged to learn collaboratively and to be responsible for one another. The encouragement students are given helps them establish these communities and become willing participants. There is much discussion in education on building communities of learners (Allen, Michalove, & Shockley, 1993; Tompkins, 2000; McCaslin, 1996; McMaster, 1998). The members of these communities support and encourage one another as they learn to read and write. Teachers model responses and actions that help develop such a community. One of the benefits to creating a community of learners is that it moves students toward independence. Heathcote calls this move towards independence assuming “the mantle of the expert” (Wagner, 1999). The mantle of the expert is like Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, which suggests the learner can move beyond his/her existing knowledge with the assistance of a more experienced or knowledgeable learner (1978). Heathcote’s theory posits that if students are placed in the role of the expert while being given this assistance, they learn the skills that make it possible for them to be given the label of expert. The key here is the encouragement and response given as they progress in becoming experts.

The final benefit I would like to discuss is that of self-evaluation. I prefer the term evaluation because for me it implies focusing on the value of the experience rather
than looking for what is wrong. In my theatre experience, actors are constantly evaluating their own performance as well as being evaluated by others (the director, the audience). This evaluation is constant and ongoing, throughout the rehearsal process and the performance. Self-evaluation is such a part of the process that the moment the line exits the actor's mouth, he/she begins to evaluate. Was it loud enough? Was the right tone/expression used? Why did I say it that way? That was just how I wanted to do it. Good job! I did it! During this study, in addition to evaluating themselves as actors, the members of KEY Players were asked to evaluate themselves as readers and writers.

Often they resembled a class of students learning to read and write. For all of their similarities and use of theatre rehearsal techniques in their literacy practices, I was struck by how often these professionals denied their proficiency as readers and writers. Their idea of what makes a good reader and writer included anyone but themselves. Each time we met for an interview we talked about literacy. In the beginning when I asked them about their literacy practices, each participant said, "That's interesting. I've never thought about it." I believe their not thinking about it was why they did not consider themselves very proficient readers and writers. It is difficult to be introspective about one's literacy. As Megan pointed out, "Literacy is not something I think about, I just do it." Several times during the study they were asked to define literacy. (See Appendix E.) In the very first group interview when they were asked to talk about literacy and what it means, they all defined it as the ability to read and write. Period. Even when I pressed them to talk about it more, they could only define it as the ability to read and write. The reflective instruments showed that they were thinking more and more about how they
read and write and what they thought about themselves as readers and writers. As they began to identify the techniques they use in their reading and writing of plays, they were able to see the transfer in their reading and writing of other materials and consequently see themselves as better readers and writers than they gave themselves credit for. By the end of the study, their definition of literacy had broadened to include such words as understanding, communication, and multiple. Most importantly, for me, they considered themselves almost as proficient readers and writers as theatre professionals.

Students also need to be able to evaluate themselves as readers and writers. I believe it is not enough for teachers to evaluate students, I believe students must have opportunities to evaluate themselves. It is essential to their growth as learners. When students choose the pieces that will go into their portfolios and write the statement that accompanies it, they are telling themselves and their audience what they have learned from doing the work, what they want their audience to see about their learning and what they hope to learn in the future. “A portfolio is not just a collection of work samples; instead, it is a vehicle for engaging students in self-evaluation and goal-setting” (Clemmons, Lasse, Cooper, Areglado, & Dill, 1993). By engaging in discussions with classmates and teachers, students learn how to evaluate themselves and others in a way that validates the work they are doing. Rehearsal provides multiple opportunities to practice how to evaluate oneself and one’s peers.

Summary

Chunking, repetition, encouragement, and response are reciprocal and recursive.

In the theatre rehearsals I observed and in the rehearsals I have experienced these
components were always present. Chunking generates repetition, repetition generates encouragement, and encouragement generates response, which generates another round of chunking, repetition and encouragement. However, chunking may generate a response, while a response may generate repetition or encouragement. In addition, the use of these four components creates an environment where other things take place.

During rehearsal the chunking of the script gives actors time and space to visualize specific scenes in their minds. These visualizations can be brought to life and tried out in the safety of the rehearsal space. The collaboration that theatre work involves creates an environment where actors are encouraged to try out new ideas. The consistent repetition provides opportunities for new ideas to be tried many times before a final decision must be made and creates opportunities for the actors to self-evaluate their work. The encouragement and response to an actor’s work by his or her fellow actors helps the actor to improve his or her acting skills and to gain confidence. I strongly believe that the use of the components of theatre rehearsal in the classroom can create an environment that will generate the same types of outcome. Students will learn to evaluate themselves as readers and writers; they will form strong, collaborative learning communities; and they learn to use and understand the strategies and skills they need to be more proficient readers and writers.

When we first began this study the members of KEY Players were strict judges of themselves as readers and writers. They were concerned about whether or not I would consider them readers and writers, i.e., literate people. This study was new territory for them. For the first time they were being asked to think about their literacy practices.
They were not being asked about their acting in the sense of performing, but they were being asked about their reading and writing as they prepared to act. In addition, they were being asked to think about their reading and writing when it did not relate to theatre. For the most proficient reader and writer and for the best actor this is a difficult thing to do. What makes us proficient is the fact that we have learned to use skills and strategies without even thinking about them. This allows us to read unencumbered by thinking about the rules. When we have to think about the rules it slows us down. As actors once we’ve learned how to read a script or the rules of the stage we cease to think about what we do and we just do it. In reading we call this automaticity, in theatre we call it experience.

For all of the differences that can occur in rehearsal because of directing/teaching styles, acting/learning styles, type of play being produced or material being read or written, and audience, rehearsals are relatively consistent in that they all include the four components discussed in this paper. These components are crucial to the success of the rehearsal and subsequently to the success of the production.

During KEY Camp, when the actors were engaged in learning how to question the audience or how to juggle the balls in the air the work moved very slowly. By the second day of the first tour they appeared to be an ensemble that had been doing this forever. The moves had become second nature. It is what rehearsal is all about; learning how to make the moves and why to make the moves to we don’t have to think about the moves. When all is said and done, actors look at the whole script and know it is not as thick as it looks.
So the question becomes, what does any of this have to do with the teaching of reading and writing? What do chunking, repetition, encouragement and response have to do with reading and writing? When I first began this study, I was convinced that there was a connection between what actors do with a script and what happens in the classroom. I was convinced because of my own experience as an actor, a student and a teacher. My observations of the KEY Players affirmed my beliefs. The literacy practices these theatre people use in the theatre is transferred to their literacy practices outside of the theatre. Some of these practices they deliberately choose to use when reading non-theatre material, and others they use without thinking about it.

If rehearsal is done properly, none of the components of rehearsal can be done independently of the others. Chunking breaks the text into smaller, more manageable segments, and each segment is read and reread until the reader/actor and the teacher/director are satisfied that the goal has been met. This rereading of the text incorporates repetition, and the purpose for the repetition is also the purpose for the chunking. Along the way, the teacher/director is encouraging the student and giving response or feedback in an effort to help the student make decisions/choices about the reading. In addition, the teacher/director uses the four components to assess the student's work, and the students/actors learn to evaluate their own work and the work of their peers. Just as the director looks at the work being done in each segment of rehearsal and gives notes, so, too, the teacher looks at the work the student is doing in each segment of
the reading and writing of the specified text and responds. In the next chapter I discuss what I believe to be the implications for the use of theatre rehearsal techniques in the reading and writing curriculum.
CHAPTER 5

THE REVIEW

The Implications

Let me again point out that the four components of rehearsal are linked to one another and are difficult to separate from one another. However, for this discussion I will attempt to discuss each component separately, although at times there may appear to be some overlapping, which is exactly what happens when the components are seen in practice. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest ways in which the concepts of theatre rehearsal might be used in a classroom to enhance already existing practices.

Chunking

The chunking of the text in the classroom should be done in the same way the script is chunked in the theatre. The teacher should make the determination based on his/her purpose for selecting the text and the concept to be taught. For example, in Naomi Howland's book, *Latkes, Latkes, Good to Eat* (Howland, 1999), the first chunking might be solely for the purpose of introducing the students to the language of the text. Since almost each page of the book contains some words that are unique to the Jewish culture, the text might be chunked one page at a time. The second chunking of the text might be to improve students’ comprehension, and so several pages might be chunked together based on their relationship to one another. For example, the first page could be one chunk because it introduces the family and their situation. The next two pages of the story
might be another chunk because they give the reader the reason for Sadie having to go outside to get the wood. The next chunk could consist of the next two pages, which tell of Sadie’s meeting with the old woman. This would continue until the entire book had been chunked and read. The third chunking might be for repeated reading to promote fluency, so more pages might be chunked together at one time. The process continues until all of the pages are one chunk and the students are reading the text fluently and comprehending what they are reading. Each chunking of the text provides students the opportunity to reread and become more familiar with the text. Each rereading provides opportunities to practice using strategies and skills that will, in time, become automatic to the process.

As the teacher chunks the text and provides the purpose for each chunking to the students, the opportunity exists for students to learn to chunk the text for themselves and their own purposes. Again, looking at the Howland text, one student may chunk the text in such a way that it allows him/her to explore the relationship between the culture presented in the text and his/her own culture. For example, comparing the concept of a village to the concept of a city, the student might chunk the first several pages of the text to provide a context for life in a village (going out to gather wood from trees, rather than going outside to the woodpile). Another student may chunk the text in a way that helps him/her better understand the language of the text. As the teacher models chunking the text in the classroom, students learn to chunk on their own and for their own purposes. I believe, that like actors, as students become more accustomed to chunking the text their participation in the chunking process changes. For example, in the KEY Players rehearsal
of the workshop *Frankie and Gloria*, both pairs of actors started out chunking the text according to the way it was chunked by the director. “Let’s start at the beginning and just work through it” (Laura). Later, as they became more familiar with the text, they chunked it for the individual style of their pair. At one point Megan suggested that they go back and work a section because she and Larry were both having difficulty remembering the lines. On the day they were leaving to start the tour, she and Larry worked the *Frankie and Gloria* piece one more time and chunked it for continuity and pace. “Let’s just run it and see if we can get through it without any screw ups” (Larry). Shemeca and Degel chunked a section because they needed to get the blocking and the exits right. As Rogoff points out, the question is not whether individuals have or have not yet ‘acquired’ information or skills but rather how people’s participation changes as an activity develops (Rogoff, Radziszewska, & Masiello, 1995). Rogoff calls this guided participation, the teacher guides, the students participate and eventually the students take more of a leadership role.

Guided participation involves adults or children challenging, constraining, and supporting children in the process of posing and solving problems—through material arrangements of children’s activities and responsibilities as well as through interpersonal communication, with children observing and participating at a comfortable but slightly challenging level” (Rogoff, 1990).

This is very similar to Vygotsky’s (1978, p. 4) discussion of the Zone of Proximal Development, when he states, “What is the zone of proximal development today will be the actual developmental level tomorrow – that is, what a child can do with assistance today she (sic) will be able to do by herself (sic) tomorrow.” Vygotsky defines the Zone
of Proximal Development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as
determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as
determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more
capable peers” (p. 86). As students work with the teacher they learn how to chunk the
text, or the purpose for the chunking, and they begin to make these decisions for
themselves.

Chunking the text creates opportunities for students to experiment with the
language of the text. This is particularly important when the language of the text is
different from the language of the learner’s community. For example, the names Herschel,
Hillel and Hayim found in Howland’s book, are very different from the names Betsey,
Sharon and James found in Ntozake Shange’s book, Betsey Brown. The words
“Chanukah” and “Latkes” are also different from words like “chirren” and “y’all.”

Chunking the text can help students learn to pronounce the words and practice saying
them. Lisa Delpit (1995, p. 65) asserts that “learning to orally produce an alternate form
is not principally a function of cognitive analysis, thereby not ideally learned from
protracted rule-based instruction and correction. Rather, it comes with exposure, comfort
level, motivation, familiarity, and practice in real communicative contexts.” Chunking the
text can provide students with such exposure and practice. The chunks may be selected
to point out the cultural language of the text. These chunks might then be compared to
the language the students use in their own cultures. For example, in Betsey Brown there
are sections where the characters speak in dialect, very different from the Standard
English we use in our classrooms.
Charlie gon' give she some, come t'morrow. Betcha money on it. He gointa the high school. Now, how he be in high school an' he aint gon' give she some? I'ma tell ya one mo' time. If she aint give it up yet, she a fool.

In order to appreciate the impact of the scene, the student (and the teacher) must become familiar with the language of the character speaking in dialect and have opportunities to practice speaking the dialect and interpreting it. Chunking can provide these opportunities in the classroom just as it does in the theatre.

Repetition

Generally, when we think of repetition in the classroom, we think of it as a negative. Students think that if they ask something to be repeated, it means they were not paying attention or they are dumb. Teachers think that if they must repeat something they did not do their job effectively or their students were not paying attention. However, because of my training in theatre, I worry when repetition is omitted from my learning process. There is also research to suggest that repetition in reading can be beneficial to the learner. In their recommendations for practices to increase reading fluency, Mastropieri, Leinart and Scruggs (1999) suggest repeated reading as one strategy. “The investigations on repeated reading suggest that reading fluency can be improved when students with reading difficulties are provided with specific instructions, including repeated readings, guidance and procedures for monitoring their reading performance” (p. 68). Another study looking at increasing fluency in student with low vision found that,
Repeated readings are effective and easy to use and produce good results. Many students with low vision are given fewer shorter assignments at school, which reduces the time they have to practice reading. Teachers need to ensure that their students have enough time to practice needed skills. (Layton & Koenig, 1998).

Repeated reading has also been found to help students improve comprehension. In a study that looked at the effects of repeated reading on the written language comprehension of younger and older adults the authors concluded that, “both age groups improved their performance by repeated reading of the texts, resulting in a robustly significant effect of trial. Repeated presentation of texts enhances processing” (Harris, Rogers et al., 1998).

Repetition should be as connected to chunking in the classroom as it is connected to chunking in the theatre. Repetition of the text provides students opportunities to think about what they have read and how it connects with what they already know. Again, Wells supports this stating that “children have certain hypotheses about the principles for combining units. They seem to prefer to work with principles that they construct for themselves on the basis of the regularities that they perceive in the speech of others” (p. 43). This mediation of the student’s world and the world of the text requires some reflection, and I contend repetition of the text provides opportunities for this. It is through reflection that the learner makes decisions about what must be attended to at the moment. For example, many of the situations that are presented in Betsey Brown are familiar to all cultures, and students may connect those situations to experiences in their own lives. The language used to describe those situations, however,
may be unfamiliar to the reader. Look at the scene in which Regina is discovered with her
boyfriend visiting.

Regina: Mrs. Murray, this is Roscoe, my beau.
Vida: You don't say, Regina. Allard seems a mite untidy and the girls
could use some talcum quite nicely. If you don't mind, I'll see
your visitor to the door. Then you and I will talk.
Roscoe: My intentions are honorable, M'am.
Vida: No need to impress me, young man. I've got no high-school-
drop-out to fend for. I'd hoped Regina would elevate or
gravitate to her potential, but it seems her bodily needs are
more the essence of her background.

The familiarity of the scene is the dismissal of a friend and the implication that
Roscoe is not good enough for Regina. The language used to indicate this, however, is
different from what many of us are used to hearing. As students revisit this scene,
through repeated readings, and as they reflect on the scene and the language being used,
they begin to make decisions about what needs to be worked on at that moment. For
some students it may be attending to the new vocabulary, questioning such words as,
'talcum,' 'intentions,' and 'gravitate.' For other students the focus may need to be on
comprehension and understanding the significance of this scene to what has happened
before. Repeated reading of the text, in segments, will help the reader become more
familiar with the language of the text, and opportunities for reflection on the text will help
students determine which aspects of the language of the text needs to be dealt with and
why.

Repetition can also help students visualize the text. Keene and Zimmermann
(1997) in their book Mosaic of Thought, talk about the use of sensory images to enhance
comprehension. In the theatre, exercises on visualizing the text brings forth memories in
one's life, and helps the actor make the text come alive. Bell (1991) suggests that strong readers are able to visualize the details of a story assembled as a whole rather than trying to hold onto the parts. Long, Winograd and Bridge (1989) indicated that imagery may increase the capacity of working memory during reading by assimilating details and propositions into chunks which are carried along during reading. It may also be involved in making comparisons or analogies—that is, in the matching schematic and textual information. And it seems to function as an organization tool for coding and storing meaning from the reading. Wilhelm states, “Drama is a cognitive tool that concretizes the abstract, making it sensory and available” (p. 31). I believe teaching students to use repetition as a strategy for reading and writing helps in making the text sensory and available. All too often the reading of text in the classroom is passive, students read the text once and move on. Repetition of the text pulls students in and gives them time to “feel” the text. As students read and reread the text they may begin to make connections to situations in their world that resemble the situations in the book; they begin to relate the previous reading of the text with the new read, and they may begin to chunk the text in order to relate the new read with previous readings. With each repetition of the scene discussed above, students may begin to visualize himself or herself or someone they know in the role of the characters. They may even replace the scene in the book with one they have experienced that is similar. They begin to make the connections to their own lives and draw on their own memories, which can make for a lively and more in depth discussion of the text in the classroom.
Encouragement

In a second grade classroom in Wilmington, North Carolina, a few years ago, I confided to a group of students that creating concept maps made me uncomfortable. The students looked at me, a visiting teacher working on her Master’s Degree, and said, “Oh, Ms. Wright, just do it!” After that, each time I visited their classroom, they made a point of insisting that somehow a concept map was included in our lesson. Rarely were they subtle in their hints. “We need to do a concept map, so you can get comfortable. You know what, if you practice doing something long enough, you will get good at it.” These second graders’ encouragement helped me to overcome my fear of concept maps and to ‘just do it.’ I will admit to still not reaching for the concept map as my first way of sorting out my thinking, but I do reach for it now, and feel relatively certain when I have completed it that I have made headway. Encouragement is a necessary ingredient for learning. In the world outside of the classroom the newest members of the community are encouraged from the moment they enter our world. As adults we encourage them to use the language of the community by talking with them; we encourage them to learn the rules of the community by modeling appropriate behavior for them and telling them when they have met our expectations. In addition, we provide opportunities for them to approximate the language and behavior of the community and we assist them in becoming independent. Students need the same encouragement to guide them in the classroom.

Keep in mind the dictionary definition of encouragement is to “inspire with courage, spirit or hope.” Like encouragement in the theatre, I believe students need to receive encouragement that will spur them onward. I believe when students are
encouraged in the classroom it tells them we believe they will succeed. Ladson-Billings (1994, p. 27) refers to this in her discussion of teachers with culturally relevant practices. One of those practices is the belief that all students can succeed and conveying that message to them. In her description of the teachers in her study, each one conveyed the message and expectation of success to the students. Sometimes the teachers used words, “I believe you can.” “What are you going to be your best at today?” “I just know you can do that.” Other times it was conveyed in the way the classroom was set up, tables instead of desks, space for students to work collaboratively, opportunities for independent study. Whatever the set up the message was clear; I trust you to do what you need to do in order to be successful at what you do. Students need to have a sense of belonging in order to be successful in school and to begin to see themselves as having something to contribute to the learning process (Allen et al., 1993). I am reminded of a student who was in the class where I conducted my Action Research project for my Master's thesis. Saquaia was the child who'd been told so often that she was incapable of accomplishment, that she believed it...and so did her classmates. Each time she was assigned to a group her classmates would moan and groan about not wanting her in the group. For the writing part of this project the class was separated into four groups of five. The students were to write a story that they would later perform as Readers’ Theatre. The students were told that every member of the group had to contribute and idea to the story. Saquaia struggled to make a contribution but was sabotaged by her insecurity in her ability. “I don’t have no ideas in my head,” she said to me during one session. “Yes you do, just keep trying, you’ll get it,” I assured her. In addition to my
constant encouragement, Saquaia’s group mates began to encourage her also. As a result, she was able to eventually submit an idea for the group’s story. Her pride in her accomplishment beamed across her face and registered in her voice on the day of the performance when she announced to her grandmother, “When you hear the line ‘the periwinkle squirted water in their faces,’ I wrote that one.” Constant, consistent encouragement convinced Saquaia and her group mates that she had something to contribute to the learning process.

Encouragement that spurs students forward may move them to explore beyond the text in hand. Just as Shemeca, of the Key Players wanted to know more about Native Americans and her own culture; and Larry wanted to know about each of the “Assassins;” so too, a student reading Howland’s book might want to know more about Chanukah and explore the subject further. Just as Larry read about all of the Assassins in the play, a student may decide to visit the library to learn about the celebration in general, or he/she may decide to focus on one particular aspect, such as the history, the symbols, etc. Just as Shemeca went to her grandmother to learn about the Cherokee; a student reading Betsey Brown, might want to learn more about the desegregation of schools in this country and could choose to visit the library or interview older members of the community. In making this move, the student begins to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

Response

As I stated in the Findings section, I prefer the word response to feedback because I believe it implies a discussion or a conversation, and I believe we need to engage
students in more conversation in the classroom, particularly in the area of assessment.

This does not mean that I believe we should do away with assessment of students’ work, nor does it mean that we should use only student evaluations in that assessment. What it does mean is that we should include students in part of the discussion of that assessment and that we should talk with them about our assessment of their work. In other words, we should give them “notes” and encourage a discussion of those notes. I suggest that this discussion needs to go beyond the kinds of discussion that take place during reading and writing conferences. The conversations I am suggesting require both the student and the teacher to participate by listening and talking. These conversations must require students and teachers to go beyond simply making a statement, “You did good work,” or “I like the part where the boy climbed the tree,” and talk about the reasons for the choices being made. These conversations must generate the type of response that occurs in theatre, where both parties are willing to try something new, just to see if it might work. In addition, we must be willing to broaden our interpretation of what is good and valid assessment.

In an article discussing the attitude and perceptions of educators on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills and the impact of the test on students and teachers, James Hoffman (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001), suggests that the use of standardized tests forces educators to “align” their classroom practices to meet the demands of the tests and, as a result, students are impacted negatively. Teachers respond to the demands of the tests, students’ needs are considered less and content is sacrificed for context.
"If teachers couldn't use tests, what would they do to evaluate their students? What would administrators say about the students in their schools if they couldn't talk about them in terms of test scores? What would parents say? What would students say?" Jane Hansen (1998, p. 78) begins her discussion of the importance of authentic evaluation with these questions. Hansen's response was that the people she interviewed for the chapter "seldom mentioned test scores, but that many of the behaviors they considered important go unrecognized in a test-driven evaluation system." I believe response can help teachers and students engage in authentic assessment activities and provide answers to those questions.

Authentic reading assessment requires students to demonstrated reading rather than recognize correct responses. Students read, respond, and interact with real books; engage in meaningful discussions; write about what they read; and set personal goals. As teachers provide instruction, they are continually observing and planning activities to assess how well students are learning. In addition, because students can see the results of their work, they become involved in their own assessment (Valencia, 1997).

Authentic assessment includes student self-assessment, and, according to Caroline Smith (1997, p. 5), teachers engage students in some form of goal setting and this requires students to reflect on what they know and what they want to know when they start a new topic. As one teacher put it, "Self-assessment is affirming, it gives children the opportunity to feel good about themselves" (Smith, 1997, p. 1). I suggest that good self-assessment techniques allow students to move through what Vygotsky calls the process of internalization and that response helps in the development of this process. As the student becomes more experienced in assessing his/her own work, he/she moves from an
interpersonal process into an intrapersonal process. For example, a student assessing his/her comprehension of *Betsey Brown* might begin by relying on questions about the story or the characters put forth by the teacher or other students. As he/she progresses in the ability to assess his/her own work, he/she begins to ask questions as he/she reads the text.

I believe response can help students assume the mantle of the expert by making them apprentices in the assessment process. Rogoff (1990, p. 57) describes apprenticeship as a "model in the plan of community activity, involving active individuals participating with others in culturally organized activity that has as part of its purpose the development of mature participation in the activity by the less experienced people."

When we encourage students to engage in conversation with us about their work we help them learn to articulate their thoughts and ideas about that work. We help them learn to evaluate our assessment of their work. We teach them how to agree and disagree with others assessment of their work; and we teach them how to accept and give constructive criticism. When we provide students with opportunities for response, we provide them with opportunities to use a variety of modalities for giving that response—reading, writing, speaking, listening and gesture.

Portfolios are, perhaps, the best-known form of response in the classroom. Students make choices of the work they wish to include in the portfolio and write a response to the work telling why they chose it for the portfolio, what the piece shows about their learning and what goals they have set for themselves as it relates to the piece. While I support the use of portfolios as a response tool, I believe they can be more
effectively used if they are part of an evaluation conversation. Salvio (1994, p. 76)
echoes this in her article *Ninja Warriors and the Vulcan Logic*.

By casting the portfolio as a popular narrative that has implications for curriculum, we challenge and extend our understanding of the literacy proficiencies students from diverse backgrounds possess, thereby widening the discourse boundaries of school. The process of inquiry the children participate in requires that they exercise the power of reflective attention Dewey recognized as a vital part of education.

The student and teacher need to talk about the contents of the portfolio and the rationale for the choices. This conversation needs to be ongoing as the portfolio is being developed. Just as the director's response to the actor is made in the form of suggestions and corrections and encourages response, so, too, should the teacher's response to the student involve suggestions, corrections and encourage response in return.

Response provides both the student and the teacher with opportunities to relay expectations to one another. It can also create an environment where the student feels safe in articulating concerns about assessment. I recall such a moment during my Master's program when one of my professors returned a self-evaluation form to me and expressed concern that I appeared to be unprepared for class at times. Knowing how hard I worked to always be prepared for class, I went to her and we talked about it. After articulating to her that I was not unprepared, but often, during class I found myself trying to think through the information, she agreed. By responding to her response to me, we were able to engage in a conversation that allowed us to understand one another's thinking. We engaged in a dialogue about learning.
Summary

As I stated as the beginning of this chapter, I am suggesting the use of theatre rehearsal techniques in teaching reading and writing as tools to enhance already existing practices. I believe it is not enough to assess if a student can choose the appropriate response. I believe that we must assess what our students know about their own learning and thinking. We must provide them with opportunities to demonstrate what they know about reading and writing, not just that they can read and write but that they understand what they are doing when they read and write. I believe that the four components of theatre rehearsal can help students understand what they do when they read and write by giving them time to reflect, and by giving them multiple opportunities to interact with the text. Jane Hansen (1998 p. 77) suggests that “most of us don’t take time to reflect nor do we provide time for our students to do so (because) we have too much to do. We have to move forward, do the next thing, make progress, get somewhere.” I contend that using these theatre rehearsal components can move us forward, get us somewhere, help us make progress and give us and our students time to reflect. Wilhelm says, “Literacy is the willingness and the ability to evoke, conceive of, express, receive, reflect on, share, evaluate, revise, and negotiate meanings in the various forms that these meanings may take (p. 150). I believe theatre rehearsal can help us help our students learn to do all of these things.
CHAPTER 6

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When I began this study I believed that all actors were proficient readers and writers and saw themselves in that way. I also believed that all actors loved to read and sometimes write, and I thought the literacy practices of the theatre informed their literacy practices outside of the theatre. After conducting this study I am convinced that all theatre people do not see themselves as proficient readers and writers; that all theatre people do not like to read and write; but the literacy practices of the theatre do inform their literacy practices outside of the theatre. Even though the theatre professionals I interviewed represented a very small sample of the population, the similarities in their literacy experiences in the theatre and the similarities of their literacy practices outside of the theatre lead me to believe I am right.

If I were to conduct this study again I would plan to stay with the company for an entire touring season and perhaps work with several companies simultaneously. This would give a larger sampling and make generalization more likely. I might also conduct a quantitative study immediately following the collection of the qualitative data to look at what, if any, impact the use of theatre rehearsal techniques has on the reading and writing success of students. The next step in this process is to take what I have learned here and implement it in actual classrooms in various types of schools. Over the next several years
I hope to conduct a quantitative study in several classrooms of differing grade levels in different types of schools and in different geographical locations.

Like any theatre production this one ran out of rehearsal time. The day ultimately came when the curtain was scheduled to go up and the show had to go on even with the set still wet with fresh paint. Like most actors I am wishing for one more week of rehearsal and praying that the audience will forgive my shortcomings. Then, in the midst of my concerns I am reminded of what one of my theatre professors in college said to his cast before each rehearsal, "Breathe, relax and have fun. If you make a mistake, just keep going, that's why we're here." We took the script page by page, the play scene by scene until it was done. I am also reminded of the time when I was in seventh grade and wanted to read Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* for a book report. Amazed at how much there was to read, and I loved to read, I complained to my dad. "Hey," he said, "just remember, it's not as thick as it looks." Not convinced I asked him what he meant. "Don't start reading the whole book, read one page at a time. Before you know it you'll have read the whole thing." Many years later I know that about any text I attempt to read or write--if I approach it one page at a time, it is not as thick as it looks.
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Appendix A

KEY Camp Schedule

D A Y ONE

Welcome and Intro
- Welcome from Laura
- Explain on-going la si demo
- Get to know you circle

History of KEY Players
(Cjane) 9:30-10:00 (K)

What is KEY Camp
- Explanation of KEY Camp

Tour of Town & FLC
(Laura/Ray) 10:15-10:30 (FLC)

Actor/Educator Challenges
- Importance of Warm-ups
- Comfortable/Uncomfortable
- I can/I can't chair

Lunch Break
(Ray/Laura) 1:00-3:00 (FLC)

Ensemble Building
- Group Juggling
- AEs make list of what defines/goals for their ensemble
- Respect sculptures (*La si)
- Chocolate kisses (*La si)
- Tin foil (*La si)

Break
3:00-3:15

Employee Manual Test
(Laura) 3:15-3:30 (FLC)

Employee Manual
(Cjane/Laura) 3:30-4:30 (FLC)

Sustaining Ensemble
- Use AES "ensemble list"
- Policies which relate to sustaining Ensemble:
  1) Attendance
  2) Bad Mouthing
  3) Check In
  4) Complaints
  5) Deadlines
  6) Non-Smoking
  7) Props and Costumes
  8) Determining Negligence
  9) Scheduling
  10) Rehearsal - Actors Do Get Breaks

Line of Goodness
(Laura) 4:30-4:45 (FLC)

Actor House Meeting
(Ray/Cjane Laura) 4:45-5:30 (H)
- Determine house manager
- Go over rules
- Cleaning Schedule

Site Coordinator Meeting
(Ray/Cjane Laura/Megan) 5:30-6:30 (K)
Appendix B

Interview Questions for KEY Players Staff and Actors

Interview #1

Tell me about yourself. What is your role with the company? How did you get into theatre? Do you have formal training? Etc.

Do you consider yourself a reader/writer? Are you a proficient reader/writer?

How do you define literacy?

What do you think is the criteria for being a good reader/writer?

Define theatre literacy. How does one attain theatre literacy?

What else would you like for me to know about you?
Appendix C

Interview Questions for KEY Players Staff and Actors

Interviews #2 & #3

Do you think reading and writing of theatre material influences your reading and writing of other materials?

How much reading of theatre material do you do in your role with the company?

List some of the strategies you use when you read and write.

Talk about your system for reading plays (the first, second, third time and beyond).

(Non-actors) How do you read plays differently from actors?

(Actors) How does your reading in preparation for an audition differ from reading in preparation for a role in which you have been cast?

How much writing for the theatre do you do in your role with the company?

How do you see your reading/writing of theatre material affecting your reading/writing of other materials?

List some of the theatre strategies you use when you read and write non-theatre material.
Appendix D

IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building
51 College Road
Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3585
(603) 862-3564 FAX

LAST NAME Wright
DEPT Education - Morrill Hall
OFF-CAMPUS 1 Winter Street
ADDRESS Dover, NH 03820
PROJECT TITLE How Do Theater Performance Techniques Help Actors' Reading Performance

FIRST NAME Dale
APPL DATE 7/9/99
IRB # 2158
REVIEW LEVEL FULL

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research reviewed and approved the protocol for your project.

Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. (Please refer to the Assurance of Compliance and the Belmont Report, enclosed.)

Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to their implementation. If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact me directly at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Kara L. Eddy, MBA
Regulatory Compliance

cc: Jane Hansen, Education
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this protocol. Approval is granted for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a project report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your project is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. Changes in your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and receive written, unconditional approval prior to implementation. If you have questions or concerns about your project or this approval, please feel free to contact this office at 862-2003.

Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this project. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Regulatory Compliance Manager
Office of Sponsored Research

Jane Hansen, Education
Appendix E
Notes from Transcripts

**Director Modeling (p. 61).**

In this rehearsal Laura (the director) models for the actor playing James (Larry) the route he will take to make his entrance from the far right side of the performance space to the stage area.

“So, Larry, you’ll come in through here.” (Laura walks through the “entrance” to the performance space as Larry watches.) “And then you’ll come around behind the audience, keep coming until you get about right here.” (She meanders the space until she is on the stage area.) “Shemeca, when you see him get here you say your line. Larry, the minute you hear her you stop, pause, and then say your line.” (She imitates him walking, stops with one foot in mid-air, holds for a two-count, and then puts foot down.) “Okay, now you try it.” Larry begins the entrance as Laura coaches him, “Okay, now you come around behind the students (represented by strategically placed chairs), keep coming, keep coming, good. Shemeca, get ready, keep coming.” (Shemeca gives the line, Larry pauses for the two-count, and continues.) “Good job, let’s do it again.” The chunk is repeated twice more without Laura’s coaching and then the rehearsal moves to the next scene.

**Group Interactions (p. 82)**

Peer discourse
In response to Laura’s question, “Where are you in your work?” Shemeca acknowledges that she is having difficulty with her character.

Shemeca: I feel off balance with this one. I can’t seem to get into it.
Laura: Talk some more about what you mean by ‘off balance.’
Shemeca: Well—see—I don’t know. I mean, I just feel odd when we do this one. Okay, so here’s the thing…I don’t like this play. (pause) I mean (pause), I don’t know. (throws hands up)
Megan: Are you saying you don’t know why you’re off balance or you don’t know why you don’t like the play?
Shemeca: I’m saying I don’t know why both… like I don’t know what there is to dislike about this play. I don’t know, maybe that’s not it.
Laura: Okay, let's talk about the play. What do you think is different about this play? (The actors suggest such things as the subject matter is scary, harassment is hard to talk about, and nobody likes to believe it can happen to their kid.) Shemeca, what is happening for you in this play that didn’t happen in the others?

Shemeca: I'm not sure I understand what you mean.

Larry: Like what is different this time? Is it the way we're rehearsing, or the character you're playing, or just stuff in general?

Shemeca: Hmmm...I think it's the subject of this one. Like, you know, Trash is about garbage and that's easy to deal with, but this play gets personal. I don't feel comfortable with the subject—yeah, that's it, I'm uncomfortable with the whole subject of harassment.

Larry: So maybe you should talk about that. Why are you uncomfortable?

Laura: You don't have to talk about that if you don't want to, but you do need to explore it for yourself?

Shemeca: Yeah, like okay, I don't want to talk about it right now.

Megan: Okay, I know you don't want to talk about it right now, but can I just tell you one thing—the discomfort works. I really feel your anxiety when you're doing those scenes. And I think you just need to figure out a way to get comfortable with the discomfort.

Shemeca: Okay, I'll think about this some more.

The rehearsal ends for the day.

Later, in her reflective instrument, Shemeca continues to explore her feelings about this play.

I think I know what's wrong, it's Degel. He gets too close. I know his character is supposed to intrude on my space, but I think he gets too close. See, I have this thing about personal space. I hate to have my personal space invaded. See, when people get too close to me I feel like I'm being attacked. I know that's what this play is about, it's about invading somebody's personal space, but I don't like having my space invaded. So I don't know what I can do about it. Maybe it's like Megan said, I just need to find a way to use it for the play. She thinks it works. Oh, well, if it works for the show, I guess that's what's important.

Visualization (p. 87)

C. Jane: When I read or write for the theatre, I create a movie in my head. I actually see the characters and places come to life. I make up little voices for the different characters. I also hear the voices of and see the characters in my pleasure reading. I kind of bring to life in my mind a play of the novel. (Reflective Instrument)
Margie: I enjoy reading. I enjoy having to use my imagination. Like when you watch TV it's all right there in front of you. They give you the story, they give you the characters. But when you're reading you have to make up all of that stuff on your own and imagine what it looks like. (Interview #1)

When I read I usually visualize how it might be to set it up and which character I identify with the most. (Reflective Instrument)

Laura: When I read a play I'm envisioning it and I'm hearing the voices of the characters. And when I'm reading a novel I'm still envisioning it. I see it in my head like I would a play or a movie. (Interview #2)

When I am reading something and come across a word I don't know, I will usually skip it or ask someone if they know what the word is or how to pronounce it. I rarely stop and look things up because it interrupts the flow of the thoughts. I think the reason I don't interrupt and look the word up has to do with visualization. When I read I picture the staging in my mind as if the story or information were a play to watch. That is how I process information, I have to see it somehow. (Reflective Instrument)

Definitions of Literacy (p. 93)

In the first group interview participants were asked to write a response to the following prompt: “Define literacy.” During the first individual interview each participant was asked, “How do you define literacy?” In subsequent individual interviews participants were either asked, “Define literacy,” or “Define literacy for me.” The reflective instrument prompts made no mention of defining literacy.

Margie: I define literacy as the ability to read and write. (Group Interview #1, 10/7/99) (Literacy) is being able to read and write and comprehend what you're reading. I guest that's it. (Individual interview #2, 9/23/99) I've been thinking about literacy a lot and what I mean when I say that word. My definition hasn't changed much but I think it is still evolving. (Exit interview)
Larry: Literacy is the ability to read and write and understand. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)
On the sheet I defined it (literacy) as being able to read and write and understand what you’re reading and writing. I still that. (Individual interview #1, 10/7/99)
Literacy is the ability to read and write and understand language; that includes letters, numbers and symbols. (Final entry in reflective instrument, 10/14/99)
My definition of literacy has broadened since this project started. My views were kind of stereotypical in that I thought only about reading and writing words. I’ve expanded that to include looking at and understanding numbers and other symbols. I think I have a broader sense of the word. (Exit interview, 1/00)

Shemeca: It’s the ability to read and write in your native tongue. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)
I define literacy as the ability to read and write in your native tongue. I say native tongue because my grandmother is Cherokee. I think she is very literate in her language. I can’t read Cherokee. (Individual interview #2, 10/13/99)
I don’t think my definition is the universal definition of literacy. I don’t think you have to be “well read” to be literate. You have to be able to read and write for your level. (Exit interview, 1/00)

Laura: Literacy is the ability to read and write the written word. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)
I’m not sure how to define literacy. I’d never thought about that. I guess it’s the ability to read and write and to convey your thoughts. (Individual interview #1, 9/23/99)
I don’t think my definition has changed much. I still think it is the ability to read and write and to convey your thoughts. But I think you also have to be able to understand what you read and write. So maybe I am changing. I’ll have to think about that some more. (Exit interview, 1/00)

Ray: Literacy is the ability to communicate via reading and writing. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)
Literacy is the ability to read and write and to understand. (Individual interview, #1, 9/23/99)
Literacy is the ability to read and write and comprehend and to apply it to one’s life. (Exit interview, 1/00)
C. Jane:

Literacy is the ability to read and write with comprehension. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)

Literacy is the ability to read and write and to comprehend the world. (Individual interview #2, 9/23/99)

Literacy is not just the way we see it as educated people. It is communication in a broader sense. (Exit interview, 1/00)

Degel:

Literacy is the ability to read and write at the accepted level. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)

I believe it is the ability to read and understand both the spoken and the written word at the accepted level. (Individual interview #1, 10/12/99)

My definition of literacy hasn’t changed. I still believe it is what I said at the very beginning. (Exit interview, 1/00)

Megan:

Literacy is the ability to read and write in a given language. (Group interview #1, 10/7/99)

It is the ability to read, write and communicate in a given language. (Individual interview #1, 10/11/99)

You asked me about the definition of literacy and I began to consider it again. I guess to decide on one right answer would limit my definition of the concept of literacy. Half the fun and fulfillment of the answer to that question is in the search, not the actual answer. So literacy is to read and write in order to explore and express our ever changing finds. (Reflective instrument final entry, 1/00)

My idea has been expanded since the first time you asked me that question. Literacy is not just reading, writing and communicating, but it’s how I perceive things. My ability to perceive things. And that might be communicated in how I read it or write it or talk about it. Say I see a huge tree, and just my ability to see that tree and to recognize it as a tree and to perceive that is in fact a sort of literacy. I am literate in just taking things in with my eyes or even with my hands. (Exit interview, 11/99)