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An ecological perspective of writing: Teachers, peers, and authors as resources in a response-based classroom

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AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF WRITING: TEACHERS, PEERS, AND AUTHORS AS RESOURCES IN A RESPONSE-BASED CLASSROOM

BY

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

To my family

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First and foremost I want to thank Nancy Herdecker, the teacher in whose classroom I conducted my research. Enough cannot be said about her. She taught me so much about what goes into good teaching-- through her love and honesty, energy and consistency, and her sensitivity to the individual needs of her students and quickness to see the sparks of development. She made me feel valued every day of my participation in her class-- through her giving up of precious time to meet with me, through her enthusiastic response to field notes, through her encouragement and sympathetic ear when I felt overwhelmed or down. She did these things consistently even in the face of several painful crises that were occuring in her life at the time. I am indebted to her.

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ABSTRACT

An Ecological Perspective of Writing: Teachers, Peers, and Authors as Resources in a Response-Based Classroom

by

Margaret L. Murray
University of New Hampshire, May, 1992

The present study examines the ways in which the available resources of books, classmates, and teacher affect three fourth-grade students' writing development within the same classroom. The study's unique contribution is its holistic description of how all three resources contribute collectively to the ongoing writing of these individuals over the better part of their school year. The study describes the ways in which the children's writing and their notions of good writing are being formed in the dialectical processes of interaction with these resources. Further, the study describes the global traits of their particular classroom's culture--its extant written forms and literacy contexts of interaction--in order to understand more fully the effects of the social context on the individuals.

Data were collected using a variety of techniques of ethnographic inquiry: field observation notes, formal and informal interviews, audio-recordings of classroom literacy events, and the writing of the case study children as well as that of their classmates. Data were

analyzed by using ethnographic tools of analysis: data categorization, data triangulation, as well as through exploratory writing.

Major conclusions include: 1) the extant written forms and contexts constrained as well as multiplied the choices the children made for learning about writing; 2) the ways these children "read" and "took" from the classroom resources were both a function of who they were as individuals-- their literacy development, personalities, and proclivities-- and of what the classroom offered; and 3) the resources overlapped to strengthen their power to influence the case study children's writing.

CHAPTER 1

WRITING AS A SOCIAL ACT

The prevailing notion of the writer is one of a solitary figure weaving thoughts from some inner realm of self, cut off from the social world. As Linda Brodkey puts it: "Whether the scene of writing is poetic or prosaic, the writer above the madding crowd in a garret, only temporarily free from family and friends in a study, or removed from the world in a library, it is the same picture-- the writer writes alone" (cited in Ede and Lunsford, 1990). This image is rooted in the Platonic tradition in which seeking truth and reality about the nature of things is necessarily an inner journey.

This cultural myth extends beyond writers and into all matters of invention and discovery, and remains despite the commonsense of seeing otherwise. If one asks writers, visual artists, musicians, and scientists to talk about the social influences that have contributed to their work, as John-Steiner (1985) did, they reveal their process of invention as one forged in interactions with others. Apprenticeships were a common feature-- either through "distant mentors" never met, perhaps dead for centuries, and/or through more collaborative linkages. Their mentors inspired them, and left an imprint on their work. Indeed, for many, their work was dependent on the discoveries made by others. There were many instances of people, writers among them, coming together to share their work and ideas with the purpose of defining more clearly for themselves their own

unique expressions through convergencies and divergencies with others.

LeFevre (1987) enjoins us to view invention, written or otherwise, as the social act that it is. Regardless of whether we write at home alone or surrounded by books and people, our ideas and purposes are formed in connection with others. Further, our culture prescribes the forms of writing into which our ideas and purposes become expressed (Heath,1982).

To illustrate, my ideas are formed in interactions with others' ideas-- through reading and talking with people. I am writing because a dissertation is a requirement to attain my degree. My more immediate purposes shift from describing to informing to persuading, all necessary components of dissertations. The particular form and style in which these purposes take shape are a product of my understanding about how qualitative research is written, based on models I have available to me and the broad audience that it is intended to reach. Indeed, the fact that this dissertation takes a written form is determined by my culture's conventions for dissertations.

This perspective is informed by the cognitive development theory of Vygotsky (1962, 1978). His theory derives its power from his attention to the evolutionary progress of our species and his recognition of language as the tool that set our species on a course of shared understanding, and of culture. Language freed us to express ideas outside the realm of the here-and-now, and to pass on the accumulated knowledge of our culture to our young. As individuals develop language, they acquire tools for differentiating and

organizing our thoughts and perceptions of the object world in our culture's particular ways.

Individuals develop, said Vygotsky, within a culture's available set of organizing structures and functions to express meaning. The individual's development is inseparable from the culture but is, as well, the individual's own "reading" and "taking" of its offerings. How we read and take from the offerings is a product of our own past experiences within the culture, and our own proclivities, personal characteristics, and abilities. The individual is an active agent in both creating and being created by the culture. We have, said John Dewey, "a *distinctive* way of behaving in conjunction with and *connection* with other distinctive ways of acting, not a self-enclosed way of acting, independent of everything else" (1927, p.188).

Vygotsky's view is a radical departure from Platonic tradition which places the individual at the center of development. This long-dominant view has led us to define and describe development, and writing development specifically, primarily in intrapersonal terms.

Marilyn Cooper (1986, p. 366) informs us that the Platonic tradition has been the world view permeating our composition theory. Even as composition theory shifted to a conception of writing as a process, researchers generated a cognitive model of composing which, although useful, projected the ideal writer as one who:

> ...uses free writing exercises and heuristics to find out what he knows about a subject and to find something he wants to say to others; he uses his analytic skills to discover a purpose, to imagine an audience, to decide on strategies, to organize content; and he simulates how his text will be read by reading it over himself, making the

> final revisions necessary to assure its success when he abandons it to the world.

Cooper suggests that this dominant model of composing, as it was conceived in individualistic notions of writers, is inadequate for bringing into light the full understanding of an act of composing.

This "ideal" model of composing, with its lens on the individual, is reflected in the common pedagogical practices extant today. Writing assignments are still routinely conceived and written without benefit of interaction and response until the piece reaches its sole audience-- the teacher. Students are rarely asked to revise (Applebee, 1981; Shaw, Pettigrew and van Nostrand, 1983). The students must rely on whatever current theories they possess to compose, based on prior writing and forms to which they have been exposed. Not only does such a method perpetuate the myth of the writer necessarily adrift from social influence, but it also constrains the resources to which the writer can avail him/herself and the learning to use them. The benefits to be gained in interaction with others-- for example, a sense of audience, learning from others' writing processes and texts, and receiving response to one's own text-- remain unavailable.

Cooper proposes "an ecological model of writing" which reflects "the various ways writers connect with one another through writing: through systems of ideas, of purposes, of interpersonal interactions, of cultural norms, of textual forms" (p. 369). Such a proposal seeks to widen our lens to take into account individuals within the sociocultural grounding in which they write.

Literature Review

Research on writing which looks at writing development within the social contexts of influence is at its beginning, gaining ground in the past decade. Some studies have concentrated on the development of literacy (reading and writing) in home settings. Taylor (1983) describes the range of reading and writing forms that were used and supported by social purposes that were, often as not, independent of the explicit message conveyed in the text (e.g., after a mother-daughter argument, the daughter writes a note to her mother about some event at school but with the primary purpose of being conciliatory). Heath (1984) documents the forms and functions of literacy in various communities, the ways in which children in these communities acquire literate behaviors, and how these ways predict individuals' differential success in school.

Most germane to my study is classroom research that examines the influence of books, classmates, and teachers on students' writing. Some studies focused on one or the other of these influences and fewer on the combined influence of two or all three. I will make a representative review of these studies.

Books

Studies have demonstrated that children use books as models in a number of ways. Not only do they choose to write in the genres they read, but they also borrow topic, theme and style of favorite books (Atwell, 1987; Blackburn, 1985; MacMillan, 1990). The borrowings occurred in classrooms that were designed to make the connections of reading and writing explicit, an observation that was offered as a key factor for making these connections occur. The class

activities aided students to connect the two processes by structuring events in which books and children's writing could be talked about concurrently, and/or by leading students to make connections through discussion questions that capitalized on writing. For example, the question, "How does the author capture your attention?" may be asked of the student's writing too. Atwell also observed that the broad selection of permitted genres for reading extended students' purposes and genre choices for writing.

Blackburn's (1985) research is especially interesting in that she, as a first grade teacher, observed that the reading of a favorite book sparked a child to write a story with some characteristics like the book. In turn, his story inspired other classmates. Later renditions evolved from earlier ones in a kind of "collective revision." As well, the other children began to change their view of books as "self-contained entities," to make connections across many books, and to fashion their own stories after favorite books.

Classmates

Classmates' influence on one another's writing has also been explored. One of the key roles classmates play in enhancing students' writing is that of audience. Rubin (1984) asserts that rather than defining style as a distinctive trait of writers, it is more appropriately characterized as a device that shifts to meet the needs of the writer to generate particular reactions from his/her audience and to meet the needs of the communicative function. However, as Dyson's (1989) work and that of Hubbard's (1989) reveal, children exhibit stable stylistic qualities and features in their earliest years of school. Dyson found the styles salient not only to her but to the

children's classmates as well. However, she also found that children altered their characteristic styles in situationally-motivated ways that sprung from the interaction with and reaction to other children's talk and texts.

Bruffee (1978) and Marcus (1984) both found writing improvement in situations in which peers acted as writing tutors. Not only did the tutees' writing improve, but so did the tutors'. The process of evaluation in the context of creating shared perceptions of texts was cited as the key factor in these studies. Interestingly, a number of studies have suggested that classmate-based editing conferences produced greater stable writing improvement for students than writing which was done under teacher direction (e.g., Karegianes, Pascarella, and Pflaum, 1980; Ford, 1973). The same effect was found for students who were taught to rate their own and classmates' texts in comparison to those whose writing was teacher-edited. (Sager, 1973).

Miller's (1988) study revealed the social construction processes of genre development in a first grade class. Children generated and controlled the forms of representation as well as the content of texts through their social standing and the complete immersion of composing in talk. Their sensitivity to and adoption of conventions were connected directly to the responses and suggestions received in the act of writing and to the reaction of the classroom audience when they shared.

Dyson (1987; 1989), in her study of young children interacting as they drew and wrote stories, found that classmates unintentionally served each other in a number of ways: they monitored the

competence of one another (e.g., pointing out oversights in their drawings and writing), and acknowledged one another's unique qualities and competencies. Her study, like Miller's, revealed the socially-constructed nature of writing. Children's "story drawings" were altered in the midst of situation-specific motivations related to social relationships-- for example, desire to retaliate, or maintain solidarity with friends. The drawings played out the social dramas situationally present by making good or bad things happen to classmates in story plots and events in which their classmates were characters. Also, individuals' constructions of story worlds often intersected with the stories of others.

Dyson found that the immersion of drawing and writing in constant talk also had the effect of creating tensions around whether to encode meaning in the drawing or writing. Writing development was pulled ahead by recognizing in their texts and their classmates' the distinct ways that written language functioned in contrast to drawing. Also, the teacher's early practice of asking students to tell her "about the story" in their picture(s), and her practice of writing the words they said down on their pictures signaled the school's value of written language. Over time their written language began to represent meanings they wanted to convey with greater explicitness in the written medium.

Classrooms that allow social processes sometimes yield undesirable effects. In addition to the sometimes negatively-driven motivations cited above in Dyson's study, she found that one of the children became "so caught up with being like someone else in his

first grade year that his style of creating, which had been so dynamic in kindergarten was lost" (1987, p. 25).

Observations of peer conferences by Roessler (1983) and Pianko and Radzik (1980) noted that classmates are often timid about giving critical feedback and the interactions tend not to "deliver" on the teacher's intended purposes. Newkirk (1984) found differences between student and teacher feedback on college student papers. The student's' identification with the student writers made them tolerant of flimsily-elaborated prose. Whereas teachers were more likely to put aside their own opinions and help the writer express his/her own, students tended to compromise their role as responder by rejecting ideas they didn't agree with. Given these differences in responses, Newkirk expressed a dilemma: if we ask students to write for their peer audience, then that audience is likely to conflict with the values and intentions of the larger academic audience to which the teacher belongs.

Freedman (1987) studied peer writing response groups in two ninth-grade classrooms and found positive effects wrought by responses to their writing, in terms of specific content and developing sensitivity to audience. However, she also observed that individual requests for help were often not met, and the students avoided answering teacher-assigned tasks involving the evaluation of classmates' work.

The complex social (e.g., degree of familiarity with peers, gender roles, willingness to help), cognitive (e.g., listening, oral and written skills), and emotional (e.g., trust) factors that operate in groups need further study, especially as these factors are grounded in task

specificity, time and frequency of group meetings, etc. Although studies reveal some factors which may be requisites for group functioning, the unique properties of classrooms and groups will necessitate ongoing evaluation of the functional priorities of the interactions. The studies of peer interactions suggest the potential gains outweigh the problems.

Teachers

In all classrooms, teachers create the structural setting to reflect their values and beliefs about learning and the resources that aid learning (Sunstein, 1991; Lindley, 1987; Newman, 1987). Research conducted in two third grade classrooms by Tierney, Leys, and Rogers (1986) revealed ways in which the teachers' different structures and rules governing their classes both constrained and allowed for collaborative efforts and contributed to the nature of the exchanges found therein. One of the classrooms allowed students to choose book and writing topics, and encouraged a high rate of exchange among the students through various reading and writing events. These practices affected the students' value of peers. Tierney, et al. revealed in interviews specific ways in which particular pieces of writing were improved by their peers' questions and comments that called their attention to problems: (e.g., "I wouldn't have noticed that if they hadn't told me at share", p. 211). They also had a firm sense of their peers as a resource that they could turn to for ideas and "trying [ideas] out." Tierney, et al. reported that the nature of the collaborations also included talk around writing strategies, and opportunities to "develop, fine-tune,

and expand selected monitoring abilities, including a fuller sense of audience" (p. 214).

In the other class, students had "less opportunity to choose their own topics and books, less interaction with peers, and more emphasis on the product of writing (neatness, grammar, punctuation) than the process" (p. 209). Children sometimes selected books based on peer book reviews that were displayed or asked a friend for a recommendation, but most often they asked their teacher for book recommendations and topics on which to write. Their writing was generally read and evaluated only by their teacher. However, they enjoyed their opportunities to share but had a limited view of what their peers offered.

Teachers who hold a traditional view of teaching "hold the floor" in most interactions, initiate and control the flow of talk, and are the chief evaluator of contributions made by students (Mehan, 1979). Janda (1990) examined a rare episode of a teacher-sponsored collaboration that occurred between two classes of students who were normally learning in a teacher-centered ethos. Despite the collaborative stance the teachers took to each other in presenting the activity, the one class of students from fourth grade adopted the teacher's typical teaching style in "collaborating" with their first grade counterparts. The students' ideas, elicited in the preparatory stage, that received positive evaluations from the teachers, were the ones most used by the students in collaboration. In other words, the teacher-approved ideas were valued over the ideas students came up with during their collaborations with each other. The grounding

of collaboration in a teacher-centered classroom severely compromised the students' engagement with and value of each other.

These two studies support the perspectives of various writing teachers and researchers who call for a literacy workshop atmosphere in which the teacher, although retaining a central role in functioning, increases students' resources by allowing them access to their classmates (Hansen, 1987; Graves, 1991; Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1983).

Research that looks at characteristics of teacher response to students in writing conferences that facilitate writing reveals the fundamental need for teachers to "headfit" (Brown, 1979) their responses to the writer. That is, the teacher needs to establish what the child knows and is attempting to do, and then provide collaborative support that is within the child's range of understanding and intentions.

Sperling (1990) documented the success of conferences in which the teacher works from the child's knowledge base. The students varied in their willingness to collaborate and initiate ideas, but as Sperling noted, all were "co-laboring." The teacher got students to state their knowledge of topic and he periodically restated and summarized what had been shared. He encouraged "unfolding elaborations" by interjecting comments that engaged the student to say more. He outlined strategies which were closely aligned with the students' intentions. And he listened. As Sperling noted: "Students and teacher participate on a continuum of collaboration, playing out a flexible collaborative relationship that varies not only from student to student but for the same student at different times" (p. 287).

Fitzgerald and Stamm (1990) looked at the effects of group conferences on first graders' revisions. The conference groups were stably-occurring events in which the teacher and several children met to hear and respond to one another's writing. The teacher led the groups and talked about 72% of the time. She elicited the responses of the children to the writer, asked the writer to elaborate on information, making additions supported by the group's comments, and asking procedural knowledge (e.g., "Where would you put that information if you were to add it?") Fitzgerald and Stamm found that the revisions students made were closely linked to comments made to them in the conferences and that students who were initially doing the least amount of revision made the largest increases. The authors accounted for this by suggesting that those children were the ones with the least amount of revision knowledge and thus they gained the most from the questions which directed them to revision activity.

Other researchers have documented the ways in which teachers model appropriate ways to respond to writers in various literacy events (Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987; Calkins, 1986), writing strategies (Kucer, 1986; Sinatra, Gemake, and Morgan, 1986, Calkins, 1986) and genres (Blackburn, 1985; Graves, 1989).

The studies reported above use different lens to see the writers within their social circumstances. The works of Dyson, Miller, and Tierney are unusual in that they adjust their lens. They look at "global effects [communities] have on their individual members" (Nystrand,1990, p. 5)-- a social constructionist view-- as well as look closely at individuals within their specific interactions-- a social

interactionist view. Regardless of the lens' distance from the individual, all of these studies contribute to the view that writing is not an inherently private act, but rather an act steeped in participations with others. The present study joins this new tradition of writing research.

The Present Study

The purpose of my dissertation is to look at the ways in which the available resources of "distant authors" of books, classmates, and teacher affect three young students' writing development who are participating in the same classroom. Most studies done in classrooms focus on the effects of one or perhaps two of these resources. The unique contribution of this study is its holistic description of how all three resources contribute collectively to the ongoing writing of three individuals over the better part of their school year. I reveal how children's writing and their notions of good writing are being formed in the dialectical processes of interaction with these resources. I reveal the children as consumers, looking at how they negotiate this room to get what they need as writers. And further, I look at how a particular classroom's culture, its extant written forms and contexts, constrain as well as multiply the choices that children make for learning about writing.

The writing process as it is reflected in Donald Graves' (1983, 1991) and Jane Hansen's (1987) pedagogical model (to which the present study is linked) reflects the notion of writing as a social act. The classroom structure is set up to maximize opportunities for dialectical processes to occur between writers and readers and texts. There are literacy events (Heath, 1982) in which the community

takes part: teacher-child conferences, peer conferences, and whole-class conferences. Just how these events take form depends on the particular ways the teacher and children shape them.

As well, there are important principles which acknowledge the process of writing: time and choice. Time acknowledges the protracted process of writing across literacy events and across days, perhaps months, in which the writing product is created. Time acknowledges the need to reflect upon the writing, to assess the extent to which the writing in progress is saying what the writer intended, and to make further plans. Choice acknowledges the need for the writer to be purposeful, to use her own interests, and to decide the genre in which expression will be shaped. Choice also acknowledges the need for the writer to transact with the community-- to use resources-- in the manner in which one feels is necessary to help shape the writing.

Underpinning this pedagogical model is the acknowledgment of the writer as an active theorist, a meaning-maker, engaged in the social and text world. As the writer interacts with the world, his/her working theories are constantly being revised by new experiences with people and texts. He/she is able to "read" the community for what it offers within its various literacy events and make choices about kind and level of engagement within it.

My purpose for briefly discussing Graves' process model of teaching writing is that the classroom in which I conducted my study was one based on this model. Several years before the present study began, a member of the faculty from the University of New Hampshire gave a series of school-wide workshops for teachers to

learn how to begin teaching writing. The year before my study took place, in 1987, many of the teachers in the school changed their reading programs from one based on a full basal program to one which connected reading and writing together. Nancy Herdecker, the fourth-grade teacher in whose room I conducted my study, started to teach writing four years before my participation in her class and was one of the teachers who changed her reading program to reflect the writing program's values, expectations, and stance toward the learners.

An ecological model of this classroom is a sound one for describing how this classroom operated in expanding and limiting students' choices and range of influences. I will reveal in this study how the children and teacher shaped the forms of writing and literacy events which surrounded the acts of writing in their joint (whole class writing conference, teacher-child conferences) and separate (peer conference) domains. An individual's choices, of genre and participation in literacy events, is mediated through the classroom culture.

The organization of this dissertation is as follows. In Chapter Two, I will tell you how I came to be in the classroom this study is situated in, and describe my research methods: data collection, analysis, and writing process. Chapter Three describes the classroom milieu in order to provide the reader with a fuller sense of the environment in which the three children are engaged. I reveal the extent to which Nancy's social values, the structure she creates, and her own notions of literacy create a field of potential for the

development of writers. I also reveal how the children shape the genre choices and literacy events in which they participate.

The next three chapters, Chapters Four, Five, and Six, are the case studies of Kenny, Katie, and James, respectively. I will look at their working theories of what makes writing good, how they acquired them, and how this in turn directs them to use the resources available to them in their own individual ways: distant authors of books, peer conferences, teacher-child conferences, and the whole class writing conferences. Finally I look at how these resources impacted their texts.

Chapter Six will summarize and draw conclusions across the three case studies, and suggest implications of this study for viewing the teaching of writing from an ecological perspective.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

In the Fall of 1986, the year before the present study was conducted, I joined Jane Hansen, Donald Graves and several doctoral students in a research project at Stratham Memorial School. The purpose of the research project was to study the nature and growth of students' evaluations in writing and reading, which was expanded to include the evolution of the teachers' understanding of growth and assessment of reading and writing abilities. Nancy Herdecker was one of the teachers who had volunteered her fourth-grade classroom as a setting for the study and I was assigned to her room.

The town of Stratham is an affluent community in southeastern New Hampshire, committed to education, as evidenced by parental participation in school functions and generous appropriation of town monies. The school had received national recognition for excellence in education, and its then principal had been honored for his outstanding leadership in a state-wide competition.

That year, 1986 - 1987, I came to Nancy's classroom twice a week. I documented the children's and teacher's thoughts and reactions to the mid-year changes in their reading program. I also documented the changes in two children's working evaluation criteria used to evaluate their writing. I observed traces of what appeared to be ideas, styles, and forms of writing that were borrowed from other children but the connections were attenuated

by my close-in focus on the individual writers. I didn't observe these children within the social context to learn how it was these children interacted with the classroom community and came to borrow from among a variety of texts, the particular ideas, styles, and forms they did. I wanted to look at this more closely for my dissertation.

Nancy agreed to let me return to do my dissertation research in her room the following year, 1987 - 1988. I wanted to follow four children over the year and document their writing development as it was formed and forming within the classroom contexts of interaction with books, peers and their teacher. I was there most days of the school year, although I did take a couple weeks off in early January after they had already returned from the holidays, and a few days here and there, and at the end of the school year.

For the first month, I took in the goings on in the classroom, got to know the children, and Lin Roy, the teacher intern who would be in the classroom for the first half of the year. I watched the children write and interact with one another. I made a commitment to Nancy to always supply her with all my notes. We agreed to make time to meet together to discuss them on Wednesdays during her free period. I told Nancy that I wanted to be of help in any way I could.

My role in this class was multidimensional. Children knew they could approach me and ask me to read with them, or ask me to hear their writing. And they did. I sometimes led reading groups. I volunteered to type some of the long pieces that children were writing so that they wouldn't be forever rewriting a piece into a final draft. To the children I must have at first appeared a bit eccentric

with my notebook and pen in hand, circling the room, pausing here and there, writing, always writing, writing what? they would ask early in the year. I'd shrug my shoulders and say I just wanted to see how the classroom worked and what they were learning. Sometimes I read a bit of my notes and they'd give me a baffled look and go about their business. My tape recorder which I used everyday became a fixture in the room. They'd make cracks about it every so often, and always told me when a tape needed to be turned over.

I chose my case study children based on several criteria. I wanted to look at two boys and two girls. I wanted their writing to be representative of the range and quality I saw in this room. Also, they had to have shown a willingness to interact with me. Two of the four sought me out regularly, and the other two seemed open to developing a closer relationship to me.

One of the four case study children was eventually dropped because I found inconsistency and unreliability in her responses to the degree that I couldn't sift the "truth" from the fiction. At one point, she presented me with writing that she said she'd done at home and, after speaking with her mother, I found out she had made fabulous fictions up about how she composed it-- in fact, the piece wasn't even written by her. At that point, I felt my understanding of her was greatly compromised and I made the decision to "drop" her from the study (although I continued to spend time with her informally).

Data Collection

I collected data in three main ways across many contexts: field notes, tape recordings, and photocopies.

Field Notes

These consisted of observational notes of the class in which I wrote about what I saw and heard as children interacted among themselves and with their teacher in various contexts of interaction. I recorded the language of the interactions as closely as possible. There were often quick observations in which, for example, I went around and wrote down what everyone was reading or writing, and listened discretely to conversations. I recorded important discussions around the "setting up" of the classroom and incidental, related discussions thereafter.

I observed the case study children sometimes as they wrote, noting the changes made in the text and the hesitancies and fluency as they composed. I paid close attention to what they read, and read much of it myself to see if I could discover if and in what ways they used books to write and to spark conversations about the same with them. I observed who they talked to and shared their writing with and in what contexts.

Audiotape-recordings

I invested in a fine tape recorder that filtered out background noise and picked up voices from across the room with surprising clarity.

Classroom Contexts. I taped most of the whole-group interactions across the year in which children were either sharing their writing or sharing a passage from a book. When transcribing

these, I noted the title and genre and sometimes summarized the content of the story but always transcribed the comments, questions, and suggestions that people made. This allowed me to see the kinds of response children received, and to what particular strengths and elements the responders chose to praise and to extend help to.

I taped many small group reading discussions to find out the content of the discussion and its connection to writing.

Conversations, Informal Interviews, and Conferences. Informal conversations were usually not taped because these conversations were incidental to ongoing interactions and it would have been rude and disruptive if I went to retrieve my tape recorder. However, I almost always taped informal interviews with the case study children. There was a difference between conversations and interviews. In the former, they guided the content and initiated the conversation as much as I did. With interviews, I usually signaled to them that I had a purpose for talking with them ("Can we talk about your writing today?") and I took a more probing position, asked more questions and directed the flow of talk. Our interaction broke conversational rules (Spradley, 1979): I repeated what they said, repeated questions, asked them what they meant by particular words they used or statements they made in present or past interactions.

These interviews were varied in their purposes. Sometimes we talked about their ongoing and earlier writing so that I could learn about their motivations for writing particular pieces, and how the writing was being informed by others. I presented writing from others in their class and asked them to talk about the writing to see

how they compared and contrasted others' texts with their own. Other times we talked about their relationship to classmates during writing to find out their reasons for seeking out or not seeking out members to confer with. We had conversations about the books they were reading to find out if, what, and how they were using books to help their writing.

I also taped formal writing conferences I had with them in which I acted in the capacity of the teacher, inviting elaborations of what they were writing, responding to their comments, and suggesting ideas and changes. My conferences with one of the students were especially intense interactions which would have been difficult to piece together later without benefit of recordings. Also, the recordings allowed me to keep much of the flavor of interactions, and to portray their language use with an accuracy I otherwise would have not been able to do.

I found the tape recorder indispensable for reviewing what children said to me in our conversations. Often times I would leave for the day with certain ideas about what a child had told me which, upon transcribing the tape, I found to be inaccurate. I read incorrect meaning into their words or misapprehended what they had said. If I had not taped the conversations, I would have been mislead by my assumptions.

I could also glean from their point of view, what intentions they thought I had for asking questions, by looking at the flow of interaction. I found two of the case study children, especially, tried to "read" me, and would say things that they thought I wanted to hear, given what I had said earlier. I was sensitized to this

phenomenon by Margaret Donaldson's (1978) work with younger children. I feel certain I would not have been privy to knowing quite so well when this occurred if I had not made recordings. This was important because I was in a better position to judge whether I could trust that what they said was an accurate statement of what they really thought.

Whereas I could count on the regular meetings with Nancy, I couldn't do the same with the children. Often they were happily engaged in what they were doing and would have felt imposed upon if I had asked them to disrupt their ongoing activities. But much of the time, they were very accommodating. Each dealt with my informal interviews differently. Kenny would flat out tell me when I was asking too many questions or remind me that he answered a question in another interview. Katie would have seen this direct tack as impolite; instead, she would tell me the first thing that popped in her head and distract me from my question, hoping to get me to move on to something else. James seemed to enjoy my questions, and told me, "You know, this is really interesting. I never really thought about this before until you asked me."

I taped many of my conversations with Nancy on Wednesdays. Usually our conversations included discussion of the notes and transcriptions from tapes, including those about our earlier conversations. She was consistently enthusiastic about reading them and always had interesting observations to make about what she read. She was interested in the perceptions children revealed to me about their writing and often filled me in on things I had missed. I

learned from those discussions about her concerns and the values that informed her actions.

Photocopies

I photocopied the case study children's pieces of writing at different stages of their development, and their reading journals. I also photocopied a great deal of what was written by other members of the class, and some of their reading journals.

Data Analysis

When I left for the day, in the noon hour, I generally went straight home and transcribed the tapes, and typed up my field notes, adding things that I had not written down while in the class. Once a week, I sat down with the field notes and transcriptions and categorized them by writing a few words in the margin to signal what was represented. I had general categories such as "literate community" which pointed to observations and conversations about a particular book that two or more members had read and were discussing or places in my notes where a child asked for or gave someone a book recommendation, a "common interests" category in which interests outside of school were spoken of (e.g., skateboard and surfboard champions and meets), and a "sharing protocols" category in the rules of interaction were discussed and/or reinforced by Nancy or a student.

I categorized Nancy's comments and actions according to what came up that week: for example, "extending genre choice", "conference with [student]", "reactions to joke book", "role of pictures and words in various genre", "evaluation of [student]"; I also categorized her kinds of comments and questions given to students

sharing their writing with the class: for example, "word selection", "lead-in of story", "description of character", "noting changes in writer", "acknowledging student's goal".

I did the same for the three case study children. There were overlapping categories for them: "observing writing", "interaction with [student]", "sharing writing", "books as resource", "sharing reading", "interaction with Nancy" "evaluating writing", "choosing genre"; and unique categories such as: "concerns about plagiarism", "student as mentor," "social purposes for writing."

I categorized the comments and questions classmates asked of those who had shared their writing with the whole group (e.g., "liked details," "asking for elaboration," "questioning plausibility"). I also kept a separate record of specific comments and questions made by and to the case study children.

I attached summary sheets to each week's notes/transcriptions of categories and additional notes related to the case study children, Nancy, the class as a whole, and the various contexts of interaction.

By the end of the year, I had about eight hundred single-spaced pages of notes plus summary sheets and the children's writing.

Writing Process. Writing was the most crucial step for beginning to construct what I knew about this class' workings and for coming to an understanding of the three children and their writing. I began by constructing a chapter about Nancy-- her educational values, expectations for students and herself, and her standing in the school community. At the time, I thought it was important for putting what happened in her class in the wider perspective of who she was as a professional. Twenty-five pages

later, I realized I had really gone too far from my purposes. Only about five pages remain of that effort, merged in the chapter describing the classroom context.

Each of the case study chapters went through qualitative shifts of attention. Initially, each chapter was straight narrative, a running record of the children's interactions as they wrote, with their writing placed in the story line as it occurred. A lot of what was placed in the initial narratives was unnecessary to my purposes but nevertheless served me in gaining a sense of the individuals.

Then I went back and analyzed the case study children's writing for what it revealed about their skill and development, in light of what I knew about them from observations and interactions with them. Some actions and comments that initially appeared random later became meaningful, reflecting the individual's motives. I was seeing more clearly the motivations that connected their actions, talk, and writing. I realized that I had lost some of what was important in the way that I had written the case study chapters. They had taken on a life of their own but I had left the common thread that weaves through them sometimes hidden in the writing. Data blindness. I revised again, adding and reorganizing information, and trimming excessive detail and analysis.

Looking back, I would probably have been better off starting with the introductory chapter to reestablish firmly in my mind what this project was about, then moving to the classroom context and then to the individual children. However, regardless of where one starts to write, the process of writing this kind of research is one which begins with discovering what it is you learned and then turning to concerns

of how to write it in a readable form. At that point the process is best described by a colleague, Mary Comstock, as one of "trying to stuff a mattress into a pillowcase," and readers were crucial for revealing to me how well my purposes were being met.

CHAPTER 3

THE ECOLOGICAL NICHE

> Schools...are themselves "communities of learning or thinking" in which there are procedures, models, feedback channels, and the like that determine how, what, how much, and in what form a child "learns." The word *learns* deserves its quotation marks, since what the learning child is doing is participating in a kind of cultural geography that sustains and shapes what he or she is doing, and without which there would, as it were, be *no* learning.
> -- Jerome Bruner, Acts of Meaning

In order to understand the ways in which the three case study children-- Kenny, Katie, and James-- learn from this community, it was important for me to understand the community myself. In this chapter, I will reveal to you the important features of this community that are operating. I will begin by describing the fourth-grade classroom and the values Nancy Herdecker presents to the class to guide their interactions. I will then describe for you the particular forms and functions of literacy events, and the kinds of writing that are extant in this class, within both the writing and reading periods.

Classroom Description

Nancy's room was a comfortable place-- neat and organized-- but not overly fussed over. Classmates' desks were set up in clusters, accommodating the eighteen children; three clusters were of four desks with two desks facing two others; the fourth cluster was six desks, three facing three.

Nancy's desk was the place to put her schedule and planning book, deposit various textbooks and students' work, a place to keep a ready supply of pencils for the children and display their knicknack gifts. She didn't sit there often during school hours.

Meetings with her students most often took place at one of two round "conference tables," one each in the back and front of the room. These were places where children could read and write and share their writing with each other and with Nancy. The carpeted floor very often served as a meeting place for the children.

Although the teacher's influence on students can be felt in all classrooms, in many, the personal influence of the teacher is much less tangible than the influence of curriculum guides, materials, and scheduling mandates of the school and district. I've been in classrooms that look much the same as Nancy Herdecker's-- with desks set up in clusters, open table, festive bulletin boards displaying seasonal themes, students' artwork and writing-- but with very little of the character found in her room. The arrangement of the space was contributive to the spiritedness of the room but it was the children's stance toward learning and towards each other that was most salient. Visitors (there were many coming most every week to observe the writing and reading process model at work) to the room often commented on what a "good feeling" was present.

On the first day of school, when people were able to choose their own seats in clusters, the gender lines were drawn: two of the four clusters had girls only (four per cluster), one cluster of six was all boys, and the remaining cluster had two boys and two girls. This arrangement was short-lived.

Nancy told them of her plan to assign them seats and to periodically change them, explaining that it would allow them "to be with others" and gain "new perspectives." By the end of the first week, they had been assigned their seats which positioned girls and boys evenly across clusters. "You don't have to like everybody, but you do have to learn to work with everyone." She reassigned seats two more times during the year, once in December and again in April so that by then, everyone had a chance to be in a cluster with everyone else. Talking in quiet voice to those in one's cluster was acceptable in most situations, and it allowed neighbors to explain misunderstood material and directives.

The natural alliances that existed outside the classroom continued in the classroom so Nancy wanted to make opportunities for students to offset their needs to maintain established friends and suspend socially-prescribed rules and roles formed outside. She made room for courting the learning opportunities that exist only in situations that are inclusive to all members of the class.

Home-spun Rules of Conduct

From the first day of school, Nancy emphasized sensitivity to the feelings of others. She introduced her home-spun formula for interaction: The Three C's. Kindness, consideration, and cooperation. And from that beginning, she monitored their reactions to one another carefully. Whenever a child was rude or insensitive, she discretely spoke to him or her at the first available moment. Sometimes the offense was able to be handled within the group context without embarassing the offender ("John, you use of the word "weird" is inappropriate, don't you think? What did you mean to

say?") But most often she spent a few minutes alone with the offender to have him or her "step in the other's shoes" and consider how they might have handled the situation better.

The efficacy of this classroom for encouraging a sense of belonging for everyone was revealed dramatically by those students who were at risk for being outsiders. Two children come to mind who were especially at risk in this regard. One child was often consumed by her emotions, and from the first week she showed her proclivity for misinterpreting good intentions on the part of her classmates. Over the first three months, Nancy had many conversations with her around the idea of changing her perceptions of people's comments and behavior and her explosive reactions. There was an unmistakable contrast between her behavior over the first half of the year and that of the second. She found a comfort zone in the classroom. She was less fidgety and her knee jerk responses were gone. She shared her writing often, without the defensive posturing, and found that she didn't need it: the class responded kindly to her.

The other child felt apart from the classroom community owing to her assignment to the Resource Room for much of the writing and reading periods. Over time, Nancy coordinated with the Resource Room teachers to arrange for her to spend most of this time in the classroom. This child, who for several months had blushed, kept her head low, and didn't talk, became an active member of the class. With Nancy's encouragement, she shared her writing with the whole group. Her writing, imaginative and well-written, received accolades. Her difficulties with reading were known to the group but they rallied behind her. In a small reading group, one unattended by

Nancy, I observed four students pull in closer around the book she was reading to them. One student, trying to be helpful, gave her several words she was stumbling on at which point the group leader said, "Give her time." Another time, Mike was passing by her desk and heard a heavy sigh from her. When she remarked that the reading was hard, he patted her on the shoulder and said, "That's all right, [name], *you* can write!" In this classroom, she was acknowledged for her strengths and her contributions to the class. By mid-year, she would contribute comments and questions to writers and engage in conversation with those around her at her cluster of desks with ease (See Wansart, 1989, for a case study of this child). Both of these students' dramatic changes speak most clearly to the ethically-grounded sense of community in this classroom.

Nancy's rules of conduct were simple ones. Ridicule and insensitivity never found a place in this class. People in this class laughed with someone, not at them. Ridicule, I have come to think is more natural to a situation that constrains the range of individual responses to a uniform few. In this classroom, the children were valued for their individuality.

John Dewey (1964) wrote in his essays on Ethical Principles Underlying Education: "The school cannot be a preparation for social life excepting as it reproduces, within itself, the typical conditions of social life....The only way to prepare for social life is to engage in social life." Dewey believed that moral education is necessarily an active process, of thought *in* action. He thought it was foolhardy to try to foster respect for others, democratic participation, and a sense of justice in a school structure that restricted opportunities to behave

and develop in these ways. Nancy's room afforded the opportunities and she was able to foster greater sensibilities to one another directly and indirectly through the interdependent community she created.

Nancy's Notions of Literacy

Occasionally, the classroom teachers and the members of the research team would come together to talk about what was going on in the classrooms that had both reading and writing process programs. At one meeting, the discussion turned to the value of encouraging reading and writing in different genres to foster development and to blur the distinctions of school and home forms and purposes of literacy. Nancy decided her classroom library needed to reflect these considerations and she and I brought in newspapers, wildlife magazines, information books, how-to books, etc. She had students bring in articles and assigned them to read a biography. Lin Roy shared books and journals detailing early living in New Hampshire.

Nancy became concerned when a student, Gary, told her that he thought writing about the Constitution was inappropriate during the writing period. Over the four year period in which writing became a formal curriculum, the students mostly wrote personal narrative and fiction. These preferences were signaled by the teachers as the kinds of writing to be encouraged. Much of the literature on writing, read by the teachers, extolled the value of personal narrative and most often cited examples of students' writing that were of the personal narrative and fiction forms. For the past four years, the teachers had required the students to begin their writing year with personal

narratives. I recalled some children's disappointment with that requirement the year before; they couldn't wait to write fiction.

Nancy's awareness of and dissatisfaction with this unintended restriction was growing and she looked for ways to break through this code. In late September, after Gary had spoken to her, she met with Lin and me and told us she wanted to encourage other kinds of writing. She hoped that Brandy's picture book and Kenny's proposed book of directions would help to break the barriers. She suggested we stay sensitive to opportunities to have students engage in other kinds of writing-- like "letters to Aunt Sophie" and interests such as Gary's. She wanted these kinds of writing to evolve naturally from the interests and motivations of the students, and their interactions with many kinds of reading materials. Later in the year, she encouraged the students to work on their science writing (about animals in New England) within the writing period.

Classroom Schedule

The classroom schedule for the reading and writing periods was as follows.

WRITING PERIOD

8:45 - 9:10 Quiet Writing

9:10 - 9:30 Conferences (peer and teacher-child) or continue writing

9:30 - 9:50 Whole Class Writing Share

READING PERIOD

9:50 - 10:15 Quiet Reading

10:15 - 10:45 Reading Group (one group of 4 or 5 students)
Other students could read together, work on their journal entry, or continue to read by themselves

10:45 -11:00 Whole Class Reading Share

Quiet Writing Time

Every day, the children wrote quietly for about twenty-five minutes at their cluster of desks. As they wrote, it was common to hear them talk quietly to their neighbors sitting in their cluster. Sometimes they would read a passage they were writing but most often they would carry on brief conversations about events happening in their life at home or school between spurts of writing. After the first twenty-five minutes, they were allowed to confer with each other about writing.

Peer Conferences

When peer conference time began, some people would approach others, always of the same gender, and find a spot on the carpet or at one of the two conference tables. Many others would remain at their desks, writing quietly and intermittently talking with their neighbors at their cluster of desks.

This literacy event was rendered by the students. Nancy did not do any directing of form like she did for the Whole Group Writing Share. She presented it as the place to get ideas, often suggesting students who had relayed ideas in the Whole Group Writing Share to follow up in more detail in the peer conference. Also in her conferences, she would suggest to the student someone who might have ideas in line with what they were trying to accomplish. She relied on the interactions in the Whole Group Writing Share and her modeling of interactions in her conferences to guide what went on in the peer conferences. However, in the early months she asked a

student on several occasions to have a conference with one or another shy student to encourage them to open up. The pattern of interactions within the peer conferences were generally ones of simple turn-taking, captured by the following representative conferences I observed.

On September 16, Rachel asked Kristen to "conference" with her. They headed for a space in the back of the room, against the door that adjoins the next classroom. I asked if they'd mind if I sat in on it. They momentarily hesitated and then Rachel said, "Sure." I knew my presence would affect their interaction, but I figured if it had any effect, it would be that they would show me the best of what they thought a conference should be like.

> Rachel said, "I'll go first. Mine's only two sentences long." She reads her two lines and shows Kristen her picture. Her story is about a worm that wants a bird to teach him to fly. Kristen doesn't say anything. Rachel says, "You're turn." Kristen begins reading her animal piece. It begins with the general description of all her animals and then starts to tell more specifically about one of her animals. When she finished, she said, "There, we're done."
>
> There was a momentary silence. I gave them both a look of surprise and said, "Aren't you going to try to help each other?" Kristen replied, "Hers only has two lines." I encouraged, "Yeah, but doesn't she have more that she could tell you about?" Rachel then turned to Kristen and asked, "Kristen, did any of your animals ever have babies?" Kristen's reply, "Yep." Rachel said, "Maybe you could write about that. All done!"

Rachel did have a lot more to tell. I asked her if she knew where the story was going and she proceeded to tell me the whole story.

Here is another representative peer conference taken from my notes which shows a pair in conference joined by a third person.

> November 12. Jonathan and Mike are sharing their pieces on the floor. Jonathan finishes by saying, "And that's it!" and Mike's comment was "Wow." James joins them, and asks excitedly, "Can I share with you? I didn't write down the title yet." He doesn't wait for any reaction from them, just starts reading. The excitement in his voice involves them immediately. At one point as he reads, Mike's and Jonathan's hands become animated, acting out the action he's reading. General comments, "That's cool." They disperse.

I observed many "free-style" conferences. Sometimes the same two or three would meet on consecutive days; other times, it was a one-time event. For example, two boys might sit down on the floor together, then be joined by a third boy, and perhaps a fourth, and then later one of the first two would leave. Maybe only one or two would share with the group. There was a touch-base-and-go level of participation. "Ahhh, cool," "It's really good," and "That's pretty funny" were typical reactions to the texts.

Ideas for a partially written story sometimes flew fast and furious through their talk, one person adding ideas to another. This was most common when the story was an action-adventure with classmates as characters. Sustained joint attention was also found especially with Jonathan's picture books (in which the pictures served as the primary carrier of meanings and the accompanying words supported the telling). Boys would sit and watch him draw, adding asides to the effect of adding details (e.g., "You should make his hair longer and make it going straight back in the wind" "Put a Hang Ten sign on his surfboard" "Make some people sticking out of the snow with their skis all over the place, trying to get out of his way").

Sometimes sharing went on right at their desk clusters. It was here that sharing crossed gender lines. They shared with whomever would listen. Here's a peek.

> September 8. Juanita who sits next to Gary is listening to him read his writing, a take-off on a James Bond film. Mandy sits perfectly still, face with a distant stare. She is composing. Hal is writing. Five minutes later: Juanita is writing. Gary is relaying to Hal the plot of the James Bond film he's just seen that has generated his idea for his writing. Hal treats Gary's talk as preparatory for writing. Gary is relaying part of the plot, something about weapons sales. Hal says, "Anything else?" and Gary tells him he left out the best part and then describes it to him. Hal is very attentive.

Hal held a unique position within his community for the way he responded in peer conferences. Hal would sit very quietly and attentively, holding his eyes on the speaker. He'd ask questions about future plans, questions about something he wasn't quite sure he understood. He didn't say very much himself; he just sustained the person's talk. I tell you about Hal at this juncture because he is a unique resource in peer conferences, but also because he becomes relevant later to one of the case study children.

The children rendered the form and content of the peer conferences. The most common pattern of sharing was a simple one of taking turns sharing writing. Critical response, common in the Whole Group Writing Shares, was not found here. This was true throughout the year. The children's main purposes for coming together were to build and support camaraderie and to be updated on what a writer was doing.

Whole Group Writing Conferences

The whole group conferences, Whole Class Writing Shares, as they were called, were the focal event that displayed for all to see the kinds of writing everyone was doing. The texts, themselves, and talk surrounding the sharing of texts were very fertile for engendering

many kinds of learning. This year, Nancy had decided to make time every day for the children to share their writing with the whole class. She saw it as very important for stimulating ideas for writing. Other teachers had told her that their students' writing seem to be off to a slow start, and given that that was not the situation in her class, she wondered if the everyday chance to share with the whole group was the primer for getting the writing flowing after the long summer's respite.

Nancy's Influences on Quality and Form

Nancy's influence is felt keenly in this event. She sets up her expectations for the quality and form of the interactions, and maintains a high profile during their enactment throughout the year.

During the first month, Nancy had conversations about why the group had a Whole Class Writing Share. The children volunteered many comments:

Mandy: Sometimes you're not sure if the piece needs more and if it's clear
Katie: Sometimes you want ideas, like when Rachel needed a name for her cat or something like that
Mike: You really like it and you think other people will like it
Brandy: We share so other people will see what you're writing about
Gary: You share to see if people like it
Kenny: You share because you just wrote a book and you're happy and you feel that something's missing and you ask them if there's something clear.
Jonathan: If you wrote a story like about what Mike wrote, Star Wars, and share it and if people like it, you could write more about it

She also engaged them in conversations about the format she set up the second day of school, of making comments first, then

questions. All but two or three of the students had been at Stratham for at least the year before entering fourth grade. The basic form that was used by all the teachers in the school was that of making positive comments and asking questions. The format served to build certainty for the writer regarding what he or she could expect. It also focused the responders on what their role was, namely, to encourage the writer, acknowledge their strengths, and to be helpful. Nancy instructed the class to make positive comments first because, as she said to them, "when you're first starting school it's nice for the first couple weeks to get comments first because you're a little uneasy about getting up to share." The children had learned from writing in earlier grades to put their positive comments in the form of "I like..." statements. This convention persisted in their fourth grade, but as often as not, comments were put in a different form. She engaged the group in discussion about her format and sparked a range of opinions:

Katie: Sometimes when you hear a response to a comment, your question gets answered.
Gary: Comments are good, well most are, so a person can relax and then take the bad. (Nancy asked if others thought the questions indicated something bad and 9 of 18 hands went up.)
James: I think comments are good later because then you can leave the table happy.
Mike: You can get an idea for a question from a comment.
Lin Roy: With respect to what Gary is saying-- comments are good, questions are bad-- questions aren't so bad as they are "helps", they are a way to help the writer with making their pieces better.

Nancy's format was generally held to for several months, with both Nancy and students enforcing the "comments first rule." Thereafter, the comment and question "strands" became interwoven

(examples of Whole Class Shares will be given throughout the case study chapters).

Other conversations addressed the ways to say things in an honest, but positive way so as to be helpful, not hurtful.

Kenny: You can make positive comments, like I wouldn't say: "That wasn't a very good story." We should say like, "That was good but there were parts I didn't understand."
Nancy: Yes, "I wonder if it would be more interesting if you..."
Gary: You say we're not allowed to say "This is boring"-- so what DO you say? "That was kinda boring but if you added a little here, it'll sound better?
Nancy: How DO you do it?
Gary: Just don't say anything about it being boring.
Nancy: Yes, or you could say "You know that part might be more exciting if you added this, or put something here." We have to find more delicate ways to say things because I'd be crushed if someone said "This is boring, Mrs. Herdecker."
Jonathan: How about: "That was exciting but it could be more exciting."
Nancy: But is that an honest response? ...

These conversations were effective in directing students to attend to their oral language and their role as responders.

Nancy's Comments in the Whole Group Writing Shares

When children shared their writing with the class, Nancy consistently pointed out features of the texts that were their strengths. For examples: Jonathan's use of repeated phrases ("He surfed and surfed and surfed. And he got F's and F's and F's.") Michael's use of "humorous little asides", Sean's use of alliteration, and Juanita's attention to environmental description. She also frequently recommended writers to seek out various members of the class who had demonstrated skill in various areas, such as dialogue and making things funny. Her comments were individuating ones,

and often called attention to emerging features in their writing that were not present in earlier pieces. Also when children wrote about things they had done, like Hal's piece about the process of baling hay. she expressed her genuine appreciation for what he had taught her.

Nancy often offered a developmental perspective on a piece of writing, framing it in terms of its significance to the writer ("We want to congratulate you on the completion of your first fiction piece this year." Gary's goal is to try to write a fantasy like Tokien's The Hobbit, a very admirable ambition." "Sean is attempting to write a piece using alliteration throughout.")

She commonly recognized the contributions of other responders. She'd use the phrase, "I'd like to piggy back on what [child] said..." as an entry into her comments. (This became a common phrase used by students, too.) Then she would reiterate and rephrase the observations the classmate made that she felt were most helpful to the writer. She served a mediator role between the writer and audience, defending a writer's choices (e.g., "Sean, she's relying on you, the reader, to read into that situation a bit, to use your imagination.")

Her comments to the writers in this context were primarily ones of acknowledging strengths and perceptions of the writers *and* the responders, and in doing so, she informed the sensibilities of them all.

Nancy and Lin Roy each shared a piece of their own writing in the early part of the year. Although they both expressed their desire to continue this practice, and saw its value for students, they became so busy meeting the needs of the children that this practice took a back seat.

Student Influences in Whole Class Writing Shares

Extant Genre Forms. Fiction and personal narrative were the main forms of writing in which the children wrote. In September, neither genre dominated. About an equal number of personal narratives and fiction pieces were written. I wondered if the amount of personal narrative writing was due to their initial expectation to have to write it, as they had been required to do in past years. In October, a shift to fiction had begun, and by November fiction dominated. Personal narrative remained extant all year but became relatively rare (about two texts in eighteen were personal narratives).

Exposition was a rare form (six in all). An alphabet theme book (A is for alley cat, B is for bobcat...) which Shayna did in October as a restful preoccupation between major efforts of writing, generated a few of these over the year. Also a newspaper compiled by Katie and Mandy was produced in January that contained contributions from many of the students. A theme book of pictures was also produced as a joint effort among the class, headed by Kenny, whom you will meet.

Within the fiction genre, fantasy or fairy tales, spooky tales, picture books (texts that were primarily pictures with accompanying words) existed across the year. They weren't common but because they were different, I think they stood out more. The children were very attentive to them. James, whom you will meet, wrote a mystery-- the only one written.

The most common forms of fiction were of the adventure and realistic kinds. The boys did both adventure and realistic fiction, but the adventure form was by far their most common kind. In their action adventures, they almost always used their classmates as

characters, a convention that originated in earlier grades. In most of this writing, the action moved the story forward; characters moved where the action took them. This is typical of early fiction (Graves, 1989; Hansen, 1991). The girls did realistic fiction, no action-adventures. Although some of these pieces were action-directed, most of them showed a greater degree of attention to character.

Student Influence on Genre Choice. The Whole Class Writing Share, by way of the students' response, both widened and constrained the choice of genre as the following two examples will show.

As I mentioned in an earlier section, very early in the year, Gary felt that his writing about the Constitution was not appropriate for the writing period. It didn't fit into the class conventions of what is shared. Therefore, it didn't fill audience expectations. There was an even earlier instance, from the first week, in which Gary shared the following with the class:

> The Persian Gulf, a quiet place in the heart of the Mideast conflict. Suddenly, BOOoooooosh! An Iranian tanker is engulfed by deadly flames. A nearby Iraqi jet has just completed an attack on the Iranian oil business. Many such attacks have been made by the peace-seeking Iraqi military. This attack also was to weaken the Iranian Oil Industry so that the Iranians would agree on a cease-fire to help end the Iran-Iraq war.

I wrote in my field notes:

> He said he was trying to make it longer but couldn't seem to do it. This wasn't picked up in the Share to try and help. Someone asked him why he always wrote about wars and spies (a classmate who obviously was in his class the year before) and he replied "I like writing about that stuff. It's interesting." (He has a topic list for writing in his folder: 1. Space; 2. WW1; 3. WW2; 4. USSR; 5.

Persian Gulf War.) I didn't get down any specific comments, although my feeling was that he didn't receive the same enthusiastic comments and questions received by others who shared. I wonder if this will affect his genre choices. As it is, he abandoned this piece the next day and began a James Bond spy thriller. Has the classroom audience already begun to shape his choices?

If Gary couldn't find an audience for this kind of writing, either it was not likely to continue *or* it would become private writing which didn't fit Gary's purposes. Gary didn't write a commentary again. He wrote adventure-espionage-thriller stories which pleased primarily the boys in the class.

By late September, Rachel had finished a well-written children's tale about a worm who wanted a bird to teach it to fly. The bird tricked the worm up into its nest to eat it and the worm's friends and relatives save the worm by outsmarting the bird. Rachel initially put her name on the share list to read it to the class, but then backed out because she was afraid the class would think it wasn't appropriate for fourth grade writing. I convinced her to share it, that it would be accepted for what it was. Her fears turned out to be unfounded.

Shayna: That was a cute story. The part where the worm wants the bird to teach him to fly reminded me of Pee Wee Herman, did you see it?
Rachel: [shakes her head no]
Sean: It was a cute story.
Katie: I liked when the worms plucked the feathers out and used them to parachute down to the ground.
Kenny: It was real funny. You wrote it clearly.
Lin Roy: It was humorous, you made so much fun from such a simple thing.
Mike: I thought it was a very good story. You did a good job.
Nancy Herdecker: I liked the way you used conversations-- your dialogue was very interesting. You did a good job of keeping all

the people straight. And I liked your use of words "gruesome sight." That really says it.

Kristen: Are you going to publish it?

Rachel: Maybe later.

Lin Roy: I think this piece would appeal to younger students as well.

This kind of imaginative writing was found to be quite acceptable by both boys and girls as gauged by their comments. The children's tale found a place in this classroom.

Students' Responses in Whole Class Shares. Classmates, like their teacher, made individuating comments to their classmates' writing, recognizing them for their strengths and the unique features they introduced. Within the dominating fiction genre, there was a wide range of styles and strengths, especially when one heard both adventure and realistic kinds on a daily basis. James, one of the case study children remarked mid-year:

> Different people are good at different things. Like Cameron is good at action, and Sean is, too. Most have some talent for comedy. Mandy and Katie are wicked good at putting in description-- they have the talent to do that all the way through their stories. Jonathan isn't as good at description but he can make good stories, wicked funny and it's funny all the way through.

One could find within these Whole Class Writing Shares the particular styles and textual elements that one most felt drawn to. In addition, the contrasting features found across classmates' texts allowed the children to define more clearly for themselves what it was they wanted to strive for in their own writing, and helped to develop their notions of "good writing."

The students responded differently to personal narratives and fiction writing. Classmates responded to the lived experience

represented in the personal narratives. Because the bulk of personal narratives were written in the first part of the year, I thought the students' responses might be due to some factors related to the time of year, getting to know one another and feeling less comfortable about responding "critically" to classmates' texts. But this didn't hold true because comments and questions to early fiction pieces were more text-based, relating problems and strengths of the writing as crafted. With personal narratives, students asked questions to gain more information about the experience, but generally, questions were not framed in such a manner as to suggest that the writer make changes in the text.

Personal narrative writing was seen more as a prop to get a conversation going about the student's experience. Sometimes this was as much the writer's purpose as it was for the responders. Personal narratives didn't seem to have to stand on their own like the expectations of fiction-writing. It operated more like the earlier grade event of Show-and-Tell. Rather than bringing an object to show-and-tell, children brought a piece of personal narrative to support the telling of an experience for its own sake. The written text mediated between the sharer and the class. In addition, the small reading groups may have also had an effect on the ways the children approached the fiction writing of their classmates. Although there were a variety of genres read and discussed within the context of the reading groups, the majority of it was fiction. The examination of the texts as written (which was a strong component of what the group talk was about) may have helped to generate the stance of the audience to all fiction, including that done by classroom writers. If,

indeed, one or both of these other contexts account for the differential responses, then conventions from other contexts are creating conventions in the context of Whole Group Shares.

The Whole Group Share best served the writer's writing by displaying the values of the community, through their comments and questions, and immediate reactions as the writer read (e.g., laughter or asides, like "ooh gross"). Classmates listened carefully to the texts and were not hesitant to tell a writer about parts that were confusing, and generally they did so in a positive, helpful manner that left the writer feeling good. It was a place where writers could ask for ideas or air some of their own and get a lot of responses in quick fashion. Specific ideas, which included an explicit course of action (e.g., "Maybe you should show him going down the hole, like, the rope was twisting and he was loosing his grip, or something") closely linked the group and writing event, comment to action. This context, however, could not easily accommodate long, sustained talks about the text because of the number of students waiting to share.

Teacher-Student Conferences

The teacher-student conferences were very different from the Whole Class Shares and peer conference events in which the children's writing was discussed. Whereas the children could choose when they would participate in the other two events, they did have to meet intermittently with Nancy.

Conferences were sometimes very quick. Some students sought her out on a regular basis to update her on what they had accomplished since the two last met ("Guess what, Mrs. Herdecker, I got them in Australia now!"). Other times, the writer talked about

current and overall plans, with Nancy asking questions which sustained the writer's attention to all kinds of concerns around character and plot.

Children also sought her out for ideas, as Mandy did in the following excerpt from early February. If a student asked her for ideas, she willingly helped, but she didn't initiate this kind of exchange.

> Mandy: I'm stuck on a part. I don't know what's going to happen.
> Nancy: Tell me where you are in this piece now and I'll see what pops in my head.
> Mandy: [summarizes the character's dissatisfaction with her new school and concern about not having a date for the upcoming Halloween Hop]
> Nancy: So you're stuck with the part about the Halloween Hop approaching. Is it all right to tell you what's popped in my head? Is it possible that she might find some people who are going without dates? It could be a disaster or wonderful.
> Mandy: Yeah, a disaster, like she spills the punch bowl.
> Nancy: Ha! She could spill it on one of the teacher chaperones.

Most conferences were done one-on-one between Nancy and the child, but sometimes one or two other students were involved in the conference.

> Cameron is working on a piece with Nancy for publication. Mandy attending. Conversation ongoing...
> Nancy: I loved your word "authorities" instead of police.
> Mandy: Maybe you could put more information at the end.
> Cameron: Yeah, I was thinking that, too.
> Nancy: You think so too? It did seem kind of blunt, you know what I mean? Maybe you could think of a way to make it humorous. Maybe Sean would be a good person to talk to. Well that's something to work on. Sounds like you chose a good piece to work on for publication.

She very often directed children to peers who had particular strengths in what they were trying to accomplish.

Other conferences were fairly long. These were usually ones in which the writing was being reworked for publication (children periodically would choose a piece to be published into a book form, complete with hard cover). The exchange was a sustained interaction with the text poised between them. They would attend to identifying strengths and things that needed to be worked on to be clear or logical. They discussed specific ways to strengthen the text. Once a course of action had been decided, the two of them sat together either revising or creating new text. In the enactment of writing, the child's sense of what the two had talked about was revealed to Nancy in the particulars of their writing process, and she was then in a position to nudge the child's understanding towards her own meanings with questions and comments. Although she didn't have the luxury to sit for long periods of time with students, she was able to impact their writing processes and take away a better understanding of the particular writer at work.

Description of the Reading Period

Every day, the children were expected to read for about an hour from printed materials of their choosing. After about twenty-five minutes of silent reading, they were allowed to read with others for fifteen minutes. Like during the writing period, some children would go off to a place on the floor or one of the conference tables and read together. Most children chose to read by themselves for almost the entire period although they would sometimes turn to their neighbor at their desk cluster and read an excerpt that was particularly good. Once a week, the children met in a group of four or five with Nancy to discuss their books. They also were expected to write to Nancy in a

reading journal once a week, which she responded to. At the end of the period, there was about fifteen minutes allowed for several children to read to the whole group a passage from a book they were reading.

Two of the three case study children that I will be presenting used books as resources for their writing. I'm not in a position to judge the extent to which this particular reading program enacted this connection to their writing but I see its juxtaposition in time, form and content, to the writing period as conducive to making such connections. Although the following descriptions of literacy events within reading does not find a direct connection with the case study children's writing or their discussions about their writing with me and others, my hunch is that the interactions within these contexts were influencing these children in ways yet unseen. The properties that existed in each of these contexts have enormous potential for fostering growth in writing and merit attention.

Small Reading Groups

Nancy formed and reformed reading groups to give people a chance to be in a group with everyone over time. Assignments to groups were not based on individual abilities as readers. No matter what books the individuals were reading, they could contribute to the conversations. The questions Nancy posed in the reading groups were exploratory, no answer could be definitive. Questions such as "How does the author of the book you are reading describe a main character?" necessarily provoked unique contributions by each member of a group. Every Monday morning, Nancy announced the question that each group would address that week. About half way

through the year, Nancy let the children take turns being the group leader, directing the questions and pace of the group interaction. On several occasions, she let the group meet without her.

The most common event that occured in the groups was Nancy's direction to look at particular features within the books they were reading; in effect, she was asking them to isolate a particular feature from the context in which it existed. This particular form of decontextualization is what is advocated by Gee (1989) and also Heath (1983), whom Gee summarized in describing what is needed in school literacy programs:

> ...apprenticing the individual to a school-based literate person (the teacher in a new and expanded role), who must break down essay-text literacy in it myriad component skills and allow the student to practice them repeatedly. Such skills involve the ability to give what- explanations; to break down verbal information into small bits of information; to notice the analytic features of items and events and to be able to recombine them in new contexts, eventually to offer reason- explanations; and finally to take meaning from books and be able to talk about it. (p. 58)

Nancy asked her students to isolate, for examples, a setting or mood or a climactic moment in a book and tell what the author did to create it (what- explanations) and tell why the author might have chosen to do what he or she did (reason-explanation). A list of ways various authors created a particular feature sometimes was created for a week-long discussion across reading groups devoted to talking about the feature. For example, this partial list created for the discussion of setting: *told the reader New York City, street name, and apartment number and floor; describes cramped quarters of an airplane; what boys are doing and saying reveals the setting-- the*

woods; told the year, 1774, Boston, working in printing office. Questions around why the author described the setting in its particular way, and why settings changed or didn't, were addressed. Most often, Nancy did not make lists but instead summarized at the end of a group and then that group's summary was used to spark further discussion in the next day's reading group.

Nancy also stimulated a personal stance to the texts in the reading groups. She asked them to reflect upon characters' motivation, who the reader was most like in the story, and what they learned from reading a book-- either a lesson about life or something they learned that they didn't know about before reading the book. These sorts of questions provoked animated conversations, sometimes moving and often humorous observations-- anything from the importance of appropriately dealing with anger to learning some "awesome" pranks to use at summer camp.

Louise Rosenblatt (1985) describes two stances toward the act of reading, each of which represents the extremes of a continuum. The first she termed an "efferent" stance:

> In such reading, attention is focussed mainly on building the public meaning that is to be carried away from the reading; actions to be performed, information to be retained, conclusions to be drawn, solutions to be arrived at, analytic concepts to be applied, propositions to be tests (p. 70).

The other stance is "aesthetic":

> The reader focuses attention primarily on what is being lived through during reading... what we are seeing and feeling and thinking, on what is aroused within us by the very sound of the words, and by what they point to in the human and natural world. (70).

Nancy's focus question for a particular week primarily engagd one or the other stance, but in actuality, both stances wove in and out of the group conversations.

These ways of talking about books stimulated thinking about the kinds of decisions writers make, and the styles and strategies they use to accomplish those decisions. It also created a common field of ideas in which to talk about writing, a shared reference to words and their accumulated meanings: setting, description, the lead, suspense, style, plot, character development.

This building up of shared meanings and ways of talking about books may show greater intersection to the ways children talk about their own and others' writing in years to come. In large measure, the reading groups offered up a challenge to these young writers, showing them the complexity of the writer's craft, engaging an aesthetic response to craft, and something to work towards.

Reading Journals

I do not discuss the journal writing within the individual case study chapters because of its private dimension. My focus was on that writing which had a social dimension within the whole class context. But I will here briefly describe the potential influence the journal served for their writing and talk surrounding writing.

The same kinds of focus questions which guided discussions in the reading group were extended into the journals that children wrote back and forth to Nancy, and evoked both efferent and aesthetic responses. The potential importance of such questions, discussed in the small reading group section, holds here, too.

There were also entries to the children to stimulate connections between their writing and reading. For example, when James talked about the suspense in a mystery he was reading, Nancy connected that observation to his writing: "Since you are now writing one of these [mysteries], I will be interested in how you maintain the suspense for your book. I think there is a knack for it." Also she used observations that children made about the way a book was written to suggest ideas for their own writing and further reading, as she did in Katie's journal: "A diary is certainly a different way of writing a story. It might be interesting to try writing one that way. We have another book in the room written that way. It is called The 7 1/2 Sins of Stacey Kendall."

The generative nature of the reading group, in accompaniment with Nancy, had a dynamism that was not matched in the journal writing. Often times Nancy's responses were light on her observations about her own reading and heavy on questions which she expected the students to answer. To the extent that this occurred, the responses she received took on the quality of disconnected sentences (answers to her questions) strung together. Even when the questions she asked were yoked in focus, the response tended to be disjointed:

> Dear Katie,
>
> I have found that many people like to read books over again. What was it that made you love this book enough to read it four times? Was it funny, sad, realistic? Did you get different feelings or ideas each time you read it?
>
> Love, Mrs. H.
>
> Dear Mrs. H,

I finished reading Stay Tuned For Danger, but before I tell you about it, I have to answer your questions.
1) Just liking the book made me read it four times.
2) I think it was sad and funny at the same time because it was sad becasue how Elsie's mother didn't love her much. And it was funny just because of the characters.
3) No I didn't because I knew what was going to happen and I like it when I know what is going to happen because it sometimes is more exciting. Now on to my journal entry.

This entry went on to tell about the latest book she was reading but very often her entries (and others') only supplied answers. Although students sometimes asked her questions, the main goal when they sat down to write was usually to answer the questions she wrote to them in her previous letter.

Yet there were often exchanges between teacher and student that were their own private conversations unlinked to any discussions in the classroom-- reactions to what each had written to the other that had a genuine letter quality. This quality of exchange occurred when Nancy kept the questions to a minimum and was, herself, answering questions the students wrote to her. Then a balance was struck between teacher and student. These exchanges usually included talk around understanding and reflecting upon circumstances of people, either real or fictional, in books: food for life and for writing. For example, Kenny reflected on a book of various personal accounts written by adolescents living in alcoholic families:

Dear Mrs. Herdecker
Yes the story is true. It's amazing the you just start drinking or smoking you just can't stop. Why is that? When you want to stop you can't. Kenny

Dear Kenny,

Some people have what is called an addiction to cigarettes or such. You get so your body depends on it. You can see why it is best not to start in the first place. Sometimes it is hard to believe what some families go through. It makes us realize how luck we are.

What are you reading now? Love, Mrs. H.

Dear Mrs. Herdecker

I'm reading Encyclopedia Brown. Thanks for answering back.

Kenny

Dear Kenny,

I use to read Encyclopedia Brown all the time. I love trying to solve the mysteries. Are you any good at it?

Love, Mrs. H.

The way in which Nancy influenced their writing within the journals was in asking questions that revealed her confusion over what had been written to her (e.g., Were there TWO boys? One named Cracker and one named Jackson? I don't get it!" "Why do you think this book is 'weird'?" "Why don't the women want the men to go back to the mines? Isn't that how the men earn their living?") In doing so, the children had to be more explicit or attend more carefully to the way they expressed their ideas.

Whole Class Reading Share

In this event, students could sign up to share a book excerpt with the class. The passage was picked for its ability to evoke an emotional response of every kind: merriment, sadness, scariness, awe. These responses were tied to a wide range of genre: books of poetry, joke books, fact books, fiction, historical fiction, and biography, but fiction was the primary genre shared. When I asked the class, individually, about what they got out of these Shares, the overwhelming answer was book recommendations. They became

interested in various books from hearing passages from them. The potential influences on writing within this event primarily came from hearing what the sharer liked to read and the reactions of the classroom audience.

* * *

This classroom-- its values, its extant genres for writing, and its particular forms and functions of various literacy events within-- has importance for understanding, as Bruner says, "how, what, how much, and in what form" children learn from their participation within it. In the next three chapters, I will present Kenny, Katie, and James' writing within the rich context in which it is being composed to show how it is being shaped by this community. You will see how the unique ways children use books, classmates, and teachers as resources.

I begin with Kenny.

CHAPTER 4

KENNY

Introduction

Mid-year Kenny sits at his cluster of desks with four others. Mandy, one of his deskmates, perks up suddenly and summarily fortells their futures: "I'm going to be a good author, Mike will be a good instrument player, Rachel will be good at writing words-- she writes letters neat, Juanita will be good at computers, and I don't know about you [Kenny] yet." Kenny replied, "Oh, thanks a lot!"

However whimsically Mandy's reviews were made, there was a certain truth in what she revealed about Kenny. As a fourth grader, he was full of the wonder of childhood, nestled safely between years of elementary school goneby and those that lay ahead. While other classmates were beginning to trade their childhood identities for adolescent ones, Kenny blissfully went about his days unaffected by such concerns. Although not a vanguard for honing this class's more sophisticated personae, he was a refreshing character, often amusing without intending to be so. His innocence and complete lack of guile in his attitudes and interactions with others in the class made him likeable to everyone, although it also set him somewhat apart.

Kenny considered everyone in the class his friend. He once wrote: "My friends are the people I like. Heres the friends in my class." Following was a list of everyone's name in the class, broken down by categories "boys," "girls," and "teachers."

Kenny entered Stratham Memorial School in third grade along with his two brothers. He is a triplet. Kenny had access to a lot of different boys from all three fourth grade classrooms, since each triplet was in one and invited friends home to play. Although he had access to a lot of boys his age, I was aware that he did not share quite the same status in play as his two brothers. At the morning snack break, when all three fourth grade classes came together to play games and talk, his brothers were more central to the ongoing action; Kenny was engaged in the talk and play but not pulled into it by classmates like his brothers were.

Unlike his brothers, Kenny's reading scores were "below grade level" which entitled him to Chapter One tutoring. Once a week, from November on, he went with two others to meet with a reading tutor. He never expressed any misgivings about this-- he seemed to enjoy the special attention.

In talking with and observing Kenny, I found no evidence of influence from books on his writing. I wouldn't call him a reluctant reader, but reading probably would not have been his preferred activity if given a choice to read or do some other activity. He sampled a variety of books all year, many of which stretched his reading abilities but he didn't develop favorite authors. Most children in the class found an author or two that they became enamored with during the year and read widely from their selections. Kenny, did, however, get excited over books such as The Guiness Book of World Records, joke books, and comic strips. Reading was generally challenging to him because the reading act itself had not obtained a high enough level of automaticity; he struggled with words and

syntactic complexities of sentences. He also wasn't a child who had yet built up enough of the "living-through" feeling that Rosenblatt (1983) speaks of-- the feeling of vicariously-lived experience-- which helps seal the love of reading in childhood, but he was on his way. In moving into fiction-writing, he discovered the "living-through" feeling, and was excited by it.

Previous to third grade, Kenny attended a school in New Jersey where he "didn't do any writing." In fourth grade, he continued to build on his writing experiences from third grade (where he also wrote daily) and found continuity between the structure and process across the two grades.

For the first month of school, Kenny struggled to find things to write about. He had primarily written personal narratives the year before and began the year with the expectation of writing more of the same. He initially sought attention primarily from his teachers, who were doing writing themselves, and he connected his writing with theirs. But as the classroom community took hold, Kenny aligned his writing efforts to his classmates. He found within his classmates' chosen genres, the one that best suited his needs. The action-adventure kind of fiction, with its use of classmates as characters, suited his notion of what makes writing good-- a notion which was not so much tied to the writing as written as it was to what the writing could do. It had power to get classmates involved with the writer; it generated high-spirited reactions, especially of those classmates featured in the writing. As well, it allowed him to create text worlds where he could be a key player in the interactions among

friends, have his dad or his teacher all to himself, and exclude his brothers.

During conference time, across the year, Kenny divided his time between writing at his desk and interacting with classmates when he found them doing something he found of interest-- like gluing covers on their published stories or typing their writing on the computer. He didn't confer with them about his writing; he reserved this for his teachers and me.

The Whole Class Writing Share was the literacy event that tied him to this community more than any other. It was where he heard the action-adventure stories that he was drawn to and used for his own fiction. It was the event in which he honed his understanding of the difference between genres. It was also the place where he could command an audience, all to himself, and get the special attention he craved.

In this literacy-loving community, Kenny found reading and writing essential to getting his need for attention met. He, perhaps more than any other child in the room, used literacy to impact his world, to locate himself in the center of the community's activity. As you will see, once he began fiction-writing, he became more empowered with every new piece he wrote.

First Month: What Shall I Write?

As Kenny began his fourth grade, he found himself again in a class that allowed him to choose his own writing topics. Last year, he had written personal narratives almost exclusively. He found an ease in telling about the events of his life. In one pivotal piece, called

Camping, he had told about how he camped with his brothers and friends in the backyard and had added some fictional elements to the story to make it more exciting and funny. It was the first time he had ventured into fiction, by adding fictional elements to an otherwise true story. He called this piece a *true fiction* because it was mostly true (or personal narrative) "with some made-up stuff." This piece marked a first step towards writing fiction.

At the end of third grade, he had been encouraged by his teacher and classmates to write a piece of fiction. His brother, Doug, had written an adventure story, as had his friends Cameron, Sean, and Scott. "I knew that Cameron, Sean, and Scott liked wars and stuff and so I decided that maybe it's time for I should do a fiction and adventure because I was the guys' friend and I felt left out not doing it because I always did true. And my teacher kept telling me to try fiction but I didn't and I didn't because *I didn't know one.*" He began one called The Adventure but as the year ended, it remained partially written. This fiction piece was tucked in his fourth grade writing folder. He was hesitant to go back to it. When Sarah, his fourth grade classmate told the class, "Fiction's easier", Kenny was astonished by her assertion and he replied, "What do you mean fiction's easier? True stories you know what happen!" Creating a story without reliance on experienced events was a daunting enterprise to consider.

During his first month of fourth grade, Kenny sought attention from his teachers for its own sake and to get ideas for something to write about. He found validation in his desire to write personal narrative when Nancy told him that she always wrote in this genre herself. He wanted to write personal narrative but he thought it

required some unusual event to talk about, something exciting. The mundane was boring. He couldn't initially think of anything exciting to write about from his life so he was stuck.

Kenny approached Lin Roy, the teacher intern, for help. At the time, she was writing directions for using the computer to publish writing and Kenny asked her if she liked writing directions. She told him she did and that it required her to be very careful not to leave out anything. Lin and Nancy, always looking for ways to extend genre choices, suggested that he try to write directions to his house with the school as the starting point so that, if she wanted to, she could find his house without getting lost. She asked him about other things he knew how to make, and he said he knew how to make a fire. She told him that was another thing he could write directions about. Then she suggested another genre: letter writing. Kenny made a list of her suggestions: "My House [Directions], [How to] Make a Fire, Make (write) a letter" and decided to write the directions to his house.

Over several days, he wrote directions to his house for Lin. She got him to make his directions more and more specific. Kenny explained to me that he kept getting her lost: "I kept getting it messed up. I had to write all the details-- like you come out of the school, go to Bunkerhill Road, take a right... When I got it done, Mrs. Roy ended up in the woods. I forgot to tell her what side of the street my house was." Although writing directions for his teacher allowed him to get her attention, and allowed Lin to extend his genre choice and direct his attention to explicitness in his writing, the writing itself was not satisfying. He kept looking for something in his life to write about. He soon found something to suit him.

Mid-September Kenny showed me some unusual photographs taken of the bedroom he shared with his brothers. He told me that he and his brothers had saved the side strips from their father's computer paper and decided to make a giant spider web. The photos showed paper strips that extended from wall-to-wall, crisscrossing everywhere. It was an amazing sight and I told him so. He returned to his desk and began to write a piece called Family presented below as it was finished several days later. He had not yet let go of his idea to writing directions as revealed by his attempt to describe how he and his brothers made the spider web, and the reference to his dad's making of their bunkbeds. The piece was snippets of family life strung together which had special significance to him.

> My family is great. We do lots of things together. If we get mad at each other, then we don't like each other. But we always get over it and then we all love each other again. My mom and dad works almost all day. Are spishele times is when we go on vacasine and day trips. Once my brothers and me made are room into a big spiderweb. And heres how to make it. First take computa paper and wrip the sides off. then you take taks and tak up the sides and make into a spiderweb. Once my dad all hiself made bunk beds and just by looking at a picter and no drsines (directions) too. and they can come apart too. We went to the Nackfalls (Niagara Falls) together too. We went in the under ground tonlls (tunnels) too. We each got a toy there and we also got some cloths. And we watch the fall colers. Then we went home.

On September 22, Kenny shared Family with the class. As he read the part about the paper web, he held up his photographs. The children's comments focused on asking about the creation of the "spider web" ("Did you use tools to tack the paper up?" "How long did it take?") and his mom's reactions ("What did your mom do when she

saw it? She wasn't mad just a little bit?") One commented: "I liked the pictures 'cause when you were reading I couldn't figure out what it looked like."

Nancy's and Lin's comments, in contrast to the students', attended to the overall message of his text, both commenting on the "happy feeling" he conveyed toward his family.

The response Kenny received from sharing was very rewarding to him and set in motion his pursuit to share his writing with the class. He began to sign up constantly for Shares. If he was working on a piece that he didn't quite feel ready to read to the class, he'd pull out a piece done in third grade, share something he previously had written earlier in the year or would dash something off quickly--anything to keep that attention coming his way.

On one such occasion, about a month after writing Family, he shared it again, unaltered from the first time he shared it. He reminded the class that everything in Family was true. When Lin asked him where he was going with it, Kenny replied that he was leaving it alone and might add to it when something exciting happened, like a parade that the family went to annually.

Lin encouraged Kenny to perceive it as a way of recording family life and honoring the mundane happenings as well, "like eating breakfast or raking leaves" and perhaps allowing it to take on a journal quality. Again she was extending to Kenny, and to the whole class, a widened selection of genre choices and purposes for writing. Kenny responded, "Now I have a new idea." However, he never added anything more to this piece of writing. Its purpose, for Kenny, was to record unusual family events, those which he perceived his

classmates would find exciting to hear about. His classmates were becoming his dominant audience and they were writing about events and things more unusual than the daily life of family.

In Whole Class Share, he had heard Shayna's piece about visiting a Shaker Village, Gary's news article about the Iran-Iraq War, Sean's piece about his various collections, and Jonathan's fictional piece about a boy obsessed with surfing. As well, some of the boys began to launch what would be their year-long endeavors to write action-adventure fiction.

Mike and Cameron, for example, both wrote pieces in which they and their friends equipped with weapons went on secret missions. Sean wrote one set in Australia in which he and his friends go from one wacky event to the next: meeting up with Crocodile Dundee , quicksand, Bushmen, and audience-pleasing elements such as throwing-up and fainting. When he shared it, the children paid a rare tribute: they clapped. This was the kind of center stage presence Kenny wanted.

Kenny's Move to Fiction

Kenny decided to return to his partly-written fiction piece called The Adventure which he had started at the end of third grade. It was written in the form of a play, a form common in his third grade but rare in the fourth. His brother, Doug, last year had written an adventure, in the form of a play, with friends and his brother Kenny in the story. Kenny got most of his ideas for Chapter One from Doug: "I first got all the weapons and got all the stuff ready and we went camping... we camped in a tree... I took most of it from Doug."

Although he borrowed ideas from his brother, he didn't include him as a character in his story. It began:

Chapter One
The Jungle

ANNOUNCER: Once there were four boys and their names were Scott, Sean, Cameron, and Kenny.
SCOTT: Hey guys, let's go camping in the jungle for a week.
ANNOUNCER: The boys all agreed.
CAMERON: I have knives.
SEAN: And I have some rope and some backpacks, too.
KENNY: And I have some beer and spears.
SCOTT: And I have a tent and machine guns.
ANNOUNCER: So the boys did. Once they got there, they went to bed in a tree. When they woke up there were snakes around them.
CAMERON: Hey! There's four vines. Let's jump on the vines and swing across the swamp. Then we will be safe.
ANNOUNCER: So the boys did.
SCOTT: Hey, where are we?
SEAN: I don't know.
KENNY: Hey, let's make a fort.
CAMERON: Okay. Let's do it.
SEAN: Hey, there's a lion. Let's kill it and have it for dinner.
SCOTT: Okay.
ANNOUNCER: So they did.
KENNY: What's for breakfast?
SCOTT: When you and Sean were sleeping, Cameron and I got four rabbits.
ANNOUNCER: They ate the rabbits and the day moved on. When they were finished with the fort it was night time, so the boys had the lion and went to sleep in the fort. In the morning they got up and had the rest of the lion. It started to rain. But the boys did not care. After a while the rain stopped.
SEAN: Hey, let's go farther in the jungle where all the wild animals are.
ANNOUNCER: So they did.
CAMERON: Hey, it sure is cool out here.
KENNY: Hey, you guys, I brought some shotguns.
GUYS: All right!
CAMERON: We'll need them.

The second chapter, the one he began in fourth grade, titled "The Rocky Mountains," continued along a similar adventurous vein with Kenny finding a secret passage leading to a slide. The boys slide down into water and find a ship filled with gold. Cameron throws a grenade which topples a wall big enough to sail the ship out and onto the Atlantic Ocean. The boys sail "on and on and on." His final page reads: "To Be Continued... Wait for Part Two!" (Part Two is never written because, he said, "I wanted Scott (his friend from last year who drew the pictures accompanying The Adventure) to help me but he didn't want to cuz we're in different classes this year."

Much of the content for Chapter One came from his brother and the second chapter, from the movie, The Goonies.

> [In The Goonies] Well, at the drawbridge-- there was this organ kind of thing that they had to play the right keys to open the drawbridge. There are people chasing after them but I didn't put that in [my story]-- they just went down the slides. And it was so weird about it-- there were spikes at the end on the sides of the slide and they AAhhh! and they finally came out and they find a ship where there's all this gold and jewels... and the ground just fell-- it just went bppprsh and so they just made it out [of the cave].

With the ideas from his brother's text and The Goonies, Kenny was able to deliver a piece of fiction. But he was also tuning in to what classmates liked about others' texts to incorporate in his own. The repeated phrase "on and on and on" came from Jonathan who used the repeated phrase extensively in his surfing piece and received positive responses to its use from his peers when he shared it in Whole Class Share.

In The Adventure, Kenny's characters are indistinguishable from one another. He concerned himself with moving the action, and to that end, the characters were primarily props to support action (Graves, 1989), characteristic of the action-adventure stories he heard. But to Kenny, the characters were distinct; they were his classmates. By using people known to him, Kenny's characters came alive to him, as did the story. He pictured himself going through this wacky adventure with them, deciding who would throw the grenade and shoot the rabbits. Kenny found a new sense of what fiction could do for him: "I didn't know anything about fiction-- I just wrote true stories. But it can be fun because you can sometimes, like, feel like you're in the adventure-- you're doing it." Here we see Kenny beginning to find the "living-through" feeling. Writing, rather than reading, was the means by which he came to this insight about print, and it was very exciting to him. His move to fiction, supported by his classmates, benefited him greatly.

In early October, Kenny shared The Adventure with the whole class. It didn't receive the kind of unbridled reaction that Sean's piece had, but Kenny didn't seem disappointed. Hal commented on Chapter Two's similarity to the movie The Goonies. Jonathan, a boy who wrote stories grounded more in reality, called Kenny on the plausibility of a boy his age wielding a machine gun. Kenny replied, "This isn't a *true fiction* story." Only the characters were "true" and although some of the elements of the text are typical of camping experiences (setting up camp, hunting, rain), the events were "made up." Kenny expected his audience to suspend their judgment of what is plausible for him and his friends to do, and just enjoy the action, an

expectation shared with all of the adventure writers in his classroom. The writer, along with a cadre of friends, move from one exciting action-event to the next. In distinguishing *true fiction* from *fiction*, Kenny told me that *fiction* crossed over the line from being mostly true (events that happened) to being mostly made up: "[Fiction] is mostly fiction but there's some true stuff in it, barely any."

The Announcer in his piece largely served the purpose of moving along the action ("And so they did" and "The day moved on"). Kenny's piece compressed time so much that it caused confusion for readers. Cameron commented to Kenny, "You said you killed four rabbits but you said you killed a lion too. It seemed like it was all done in the same day." Kenny had to explain that the rabbits were eaten for breakfast and the lion, for dinner.

As the Share ended, Lin told Kenny, "You should be very proud of it" to which Kenny replied, "It's my first fiction book I EVER wrote."

The limited context and lack of character dimensionality did not fuel his classmates' enthusiasm to the degree he wanted. From Kenny's perspective, his writing needed "more action" to please his audience.

Audience Concerns: "Put More Action In"

Throughout his year of writing, Kenny looked for ways "to put more action in." I asked him, five months after writing The Adventure, what he meant by "to put more action in."

> Kenny: "Like, a guy's swinging on a vine and another guy's swinging on another vine and one guy smashes into a wall and the other guy falls off into water and there's alligators in there and so he shoots a gun."

MM: Oh. I get it. And so how does putting more action in make it better?

Kenny: [makes a crack about my asking too many questions, smiles all the while] If I said "the boy went to school, had lunch, went to recess, came home from school"-- that's dumb! There's no ACTION in it-- what happened. Nobody likes it really if it's just boring, if it has no action.

MM: But what you said DID tell what happened. You said, "The boy went to school, had lunch, went to recess, came home from school" -- that DOES tell what happened.

Kenny: Yeah, but it doesn't say, like, "He went sliding down and kept sliding and then went on the tires and jumped off them and" like that.

MM: So just saying "went to recess" doesn't have [interrupted]

Kenny: Action

MM: I see what you mean.

Later, Kenny distinguished between two kinds of actions that he perceived classmates used in their writing. This he learned from the Whole Class Writing Shares in which realistic and action-adventure fiction were well-represented. He said: "Everybody writes action. Everybody writes different action, different kinds of action. Some write 'walking,' 'scratching their heads,' or something like that and somebody else has 'flying across the vine, jumped through the air'-- like that." The latter kind "has more adventure" and that's what he especially liked to hear and to write.[2] However, the more realistic fiction he hear in Shares, with its characters doing more mundane actions, caused him to ask "Is that part true?" as a way of continuously gathering information about how classmates constructed their fictional works.

The "living through" feeling he experienced in writing fiction, as you will see, remained strong throughout his year of writing, as did his need to deliver a piece that would secure the attention and engage the imaginations of his audience. This latter importance gathered

momentum as he learned to draw his classmates more and more into his adventures.

The indistinctness of characters found in The Adventure gave way a little in his future fiction pieces as he infused his real-life characters with a measure of their real-life traits. Using what he knew about his real-life characters, he reasoned, would spark their interest in his stories. But his main challenge, as he saw it, was to create exciting action-events for himself and other real-life characters to live through.

Learning to Write "a Fiction"

Popcorn. At the end of September, Lin Roy shared her piece in the Whole Class Share about her extraordinary love for popcorn. She told how every morning as she came down the hall she smelled the popcorn being popped in the school kitchen for the snackbreak, and that it was an act of sheer will to keep her feet from heading toward the kitchen. She ended the piece with a comment to the students that, if they ever could not find her, they should look in the cafeteria where they'd probably find her with her head in a big bowl full of it.

The piece was appreciated by the students and sparked a spirited response. Several said they had the same reaction to the smell of popcorn to which Lin Roy responded passionately that she liked it "smothered in butter." Sean thought her story was "really funny". When Mandy remarked that she "could really see it when you wanted to go into the cafeteria," Kenny said,"I'd like to piggyback (Nancy Herdecker's phrase) on what Mandy said-- you said it so clear. I liked when you said to look for you in the cafeteria with your head in

a bowl of popcorn." Popcorn obviously interested everyone and the response Lin got suggested a story about popcorn would be a success with his classmates.

A month later, Kenny asked to confer with me. He had begun writing a piece inspired by Lin Roy's. The previous day, as he was getting ready to leave school for the day: "I thought oh that's a good thing to write... popcorn... and I asked her, 'Can I put you in? I won't try to make fun of you.' " She agreed.

The idea to set the piece in his house was furthered by her asking him to write the directions to his house. She knew where he lived and, given that, it seemed to him natural to invite her over-- at least in his writing. Starting again from "true" elements (real people: Dad, Lin, and he, his house, and Lin's love of popcorn), he began to construct "a fiction."

His draft began with his title, <u>POPCORN</u>, printed (and traced several times) in large letters across the top of the page. His first draft follows.

POPCORN

Hey Dad can I make some popcorn? Shore. So I made popcorn 5 storys high. And six storys of butter. And 3 storys of salt. Then I ask Dad if I can ask if Mrs. Roy if she can come over. Yes you can! I call up Mrs. Roy. She picks it up. Yes? she said. I asked her if she wanted to come over. she said o.k. She got here fast! I didn't tell her about the popcorn. She walk in. her jaw fell down and she fated (fainted). I yelled Dad come here. Dad came in. then he fainted, too. Well if you can't beat them you minus (might as) [well] join them. I fainted too. But it didn't work.

So I yelled Mrs. Roy Dad WAKE UP! What hapin? they both said at the same time. then Mrs. Roy said jinks. Then Mrs. Roy said I got you! Come on I said. We got to eat all the popcorn. Hey let's have a race. O.K. Let's split it up right here, and here and you can do all kinds of tricks. ON YOUR MARKS, get set, GO. My Dad and I

were making noises like this munch. . . . . munch. . . . .And you could hear from Mrs. Roy MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH. Dad were (where) did Mrs. Roy go? Sudele (suddenly) Mrs. Roy poped out my dad's side.
Dad: Hey you were apost (supposed) to stay on your side. Mrs. Roy: I couldn't help it. Do you want to come see the butter fall I found? And there were some yellow crestlst (crystals) too.
Lead the way Mrs. Roy. Aosome (awesome).

Kenny read this to me, full of expression. He was obviously happy with it, and was thinking of having the three characters see a bar and go have drinks. But that idea wasn't very pleasing to him. "I need a better ending," he said and added that he had hoped to finish it right away so he could read it to the class at the end of the period. As it turned out, there wasn't enough time to get to Kenny's name on the list for Whole Class Share.

The next day, looking at the list of names on the share list, he commented that he didn't think he'd get a chance to share it with the whole class for at least another day because his name was still way down the list. He needed to share it with someone, and he didn't want to share it with classmates during conference time because he didn't want to dampen the reaction he would get when his classmates heard it for the first time. I, and his teachers were safe. He wanted us to like it, even though we were not his primary audience. By reading it to us, he was somewhat able to offset his excitement to share it with the class. I told him I would love to hear it and was interested to hear where he had decided to go with it. He had decided to add the part about the bar after all and to extend his story:

Hey Dad there's a bar. Let's get a drick. I brot some sota.
Good said Dad. Let's go to sleep. O.K.? O.K. A cupble (couple of) hours later we woke up. Come on. Let's get more.

The following day, October 22, Kenny added more to Popcorn and decided to add popcorn guns to his story:

Hey I found some popcorn guns. Can I try it? Yes you can said Dad. POP POP POP POP and popcorn came out of the gun. Hey there's six guns here. Come on let's take [them] and get out of here. Suddle (suddenly) all the salt comes down. the whole plase capses (collapses). It's a good thing that we jumped out of there in time said dad.
yeh said Mrs. Roy.
Let's light a fire. O.K. Fire crackers all came out of the chimeny.
I'll make peanuts to morowe (tomorrow). And I'll avite (invite) Gary over too.
TO BE CONTUE (continued) Wait for Part 2.

Kenny created a dramatic climax with his three characters barely escaping disaster, and to the very end of this episode, he held to the zany, happenstance flavor of his narrative. The idea of the characters' fainting probably was borrowed from Sean's Australia-based piece (when Sean shared his piece, the character's fainting reaction got a big laugh).

In this piece, in contrast to The Adventure, Kenny described the actions of his characters and they interacted more with one another. For example, Mrs. Roy (in the story) playfully teases Kenny, and comments are made to one another about what they saw and did.

On October 27, Kenny came up to me to tell me that he'd started to work on his second draft of Popcorn for publication. He had conferred with Lin Roy and they had worked on paragraphs, spelling, word differentiations, and made minor deletions and additions to his text for purposes of clarity.

For the next three weeks Kenny worked on Popcorn fairly steadily. Further changes in the draft were made with Nancy's help:

punctuation was added to the dialogue and some of the "ands" that Kenny used were crossed out to allow the sentences to stand more on their own. Kenny made two content changes: he had taken out the bar scene, the one event of the story that he had initially said wasn't working. Instead of drinking sodas, they went straight to their naps. The second change was an addition: When Kenny, as character, found the six popcorn guns, he added, "Let's take some for Sean, Scott, and Cameron", the three characters (and real-life friends) who appeared in his earlier published story, The Adventure. Again, Kenny was thinking of his audience.

Kenny offset the relative tedium of writing the second draft and then the final published copy by spending time listening to others' writing. He continued to write his name on the board to share his writing-- anything but Popcorn which he was determined to share only after it was finished. For example, there was a story circulating the room about a local house that was supposed to be haunted. Picking up on that interest of his classmates, he dashed off the beginnings of a haunted house story that got quite an animated conversation going about the house within the Share. A few minutes after sharing it, he tossed it in the trash, it having served its purpose.

On November 17, Kenny had finished pasting and sewing the cover for Popcorn and wore a big grin as he sat on the front table to share it. It was in the sharing of it with the large audience that I became fully aware that, for Kenny, the oral performance was as much a part of the text as the words written on the page. The characters' exchanges were read with the intended excitement, playfulness, surprise, and relief that Kenny wanted to convey. It had

an innocence to it with its popcorn guns and chosen characters, his dad and teacher, that was different from that of the adventure writing his classmates' texts usually portrayed, but it nevertheless "worked." His classroom audience appreciated his delivery and the zaniness of the story.

Kenny: Comments or Questions?
Jonathan: I liked when you said, "Munch.....munch.....munch" and Mrs. Roy said, "MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH."
Brandy: I liked the same part as Jonathan
Shayna: Are there pictures?
Kenny: Oh, I forgot to show you. [shows several of them]
Shayna: How many pages is it?
Kenny: I don't know yet.
Mrs. H: Oh, you've still got to get the page numbers written in it.
James: I liked it a lot.
Cameron: I was wondering what the popcorn guns looked like. I wasn't sure if they were made out of popcorn or...
Kenny: [explains what they looked like.]
Sean: I think it's a funny story.
Kenny: So do I!
Mike: I don't get it when the house collapses.
Kenny: No, the house didn't collapse-- the pile of popcorn did.
Mike: Oh. I thought it was the house.
Gary: So did I.
Kenny: No, just the popcorn falls, not the house.
Katie: Your butterfall is like a waterfall, right?
Kenny: Right.
Katie: Well, you've... it's not like a regular fiction story-- it's really different-- you have all these things that can't really happen in it. It's really good.
Kenny: Can you imagine how big that pile would be?
Hal: I was wondering what your Dad thought when he saw it.
Kenny: He fainted, didn't he?
Lin Roy: It's fun! Now you were concerned about whether you might be able to write fiction or not and you've written a wonderful piece of fiction!
Kenny: Thanks. Jonathan?
Jonathan: Uhhhh...
Kenny: Want me to come back to you? [calls on a room visitor]

Visitor: I loved the way you started your story and I thought your butterfall was a very clever idea.
Kenny: Thanks.

His classmates' enthusiasm fed Kenny's feelings of success at both writing fiction and bringing pleasure to his classmates. Kenny wasted no time beginning his next fiction story, Peanuts, which combined elements of Popcorn that Kenny felt won him accolades.

Peanuts. This piece, he said, was going to be about peanuts-- and making peanut butter-- many stories high. It would be a "Part Two" or sequel and he looked for a person in the class who liked to eat peanuts as much as Lin Roy liked popcorn. When he asked Hal if he liked them, Hal replied, "Not a lot" but Gary said he loved them, so Kenny decided to put Gary into his story. Including a classmate within the class would prove to be a good decision for his purposes of getting the class involved with him.

As he wrote, he formed the words with exaggerated movements of his mouth, periodically sucking on the end of his pencil and blowing air in his cheeks. It began:

Book 2 of Popcorn

PEANUTS

Day 2. Mrs. Roy's gone home 12 hours ago. It takes place in Kenny's house. And Kenny is making a list.
Dad can I make some Peanuts?
Wait, are you going to make a moautin (mountain) a gane (again)?
Yes.
Then do it out side and thats a orter.
O.K. Can you listen to my list I have?
O.K.
And pick the one that you want.

---

rosted peanuts
shelled peanuts
red peanuts

yellow peanuts

topings	
salt	cheese
sureger	butter
cinnamon	honey

Ah. I think shelled peanuts with cinnamon.
O.K. Now can I call Gary?
Yes.
Bookey down! Before I picked up the phone, the phone rang.
Who could it be? Hello.
Hello this is Gary. Is Kenny there?
This is him.
Can I come over to pig out and booky?
Right on man. Get over here now.

On November 30, Kenny wanted to read me the above. I noticed that Kenny used a similar story frame to Popcorn: asking his dad's permission to make peanuts and call his friend over to eat them. He was building on his past writing. The dialogue between him and Gary was in keeping with the funniness of dialogue of other action-adventure pieces. It also appeared to me that he had again (as in Popcorn) slowed down the action a bit-- long enough to fashion a list of possible peanuts and toppings. He had consulted Lin Roy for other kinds of toppings and she had written cinnamon and honey on his list. I suggested that he go into the making of the peanuts in keeping with his greater attention to describing action. Kenny liked the idea and went back to writing:

Oh how am I going to make it? My magic books! What's on the shelf.

[picture of a book case full of books.]

Stuff to do in school. That sounds like a good book. Whats in here? How to make a teacher sick. How to burn down school. Boy I should try those tricks some time. Here's one. How to make

food. O.K. I want to look for the P's. P P P P P boy I should make a song out of this. Mabe I should look at the giude words. peanuts. here it is. Hokus pokus amancokus. I'll run out the door and say the words. no the window is faster. Hokus pokus amancokus. Done. O.K. Dad the peanuts are ready.

The next day Kenny shared the above with me. I laughed and told him I felt like I was right there with him watching him look through the shelves.

Kenny relayed to me what would happen next. He had recently heard Gary's piece in which Gary depicted himself as a military pilot (Gary's writing was full of fighter and spy planes, as were several others' writing). Kenny decided to incorporate Gary's imagined self in his own piece as a means to draw Gary's interest and the wider audience's interest to his writing. Kenny would have Gary arrive in a jet. Again wanting to direct Kenny to frame the action, I asked him, "Do you see Gary approaching? Did you hear him coming?" Kenny didn't answer but went back to his desk and began writing again:

Here comes Gary in a F:5A jet! BOOM! That must be him now. O.K. Let's booky. And I brought my boom box.
[picture of a portable radio/cassette player, two speakers, and a tape called Foot Loose.]

Kenny continued to work on Peanuts during December and January. During that time, as was usual for Kenny, he also spent time listening to others' writing, watching peers writing on the computer, and helping others to sew their books together. Occasionally he wrote down jokes from comic books, and silly poems by Shel Silverstein.

His story continued, drawing on similar elements from Popcorn, mainly that of another world created from, this time, peanuts. His attention to Gary's interest in planes remains strong.

One hour later I yelled time to eat.
O.K. Gary yelled. Yug I hate shelled peanuts. I'll fix that with my F:5A. Oh do you have any gas? 50 gallons. Can I use it? Just then Kenny came back and said here. Thanks. RRRRRRoomm. Let's see here. Let's just swich on my magic stuff. now shoot it at the peanuts. Zamey! Now I just have to switch on the salt. I just have to shoot it on. ZAMEY! It's all done.
Hey kids. I'll be in side if you need me.
O.K. dad. Hey Gary I found a key. And on the top of the key is a peanut. Lets go try it in a door. Hey it's peanut world. It's night time too. Oh look a falling peanut. Look at those peanut trees. Boy look at that peanut castle over there.
Hey look at those peanut alliegators.
Suddly Gary froze. I said Gary, What's the matter? Then he fainted. I looked over and saw the biggest F:5A in the whole world. Gary, wake up. Lets go try it out.
O.K. Which switch should we push Gary? They'er all the same. Don't worry. I fly a jet remember. Oyea! Then Kenny's dad walked in the door. Gary started pushing buttons. A net came and caught Kenny's father. They all blasted off to space and were never seen again.

The End

Kenny went through a similar drafting and redrafting of his writing with Nancy. Again he received help with spelling, paragraphing and punctuation. His first draft, as is shown here, showed he had attended more to these considerations as he wrote. I had noticed in casual observation that, as he reread what he was writing, he often paused to ask a neighbor how to spell a word and would erase his original spelling. This draft also showed considerable more attention to paragraphing than his earlier pieces.

On February 11, Kenny finished sewing his cover on to his finished text. Because he managed to get it all put together before his name came up on the list for Whole Class Share, he was happy to be able to read it rather than the piece about seahorses that he wrote for his science class in third grade.

As he read it, his voice became louder and more expressive at various points in the dialogue (e.g., Boogie down!) and sound devices (BOOM! AND ZAMIE!). As he read the part in which he's carrying on an inner dialogue as he peruses the magic books. Sean and Mandy had big smiles. Sarah laughed when he read the part about tricks to make teachers sick. Gary, throughout the sharing, sat with an amused grin. The class responded to his piece with affection and enthusiasm, and began to hatch some ideas for his next book.

Mandy: When you talked about the peanut world, I could picture it in my head... the peanut trees and especially the peanut castle.
Sarah: Me, too.
Sean: Was the F5:A made of peanuts?
Kenny: uh... yeah. [I don't think he had considered it before]
Keith: You should have made it donuts [instead of peanuts] cuz Gary loves donuts.
Kenny: When I wrote it, I didn't know he liked donuts.
Mike: You could make another story.
James: I like when Gary asks "Can I come over and pig out and boogie?"
Gary: When you said I froze, I thought it was going to be because I saw a huge donut! I thought you'd say DOnut, not PEAnut.
Mike: [To Gary, referring to the text] It's too bad that we'll never see each other again.
Jonathan: Maybe in your next book, it could be in space!
Mike: In space and never seen again.
Kenny: Donut planet!
Cameron: Jelly donuts!
Nancy: If you have ideas for the next series, maybe they could wait and be talked over with Kenny during conference time.
Sean: It's a good book.
Sarah: Are you going to continue this in another book?
Kenny: Yeah, I think.
Sarah: You like these, don't you?
Kenny: [nods]

Nancy: The class sounds like they want you to continue the story. It's incredibly humorous! The things you could make with peanuts!
Kenny: I could write, "The end, or is it?"

Kenny's use of real people continued to be very successful in engaging his classmates-- even more so, with the addition of a classmate to the story. Gary "read" himself into the character easily. Kenny acknowledged Gary's real interests (piloting a jet (Gary's writing and liking peanuts) and gave him a goofy quality through his dialogue with Kenny. Kenny's dad appears as a hopeless pawn to their antics. All these elements of Peanuts made it a winner in this class.

Kenny Evaluates Popcorn and Peanuts

Kenny's comments about Popcorn and Peanuts revealed that his stated concern for getting action into his writing was consistent with his subsequent evaluations. As you have seen, however, characters *are* important in Kenny's stories. They are important for engaging his audience in his narratives, for inviting them to imagine real-life characters in wacky adventures. The real challenge for Kenny was not to create characters but to create the action-filled events that they would live through. It makes sense, that his evaluations of these pieces were centered around how successful he was at creating the action-events because it is what the characters do that will elicit the laughter and amusement of his audience. In March, I sat next to him with his two completed books in front of him and asked him to tell me about what makes them good.

Kenny: Popcorn was funny with "MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH" and everything. You know, in Popcorn, I um had more adventure

and action and all that but not really a lot in Peanuts--no real adventure--they didn't go underground. In Popcorn, they went IN the popcorn, dug a hole in the popcorn. I had a lot of action and stuff in Popcorn. Peanuts, I like just, Gary came over, they found the key, they went into Peanut World and they went into space. So that's not really adventure 'cause really nothing happened. But like in Popcorn, they, like, went into the popcorn, found the butterfalls and stuff like that, and they found popcorn guns and stuff so that had more action.

MM: So Popcorn has more adventure and action.

Kenny: Yeah. I had butterfalls, and popcorn guns. In Peanuts there wasn't very much action 'cause they didn't DO anything really. They just looked at these things: peanut alligators, peanut trees, peanut castles. They just blast off into space. I lost it in Peanuts. My mind wasn't, like, I just started it right after finishing Popcorn and you need rest to think, get recharged kind of, to think of a adventure. There were no more adventures and I couldn't make it funny.[3]

It's not enough to just look at things like peanut alligator, trees, and castles. For writing to be really good, it needs action and accompanying details to that action. And it needs to be funny. These concerns are what drive his overarching purpose-- to engage his audience.

Popcorn and Peanuts were not to be the end of the series but another idea for writing temporarily drew his attention and offered Kenny a chance to engage his classmates in a way his more solitary writing could not match.

The Love Book: Kenny Takes Center Stage

Valentine's Day fell on Sunday and Monday morning found Kenny drawing a "love picture" that showed a flower with it's petals coming off with each petal labeled "She loves me" or "She loves me not". Katie happened by and paused at his desk. Brandy, who was sitting next to him, watched him draw. Katie suggested that he make a

series of pictures, with one more petal falling off with each successive page. Kenny replied, "I could call it The Love Book" but added that he didn't think Mrs. Herdecker would let him publish it. Brandy told him he could, reminding him that she had published a picture book earlier in the year as a gift for her first-grade cousin. Kenny wondered if he could share his with the first graders.

On February 16, Kenny told Nancy Herdecker and Rachel of his idea and Nancy responded enthusiastically, suggesting that the three of them brainstorm some extraordinary love relationships to make the book special. Rachel mentioned a cat and mouse relationship and Nancy suggested that the cat could be saying how much it loved the mouse. Kenny countered that a cat loving a mouse wasn't unusual, but having a mouse look up at the cat and say "I love you" WAS unusual. Nancy and Rachel responded enthusiastically to that idea and Kenny was off composing again.

Two days later, Kenny shared the beginnings of The Love Book with the class. He introduced it, saying: "I'm writing a book called The Love Book and Brandy's making a new cover for it." He revealed that the idea started from a picture he was drawing for someone he loved. He held up his first picture of a man and a woman. The woman was a lot larger than the man. The man wore a spiked bracelet. The woman's heart was pierced with an arrow and the man's had a knife stuck in it. He read the word bubbles: "Love her" and "Love him". Then he turned the page and revealed a little boy drawn with the same two people with a caption over the boy: "Love them." The next page was his cat and mouse drawing which he framed like a photograph of the two. He said, "The mouse is going to

say 'love him'. Mrs. Herdecker said to have the cat say 'I love you' but I made the mouse saying it to the cat."

Various classmates responded with several ideas of their own. Katie reiterated her idea of having a flower losing a petal on each successive page and Mandy followed with the idea to have a flower pulling out its petals, saying "I love her, I love her not." Kenny responded, "Yeah. Any ideas for this would really help." After several other comments and questions, Nancy Herdecker commented, "I think it's exciting to see that there are all kinds of writing-- that even a picture can tell a story. Kenny then asked her if he could share it with the first graders and she responded, "We talked about that-- that's certainly a possibility."

In early March, Kenny told me that he regretted that he had not done an article for the newspaper edition that Mandy and Katie edited in January. However, he saw his book as a similar collaborative venture: "They (Mandy and Katie) asked if people wanted to do articles so I'm asking people if they want to do a picture."

He shared its updated version during Share and invited everyone to contribute to The Love Book. He told people to sign their name so that when he shared the book with the first graders (he had obtained permission from the first grade and readiness teachers), he could tell them who did the drawings. Several people presented him with their offerings at the end of the writing period. Many of the drawings bore the distinct signature of their creators in their level of complexity and content.

Classmates began to regularly pause at Kenny's desk during conference time to see what contributions had come in, to drop off new ones, and to guess the creator of those already received. Kenny was in his glory. Everyone contributed. Jonathan, the artist, drew a kangaroo with its baby, the subject of his science report. Then drew another picture that was a mini-drama in which he depicted a mid-air crash of two planes. A man and woman are parachuting from their perspective planes and the woman is yelling "I love you" while the man is says to himself "Oh shoot! Here she comes." Rachel drew a fly buzzing around a garbage can. Brandy drew two houses with faces looking at each other. Gary drew a boy holding a British flag saying "I love England."

The contributions kept coming in. Nancy Herdecker and I contributed, too. She drew a bee hovering over a pot of honey with the word bubble,"Love ya, honey!" and I drew the Man in the Mountain, a well-known natural face on a mountainside in New Hampshire, with the word bubble, "I love you, New Hampshire!"

Many of the drawings had been done on varying size and grades of paper. Nancy gave him carbon paper to trace the drawings that required recopying for the finished book. Sometimes he colored the recopied drawings and other times asked the contributor to do so.

As the drawings continued to arrive on Kenny's desk from members of the class, Kenny began to think of a way to introduce the unique love relationships portrayed. He wrote:

THE LOVE BOOK

It all started when Adam and Eve loved each other. Then people got married. Then there were families of people. The same things

happen with animals, too. But this isn't the same animals, like cat and cat. It's like... well you'll find out for yourself. Oh! I forgot to tell you they're not just animals, too.

March 17. Kenny asked Nancy if he could make an announcement and she told him to shut the lights off to get everyone's attention. Kenny switched off the lights and said with great purpose, "I just want to remind you that today's the last day to turn in your pictures for The Love Book. It will be published by Wednesday (March 23)." He turned the lights back on. Sarah commented, "He sounds like a teacher" to which Kenny replied proudly, "Thank you".

By Share time, Kenny decided to share his almost finished book. (A vacation day and field trip would have caused him to have to wait longer than he wanted.) His classmates laughed and commented as he showed each page. Sean and Gary both had the notion that the final drawing should tie all of the pictures together. Sean suggested a picture of God saying "I love them all" and Gary alternatively suggested a picture of the class saying "We love them all." When Gary asked him, "What gave you the idea for this?" Sean replied, "He told us that before." With pretended exasperation, Kenny replied, "Everybody got your ears open? I loved someone and so I started to write this." His classmates started to guess who that someone was and Kenny reasserted control, using Nancy's often-used phrase, "*It's inappropriate, folks!* I was just thinking about making a newspaper like Katie and Mandy did and then I just started doing this." Nancy added, "It just started to grow into this."

The sense of power Kenny felt over the enterprise, and the validation he received by everyone's willingness to contribute, helped

to sustain his effort, perhaps even more than his interest in the product itself.

Kenny followed this share with ones in the first grade classrooms. Both classes responded enthusiastically. Back in his own room, Nancy asked him to tell how it went and he said, "It was fun because it was amazing that I finished it and was sharing with the first graders." James suggested that he share Popcorn with them, too, and Sarah chimed in, "They'd love it!"

Sarah's comment was imbued with meaning beyond that taken by Kenny. To be sure, the class enjoyed Kenny's writing, and enjoyed contributing to it. But at the same time, it retained a quality reflecting his innocence that set him and his writing a part from the larger group. However, Kenny's unique renderings of texts flourished in this classroom community that honored the individuality of its members.

Conclusions

Kenny returned his attention to writing the third book of his Popcorn/Peanuts series. He called it Donut World. Jonathan dubbed the three books "The Food Series". He continued to use the characters of his real world. Dad, Gary, Mrs. Roy and himself are all participants in his wacky adventure, as well as the entire fourth grade class. Some ideas for Donut World were honed by his classmates during his whole group sharing of Peanuts when Gary's love for donuts was revealed and the suggestion was made to set the next story in outerspace. Kenny also borrowed ideas for Donut World from his classmate, Mike, and credited him as the originator. Mike wrote a piece called Future.

Class (starring all the students of their fourth grade) and had one of their classmates, Kim, collapse and "come alive again" several times in his story, which cracked up the class when he shared it. Kenny, ever-vigilant for what goes over well in shares, had his entire fourth grade class "beam up" to Donut World along with Mrs. Roy, and with every new strange happening, Dad remained baffled: "Dad's confused" is written several times throughout. Getting his entire class involved in his last adventure story made Donut World, for me, an allegory for the class involvement he achieved in creating The Love Book.

The force of social influence on Kenny's fiction writing is very strong and consistent. His writing is a socially-charged activity in both its content and goals. His early writing was influenced by his teachers but as his attention turned to his classmates as audience, his teachers and I served a more supportive role, primarily one of listening to his writing throughout his composing process until his pieces were almost done and ready to share with his classmate audience. His teachers' attention to writing conventions of spelling, punctuation, etc. increased his own attention to these over the year.

Many of his decisions were guided by his classmates' writing, and the success his classmates achieved when they shared their writing: his use of classmates as characters, his use of classmates' literary devices, and his action-driven style of adventures were all features welcomed and applauded by his classmates. Indeed, his move to fiction was engendered by its preponderance in this community, and sustained by their response.

In leaving personal narrative, Kenny faced the challenge of making up "not true" events. His definitions of fiction, true fiction, and true

stories were supported by his interactions with his classmates within the Whole Class Writing Share. His notion of fiction as "not true" was refined over the months of hearing classmates' writing, as he tried to get a handle on how his classmates constructed "a fiction." He frequently asked questions and made comments directed at finding out the degree to which classroom writers worked from their own experiences: "Is this true?", "Did that part ever happen to you?" and "That sounds like it could be true."

As well, writing which was not of the action-adventure genre was held in a contrasting light to what it was he attempted to achieve with his *action.* There were two kinds of actions that people wrote-- the mundane, "walking, scratching the head" kind and the adventure kind-- and it was the latter kind that he chose to write. This is true even for his personal narrative, Family: he wanted it to contain the unusual happenings, such as a family trip and creating a giant spider web in his bedroom. The mundane recordings of family life, suggested by Lin Roy, were never written.

Essentials for his fiction writing were lots of action, details supporting action, and avoidance of the mundane. These were the crowd-pleasing attributes that would bring delight to him and his classmates.

Although The Love Book isn't an action-adventure, it most poignantly revealed Kenny's desire to involve his classmates in whatever he wrote and subsequent to the writing of this piece, many classmates wrote similar theme books.

I wondered to what extent Kenny's perceptions of the decisions he made in his writing were guided by the reactions of his peers to his and others' writing. On March 3, I asked him.

MM: If you were writing a piece and shared it and nobody liked it, would you still write it?
Kenny: Everybody likes my stories.
MM: Yeah, but suppose they didn't.
Kenny: Well if nobody liked it, I still could share it-- put a surprise in there and see did everybody like it-- take out the boring part and put a real big surprise in it and ask if they like it or something.
MM: So you really see people in the classroom as helping you to make your writing better.
Kenny: Mmhmm [nodding, big grin]. I know what not to do and what to do.

By June, Kenny had grown four inches, and completed his second year of writing, and he had learned how to use writing to acquire status in his classroom.

Chapter Notes

[1]Six months later, in March, I approached him with his published copy of The Adventure. I was curious to know if he even recalled the comment and if he could now identify a possible reason for the confusion. I began by saying, "I think I was a little confused here" and began reading the part that confused Cameron earlier in the year. Kenny quickly recognized what I was referring to, saying, "Oh, are you talking about 'What's for breakfast'... and then...'When it was nighttime, the lion was ready?'"

MM: Yes. Can you see why I might have been confused by that?

Kenny: A lot of people were.

MM: Why do you think?

Kenny: Because they didn't understand it. I had to explain it to them. They thought it was nighttime and really they're just having breakfast.

MM: Why do you think people thought it was nighttime?

Kenny: [rereading that part of the text] "So they did. When it was nighttime the lion would be ready." Well, umm, I don't know. I'm not the one that gets confused so I don't know.

Kenny still could recall comments made to him six months earlier. Although he could entertain the possibility of a text-based problem, he was unable to perceive any identifiable problems which might affect his reader. Over the year's course, Kenny made few changes in his writing. Once it was written, it was done. He made the minor changes in drafts that Nancy Herdecker and Lin Roy asked (spelling, grammar, punctuation) but generally was indisposed to looking at the piece of writing as an alterable draft.

[2]Kenny's meaning of *adventure* is not a completely conventional one. For example, Kenny said Kim's writing was full of adventure when she writes a personal narrative about going on a amusement park ride with her mom and dad: "She says, 'Can we go again?' and they say 'NOOO!' As well, *adventure* also describes when Kim and a friend rip off the mattress tags and have a pillow fight "with the feathers flying all over the place". *Adventure* is best defined as any action that is unusual.

[3]Up to the time he produced this evaluation of Popcorn and Peanuts, Kenny's appraisals of his texts were notable for their global, non-text based nature. The first week of school, Kenny chose to read

to his class Cousin, an exposition/narrative piece written the year before. Lin Roy asked him "If you were writing about your cousin now, what would you do differently?" and Kenny replied, "Add on new stuff about him." When Nancy Herdecker followed up: "What else could you do?", he replied, "I could write a new book."

From time to time, Kenny read a piece written either in the third grade or earlier in the fourth grade to me. I often asked him "If you were writing it now, what would you do differently?" His responses were consistently situated outside of the text themselves: for example, "I'd add something if there was more to tell." The question "What do you like about it?" met with comments like "It's long," "It had good pictures" [referring to illustrations done by a friend following the writing of the piece], and "I wrote the letters sorta straight." On one occasion, he cited a part that he especially liked: "I liked this part about the seahorse's enemy-- the sea dragon!" Although this comment refers to content in the text, it was not concerned with appraising the writing itself, but rather on liking the idea of a sea dragon.

However, when he evaluated Popcorn and Peanuts (on February 11), his evaluations were based on considerations of the texts themselves from a frame of action and adventure. February 4, a week before he evaluated Popcorn and Peanuts, he articulated his concern with "putting action in" his writing, articulated what he meant by this phrase, and had distinguished between mundane and adventure varieties (see Page 73). I believe that our extended conversation and shared reference to *action* helped him to adopt this as the frame in which to portray his adventure writing. Finding the language to affix thought is the key to not only conceptualizing something for oneself but also for others (Bruner, 1973; Vygotsky,1962,1978; Sapir,1949). I suspect that our dialogue forged and legitimized a way to talk and think about his writing which he might not have otherwise been disposed to do. (Two months later on April 7, I asked him again to talk about Peanuts and Popcorn and his evaluations were exactly the same as on February 11.)

CHAPTER 5

KATIE

Introduction

Katie was a person with strong values that guided her interactions. She watched out for people's feelings and spoke up if someone's contributions or abilities went unrecognized by others. Her classmates liked and respected her. Nancy Herdecker sometimes asked her to sit with classmates in a writing slump or having an out-of-sorts day to help redirect their energies. She enjoyed meeting with adult visitors who came to learn about how reading and writing were taught in her classroom. She prided herself on doing well academically.

Over the course of the year, I spent a lot of time talking with Katie. One thing that always struck me was her quick response to questions. She seemed to want to give an answer that was ready-made-- the right one-- and was easily flustered by comments or questions I made that persevered around an idea. She seemed resistant to enter a dialogue of exploration. She was masterful at diverting questions that asked her to reflect upon her answers or my comments in more depth. Often her response was a quick "I don't know", leaving me with the firm impression that further exploration would be unwelcome. I perceived a similar approach to her writing. She wrote quickly, with little effort to crafting her words, being less

interested in considering how to make it better than in getting it done.

Katie had been writing from her earliest days of first grade at Stratham Memorial School. She wrote fiction in third grade but the preponderance of her writing had been personal narratives.

Katie perceived personal narrative writing as easier to write than fiction. She could write from event-to-event, setting-to-setting without having to consider characters and plot. These were already "written" in the real life experiences. If a piece started to get too long, she'd find a good place to end it. She felt self-sufficient and derived great satisfaction from personal narrative writing.

In contrast, her attempts at fiction-writing were disappointments. The task demands for fiction were great: creating characters, motives, and plot, all the while trying to write in the style of the books she loved to read. For the first four months of fourth grade, except for two fiction pieces that were begun and quickly abandoned (within a day's effort to each), Katie wrote only personal narratives.

In early February, however, Katie decided to undertake fiction again. Several sources of influence converged on Katie's decision to again attempt fiction. Like Kenny, Katie felt her classmates' pull to fiction. Her friend, Mandy, whose writing she greatly admired, had been writing fiction from the earliest days of fourth grade. And by then so were most of her other classmates. Also, two beloved books with similar themes inspired her to write a story like them.

As she faced the task demands of writing fiction, books, classmates, and her teacher all became crucial resources to her

development as a writer of fiction. Books provided a plot for her and had conscious and unconscious effects on her writing.

She met almost daily with her friend, Mandy, during peer conference time. Initially she met with her just to share her writing and to find out how much each of them had accomplished. But later her purposes changed. As she entered fiction writing, she knew she needed help and figured Mandy could help. Although their pattern of interaction was similar to the general one that was extant in the room-- that of simple turn-taking-- over time, she showed signs of paying closer attention to crafting her words like Mandy did.

Her classmates embraced all of her writing, but when sharing fiction, they offered her help by pointing out the illogical elements, and suggesting ways to make it more realistic. Nancy initiated conferences with Katie regularly during her writing process and called Katie's attention to issues of clarity, incongruities and omissions of ideas within her text, often as a follow-up to what classmates had pointed out to Katie during Whole Class Shares. As well, she sometimes met jointly with Katie and Mandy, which furthered Katie's understanding of the attention required to planning and craft that makes for good fiction writing.

Katie used the classroom writing events differently than Kenny. In addition to consistently using the peer conference time to meet with her friend Mandy (whereas Kenny used this time to write or observe others involved with publishing their writing), she used the Whole Class Share more sparingly than Kenny. She waited until she had the bulk of her piece done before sharing with the class (like

Kenny) but she did not constantly sign-up to share as a means of getting attention or of connecting with classmates.

This chapter begins with a brief sketch of Katie's early year personal narrative writing and the role classmates and her teacher played in it. Then I turn to describing the second half of Katie's school year within which the resources of people and books become critical to her writing development as she faced the challenges of writing fiction.

Personal Narrative Writing

"Write It Straight Out"

From September through December, Katie wrote personal narratives. In these, she recorded the ordinary, the unusual, and triumphant events of her life in as much detail as she could remember. Like Kenny, Katie was comfortable writing about the events of her life. "You just write the story straight out. You can remember what happened and ask your parents, too, if you forget something." She needed only to think of what happened next, write it, and move on. The localized events were strung together to form the narrative whole.

As well, Katie felt no concerns about establishing the characters. "You don't have to create characters in personal stories," she told me, "they're already real." Her primary concern was telling what she and friends or family did, not to developing who they were. This idea held when I perused various personal narratives done by classmates: regardless of whether the characters in personal narrative were known by the classmates, they seldom got described or developed

except incidentally, as revealed through their movements and dialogue.

In one of her earliest personal narratives, Katie told of a particular weekend when her friend Jesse came to stay. It resembles lists, alternately ones of activities and contents (of the basement and of food consumed). With the exception of telling us that she likes playing Barbies we gain little sense for the experience as lived.

> EXCERPT from Me and My Friend Jesse
> We didn't go to bed until eleven oclock pm. and we didn't get to sleep until two tirty a.m. We got up at eight oclock a.m. so we only slept five and a half hours. we were really tired. We had blueberry muffins and honny nut cherios for breakfast. Jesse and I love to play Barbies. So we played Barbies until lunchtime.
>
> Lunch time was at 12:30 p.m. we had tuna, saled, milk, and some ruffel brand potatoes chips. Jesse was going to sleep over two nights. it had already been 1 night. the second day Molly is suposed to slepover. We did that because my sister Kristen (age 6) wanted some body to play with. So at ten trity a.m. Molly came over. Our basement has a rug, tv, barbie house, 2 boxes of barbie stuff, a toy chest, my sister dolls, her kitchen set, her Criket (Criket is a talking doll) criket tapes and a heater is downstairs so it will be warm. We went down stairs to watch Mtv. We saw the videos of White Snake, Europe, Bangles, Madonda, U2, and los lobo. The Jesse and I decided that we should go bike riding around the neighborhood or in other words lollypop lane (that's what my mom calls it) so we got on our bikes. Jesse rode my moms. I rode mine. Molly brought hers and my sister rode hers. We rode around lollypop lane. We rode around for about fourty five minuts. Then it was lunch time. We had hot dogs, ruffle brand potato chips, apple cider, and two pickkels each, except for Jesse who had 4.

When Katie read this to her classmates in the Whole Class Share, their reactions revealed her popularity and their interest in what she

did over a weekend. They wondered how she managed to remember all those details (food and videos consumed).

Katie's major piece of writing, a personal narrative about a family vacation, was one in which she put a lot of time and effort. She revealed her ability to thoroughly describe action. Rather than "listing" the activities of the day, as in Me and My Friend Jesse, we were able to move through her experience with her.

Skiing Vacation Up On the Mountains

Our family was driving up to the mountains for a ski vacation with my cousins. When we got to Waterville Valley it was pitch black. We found the hotel and I saw a van exactly like my cousins van. "Wait a minute, that is my cousins van," I said. We drove up behind it and we saw my uncle John unloading the van, so my dad got out and went over to him. They shook hands.

Meanwhile my sister and I were getting tired of sitting in the car because it was a 2 and 1/2 hour drive up to Waterville Valley. So I jumped out of the car to see Laura, Jay, and Molly, my cousins. When I jumped out my sister jumped out too. We walked over to my cousin's van. The van door was open so we stepped in and my Aunt Jane said, "Hi Katie and Kristen. How are you?" We said, "Fine." Then Molly said, "Katie, Kristen, I'm really glad to see you." Laura was asleep so I went over to her. When she finally woke up Jay had come over and said, "Hi." Then he pounced on me. When Jay pounced on me I fell on Laura and she screamed!

Aunt Jane said that we should get out of the van and go inside to the hotel. As soon as everything was in the lobby we all got up and went into the hotel. We walked into the lobby. I saw a box on the wall and on that box was a blinking light that said "Trouble." Right then and there I knew the power was out....

Katie kept this level of description throughout her narrative and chronicled all the events of the evening in great detail. She recorded the minor difficulties created by the power outage (walking up three

flights of stairs, changing into bathing suits in the hallway where emergency lights were working: "Molly and Kristen changed in the hall first, then me, then Jay, and then finally Laura.") and her evening activities with her cousins (their swim in the indoor pool, dinner, goofing around, watching "Growing Pains" on television "in the living room of 407"). We were brought in close to the experience by her description of their actions and through the dialogue.

EXCERPT (at indoor pool):

I dove down and came up. But when I came up, it was freezing cold. I looked up. I was outside. I got out of the pool and dove into the pool again. I swam under the wall to the inside. I said, "Hey everybody, follow me. I have a surprise for you. Dive under the wall." ...

EXCERPT (in hotel room):

Jay said, "I want to try on your bathing cap." I said, "O.K." When he tried it on he looked like a weirdo. Jay wanted to take it off, but he couldn't so I pulled it off. While I was in the process of doing that I also ripped out a few of his hairs.

A scary event that night lent suspense and excitement to her narrative.

Suddenly at 3:53 A.M. we all heard something like a siren. I jumped out of my sleeping bag and woke up my cousin Jay in the sleeping bag next to me. My parents were grabbing a blanket from the wall bed and Jay and I grabbed all the slippers on the floor.

Then we ran to my aunt's and uncle's room across the hall. Kristen and Molly were crying. We banged on the door until they answered it. Then we said, 'It's a fire alarm!"

We walked fast to the fire exit, but we only found steps. So we walked down the steps. We came to the basement. We pushed the real fire exit but the door was blocked with snow. Kristen and Molly were still crying. I was really scared! About 1/2 hour later the alarm stopped. My Uncle

> John and my dad said, "We're going up to the main floor to the office to see if we can go back to bed.
>
> So they went up to the main floor. Soon they were back and they said, "We can go to our rooms." We went back to our rooms and went to sleep.

Katie decided to publish this narrative long before she had finished it. She had put a lot of time into it and, as she told me, "If it takes a long time to write it, if you work on it for a while, you're not going to just put it in your folder-- you're going to publish it. If it's not too short, you should publish it."

Katie had planned initially to write about the whole week but the piece was getting longer and longer and the idea of publishing it (which entailed editing and rewriting it) was daunting. She had begun to write about the early morning events of the following day and decided to end her narrative with a smaller incident but one that took on more significance given the night before. She brought a sense of closure to her piece by stepping out of the experience and commenting about the trip.

> In the morning everybody was tired and everybody was talking about the fire alarm. We all had breakfast and then Jay said, "Katie do you want to go down to the Arcade Room?" "Sure!" I said. Jay and I got dressed and went down to the Arcade Room. Meanwhile, upstairs the grownups were making breakfast for themselves. They had scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, and Danish. Then the toast burned and smoke was coming out of the toaster. Then the smoke detector went off. My mom and my Aunt Jane jumped up. They were fanning the smoke when Jay and I came up. We asked, "What's going on?" They told us the story. And to this day we will NEVER forget that week!!

She kept the title, even though skiing and the rest of the vacation week were not part of the narrative. Katie shared this draft with

the class. At the time, it was almost finished. Their comments were primarily ones of acknowledging her experience.

> Mike: I liked it a lot. I've been to Waterville Valley, too.
> Kenny: I think you must have had a lot of fun there.
> Sarah: I liked the jacuzzi starting to bubble.
> Shayna: In our new house, we might have a jacuzzi.
> Mike: That must have been some place with the jacuzzi and swimming pool. You dove down under a wall to the outside?

Nancy's comments attended to the text as written. She commented to Katie about her sense of humor (revealed in her choice to tell about pulling off the bathing cap from her cousin's head), her choice of words ("But to his surprise"--not represented in excerpts here) and her success in "sequencing the events" ("you wrote everything just like it happen").

When she shared it again with the whole class, after it was published, they recognized her for the detailed description and the effort she put into it, and her teachers acknowledged the eventfulness of the trip.

> Keith: I thought you did a good job of putting in a lot of details.
> Katie: Thanks. Mike?
> Mike: I really liked it 'cause it took so long-- I LOVE that story! It took a long time to write it.
> Katie: When we took off from home, we hit a traffic jam in Stratham.
> Gary: We [his family] had the same problem-- we were stopped dead in the road while a long trail of military trucks was going by. We were coming into Stratham and you were going out.
> Kenny: I liked the part about the pool wall. Was it true?
> Katie: Yes.
> Kristen: I liked the part when you took off the swimming cap and some of his hair was pulled out.

Cameron: I liked the story.
Lin Roy: There were catastrophes in this trip-- what a start for a trip!
Nancy: This trip was quite an adventure! It must have been scary when the fire alarm went off in the motel-- that's never happened to me.
Lin Roy: You stayed at the door until you got it open?
Katie: We sat on the steps-- freezing.
Sean: Did you find out what the fire was?
Katie: Someone had put a whole bag of wood chips in the fire instead of just a few and so it started a bunch of smoke and set off the fire alarm.

These comments were typical of the kinds made to Katie when she shared her personal narratives. Her classmates acknowledged her writing strengths directly and globally (e.g.,"You put in a lot of details") and sometimes indirectly by telling what the text did for them as a reader (e.g., "I could picture it"). As well, they validated her decisions to publish. Yet the most salient quality of their comments was their attention to the experience represented.

In contrast, Nancy's comments were typically more specific ones about lines of text that she especially liked for both their expressiveness and their message. Nancy consistently directed Katie to the text as written in addition to the text as lived.

It's hard to know the cumulative effects her audience's comments had on Katie. I do know that months after finishing pieces, she could recall comments made to her. For example, several months after completing the ski trip piece, she remembered: "They liked my details, like, I didn't just say 'We went swimming and then ate dinner'--STOP-- I said more.. .and that I put a lot of effort into it, and Mrs. Herdecker commented on how I put it in sensible order."

Certainly she felt favorably reviewed. Her classmates and teachers enthusiastically embraced her texts and the experiences within.

During Katie's four months of writing personal narratives, I observed only one incidence in which a student's comment had a direct effect on her writing. That comment was made while writing at her desk. Katie had been participating on a local swim team for several months and frequently brought in her medals to show the class. After an especially challenging two-day meet, Katie decided to write about the experience. At that juncture, Katie had barely begun her narrative about her weekend:

> Exeter Swim Team
> E.S.T. is great and I love swimming. E.S.T. stands for Exeter Swim Team. Now let's get to the story.

As she sat at her cluster of desks, she casually talked with those around her and when she told about her practice schedule and events, Rachel remarked about how hard she worked. Rachel's response seemed to develop a need in Katie to let all her classmates know just how much work she put into the swim team. Directly following this conversation, Katie continued to write, but rather than "get[ting] to the story," she expanded her background information, turning the first part of her narrative piece to exposition. She began by describing the various kinds of swim teams and naming her coaches. This was followed by the assertion that being on a swim team was "very hard work", which she supported with evidence of her substantial practice schedule and a long list of the various swimming styles in which she competed.

During the four months of writing personal narratives, Katie found few challenges to her writing. Even in conferences with Nancy, she was helped with only minor editing (spelling, punctuation, word changes). However, as Katie turned to fiction-writing, Nancy found greater need to intervene in Katie's writing process, as did her classmates.

Fiction Writing Influences

Fiction Reading: Reading Like A Reader

Katie wrote some fiction in third grade but, as she turned her attention to writing fiction in her fourth year, she told me, "I never REALLY tried to write fiction before." Her statement, taken in the context of conversation about reading fiction, suggested a standard of writing fiction that Katie was developing in fourth grade.

Katie knew fiction. She had read about thirty books by mid-year, most of which were fiction. After a weekend in which she read three books, she wrote in her reading journal to Nancy Herdecker: "I think I'm book crazy." Another entry began: "I finished 2 more books! I read two books in four hours! I couldn't believe it!" Katie enjoyed the "living-through" feeling of reading, and often found herself unable to pull herself away from a book. She often felt sad when she finished which sometimes lead her to reread books as many as four times.

Most of the books Katie read had characters of her own age situated in family, school, camp settings like those written by Judy Blume and Beverly Cleary. But she also read books she considered challenges: Charlotte Sometimes (Penelope Farmer), Little Women

(Louisa May Alcott), The Secret Garden (Frances Hodgson Burnett), and Nothing is Impossible: The Story of Beatrix Potter (Dorothy Aldis).

Two of her favorite authors were Judy Blume and Beverly Cleary. "Judy Blume writes books I like to read. Her characters are interesting." In the third and fourth grades, Katie consumed Beverly Cleary's Ramona books, reading most of them twice. "Beverly Cleary doesn't write about a lot of different things. She writes, like, Ramona books so I know the characters. Different authors have different ways of writing. She puts it like I can understand it. It's clear-- she doesn't use hard words. Some authors use harder words than others and you might not know what they mean." Their subject matter was what most attracted Katie to them: "They both write about little girls-- people my age. They're [the characters] funny and always getting in trouble."

Katie cared about the characters in the books she read. She was aware that the authors she read differed from most of the authors in her classroom in their attention to characters: "I think more younger authors--like sixth graders and people in our class don't put, they don't tell about the characters. They just have the things going on in the story-- flying planes and landing in fields." Her reading was affecting her evaluation of the action-adventure writers in her class, and forming her own expectations of good fiction-writing.

I wanted to know how Katie thought reading was helping her writing. I asked, "You said authors write differently-- do you think reading them helps you to write at all?" Katie nodded, "I try to write like them, making stories more exciting 'cause that's what I like, and

making something funny." Although Katie read and appreciated books that were sad, for example, Sadako and the 1000 Paper Cranes (Eleanor Coerr), about a young girl dying of cancer from nuclear fallout at Hiroshima, the subject matter she chose to write about was nearer to her own experience and concerns. She wanted to write stories with plots and characters which were typical in the pre-adolescent literature that she read.

Both of her fiction pieces that I will discuss held to a particular basic story structure described by Stein and Trabasso (1982) that is common among children and in the pre-adolescent literature Katie read: *initiating event* (some event that affects the main character), *internal response* (the character's goal-oriented response to the initiating event), *attempt* to achieve the goal, *consequence* of the attempt, and *reaction* (the character's response to what occured).

Although Katie was aware of borrowing plot from books to incorporate in her fiction, she read without conscious attention to the way authors construct their texts or even their crafted words. Using examples from one of the books she had read, I asked her if she noticed the words authors use to describe how a person is talking (e.g., "Jessica said indignantly," "chill in her voice") or behaving (e.g., "Elizabeth put her arm around her friend and said, "We can talk more later, OK?," "lowered her eyes"). She replied, "I don't notice things like that unless there's a word I don't know. " "But do you ever think about these kinds of things to help you when you're writing?" I asked. Katie replied, "I don't think so." However, her fiction did reveal the influence of books on her dialogue; her dialogue carried the tone and style of the Sweet Valley Twins series books she read

constantly. When I asked her if she tried to write dialogue like the books, she said she liked to make dialogue "funny and exciting" but she didn't think she tried to write it like the books. I think she was picking up on it without awareness.

She read like a reader, not a writer-- an outsider to the text as written but insider to the text as world (Calkins, 1986; Atwell, 1987). Serious apprentices, insiders to any art form, cannot help but stand back from the object or event as experienced and think about the decisions the person made in creation (John-Steiner, 1985). But the ability to do so takes a great deal of knowledge and experience in order to be in the position to take such a stance. Katie's propensity towards rereading favorite books apparently was not enough.

Katie was encouraged by Nancy to take an insider's stance to reading. In her reading journal, when Nancy asked Katie questions about the ways an author wrote, she most commonly supplied answers like: "The writing just interested me because I liked it," "I like the writing because it tells all about the story," "The lead-in brought me to the story because it sounded good (interesting)" and "Just as Long as We're Together had different moods like sad, happy, emberssd, mad." Probed further, Katie cited "great discription of the charters" (complete with a long physical description of a character), "She writes great dialog" and "I liked it because it showed so many feelings".

One day I paused at Katie's desk as she was looking at Nancy's journal entry to her. In Katie's entry to Nancy, she had written that the mystery she read "was exciting." In Nancy's entry back to her, she asked her, "How did the author make the mystery exciting?"

Katie wrote back: "They make it interesting." When I read that, I said, "Interesting could be a book about how the pyramids of Egypt were constructed but that doesn't necessarily make it exciting. How did the author make it exciting?" Katie replied instantly, "I don't know" and changed the subject.

In my conversations with Katie about books, questions such as those above yielded a similar view of her. She seemed unable to get inside the text as a writer. She could point to a character description she liked, a humorous passage, or a place where the character was sad, but her analysis ended there. "I don't pay attention to that kind of thing. I just read the story. I just pay attention to what's going on." She told me that she only thought about these sorts of things when Nancy or I asked her to think about them.

Classroom Authors Build Awareness of Fiction Writers' Craft

What was unnatural to Katie as a reader of books changed as a writer among writers in her classroom. There she observed fellow writers' processes and heard their texts daily. The distant, abstract author, although important for Katie's formation of plot and standards of writing, did little to bring her to know the process these authors went through to produce their texts. This was not the case in her classroom where direct experience observing writers at work and hearing them talk about the task of writing in Shares was commonplace.

She knew that her colleagues' fiction pieces, like her own, were constructed as they wrote with loose story lines which could take unexpected turns not anticipated by the writer when they first set out to write. But they still had to plan. She had heard them in

Shares asking for ideas from their colleagues about what should happen next and had given more than a few ideas to them over the months. She had come to the notion that you had to do more planning in fiction than personal narrative writing.

From James talking about his mystery writing in Share, she came to see an even greater amount of planning was necessary to write mysteries. Although she read mystery stories (mostly from the Nancy Drew series) she did not want to attempt to write them.

> I wouldn't like writing mystery stories 'cause you have to make sure you have every single thing figured out...well, not everything but you have to have in your head what's going to happen before you start writing-- how are they going to find out, and what's actually going to be in the story. I noticed when James was writing his mystery he's having a lot of trouble with it because he has to make sure they find one clue before they actually go on to the next clue.

Her associations with peers, particularly as they formally addressed questions about their writing process in Whole Class Share, gave her an insider's perspective on writing processes that just reading a Nancy Drew mystery did not. We could argue with Katie's distinctions along planning lines between personal narrative, fiction and mystery fiction but the influences of her colleagues on her conceptualizations are undeniable.

From another colleague, Juanita, Katie took greater notice of the crafted word than she did when she read. "Juanita doesn't use the same old words. She uses unusual words like 'frantically'. There are also examples from Whole Class Shares where she complimented peers on their choice of words although this was relatively unusual.

Katie commented often about a peer's ability to "put a lot of ideas together," referring to their efficacy in creating a cohesive story. Likewise, when a peer failed to create a text that was story-like, she made comments such as "Usually you can tell when someone has written the end of the story but not this one" to me privately, or "you maybe should try to put more ideas into it, tell more about what happens" to the writer during Whole Class Shares.

As revealed in the previous section, Katie was aware that young authors tend to produce fiction that is action- rather than character-driven: "I think more younger authors-- like sixth graders and people in our class-- don't put, they don't tell about the characters. They just have the things going on in the story-- flying planes and landing in fields."

There was one author in Katie's class whose writing she paid particular attention to: Mandy. On most days, during conference time, Katie and Mandy met to read their latest installments of writing. Each was a good listener for the other. Their implicit purposes, revealed through comments Katie made to me and my direct observations of their conferences, were to read and hear what had been written for the pleasure of it and, at least for Katie, to "find out how much had been written that day." Comments were fresh and unfiltered and generally brief: "I like it", "It's going good", "I like 'We won Megabucks!'" Witness:

> January 28. Ongoing conference, Kelly and Mandy. Mandy starts to preface what she was about to read by reminding Katie about what she read to her yesterday.
> Mandy: See in the beginning, everything's packed except...

Katie: Crispy Critters (cereal)
Mandy: Yeah, and she had to eat 'em plain.
Katie: Yuk
Mandy reads a part she read yesterday and the new.
Katie: I like "We won Megabucks!" (said with expression)

Mandy was an exceptional writer and from the earliest days of fourth grade, wrote fiction like those Katie liked to read. There was no one else who wrote like her, and Katie knew it. Katie respected her writing because she put character center stage in her writing, and described her as having "a lot of creativity so she has a lot of creative ideas." Mandy had extraordinary control over her writing. Her first attempts at a story were often character sketches with attention to trying out the main character in a situation and in relation to other characters. Sketches such as the following were frequently written and then tucked into her writing folder, having served their purpose. Parts of them were pulled out and used as she needed them.

> "Yeah-hoooo!" yelled uncle Sam. You see I just moved here about 2 days ago. My moms pregnant so Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam are helping us unpack. Uncle Sams a big guy who loves to watch football games on television. He's the loud type. He smokes cigars an awful lot. He reminds me of a 300 pound
> couch potato. Then there's aunt Rose... she smells of lavender and always wears flowered dresses. She's the kind of person who can sit and sew for hours.

Main characters' names, ages and siblings changed, and their circumstances, within these sketches until she found the combinations she wanted.

When Mandy described a character, there were reasons for doing so. An elaborate description of the main character's attire was

purposeful: to contrast her attire with that of others attending a dance, and to serve a grander purpose: to support the main character's difficult transition to Nebraska. The description of Aunt Rose and Uncle Sam above (whose name was later changed to Uncle Robert) further served to build her main character's dissatisfaction with her family's move. Uncle Robert, being "the loud type," served as a source of embarassment as the main character meets the next door neighbor for the first time, and the neighbor's reaction to him reveals her character.

> I decided to go outside to get away from all the commotion. Everything was going wrong. There was no escaping it. I was the new kid. I went outside. It was very quiet. The crickets were chirping and the air smelled so fresh. I sat down on the front steps. It was chilly but not cold enough for a jacket.
>
> There stood a girl. She looked about my age. "Hi," she said shyly.
>
> "Hi. What's your name?" I asked curiously.
>
> "Cathy."
>
> "Wow," I said excitedly, "my name's Kathryn!" We stood there staring at each other. The silence was terrible!
>
> "How old are you?" I asked, breaking the silence. She looked relieved when I asked her. She answered.
>
> "Me, too!" I exclaimed. "Oh look! The Big Dipper!" We stared until until our necks hurt. There was another uncomfortable silence.
>
> "Yeeeee-hoooo!" yelled Uncle Robert from inside.
>
> "Somebody's watching the baseball game," said Cathy.
>
> I could tell I would like her.

This excerpt also reveals Mandy's attention to the context in which interactions among characters take place. She revealed the main character's thoughts and feelings directly (sometimes with the

use of simile: e.g., "I thought of hiding like a new born puppy when you first bring him home") and through her interactions with others.

Katie told me: "Mandy had about five different stories and she got them all into one story, parts of different stories-- the beginnings and the ends and stuff-- and then she just got them all together in one story." Interestingly, although Katie told me that Mandy paid attention to the characters in her story, Katie didn't seem to recognize Mandy's initial character sketches as primarily a way to find out who the characters would be before developing a story line. She referred to the character sketches as "parts of different stories."

Katie didn't understand Mandy's writing processes, but she was aware of some of the differences between hers and Mandy's: "Mandy will say, 'I don't really have a title yet' and I don't get that." She continued (quoted in a previous section), "I like to think up titles 'cause then you have something to go by. You really don't know what you're writing about until you get the title." Katie's priority to know what's going to happen in the story contrasts her more action-driven writing process to Mandy's character-driven one. Mandy needed to sketch characters to know them well enough so that their personalities, motives, etc. can guide their reactions to the events Mandy placed them in. In contrast, Katie needed a title, imbued with some sense of plot. Although she recognized the central importance of characters to good fiction, she lacked experience creating and developing characters. Her concern for character was overshadowed by her typical personal narrative writing process of writing from event to event. Katie's and Mandy's different points of entry to writing fiction (i.e., plot vs. character, respectively) reflected their

relative experiences working in fiction (Graves, 1989; Hansen, 1991). Katie's level of development in fiction writing did not allow her to understand Mandy's writing processes.

However, Katie did notice Mandy's expressive uses of language. "I like how she explains things-- like when she said the aunt wears flowered dresses and her uncle is the loudtype." Looking at another piece of Mandy's writing, she noted that

> Mandy puts things in different words, like 'fog as thick as pea soup' and 'you could hear the great low bellow of the foghorn'. It's different. I wouldn't think of ideas like that. 'He knew there was a ship ahead, he could feel it in his blood...' and 'We must plan something to save our souls'. She describes the boat and the fog horn. I liked that the fog was thick as pea soup. You can really picture it and you know when you think of pea soup with all this mushy stuff in it, you probably think it's pretty thick and you can really see it... and [hear] 'the great low bellow of the foghorn.

I asked her if she ever described something in terms of something else, like Mandy did with fog to pea soup, and she replied "no." My question to her created unintentionally a comparison between her writing and Mandy's that would stick with her.

Mandy's writing did finally influence decisions Katie made in her writing. Several social influences were intersecting to call Katie's attention to Mandy's craft. Katie heard Mandy's writing all the time, and as I have described, Katie noticed Mandy's attention to expressiveness. Katie also heard the accolades that Mandy won from their classmates in Whole Class Shares; her careful selection of words to describe actions, feelings, characters, and environment were always part of the comments she received when she shared. Further,

Katie's attention to these concerns were also present in interactions she had with Mandy in the company of Nancy. When Nancy sought out one or the other girl for an update on their writing during conference time, they usually were together and she encouraged one or the other to remain. Both girls heard the strengths Nancy saw in each other's writing in the more intimate, sustained context of the teacher-student conference.

Witness this conference.

> February 19. Mandy has just finished reading her finished story.
> Attending: Nancy, Mandy, Katie, and I
>
> Katie: Wow.
> Nancy: I stopped writing down things [I liked about the story.] I loved you use of actions-- eating crispy critters without milk on moving day. I just knew from that that the day was going to be terrible. And then after the move, when she's eating her cereal, she's eating it with milk and I just knew that things were working out for her.
> Katie: And then the next day they were eating eggs and toast.
> Nancy: Yes. Also you had that incredible description of her chewing her nails-- "I chomped off a nail and added it to my pile". And it was hilarious when the mom was thinking the thirteen year old was a boy when it was actually a dog!
> Katie: I like how she said she couldn't go to the bathroom.
> Nancy: There's something that I haven't talked about much, but it's plot. Do you know what I mean by plot?
> Katie: Where it takes place?
> Nancy: Well, it's kind of the plan. You [addressing Mandy] set up all these plans and carried them all out. You solved all of them, you didn't leave anything unresolved. It all tied together. You must

be pleased with it, are you? [Mandy nods] What's one of your favorite parts?

Mandy: I really like when the thirteen year-old turns out to be a golden retriever.

Nancy: [laughs] That was really a twist, wasn't it.

Mandy: I wrote a description of each of the characters. [reads it]

MM: When did you write the descriptions?

Mandy: After I finished the story.

Nancy: Where'd you get the idea?

Mandy: From James' mystery

Katie: I liked it [referring to the descriptions.] It explained things, like "Kathy never comes down to earth."

Nancy: The descriptions come through in the story-- you didn't really need the descriptions. They come through.

Mandy: I don't know what to do with the character descriptions. Should I put it in the end or the beginning?

Katie: I liked it at the end.

Mandy: I think I'll put it at the beginning and then have pictures of them at the end.

Nancy: Like a play... yeah. That makes sense to me. Sounds like you've solved the problem for yourself.

There was much for Katie to gain from sitting in on these conferences by way of hearing Nancy's expressed values of crafting (e.g., show-not-tell), plot and character description. And Nancy gained knowledge of Katie, as well. Katie revealed that "plot" was not a word in her vocabulary, and as Nancy said, it wasn't something she had talked about much with the class (although she did later in the year). As Katie started to write fiction, her comment about plot and suggestion to Mandy to put the character description at the end of her story (where it makes little sense) served to inform Nancy. As Katie entered fiction-writing, her need to attend to character and plot

was more salient to her, and was reinforced in interactions with Nancy and Mandy.

In the next section, I will discuss Katie's writing as she turned her attention to writing fiction, and reveal the direct influences of her book reading, of Mandy and other classmates, and Nancy and me.

Katie's Fiction Writing

Katie perceived fiction writing as a challenge and as a qualitatively different writing process from personal narrative: "With fiction, you have to think of ideas that could happen, put them in order that makes sense. You don't put it straight down-- what happened-- like with personal narrative." Rather than relying on the given, Katie was aware that fiction requires the generation and ordering of ideas. As well, she wanted the story to be realistic,"ideas that could happen," which is what she liked to read.

When Katie got ideas for stories, they were global, bare-bone structures from the books she read. In late February, Katie told me that she was at home one day and started getting "all these ideas about a character, Patty" and so she wrote down "Patty's new dress, the lucky charm, a new friend, trouble at school." Initially I thought these were chapter titles for one story but Katie corrected me, "No, they're all new stories." Later, I recognized each of these titles as themes contained in the various Sweet Valley Twins stories that she had read. Thus, each of the titles was imbued with a story frame from her books. As she put it: "I like to think up titles 'cause then you have something to go by. You really don't know what you're writing about until you get the title."

Yet, there is still the vast empty page to fill with words that tell a story and what goes on the page determines, to an extent, what is to come. She would get a good title and then feel daunted: "I think of a good title but then I really don't know what to write about it so I write ideas, just ideas, and try to put them all together."

Katie started with the global plot plan and constructed the local plans later. This was similar to her writing of personal narratives: she started with a global plan (telling all about her weekend, skiing vacation, weekend swim meet) and then recorded the specific events within. But in fiction, the local plans had to be created. She began her fiction pieces without a clear vision of how the local plan on which her immediate attention was centered would fit the narrative whole.

Although Katie and Mandy already shared their individual writing almost daily, creating a newspaper seemed to further cement their bond. During the month of January, Katie and Mandy made a newspaper edition called The Fourth Grade Herald. They asked people in the class to contribute to it. Thirteen of the eighteen got involved in composing and illustrating the various columns. The edition included book and movie reviews, professional hockey team standings, interviews with in-class hockey fan and an animal lover, science news, want ads, a comic strip and fortunes told by wrist measurement! Katie and Mandy oversaw its progress and elicited the best handwriters in the room to rewrite pages into final copy. Nancy was impressed by their efficiency in getting it put together and she made copies for the entire class.

As the newspaper was finished, Mandy was anxious to get back to writing fiction. And Katie decided she wanted to attempt to write fiction as well. For several months, fiction had been the predominant form of writing in the class.

Katie was one of those concerned about the Young Authors Writing Contest, a district-wide contest in which one student from each grade at each school was chosen to represent their school at a writing conference. This year, she wanted not only to enter more than one piece, but she wanted to win. Katie was well aware that Mandy was a two-time winner (she won in second and third grade). "I like how she writes. She can give me ways to improve. She won Young Authors [writing contest] so she might be able to help me. I'd sorta like to win this year." Katie was planning to enter her Skiing Vacation Up On the Mountain piece but wanted also to enter a piece of fiction.

Katie's First Fiction

In early February, Katie had just finished reading Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade (Barthe DeClements). Within the story, one of the main characters was failing math and had to get a tutor, and in the end she gets a good grade. She had read another book earlier in the year, The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates (Susan Shreve), about a boy who flunked third grade but triumphs with the help of a kindly tutor. She loved both books and was inspired to try to write a story of the same theme and plot.

> An idea popped in my head and I thought maybe I should try it. I got the idea to do a story about a girl who

> gets all F's on her report card and has to get a tutor... Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade is about a girl who's flunking math and it gave me the idea for like a girl could be flunking different subjects.... Flunking of Joshua T. Bates, it was really, really good, too. It was about a boy in third grade, he stayed back in third grade. He couldn't read. And the feelings with it-- it really told how he felt... And so hopefully my book will be a good book, too.

Writing a book like those portended a good outcome for her efforts.

Mandy was at the same time beginning to write a new fiction piece, and was fiddling with who the main character would be. She began, "Hi! My name is..." and Katie decided to do likewise. Unlike Mandy, though, Katie was not trying out her characters. She already had her abstract plan about what the piece would be about. She just needed to get started. She valued physical descriptions of characters and so began with a primarily outer description of the main character and her friend. I noticed Katie's copy of Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade was on her desk. On the cover was a bunch of girls trying on makeup.

Fifth Grade Failure

Introduction

> Hi! My name is Kristy. I'm 11 and in fifth grade. I'm pretty and poplar and I usually love school. I have long black hair about 2 feet long. I always try to sneak on make up (most of the time). Jacquie has blond hair. It's about 2 feet long too. She's pretty and poplar too. She also trys to sneak on make up.

When she shared this start with Mandy at conference time, Mandy suggested: "Maybe you should put more exciting things in it." Katie knew the meaning behind such "positively"-framed comments from Nancy's discussions about how to make comments to classmates

that aren't hurtful. The implicit message carried in her statement was that it was boring.

When I approached Katie a little later, she said, "I think I won't finish it 'cause every other time I've written fiction, it just doesn't turn out." She eluded further questions and I was left remembering what she had told me some time before: "If it hasn't happened to me, it's messed up", referring to the ease of writing personal narrative over fiction.

The next day, she met with Nancy Herdecker for a status report and shared her beginning and her idea of writing about Kristy's trouble in school. Apparently, the conference (which I did not observe) and perhaps the new day brought new encouragement. When I asked her how the writing was going, she said, "Good. I have lots of ideas."

> Chapter 1
> First Day of School
>
> It was the first day of school. I was so nervous. It wasn't that I didn't know where to go or have any friends because I have a lot of friends. It was that I had gotten Mr. Sukey. He was the Hardest teacher in the whole school. My best friend Jacquie Lowe was walking to the classroom with me because she had Mr. Sukey too. The only thing was that Jacquie wasn't nervous at all. We walked into the classroom. Everybody stopped talking. I wondered if it was me but all I had on was a Guess Jean skirt, a peach Forenza sweater, peach socks, white slip-on shoes from Sodapops, and a Guess Jean jacket. I walked to an empty seat and sat down. Jacquie sat next to me.

I noticed that Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade began with a scene in which fifth graders were sitting in their classroom.

Excerpt from Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade (page 4)

> I had just started my new paragraph when the classroom door opened and a woman and a fat blond girl walked in. ...Elsie's mother leaned over her and tried to talk quietly to Mrs. Hanson. We were all staring silently, though, and heard every word.

Katie had tried to use similar ideas, and having decided to use the idea of entering to silent stares, she had to write something to address their reaction. The description of what the character, Kristy, wore described exactly what Katie wore that day as she wrote. Given her value on physical description, she figured this was a place to put it. The result didn't make sense. This instance of her lack of attention to cause-and-effect relations was the first of many such instances in her fiction-writing.

When Nancy conferred with Katie, she wondered about the necessity of the introduction. She asked Katie if the information contained in the introduction could be embedded in the story and remarked how much she liked the way Chapter One began setting up the story and that it seemed to her to be a good place to begin her piece. Nancy's comments, like Mandy's, were interpreted to mean that the introductory description didn't fit, and she decided to omit the introduction.

As Katie and Nancy continued to read, Nancy expressed confusion about what explained the hush over the classroom, explaining that it seemed unlikely to her that the kids would stop talking just because of what Kristy was wearing because she wouldn't stick out given that the outfit was what kids would wear. She asked Katie, "Why would everybody stop talking just to look at them?" Katie said she didn't know. Mandy had been sitting nearby, taking in the conversation.

She walked up and said, "Excuse me for interrupting but I have an idea. Maybe they stopped talking because somebody else was there, too." Sean, also sitting nearby, piped up, "Yeah, it could be Mr. Sukey behind them!" Katie thought that was a great idea and so did Nancy and Mandy. Katie was back in business. With Nancy at her side, she made some changes.

> We walked into the classroom. Everybody stopped talking immediately. I wondered if it was me. But as I turned around there stood Mr. Sukey. I walked to an empty seat and sat down. Jacquie sat next to me.

I don't know if Katie, on reflection, perceived problems with her text before meeting with her teacher, but she certainly had reasons for the changes when I talked with her later. Referring to the introduction, she said, "It's mostly about what Kristy and Jacquie do and we didn't think it was really important 'cause all the story's really about is school. And it talks about Jacquie but they [the readers] don't know who Jacquie is so we just decided to take that part out." And to explaining the class hush, she said, "The part 'I wondered if it was me but all I had on was a Guess Jean skirt', and on and on-- it didn't go with why the class got quiet. We changed it because it was just like, Mrs. Herdecker goes, "Everybody stopped talking immediately" and she didn't know why everybody stopped talking and I couldn't think of a reason." She further told me that she wanted the description in her story but didn't know where to put it and that "We just really want to try to get this published and I really don't want to write it all over again." (Given that this was a

beginning draft, her latter comment didn't make sense because she could have easily inserted the description.)

Nancy and I both became very aware of how tenuous Katie's sense of control was as she faced the challenge of creating a fiction piece. Although she held an abstract plan of a story from the books she read, the concrete task of creating the story was challenging her.

When I shared with Nancy what Katie said to me, Nancy was intrigued:

> What absolutely fascinates me is that when I was chatting with her, I thought she came to the conclusion that it didn't have much to do with the story but in her mind, she values that description. That didn't come across to me [in the conference]. ...Once Sean popped up about Mr. Sukey, then all that stuff really became unimportant to have in that paragraph-- which she gave her usual "yeah, okay, yeah" response to my comments. And throughout the conference, I'd ask at various places if there was some place to fit that description in.

Noting the "We" (She and Nancy) that Katie referred to in talking about the changes she made, Nancy was concerned that Katie might be "sensing or feeling that I'm taking over that piece. ...She needs direction and I have no problem giving her that-- that's what I'm here for-- I just don't want her to feel dejected."

Nancy was aware of Katie's lack of control over her fiction-writing. She also knew Katie's standards for fiction did not match what she was currently able to do in her fiction writing. Nancy wanted to help Katie but at the same time not overload her with changes to make. She was also concerned that Katie would feel that she was taking over the piece. She held strongly to the position that she was teaching the child, not trying to create a showcase piece of

writing. With more experience writing fiction, she believed Katie would develop control. With the assistance of her teacher and colleagues, she was led to changes that she could understand and to a solution (i.e., the students stopped talking because of Mr. Sukey) that she had not been able to come to.

Katie continued to write and further revealed her ability to write from within a character's thoughts and feelings. In her next chapter, she again borrowed a scene from Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade in which the character got her report card.

> ...It was March and about that time again. I was worried. I knew I couldn't even get a C in arithmetic because of fractions... I'd never had a bad report card before... When I got called up to her desk, I was scared but still hoping for a miracle. I didn't get a miracle. I got a D minus. Two A's, three B's, and a lousy D minus. Diane wrote a note asking me what I got. (47)

Katie used the above to guide the creation of her own scene and succeeded in making it uniquely her own. In this instance of borrowing a scene from the book, the strategy worked.

> Chapter 2
> Report Card Time!
>
> 8 weeks had passed quickly. It was about 2:54. 6 more minutes until the bell!
> "Now," said Mr. Sukey.
> "Uh oh" I said to myself.
> "For the report cards." Mr. Sukey said.
>
> Of course Mr. Sukey goes in alphabetical order and my name is Kristy Bohanski so I was second. He gave me my report card. I opened it slowly and looked at it. I almost died. I had 4 F's, 5 D's, 4 C's, and 1 B- (that was in penmanship!)

In addition to relying on a book to help set a scene for her, she was able to rely on her ability to effectively detail action which was a prominent feature of her personal narrative writing.

Her dialogue bore the mark of her fiction-reading. Although she didn't consciously try to write dialogue like the books she read, the characters' clipped remarks and the overall emotional tone of her dialogue reflected the influence of books, which she further demonstrated in the following chapter.

Chapter 3
Uh Oh My Parents

When I got home I threw my report card on the living room tabel, ran up to my room, and slamed my door. My phone rang. It was Jacquie. She said, "I can't believe it. I got 13 A's and 1 A-!"
"Wow!" I said.
"What did you get?" asked Jacquie.
"Well, I got 4 F's, 5 D's, 4 C's and 1B-!"
"Wow!" said Jacquie. "How did you get those grades?"
"I don't know. All I know is I have to be toutered."
"What!" said Jacquie.
"I have to be toutered." I said.
"When?" asked Jacquie.
"Every day" I said.
"Every day!"
"Yep," I said.
"KRISTY!" mom yelled.
"I have to go Jacquie, bye!" I ran down the stairs.
"Kristy."
"Yes, Mom."
"Your sister Carolyn got her report card. Where's yours?"
"Ah...."
"Bills, bills, and more bills. I'd like to see something that is going down!"
"Hi, dad. I have something that is going down!"
"What!" said dad.
"Well...see it's my report card."
"Your what!" My dad was very angry.

"My report card."
"Go get it please, young lady!"
"O.K." I said. I ran to the living room, grabbed my report card and brought it to my dad.
"4 F's, 5 D's, 4 C's and one B-!"
"At least I got a B-!" I said.
"I'm sorry Kristy, but you're going to have to be grounded."
"GROUNDED!" This was the worst day of my life.

Katie met again with Nancy. Nancy delighted at the humor Katie put in the dialogue and its realistic tone. She also directed Katie to the cause-and-effect incongruities. She questioned Katie about how it was that Kristy could be so surprised at her bad grades. Wouldn't she have some idea? Did she perhaps talk with the teacher or a parent before her report card grades came out? Katie commented that she would have had grades from tests that would have clued her in. Nancy suggested she add that information to make it more realistic. Katie added two sentences to Chapter 2 (italicized):

> Eight weeks had passed quickly. *It was no surprise that I had flunked almost every test that Mr. Sukey gave us.*
>
> It was about 2:54. Six more minutes until the bell!
>
> ...
>
> He gave me my report card. I opened it slowly and looked at it. I almost died. *I knew it was coming but I never thought it would really happen to me.* I had 4 F's, 5 D's, 4 C's, and 1 B- (that was in penmanship!)

When she met with Mandy, Mandy did a rare thing: she suggested changes which called Katie's attention to crafting her words.

> Chapter 2:
> "Uh oh," I (said) *muttered* to myself.
> "For the report cards," Mr. Sukey (said) *continued.*
> Chapter 3:
> "What!" (said) *yelled* Jacquie.
> "I have to be tutored," Kristy (said) *repeated.*

Katie continued to write chapter after chapter. They were brief, telling just essential information to hold the story together. As in the two books she modeled her story from, Katie's character had to get a tutor, and after hard work, improves her grades and resolves the crisis.

Chapter 4
Tourtering

6 weeks had passed. My tourtering was pretty good. I had gotten a A-, C+, B, and a D+ on the four science tests, but of course it started with a D+, then C+ then B than a A-, and another test was coming up.

My tourter was a 6th grader. He was so smart, he made me understand desamails.

Chapter 5
Uhh, Science Test

It was the day of the final science test of the year. I was hoping to get an A. It was 2:03 pm.
"Time for the last and final science test."
"Uh oh," I said to myself.

Mr. Sukey passed out the tests. The science test came pretty easy to me because I had studied soooo hard.

When the period was up, Mr. Sukey colected the tests. I went home feeling great. I knew I did well on that test.

Chapter 6
My Grade

When it was time for science I felt a tingly feeling going down my back.
"Kristy Bohanski."

I went and got my test. I looked at it. I almost died again, but this was because I GOT AN A+! I had gotten all of the problems right, but most of all, I was the only one in the entire class who got an A+.

I had the opportunity to watch Katie writing her last chapter on February 19. She seized her pen and attacked the page, writing line after line quickly in total concentration.

Chapter 7

"Jacquie I got an A+!"

When I got home I yelled for my mother.
"Mom, Mom I got an A+!"
"Exelent!" my mom said.

Then I ran upstairs. I grabbed my phone and called Jacquie. Jacquie answered.
"Hello?"
"Hi Jacquie, it's me!"
"Oh, hi Kristy."
"Jacquie, I got an A+ on the science test!"
"WOW, great job!"
"Thanks," I said.

Just then I realised 1 month ago this was the worst day of my life. Now it was the best day of my life!

THE END

As her pencil formed the "D", she looked over at me. "Ahh, it's done," she said and popped up out of her seat and walked to Nancy. "I'm done with my story." Nancy replied, "Good for you. I look forward to hearing it."

Nancy helped Katie with minor changes in the text: grammar, spelling, and punctuation. She asked her what the point was in Chapter 4 of listing the grades all first and then doing it again with the grades showing that they got progressively better. She helped her rewrite it.

Katie began to write her piece for publication. I wondered how she felt about the changes she had made in her text, and whether she have any regrets. She told me: "They felt good. I'm glad Mrs. Herdecker said something because when I went back and wrote it, it made more sense. I like getting ideas from people."

Katie had put off sharing her drafts of Fifth Grade Failure until she had published it. The class was especially attentive, as they are when someone is sharing a newly published piece. The feedback they gave

her showed this attention and a good measure of insightful ideas. Before beginning, she reminded her class of the significance of it to her learning about writing: "Okay. I published The Fifth Grade Failure." *And it's my first fiction book.*"

The comments:

Mike: I could imagine myself as the person in this story--Kristy--getting F's and D's and feeling terrible and scared what's going to happen. So I could really imagine it. A writer has to put a lot of description for one of the things to make a story good and that was really descriptive so I really got every word of it.

Cameron: I could picture that report card in my mind. I could see you taking it out of the envelope and looking at it and sitting there, bug-eyed, thinking "Oh my God!"

Sean: I liked your story and I know one thing for sure, if I had that report card I wouldn't come home for two months!

Kenny: I liked how you said, "I got this tingling feeling down my spine

James: I liked when Kristy called and she said, "Guess what, I got 13 A+'s and 1 A-, what did you get? "Four F's, five D's, four C's and 1 B-.

One comment stirred up a five-way conversation:

Jonathan: I was just thinking. I don't think a Dad would say, "You are going to have to be grounded" and that's all... because I didn't get the best report card last time and he said a lot more than that. I wasn't grounded though.

Katie: Well I just kind of decided that maybe that was that and maybe we could just have that there and then that was that-- she had to be grounded.

Nancy: Jonathan, you don't think it's realistic to be grounded for a bad report card?

Jonathan: No, but um her dad just said "I'm sorry, you're grounded" and that's all. And I think he'd be more madder than that.

Nancy: Oh, I see what you're saying.

Katie: Well he was mad but not...

Keith: Maybe he was a really nice dad.
Katie: Yeah.

Jonathan was implicitly suggesting that she should expand on what Kristy's father was saying because to Jonathan, given how bad her report card grades were, the father would have likely said a lot more. Katie didn't take this suggestion, bolstered by Keith's defense, and I don't think she would have made changes anyway because she "just really wanted to get this piece published." She felt accomplished.

Gary pointed out a problem with the time frame:

Gary: You said that was the 'final science test of the year', right? (Katie nodded) Well you said the worst day of your life happened in the first marking period and then you said 'just a month ago was the worst day of your life.'"
Katie: (quickly responded) Maybe it was the last science test of that unit!
Gary: Oh. [both laughing]
Nancy: We could do that-- change the word from 'year' to 'unit.'
Gary: Umm, 'cause it wasn't really clear.

Nancy made the concluding remarks: "I want to congratulate Katie on meeting her goal of publishing a piece of fiction and also congratulations because you did a lot of work in revising and editing and all. You did a nice job. Thank you very much for sharing."

Katie's classmates took a more critical and challenging stance towards this fiction piece than to her personal narrative writing, offering more specific feedback about what worked and what didn't (i.e., "pointing" to particular lines of text, rather than telling her they liked particular experiences represented). Nancy also took a more

critical posture toward this piece throughout its creation, becoming celebratory only at its finish.

Despite the doubts she had as she began this piece of fiction, Katie came out of the experience with a positive sense of herself as a fiction-writer and was ready to write another one.

Katie's Second Fiction: Bridging Real Life to Fiction-Writing

In her next fiction piece, begun briefly after finishing Fifth Grade Failure, Katie again used books to guide her writing-- but this time for their common theme and settings rather than a particular plot found in a particular book.

Katie had already read at least fifteen of the books from two book series: Sweet Valley Twins (Francine Pascal) and The BabySitters' Club (Ann Martin). These series books involved pre-adolescent girls as characters with themes of betrayal, jealousy, and misunderstandings among friends (Katie said of them: "The kids are always playing tricks on people and gossiping and getting into fights"). She used the generic settings common in these books (a movie theatre, meeting at the burger shop, throwing a pajama party, raiding the refrigerator). The basic story structure present in these and other books she continually read (and her first fiction piece) was unconsciously used for this piece as well.

Katie titled her piece, Friends, and based the story around the theme of misunderstandings among friends. The theme was the only element of her story not based in her real life. (She assured me she hadn't had any misunderstandings with her friends.) She took the generic settings common in these series and set them in her real

world. Also, she used her friends as characters and in doing so enhanced her sense of control over her concern for characters. She knew her characters and things about them that she could use rather than having to concern herself with making-up things. Katie was the main character moving through her real-life settings and, to a large extent, her lived experiences. In this piece, Mandy's influence showed a direct effect on Katie's writing: Katie showed her first concrete signs of attention to crafting her language.

Chapter 1
The Movies

One day I decided to go to the movies. I was going to see TOP GUN. I had heard that it was a great movie, so I went to the movies.

When I got to the movies I paid for my ticket. Then I got some M&M's, 2 Snicker bars, 3 packages of Dinosaur Eggs, and 1 large box of popcorn with lots of butter on it. I also had a root beer.

I got all my food then I gave my ticket to the lady. The lady's name was Madam Rosea. She had on lots of outrageous jewelry and her clothes were so ugly that they looked like dust rags that had dusted a lot of old tables. Her hair was wicked waved. Also it was black and as thick as burnt porridge. Her shoes were dark brown with large thick heels. Well, anyway, she gave half of my ticket to the usher and the other half to a huge cylinder which I thought was a garbage barrel. I followed the usher. The usher brought me to seat number W4. Luckily I got to sit in the balcony. I got to see the movie. My friends were right TOP GUN is an excellent movie.

I finished all my food so I bought one more package of dinosaur eggs.

Giving a character a name and grand scale description suggested this character would be important to the story but there was no further mention of Madam Rosea. It is another example of Katie's

attention to outer descriptions as she did in Fifth Grade Failure. However, more significant, she was trying to meet her needs of attention to character in her story. In real life, Katie had met a woman ticket taker in the local theatre whom she described to me as "ugly and dirty with ratted, black hair." Katie felt this "character" would enrich her text with her physical description which she exaggerated. Character description is handled in her local plans, without thought of consequence to her global plan. If she *was* aware at all of violating the story's plan, the rich character description still had merit.

Mandy's influence shows in Katie's use of a simile; working from her knowledge of Mandy's "fog thick as pea soup", she describes Madam Rosea's hair as "thick as burnt porridge" and compares her clothes to dust rags and the ticket cylinder to a garbage barrel. (The "huge cylinder" was also a feature of her real-life theatre.) These examples of seeing something in terms of another revealed Katie's greater attention to the language she used to craft her text. Katie was trying out these elements within her local planning and she thought it helped her readers "know what it was like in the movies".

"Madam Rosea" did not collaborate with the global plan of the story. As in her first fiction where Katie elaborately described what the character, Kristy, had on as she entered the classroom, attention to character description overtook concerns for plot. In this piece of writing, however, Katie's attention marked an important milestone in her writing: as she turned her attention to crafting language, her global story plan took a back seat. It was a sign of progress, an error that marked development (Weaver, 1982).

Nancy was aware that Katie's local planning sometimes offended the structural integrity of the story but supported and encouraged her attention to language. The text above remained essentially the same in her published version. Nancy continued to foster awareness and the importance of coordinating local to global plans through conferences about Mandy's writing in which Katie attended.

The next part of the narrative introduced the character's problem. Katie revealed her explicit thoughts and feelings and in doing so, we get to know this character, to care about her, and become involved in her circumstance.

> I went to Friendly's for dinner. When I got to Friendly's I had to wait in line for a seat. Soon a waiter came and brought me to a seat. I looked at the menu. All of a sudden, I heard a group of people laughing. I looked over and I couldn't believe my eyes. This is what I saw.
>
> I saw all my friends, or my so-called friends: Mandy, Meredith, Erin, and Beth. I wondered why I wasn't over there. Maybe they didn't like me. Nah, they told me they liked me. Maybe I was at the movies when they called me. So I decided to go over and see them. So I did. I went over to them. Suddenly they stopped talking. I wondered why.
>
> I said, "I'm glad to see you!" They still stared at me. I sat down next to Meredith.
>
> Erin said, "Who invited you?"
>
> I stood up immediately and walked out the door. I looked in the window. They were laughing again. I still wondered why.

At this juncture in her writing, I stepped in and took a more active role in Katie's writing. I had begun typing on my home computer a long piece of fiction that Mandy was composing. (Because of its length, it would have taken her weeks to rewrite it for publication.) I knew Katie would appreciate the same, and she did.

But I had another motive as well: I wanted to see if knowing she wouldn't have to rewrite the piece would make a difference in how long she sustained her effort on it, given that I knew length had been a consideration in the past. Because I was meeting with Katie about her writing, Nancy relinquished her conference time with Katie to me. I typed up her drafted chapters as she wrote them and told her it would be easy to add or take away any changes she decided to make.

In her next chapter, we find that the main character (Katie) had concluded that her friends don't like her very much and she goes about trying to solve that problem. Her motives for action are clear.

In her real life, Katie was planning to have a sleepover to celebrate her birthday. She knew from past sleepovers what they would bring and their eating behavior, and used this knowledge to add some distinctiveness to her characters.

Chapter 2

My Idea

When I got home I decided to try to get ideas about how I could make my friends like me more. So I made a list.

1. Sleepover
2. Rollerskating
3. Have a regular party

I decided that the most fun would be a sleepover so I made a chart.

Who?	What will they bring?	How much food will they eat?	What food will they eat?
Erin	Sleeping bag & pillow	not much	potato chips

Beth	Blanket & pillow	a lot	anything
Meredith	Blanket & pillow	some	popcorn
Mandy	Sleeping bag & pillow	some	popcorn
Shayna	Sleeping bag & nail polish	some	anything

> I went to ask my mother if I could have the sleepover. She said, "Okay, I guess so." I ran down to the laundry room which I thought was a junkroom. I yanked out a clipboard and pulled out a pen. I started to write all their names and showed it to my mom. She said, "Okay." I made invitations and sent them out.

Katie's problems with cause-and-effect showed again in this last paragraph: she made a list of her friends' names and then later goes down to the laundry room to get a clipboard to write their names again! As in her first fiction piece, she borrowed a scene to help her know what next to write. She was reading a Sweet Valley Twin book and I looked through it at about the place she was reading. I found this passage:

> She grabbed the pen and ran out of her room, down the stairs, and then down to the basement. She marched into the laundry room and set about getting her revenge (Tug of War, p. 72).

Katie seemed to need to fall back on something she knew to help her to write. She was writing from her life, but also counting on the books to help her. But she tacked it on to what was already written, seemingly unable to coordinate it with what came before. When I met with her, I questioned her as to why the character would go to

the laundry room to get the clipboard to write on when she had already made a chart with the friends' names. She understood my point. However, when I suggested that perhaps she could move it to where the character first decides to write, she complied automatically and I told her I would make the changes on the computer disk file.

I recognized that Katie was trying to craft her language in another simile-like way in her line "laundry room which I thought was a junkroom." I asked her what she meant by "thought it was a junkroom"? She replied, "It was junky." I suggested changing her text to read "junky laundry room." Again, she nodded agreement without any hesitation. I was reminded of what Nancy told me about Katie's response to her suggestions for changes to text: "she gave her usual 'yeah, okay, yeah' response to my comments."

Chapter Three served to move the story along to the sleepover. Again, Katie used information about one of her friends to add detail to her story.

Chapter 3
<u>You're Invited</u>

RING! RING! The telphone rang. I ran to answer it. It was Meredith. She said, "I can come to your sleepover."
"Great!" I said.
"I'll bring my furry blue blanket and my squishy Snoopy pillow."
"Okay," I said.
"Goodbye," I said and she hung up.

It was the same conversation with Erin, Mandy, Beth, and Shayna. The only difference was what they would bring.

In chapter four, Katie quickly "listed" their actions in a manner that was very much like her first personal narrative Me and My Friend Jesse, and then moved in closer to resolve the misunderstanding. Again, as in Fifth Grade Failure, there is a resemblance of dialogue to that found in the books she read, in its tone and clipped dialogue.

Chapter 4
"Here They Come!"

It was 3:56. Four more minutes until they come. The doorbell rang. Meredith, Shayna, Beth, Erin, and Mandy were at the door.

We dug into the popcorn, then chips. After that we had dinner. We had pizza with pepperonis and extra cheese. Then it was 6:00. We played Pin the Tail on the Donkey, Tag, and Hide-and-Go-Seek in the dark. Then it was 7:30. We got in our PJ's. We settled down. When we were all in our sleeping bags, I asked, "Why did you laugh at me the other day in Friendly's?"

"You don't understand," said Erin.

"Yeah," said Beth.

"We were only laughing at the joke Mandy told us," said Meredith.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Yep," said Beth.

"Boy was I wrong. I thought you guys were laughing at me."

Then Meredith stood up and said, "Why would we laugh at you? We are all best friends, right?"

"Ya-a-a!!" they all said at the same time.

We talked for another two hours. Then we went to bed. I woke up at 12:06. I looked around. Meredith was awake, too. I walked to her. I said I was hungry. Meredith said, "How about raiding the fridge?"

"That's a GREAT idea!" I said. So we went to raid the fridge. After that we went back to our sleeping bags and fell asleep.

We all woke up at 10:04. We went downstairs for breakfast. I looked in the fridge. There was nothing

there. Merdith and I started to laugh. Shayna and Erin caught on.

"You guys raided the refrigerator, right?"

"Yep!" I said.

Then we all started to laugh. I knew we were...

FRIENDS FOREVER

THE END

I typed up her writing and presented it to her the following morning. She was happy with it. She wanted to change the title from Friends to Friends Forever. She decided to share it with the class. I hoped that the stance taken by her classmates in her last fiction piece occurred again. They didn't disappoint me.

Jon recognized that Katie had not resolved the question of why Erin had been so snotty with the main character.

Jon: But what about when the girl said, "Who invited you?"

Katie: They were just, it was just a joke.

James directed to her recurrent problem of cause-and-effect relations. He wanted to know why a person would stuff themselves so much and implied it was unrealistic that she would eat so much at the movies and then go to Friendly's. Kenny chimed in.

James: Why'd you choose to eat so much in the movies? And THEN you went to Friendly's for dinner afterward?

Kenny: Yeah, I was going to say, you ate enough food already.

Katie: But I didn't eat anything.

James: You were looking at the menu!

Katie mumbled something that couldn't be deciphered. It was clear to me that the reason Katie took her character to Friendly's was so that she could find her friends there without her. She hadn't thought about the likelihood that eating would be the last thing

anyone would be interested in doing after stuffing themselves with sweets. Although the discussion did not lead to changes, her classmates called her attention to issues of plausibility.

The other comments pertained to her text as written.

Sean: I like this story. It's good. And I like the part when Erin said, "Oh, you raided the refrigerator?"
Jon: I like the way you described what the lady was wearing, and the ticket thing that looked like a trash can and um... that movie theatre must have been nice to have a balcony and stuff.
James: I liked how you described-- what Jon said.

Nancy made the concluding comments.

Nancy: First of all, I want to compliment you on the way you handled an everyday situation . I think that that could happen to a lot of people when they misinterpret the actions of other people. When you get to Friendly's, I had the same feeling that you did in telling the story-- that they were giggling about you, that they were saying something about you-- I had that same feeling. I liked the way you expressed that in your writing. It was very real. I also like the solution: by coming together and talking about it. I almost thought the story was going to end when she said, "Boy was I ever wrong!" But then you had them raiding the fridge-- I know that's something that always happens at pajama parties. You did a really good job. Thank you.

The comments, as in her first piece of fiction, were specific and challenging of her text as written.

When I met with Katie in conference, I reminded her of Jon's question to her. "In your writing it's still unclear why Erin was so mean to say, "Who invited you?" at Friendly's." Katie shrugged her shoulders and said, "She was just joking around with her." "Well, wouldn't your character still be wondering about this?" I suggested.

Katie answered, "I guess so." I continued, "They told her what they were laughing at but she still doesn't know what Erin's comment meant and she doesn't know why she wasn't invited to join them at Friendly's either." Katie's attitude was one of veiled indifference. Considering how happy she'd been with the changes Nancy had directed her to make in her first piece of fiction, I pushed. "How could you fix this?" Katie looked over their conversation and decided to add a line to Erin's explanation (italicized).

> "You don't understand," said Erin. *"I was only kidding around when I said "Who invited you?" We thought you went away for the weekend so we didn't call you to go with us."*

There were other things I would have liked to have engaged Katie in thinking about her text but it was clear she was very satisfied with it. I asked her to go read it once more and make any additional changes she wanted. She kept it as it was. Typing it for her had not encouraged her willingness to make changes to her writing nor to lengthen her stories. Holding together the basic story frame, giving characters descriptions, motives and words, and crafting language were more than enough challenge.

Conclusions

Katie's real writing challenges came with fiction. Both of Katie's pieces held to a basic story structure described by Stein and Trabasso (1982) that was common to the dozens and dozens of preadolescent books she read: *initiating event* (bad grades; friends' rejection), *internal response* (shock; hurt and wonder), *attempt* (tutoring; sleep-over), *consequence* (gets an A+; finds out it was a

misunderstanding), *reaction* (calls friend to celebrate; raiding refrigerator with friends). Although it is unlikely that Katie could have described her story structure in this explicit way, the structure nevertheless was operating.

The central themes of her two fiction pieces-- getting flunking grades, misunderstandings among friends-- were experienced vicariously through the books she read. A specific plot and theme of two beloved books were used for her first piece of fiction. However, for her second piece she didn't rely on a particular plot from a particular book, but rather used a common theme and the typical settings of the series books she read, and created her own plot. She grounded the settings, friends, and some experiences in her own real-life, and moved closer to what real writers do.

Fiction required Katie to coordinate local to global plans to create a story. Especially in her first piece, Katie relied on snippets of scenes from a book to help her with local planning (book cover showing characters putting on makeup, entering into the classroom and receiving her report card). Except for the scene in which the character, Kristy, received her report card, the other scenes she borrowed for her first piece and the one she borrowed for her second piece (going down to the basement to get a clipboard to write on) did not serve her well in that she seemed to be unable to coordinate their use with the ongoing actions. Also, because Katie had learned from books how central attention to character was to the creation of good fiction, she sometimes hurt the integrity of her story with elaborate character descriptions which pushed logic and plans to the back seat. This occurred in both fiction pieces.

Her classmates and teachers were helpful in drawing Katie's attention to her breaches in cause-and-effect relations between events, actions, and people. Nancy and I pushed her to address these concerns, and her classmates made their points strongly as well. Nancy and I wanted to have her take her classmates' comments seriously, to see them as not simply responding to the experiences, as they did with personal narratives, but as offering useful and insightful comments that she address. With Nancy and my insistence, she addressed some of their comments, although she tended to make changes perfunctorily. She made changes because she was expected to, rather than from some inner drive to do so. We only pushed so far and then backed off. Our point was not to create a showcase piece of fiction but rather to get her to slow down and begin to assess the integrity of her texts.

Katie was in a position to learn more about writers' processes from her classmates, and attend more to the crafting of language from her classmates than from the books she read. Perhaps this was due to the constant "pointing" to the particular strengths that classmates had during Shares. However, her dialogue shared qualities of the series books she read.

Mandy directly influenced Katie's fiction on one occasion by suggesting word changes. Although I certainly didn't observe them every day, I feel confident that at least most of the time they didn't help each other with ideas, let alone confront one another's texts. Their rules of friendship may have held them back in that way. Katie's relatively more plot-based concerns for writing fiction did not

allow her to fully understand and take advantage of Mandy's more character-based writing process.

Mandy's attention to crafting her words did influence unintentionally Katie's writing by modeling similes. Her attention was initially directed to it just by listening to Mandy's writing and then subsequently, in discussion with me. The strengths of Mandy's writing were also salient to her through her classmates' comments to Mandy during Shares, and in her joint conferences with Nancy and Mandy. When Katie finally did begin to craft her words, it led to imbalances in her text. But the imbalances were marks of progress as she slowed down, just a bit, and gave conscious attention to the text as written (Graves, 1983).

CHAPTER 6

JAMES

Introduction

James was the kind of child who, if you asked him to draw a line, he would reply, "A line is infinite, but I can draw you a line segment." He was one of the most intellectually sophisticated students in his class, and a perfectionist. Even in art, his art teacher told Nancy Herdecker, he was usually the last one to finish because he was very rigorous and precise and unlikely to change his course once he had started something. Throughout my involvement with him, I frequently noted his uncommon willingness to persevere when the going got tough and he once told me, "When I make up my mind to do something, I don't give up."

In March, Nancy described James as:

> a child who is incredibly bright but whose whole being is very cautious and this concerns me in terms of his ability and his approach to problem-solving: he's not a risk-taker at all. [In his writing], when he comes to forks in the road, he wants somebody to tell him which of his ideas is the best. ...He wants it to be good, he wants to be 'right.' I think he has a really difficult time when given a creative problem-solving task in which one has to look between the lines or look to the left or look to the right. If it's not in a neat little package, he is a kid who has a real problem with that. He wants everything up front and wants it to be black and white, no gray.

In essence, she was concerned that he was afraid to fail. His self-concept was tightly wound around success, success that was set at a

very high standard. His concern for getting things "right" or perfect did not prevent him from taking on cognitive challenges. He seemed to thrive on challenge.

Nancy had a hunch that his family played a strong hand in directing James: "He is used to being directed whereas there are other children who have been encouraged in any number of ways to make choices. I think he comes from a home where people will turn him into the 'right' place. He hasn't been encouraged to decide for himself." An example of this difficulty making choices came when Nancy asked James to come up with a writing goal to set for the second half of the year (such as trying a new genre or improving on something in particular). James hedged on a decision and repeatedly tried to get Nancy to set a goal for him, to which she never conceded.

In a conference with James' mother, Nancy relayed her perceptions of James, repeated to me:

> And I said there are really two Jameses because there are some things that he has a mind set to do but, on the other hand, what I see a lot is that he has this difficulty with decision-making because he wants the thing to be absolutely correct. I said that I didn't think it was something that was going to hold him back but I said that it is something that may create problems for his perception of himself because the higher he gets in grades, there are a lot more things that are "iffy" that he has to decide about.

For the better part of the school year, Nancy was concerned that James learn to be comfortable with making choices and to live with the uncertainty of whether his decisions would lead to the level of success he demanded of himself. She wanted him to loosen his

standards, to learn to accept himself even if his school work didn't pan out gold every time.

James often revealed standards that were well beyond his age group. James had one sibling, a sister, who was a sophomore in high school. His mother told me about James' great interest and curiosity in everything his sister did academically. He was always trying to get her to explain things to him that she was learning about-- from history to geometry. In early Fall, he tried to read Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher, which his mother thought was prompted by his sister. Even as a four or five year-old, he tried to engage in her young adolescent games. He would stubbornly sustain his thinking until he could understand the rules and strategies well enough to play. In this, his fourth grade year, he and his sister played Trivial Pursuit, Scrabble and other word games.

From September through December, he read lengthy books, all of which most of his peers would have considered challenges to read. He began the year by rereading Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Roald Dahl) but after finishing, embarked on a series of books which were atypical of those read by his peers: two historical fiction books set in the American Revolutionary War, My Brother Sam Is Dead (John Collier) and Johnny Tremain (Esther Forbes), The Fall of the House of Usher (Edgar Allan Poe), and two historical accounts of Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl (Anne Frank), and Anne Frank Remembered (Miet Gies). When he shared The Diary of a Young Girl in a small reading group, a classmate, Rachel, remarked to him that she thought "most of the class would find that book a challenge." I have no doubt that comment pleased him to no end.

During the first half of the year, he had been self-reliant in terms of being able to accomplish the quality of writing he wanted. But in January, his choice to write a mystery changed all that. He found himself intellectually challenged by the task and began to seek out Nancy and I regularly. The quality he wanted to obtain in his writing was beyond the help he felt that classmates could offer. Also, I think he realized the kind of help he needed required sustained joint effort, something hard to come by in the peer conferences.

But there was another reason, equally important to James, for not seeking out help from his classmates. He worried that his ideas would be picked up and used by them for their writing. He relayed to me that a fifth grader cautioned him about sharing his writing a lot because classmates would use his ideas and then his "writing wouldn't be unique anymore." As well, he also found the prospect of receiving ideas from others disturbing: "If you conference with people and ask for help, then the piece is not yours." This concern for uniqueness and control over ownership was a great one for James, and affected his pattern of interaction and sharing throughout most of the year. Nancy and I were less of a threat than classmates because we were not going to use his ideas for our writing, but we still caused conflict for him. He found himself in the position of accepting ideas from us and wanting to abdicate decisions to us in the interest of getting his story "right", which attenuated his sense of self-reliance and ownership. Likewise, mystery books were an inspiration and a curse because although they provided him with

ideas for plot, characters, and many other things, they also threatened his sense of ownership and originality.

He wrote fiction from the first days of school. It was geared to his classroom audience, full of funny dialogue and the zany antics of his characters. In one piece he used his classmates as characters, as they so often did, but his writing was theme- and character-based rather than action-based.

During the first few months of school, James spent most of the writing period writing by himself. He was a steady contributor of comments to others during the Whole Class Shares but held himself back from sharing. While others chose to share their writing informally during conference time, James did so only rarely. On those occasions when he did, he was so overwhelmed by his enthusiasm to have an audience that he would barge in on two or three boys who were already meeting on the floor. He shared his writing with the entire class only after it was finished.

Although James later didn't acknowledge to me the contributions of his classmates in contributing ideas in his early writing, their influences are there. For example, James began a piece in late October called Trading Places in which fathers and their sons switched jobs for a day. Two weeks before, a classmate shared a piece in which a mother was acting out in public and the daughter tells her, "Calm down. Everybody's looking at you." James thought the role reversal was very funny. Also in October, a television station aired a program called Switching Places which was what James' piece was based on. Kenny's Popcorn piece and Katie's Skiing Vacation Up On The Mountain also provided ideas for this piece: in

James' piece, a boy makes popcorn for his father (idea came from Kenny's Popcorn), and in a later scene, the smoke alarm goes off when the father burns the toast he was making for breakfast (from Katie's piece). James sheepishly denied receiving ideas from any of these sources, feeling his originality threatened by the questions.

Throughout this chapter, there will be incidences in which Nancy and I attempted to instill the idea in James that seeking and accepting ideas from others, and making suggestions to others, was part of the natural exchange of the writer to the writing community and that ownership of a piece of writing need not be affected by such an exchange.

Nancy consistently tried to guide James to make his own decisions in his writing while also collaborating with him on ideas. As with all of her students, Nancy was forthcoming with comments and questions to guide James' thinking. Her conversations with him stirred up his thinking and led him to new ideas and solutions. She knew she was a catalyst but wanted him to go away from conversations with her with the feeling that he had come up with the ideas himself.

My affiliation with James began primarily after the Christmas-New Year vacation. Before that time, I had watched James for a period of months informally. He first formally approached me in late October looking for an idea for Trading Places. He was looking for a unique way to begin the piece. He wanted to introduce the idea of a Trading Places Day, specifically a way to remind the characters that the next day was the day. I suggested a newspaper article or a

message over the radio. He took to the idea of a radio announcement immediately and used it to get started.

In January, James read one of the mysteries from the Alfred Hitchcock's Three Investigators series: The Mystery of the Vanishing Treasure. He'd read mysteries from that series in the past, but this one really excited him. He started it in school and could hardly put it down so he took it home and finished it that night. He wasted no time finding another mystery in the same series: The Secret of Skeleton Island. Within the week, he decided to write a mystery.

At that time, I began to talk with James regularly. My intention was to observe James as he wrote his mystery, and talk with him regularly about the decisions he was making. But I quickly found myself pulled in closer to the process than I had expected. Conferences with James were different and much more intense than those with either Kenny or Katie. He came to me regularly asking for assistance with the story plan and for help in crafting the language. I became a collaborator, restating what plans he was making and asking questions to further extend his planning, and more. In my questions and comments I tried to stay within the bounds of those concerns he revealed to me.

This chapter will take place from January through the end of the school year. During that time, outside of time taken out during writing to compose a science report on the lynx, he spent all of his time working on his mystery. At the end of the year, he would still not have it finished but would have an experience in composing unlike any other before. The collaborative nature of my affiliation with James, his interactions with Nancy, and the influence of books

on his writing will be described. As well, I will describe James' relationship to his classmates and document the changes in that relationship that occurred in the last quarter of the school year, as he directed his focus from adults to peer members of this writing-reading community.

Getting Started

During the last week of January, James' excitement and love of the two Alfred Hitchcock mysteries he'd read lead him to decide to write a mystery. He proclaimed his commitment to Nancy. "This will be longer than my longest book. I need it to be about one hundred pages to be like an author." (In various interchanges, his classmates had recognized and applauded him for his ability to write long pieces, but he set his goals even higher.)

James went on to tell Nancy about how it will begin: "Chapter One will be called 'A Mysterious Figure.' The mysterious figure will appear right away. Kids are walking home from school and a mysterious figure pops out on the road." Nancy replied, "Oh, building suspense right away, so the reader will want to read on." James went on to say that he was going to use three boys, like in the mystery series he was reading, adding that he "was inspired by the Three Investigators series."

Nancy asked him if he already knew what the mystery would be about and James, with his knowledge of his past writing experiences, replied "I think as I go." He didn't know all the characters yet but knew what the boys would look like, adding, "They're in my head." His "think as I go" strategy would dissolve within two chapters.

James as a Critical Writer

Feb 3. For three days, James worked with abandonment and had a chunk of a his first chapter done. His idea of introducing a mysterious figure remained but his other ideas, relayed to Nancy, were no more. He came to me saying, "I'm stuck. Could we have a conference?" Our exchange described here was the beginning of my supportive role to James' thinking and writing. It demonstrates his writing concerns before his "think as I go" strategy changed.

He read to me what he had written.

A Mysterious Figure

It was Friday night and since there was no school the next day Oliver, Tom, and Mark were camping in Oliver's backyard. The boys were sitting around the campfire roasting marshmallows. Tom spoke up. "Soon it will be summer vacation and we don't have a single case to solve."

"Then I guess we'll be bored stiff again like last year," said Mark.

"It's getting late," said Tom. We'd better get to sleep."

The boys put up the tent and went to sleep.

Tom woke up. The others were fast asleep. He saw a shadow. Someone was outside the tent! It couldn't have been any of the boys' shadows because they were all lying down and the shadow was standing up.

Tom did the only thing he could think of. He lied perfectly still until it was gone, as not to make any sound.

The next thing Tom knew the shadow was moving to the rear of the tent and advancing into the woods. It was soon out of sight.

Unprompted, James began to tell me, "There are a couple of things I can see to make it better. I need to change the wording. I'm going to change 'Then Tom woke up' to something like 'After about

an hour later, Tom woke up.' James perceived that since they had just gone to sleep in the line before, he should specify that some time had passed before Tom woke up.

I asked him why Tom woke up and James told me the shadow woke him up.

> MM: How does a shadow disturb his sleep?
> James: You can see a shadow with your eyes closed.
> MM: Oh, I've experienced that. But I don't think I could be woken up by a shadow.
> James: Maybe he heard a noise.

James quickly picked up his pencil, made erasures, and made changes:

After about an hour or so Tom woke up to the sound of leaves crackling. He eliminated the italicized part: "He lied perfectly still *until it was gone, so as not to make a sound.*"

Other changes followed with equal quickness. I watched. His control over his writing and willingness to make changes was a striking contrast to Katie's processes. He reworked the sentences that followed the above changes, altering the reference to a shadow's movement to movement linked with the crackling sound. He didn't want to eliminate the sentences because they gave a fuller "explanation" of the moment. (Changes/additions are italicized.)

> The next thing Tom knew, the *sound* was moving toward the rear of the tent and advancing into the woods. *Tom lay still a couple more minutes just to make sure it was gone. Finally he decided it was and woke up the others. He told them how he had heard the leaves outside the tent crackle.*

I complimented him on the changes: "You slow down time. The reader can live through it." James agreed.

I intervened again: "You know, *here* you say the boys were fast asleep and then *there* you say they couldn't have produced the shadow because they were lying down. Well, the shadow would have been produced by something coming between the moonlight and the tent." James said, "Oh yeah, that's right." He erased the line "It couldn't have been any of the boys' shadows because they were all lying down and the shadow was standing up", saying, "I don't need it."

James continued reworking his text. He concerned himself with "putting it in sensible order" and making "logical sense." But he also constantly attended to reworking the "wording" of the sentences which encompassed cohesion of sentences (e.g., "Okay, now that sentence goes with that sentence") and checking for redundancy of word use (e.g., "I don't want to use shadow too many times"). By the end of the writing period, James had finished the chapter and had changed his text by taking the shadow idea out completely and exploiting the crackling noise to its fullest. He changed the chapter to A Mysterious Sound.

(Chapter, from point of changes.)

> After about an hour or so Tom woke up to the sound of leaves crackling. The others were fast asleep. Something was outside the tent! Tom did the only thing he could think of. He lay perfectly still.
>
> The next thing Tom knew, the sound was moving toward the rear of the tent and advancing into the woods. Tom lay still a couple more minutes just to make sure it was gone. Finally he decided it was and

woke up the others. He told them how he had heard the leaves outside the tent crackle.

Oliver said, "It could have easily been an animal."

Tom thought about what Oliver said. Then he spoke up. "I heard the leaves crackle loud and clear and when animals step on the leaves they make a sound so faint you can barely hear it."

Then Tom spoke up again. "I deduce whatever it was weighed about two hundred pounds, and the animals around here don't get that big."

"Maybe there's a clue outside," suggested Mark.

"Even if there was one we'd never find it in the dark," said Tom.

"We'll search tomorrow," said Oliver.

The Approach-Avoidance Conflict of Sharing

The next day James added an introduction, taking the idea from The Three Investigators series which introduced the main characters and stirred up interest. James had put his name on the board for sharing the day before. His concerns about sharing were overshadowed by his excitement to have an audience. He would resist any attempts to give him ideas, as he explained to me:

> I don't ask for any help because when I write I like to think up the ideas myself and I don't need anyone to do this because I'm still getting help [referring to the help he got from me and Nancy] but I don't like to get TOO MUCH help because then it's like I didn't write the whole story. So when I go up there I never ask for help.

He read his introduction (A Word From James Carr) and first chapter.

A Word From James Carr

For those of you who like mysteries, you'll like this book. It's a book of suspense and mystery.

I'll introduce you to the characters that you'll mostly be reading about. There's Oliver Smith who's tall, muscular and quite an athlete. There's also Tom Brown who's slightly overweight, shorter than Oliver but is still

quite an athlete. And finally, there's Mark Green who's tall, thin but not so much an athlete.
Since Tom is the only one who has his own room, they use it for headquarters.
They live in Exeter, New Hampshire.
Now on with the story.

James Carr

The comments and questions rewarded his hard work and showed he was on the right track.

Room visitor: You used such a variety of ways to start sentences. I liked it very much.
Gary: THAT is a VERY neat story. I like the way you describe each character-- like, one is tall and muscular and athletic and another's shorter and not so athletic. Where'd you get your idea for that?
James: From the Three Investigators series I got the idea to write a mystery.
Nancy: You have excellent description and I love your choice of words like "advancing" instead of "walking." I also like the mood you set when you said they go to Tom's room to meet: I KNEW they were going to be into secret stuff.

This kind of acknowledgment was important to James. Although he was guarded about getting ideas, he valued his audience to help form his evaluation of his writing.

Classmates' Influence on Evaluation of Texts

I talked with him earlier in the year about Trading Places, his comedic piece, and asked him "Would it have affected your opinion of the parts you thought were really funny if, when you shared it, the class didn't laugh? His response was, "I'm pretty sure, yeah. I would have thought that it wasn't as funny as I thought it would be. I judge it upon how many kids like it, how many comments on it, or how hard they laugh when funny parts come up."

But James' stance toward the reactions of his classmates was also tempered by knowledge of them: "It depends on what kind or type of story you've written and who's judging the writing. Some people have different tastes. Some like comedy and others care more for action. It's not that they don't like comedy, it's that they like it IN action stories."

James' judgment of his texts, then, enjoyed an independence from the vicissitudes of audience reaction. When Kenny (repeating a question that I had asked Kenny earlier in the week) asked James in a whole group share, "What would you do if they didn't like it?" James replied, "It's just one person's opinion. I'm sure there'd be others who did like it." His classroom audience's reaction was important to him, but it wasn't the only way he determined the success of a piece. He had a sense of what makes writing good which was independent of his classmates, revealed most obviously in the ways he went about revising his texts and in his ability to use books to help him write.

Influence of Books on his Writing: Reading Like a Writer

From the earliest points of writing his mystery, James borrowed ideas from the mystery books he was reading. He was aware of the ideas he borrowed, both in form and content, and this borrowing concerned him. He wanted his piece to be original: "I don't want to copy. The more Three Investigators books I read, the more ideas I pick up from the books." Because of his need for originality in his writing, he would use the ideas by changing their context or use ideas in part. "It's hard to stay original because some of the things in

the books are things I want in my writing anyway. Like, a headquarters for the boys. In the books, they use an old trailer, but I'm going to use Tom's room." He acknowledged the introduction as an idea from the mysteries, and his use of two of the boys' physical descriptions. Having a headquarters in a different place and using only two of the three physical descriptions made his story less a copy of the books, assuaging his concerns somewhat.

He was also aware of other similarities of his characters to the mysteries he read: the three boys (a leader and two deferent sidekicks), their application of logical reasoning and keen observation, and their similar ways of expressing themselves (for example, "I deduced that...").

I knew from talking with other children in the class, including Katie, that incorporating some element into their texts from books may be done without awareness of its purposes, but rather because it sounded good. I met with James after he shared his introduction with the class to see if there was a purpose behind describing the characters, or if he wrote it simply because that's what the Three Investigators books do.

James: I wrote "A Word From James Carr" because The Three Investigators books always do that and I thought that was a good idea because it describes the characters and what they do.
MM: Did you think it was important to describe the characters?
James: Mmhmm. (yes)
MM: Why was it important?
James: Because it showed how boys could do certain things, like, the one that's slightly overweight can't

fit through tight places but he's shorter so he can fit in other places.

MM: Uh huh, so sometimes they all have different assets to offer each other to solve this mystery. Is that coming in handy in this story to have that information?

James: Not so far but I think it will later on. I'm pretty sure it will. Like, in The Three Investigators series, um, you know right away who was going to have to climb down the rope of the fifth story because obviously it would be the one who was the good athlete and everything.

He recognized the author's intent and put his own introduction to the same purpose.

Throughout the months of writing his mystery, he showed his inclination to read mysteries like a writer-apprentice, as well as for the pleasure of it. He noticed those ideas and forms that were effective as well as those that were ineffective. Unprompted, James would share with me and Nancy what he called "little faults in their writing." For example:

James: "In the Hardy Boys, Franklin W. Dickson often puts, "Just about when they were ready to give up"-- so you know they're gonna find what they're looking for. He does that in most of his books. And in the Three Investigators series, like in Skeleton Island, there's that, too. They saw a coin, a gold doubloon from a ship and it says, "ON HIS LAST DIVE, he came back with his fist tightly clenched.' So when they do that it stops the suspense because you know what's going to happen so it's not really suspenseful to you.

MM: Yeah, I see. Do you sometimes find yourself thinking about that when you're writing?

James: Yeah, so I don't do that [too]. Because suspense is what I want to try to be good in my story.

The mysteries he read, fed his excitement to write one himself, and were models for what to do and what not to do in his own story construction.

He continued to read one Three Investigators mystery after another. Tom, the leader in his story, began to resemble more and more the leader of the three boys in the books he read, in his tenacity, deductive powers, and precision. As well, Tom reminded me of James, placed in a fictional setting. In a reading group, Nancy asked the class to come prepared to talk about the character in their books that they would most like to be. James revealed he wanted to be the leader of the three boys in the Three Investigator series. "He's in on everything and is athletic." Part of the satisfaction of writing his mystery and reading others, was the life he led through them.

Second Chapter: Still "Writing as I Go"

James began to entertain some long range plans, but he didn't yet feel major constraints on what he was writing. He was still of the mind that he could fit things together as he went.

James kept writing and thinking. On February 5, he came up to me and said, "The boys are going to find something like a key, something the shadowy figure dropped. I don't know what they're searching for or what they'll find yet." He was also trying to come up with a chapter title to hang these ideas on and to help organize his thinking: "I get ideas to put in the chapter from the title." He thought of "Their First Clue" but then rejected it because he thought the title was giving too much away to the reader.

"There'll be some mystery that's been around for a hundred years, like where a treasure or something valuable is hidden and hasn't been found yet." Continuing to think aloud, he rejected his idea for a treasure and then reconsidered it: "No, it can't be a treasure and it can't be money stolen from a bank because those have been used in the Three Investigators books. But maybe there will be old jewels hidden in a secret passageway and they've been there since the civil war-- a passageway in a mountain cabin."

By mid February, James had written most of a second chapter. He had decided that the boys would find a coin. The coin would be the first clue of many which lead to something the man who had dropped the coin wanted to find-- probably a treasure of jewels buried someplace-- but he wasn't sure.

The Old Coin

The next morning the boys woke up at 6:00 A.M. and got dressed. Then they went outside to investigate.

They took some things out of their pockets which they were advised by Tom to always carry with them. Each boy pulled out a flashlight and a magnifying glass. Then they began to investigate.

Almost instantly they found something. Tom picked it up and opened his fist to show an old battered coin. They gasped as they saw the date. It was dated 1861. Tom turned the coin over and the boys saw it wasn't an ordinary coin. On the back it said, "Look for an indian's knife."

"It's a clue all right," said Oliver.

"But where are we going to find an indian's knife?" asked Mark.

"I don't know," said Tom. "That's one of the things we're going to have to find out."

Oliver and Mark knew that when Tom said "That's one of the things we're going to have to find out," he was

determined to solve the mystery and nothing could change his mind.

"Let's go in and study this under better light," said Tom.

James came to me saying again that he was stuck. He wanted the coin to be a clue to the next clue. It would lead the boys to an Indian statue, located in the woods, that no one had seen for a very long time. The Indian statue would be holding a knife. Somehow the boys had to figure out that the knife referred to on the coin was connected to the one on the lost statue. He was trying to figure out a further clue to put on the coin that would lead the boys to the statue. He started to brainstorm ideas and I suggested, "Maybe some sort of Indian symbols, since you've got this idea of an Indian statue" and he jumped at that: "Symbols, yeah."

He asked if we could go to the library to look for books with Indian symbols. We did. James knew where to look on the shelves and knew there was such a book in the library because earlier in the year his classmate, Gary, had shared it with the class. He found the one Gary shared, which had drawings of various hand signs.. We also looked at encyclopedias for pictographic writing but no examples were provided. James was satisfied with the hand sign book. He checked out the book and another one on the history of Stratham.

Back in the classroom, James perused the hand signing book. Several days later he finally settled on four hand symbols representing MOON, MAN, RUN, RIVER. He decided that the MAN, the Indian statue, was going to connect two rivers: "the rivers are going to join at the statue through the statue's mouth." The Indian statue would be the MAN who RUNs the RIVER. The MOON symbol was

troubling to him; he didn't know what it meant but didn't entertain the idea of eliminating it from his writing. Instead, he would grapple with it for several weeks. He felt he had enough planned and so he began to write again and finished The Old Coin chapter on March 1, the day after returning from the school's week-long winter break.

> They went inside and Tom said, "Look, what's on the other side of the coin?" He had turned the coin over. "Look at these strange symbols. I judge them to be indian symbols."
>
> [picture of the coin: one side had written: "Look for an Indian's knife" and "1861"; the other side had a picture of a knife and the four indian hand signs]
>
> Then Mark said, "Shouldn't we go to the library and find out the meaning of these symbols?"
> "Correct," said Tom.
> "Oliver and I could go to the Historical Society and see what the average coin from 1861 looked like," said Mark.
> "Great," said Tom. "I'll go to the library and see what I can find. Then we'll meet back here at one o'clock and trade information.
> The boys got on their bikes and set off for their destinations.

Outside of the planning ahead he did to connect the coin to the statue, no planning was impinging on his immediate writing. This condition was about to dissolve as he approached the writing of his third chapter.

For the moment, he was enjoying his mystery as it was unfolding. He again shared his writing the day after finishing chapter two with the whole class, seeking the audience reaction. This eagerness to update his classmates, was suggesting a change in heart about

sharing. After finishing, he carried his drawing of the coin with the symbols on it around to each cluster of desks, explaining the symbols. He told how he went to the library looking for "Indian sign language books." Again he was complimented for his introduction and for using Tom's room as headquarters. He was also asked again about where he got the idea to write this from. He answered, "The Three Investigators gave me the idea to write a mystery but I try to think up ideas on my own."

Planning: Promises to Make, Promises to Keep

At this juncture in his writing, James was beginning to feel the promises that his chapters were making. The degrees of freedom he enjoyed in his first two chapters were now fewer. His planning was being directed to some extent by what he had already written as well as what was to come. He couldn't continue to write until all the plans, big and small, were settled in his mind. He had spent most of the writing period thinking and planning. This was a very different writing experience for James, as he explained to me.

> In a lot of my books, actually, in every one I've written so far except this one, it [the plans] came to me along the way. ...Mysteries are harder to write because, first of all, you have to find the mystery and then of course you will eventually have to find some way for them to solve it so you almost have to plan it at the beginning to find out if the mystery is logical. That's what I have to do in order to make one that would make sense-- instead of coming to the end of the story and find out that all that I'd been writing couldn't possibly be happening because it's not logical. If you don't know what going to happen later, you can't even start to write."

As tough as it was, he was enjoying it: "What I'm enjoying about it is that you have to sit and think it all out-- plan it."

He wasn't sure what the boys would find at the historical society that would be helpful, if anything. But he had decided that in the library, they were going to find the meaning of the symbols and find a historical account of the town. (Both the library and historical society are the common places the boys in the book series use to understand clues.) "Tom's going to find the history of the town and say, "This looks interesting" and take it out, like I did over at the school library. And the book might say where the Indian statue is located."

His thinking and planning never stayed in the immediate plans for long. He decided to have the treasure be hidden in a cabin. The boys would find a secret passageway in the cabin into which one of the thin boys could fit. After finding nothing in the passageway, they would think they were in the wrong place. But then the boy would notice cracks on one of the passageway's walls: "There's going to be another passageway behind those cracks. It's going to take them some time to figure out that the cracks in the wall mean there's a passageway or something behind the wall-- that's the logic part of it [i.e., the logical deduction the boys have to make]."

He was also toying with two other decisions, both of which revealed his willingness to suspend his decision-making and sustain thinking over a stretch of time. The first decision involved whether the Indian statue would lead to another clue *or* lead them directly to the treasure. He toyed with the idea that the knife the Indian statue was holding would be pointed in the direction of the cabin, but that

didn't satisfy him. He didn't want the boys to find the treasure too fast because "that wouldn't be as much suspense."

The second decision he was still trying to make was the significance of the MOON symbol. He came up with the idea that the MOON symbol was combined with MAN, making MOON MAN, and the statue would have a moon symbol engraved on it. I remarked that I thought it was a good idea. He said he wasn't sure about it yet but that that's what he was thinking at the time. He wanted to take more time to think about it.

Two weeks later, while he was back to thinking and writing about his next chapter, he resolved both of his problems at once. He came up in a rush to tell me. The MOON on the coin would refer to the real moon. The boys would find the statue at night and the moon would shine through some carved-out hole on the knife the Indian held which would produce a pin of light illuminating where the next clue could be found. He liked this idea especially because it was exciting and because it got more clues into the story, creating more suspense.

In addition, this latter idea made more sense to him in contrast to his earlier idea of having the knife point in the direction of the cabin: James: "I want the knife to point to a clue that they'll have to figure out because the knife can't be pointing to the cabin because I don't want the cabin right there. It would be pretty boring if the cabin was right there-- it would be too simple for them to find-- but if the cabin's too far away, then that would be too hard because what's the logic of them finding it? It could be in that direction to a thousand miles or more!

Even with all these plans made, James wanted to go further to figure out exactly what the pin of light would be shining on and what the next clue would be. I was feeling that I should try to urge him back to writing. But the incomplete plan seemed to make him uncertain about whether his immediate, local plans would fit with the longer term plans. So I enthusiastically entered into a conversation to figure out the next clue.

James: Maybe the light is shining on a tree that's hollow and there's something inside it. Trees can last a long time, some California Redwoods are from 1600.
MM: Oh, okay. Well what do you think of that idea?
James: I'm not sure. A tree might get chopped down. It might be something else like possibly a rock. When it's turned over there's a crevice in it that's big enough to hide something. I'm not sure.
MM: So it could be a rock or a tree. Okay, let's take this a step further. So what kind of clue are they going to find in the rock or the tree or whatever?
James: I haven't figured that out yet.
MM: Is this clue going to lead them to the cabin or is it going to lead to another clue along the way?
James: Just whichever would be easier to write. There'll probably be another clue after that or this could be it.
MM: Well, let's see. What could this clue be? It could be a ring or something that they trace to [interrupted]
James: In one of the Hardy Boys, it's a ring-- so I don't want a ring.
MM: Oh okay... what about a house key?
James: [describes another Hardy Boys mystery that uses a house key]
MM: How about a map... or something that gives a clue to the cabin.
James: Well, in the Three Investigators there's a letter that gave a clue.
MM: Boy, well, it's hard to think of something that's not been used in those books! See, I never read those books and I came up with those ideas, you know, so

it's hard to come up with something totally original. I could always find a book that would have an idea that I've thought of and I thought it was an original idea and it's not. That happens to everyone all the time. Okay, well, we've thought of a letter, a ring, a key... hmm... could it be something else that's Indian, like an old weapon?

James: Wait a minute-- I saw that in a movie. A spear had a hollowed out part. There could be a map inside, like you thought of before.

MM: That's a possibility.

James: I think that would be a good idea.

MM: It could be stashed in a carved out part of a boulder.

James: It could be at the bottom.

MM: Yeah, where nobody would notice it.

James: It's almost under [the boulder] but not quite. I like some of those ideas. [Then James turns the conversation back to his immediate writing plans, reiterating what he had told me earlier] Tom's going to find a book on symbols and a book on the town and then he'll be reading and discover what he read about the statue and then find out what the symbols on the coin meant.

MM: Sounds like you're on your way!

James: They'll probably find out that there was no coin made like that back then. Do you think the boys [Mark and Oliver, at the Historical Society] should find anything?

MM: I don't know. I guess it depends on whether that would be helpful to you, helpful to them to figure things out.

James: I think I know what to do with my story now.

Adults Know Best: Looking for the Right Answer

James left our meeting feeling comfortable with where he was going with the story. He was looking forward to writing the next chapter. His idea at the time was to have Tom figure out the Indian symbols and find a reference to the Indian statue in the history book

of the town. But what he ended up doing, as he sat at his desk, was to begin to cook up another event that would precede Tom's translation of the symbols. He had entitled the chapter Oliver's Missing! and had begun to write. (In the series books, a common plot feature is that of having one of the boy sleuths be missing, chased, or trapped.) Oliver decides to leave Mark working at the Historical Society and head back to Tom's house on his bike. As he rides he thinks two men are following him in a car but he isn't sure so he makes "a series of right and left turns and sure enough, the car followed."

James told me that Oliver will try to elude the car and gets lost in the process, and it turns out that the men just wanted to ask him directions. James didn't know where to go from there. His confidence was down again.

James had enlisted my help in the past to brainstorm ideas with him as well as to follow his thinking and ask questions, but this interaction was different. James wanted me to make his choices for him and I felt his pressure on me to do so.

James: I'm stuck. I don't know if I should do that or what I should do.

MM: Why wouldn't these guys just ask for directions, roll down the window and shout "excuse me"? If I wanted to know how to get someplace, I sure wouldn't follow some boy on a bike for blocks and blocks. I'd be scaring him and getting myself more lost.

James: So what should I do with that?

MM: Well, anybody who follows someone that long is up to no good. I don't know if you want them to be bad guys.

James: No, it's too early. The boys don't even know what's going on yet.
MM: Well, in that case, these men are acting pretty strange.
James: So should I cross out that part?
MM: I don't know. [15 second silence]
James: I don't know what I should do with this, should I just skip that or what?
MM: Well, let's see. If you cut that part out about him being followed, then you're back to him heading for Tom's house.
James: So do you think I should keep it?
MM: I don't know James.
James: I can't think of any reason to keep this, can you?
MM: Ummm, if they're not going to kidnap Oliver, and if these guys are really just looking for directions, then the only reason I would consider keeping this in is for suspense: Oliver would be thinking, "Who are these guys?" and be scared. Let's say you get rid of that and now you're back to him getting on the bike and going to Tom's. What would happen next?
James: I don't know. Maybe he sees some guys looking around the yard.
MM: Is Tom home yet?
James: No, he's still at the library.
MM: Okay, so he sees some guys. Does he hear them talking maybe?
James: Yeah, maybe something about the coin or something.
MM: Then what happens?
James: He just stays there and listens to them.
MM: Okay, now, what if Oliver gets to Tom's and nobody's there. Then what will happen?
James: Then it's boring.
MM: Then it's boring, okay. Well, I think you ought to give this some more thought.
James: I think I'll just cross this out.

James timidly ran the side of his pencil lead back and forth over the paragraph about the men following Oliver. I felt at the time that

he was waiting for my reaction. I didn't give one. He paused, then blackened it out with a firmer hand.

The next day, James had changed chapter three's title to Straight From Its Mouth and sat staring at a part of the chapter he kept.

> Straight From Its Mouth
>
> In the Historical Society, Oliver and Mark weren't having too much luck.
>
> "You can stay and look, but I'm going back to Tom's house," said Oliver.
>
> "I'm staying to look. That's what Tom would want us to do."
>
> "So long," said Oliver as he briskly walked out the double doors. He got on his bike and headed for Tom's house.
>
> In about ten minutes, Oliver reached Tom's house. He parked his bike out front and headed toward the back of the house. He was about to turn the corner of the house when he heard voices coming from the backyard. He immediately stood flat against the house and strained his ears to listen.

Nancy approached James for a status report on his writing, knowing full well of his current indecision. She wanted to get him "moving" again and broke her policy of not volunteering ideas.

> Nancy: "What's cookin', James?"
> James: Oliver's at Tom's house and there are two men there.
> Nancy: Do you have a plan for these men?
> James: Right now I'm trying to figure out what they look like. Oliver couldn't see their faces in the shade."
> Nancy: Is it necessary to describe them?
> James: Yes, because something about the way they look will help Oliver identify them later.
> Nancy: do you want some suggestions off the top of my head? [James nodded] How about their height and hair color-- one could be 6 feet with blonde hair and the other could be shorter with dark hair.
> James: I'm looking for something a little different.

Nancy suggested a brace on a leg, something wrong with an arm, and a limp. James liked the idea of a limp.

Nancy also asked James about the "Its" in his chapter title. He told her he didn't want to give away any hints to the reader: if he wrote "Criminal's" instead of "Its", the reader would know something he didn't want them to know. Nancy responded, "Don't chapter titles tell new things sometimes? You know, give a clue or reveal something about what's coming?" James answered "yeah". Later he would change "*Its* Mouth" to " the *Criminal's* Mouth."

Five days after Nancy spoke with James, he was "stuck" once again. He seemed unable to commit to paper. He needed to know exactly what the men would say about the coin before putting pen to paper. He knew these men were looking for the coin but he didn't know how much these men should reveal to Oliver.

I was, by that time, very aware of James' overwhelming belief that every thing he wrote committed him to future plans. I wanted to release him from his need to know everything up front before writing. As well, although I generally felt good about collaborating with him, I worried that he was increasingly feeling unable to manage this writing without our constant dialogues. I wanted to affirm in James that he could figure this out by himself. If I stayed and helped, I might be giving him the message that I didn't think he could do it as well without my help, an implicit message, that Nancy had a hunch he'd been receiving in his life for a long time.

> MM: Why don't you take a clean piece of paper and play with the dialogue a bit, maybe write bits of dialogue you hear. Since you know they'll be talking about the coin,

> begin there. All writers write stuff that they end up changing. But it might help you. Try to approach this playfully. Maybe put yourself in one of those guy's heads-- what would he be thinking about and saying?

I left him, and I knew he wasn't too pleased. He sat for a while and then took a clean sheet of paper and started to draw trees. By the end of the period, he'd drawn a forest of trees.

The next day, James had begun to draw a picture describing the setting for his book. His trees became the background. He had drawn the Indian statue way back in the woods near a river. In the foreground was Tom's house with Oliver's bike parked in front, the tent the boys slept in, the two men, and Oliver at the side of the house.

For a week, he spent his time silently drawing trees and also spent a good amount of time talking with classmates and listening to their writing. He never read what he'd written or asked for their help. At one point, he showed his drawing to Nancy and explained the importance of its features to the story.

Forcing James' Hand: It's Your Decision

On March 23, Nancy met with James for a status report. She had been watching him drawing his forest for a week and wanted to get him writing again, to commit to some choices and move forward.

He told her he was toying with the idea of having a garbage truck drowned out most of what the men would be saying to each other. But he couldn't make up his mind. Nancy felt pressure from James to direct him to the "right" answer.

Nancy asked him, "Now are you sure he's heard enough? Has he heard enough to lead to the next part of the story?" James hesitantly answered "Yes," adding, "What do you think?" She responded, "James, it's your story. You are the decision maker, you are the one who has to decide which ideas to go with." Then she forced him to play his hand. In a gentle, matter-of-course way, she said,

> I guess what you're going to have to do today is to get it down on paper. It seems you have all these ideas in your mind and now you have to go make some decisions. I guess that's what makes this hard--is making all these decisions. So what you need to do is, it's 9:00 and so by 9:30 I want you to have made those decisions, written that conversation, and get them out of that yard.

James went back to his seat, and by the end of the period, James had gotten them out of that yard-- and even farther.

> "Hey, Pete, I know when I was here last night--". Just then, a garbage truck came down the street and Oliver couldn't hear the rest of the conversation. Then the guy named Pete said, "We'd better get out of here before someone comes home." The men began heading in Oliver's direction.
>
> Oliver left in a hurry. he got on his bike and headed for the library. He got there in record time, gaping for breath. When he went into the library, he found Tom gazing at the books on Indian symbols.
>
> Tom lit right up when he saw Oliver. "Did you find anything?" he asked.
>
> "You'll never believe what happened to me," said Oliver, forgetting Tom's question. "I was riding my bike to your house and when I got there I heard voices coming from the backyard. I went to the side of the house and lay flat against it. then I went right up close to the corner and tried to hear what they were saying. Here's what I heard of their conversation. "Hey, Pete, I know when I was here last night."
>
> "Go on," said Tom.

"That's it," said Oliver. "A garbage truck came down the street and I couldn't hear the rest of their conversation. Oh, I almost forgot. Then they began to head in my direction so I left in a hurry but I stayed long enough to notice that the guy named Pete limped on his left leg."

"Did you see their faces?" asked Tom.

"No, because at that time their faces were in the shade of a tree, and if I didn't leave when I did they would have spotted me."

"We'd better get Mark and tell him what happened to you."

"Let's go."

"Wait a minute. First I have to check these books out. I even found a book to read tonight on the history of our town."

"Well, hurry up. I'm going to wait outside."

After about two minutes, which seemed about two hours to Oliver, Tom came out. The boys got on their bikes and headed for the Historical Society.

When James checked in with Nancy at the end of the period, she congratulated and complimented him.

Nancy: I love that phrase "ignoring Tom's question" because it shows how excited he was, and also "You won't believe what happen to me." The dump truck idea was really good, too. It's a clever way to end that conversation. It could have been a thunder cloud or a jet plane but I liked the dump truck because it was the right time of the day for a dump truck to be coming by.

I had a chance to talk to James after the writing period. He was feeling good about what he had accomplished.

James: I decided I didn't need to write what the men were saying about the coin because all the boys need to know is that one of the men was there that night. If I had the men talking a lot about the coin, it might have given a big clue to the boys and I didn't want that. It's too early. I have most of the big ideas, but it's all those little ideas!

I asked him about what had been going on with him for the past three weeks "while he was drawing all those trees." His answer revealed a lot about his writing processes.

> James: I've been thinking about it for a while and I had a lot of decisions to make: What the distinguishing mark should be on one of them, what the men were going to say, and I was also troubled by what words to put it in. And what should happen next: Should the men see Oliver so that would give them a reason to kidnap him later--because he saw them trespassing? There were other decisions, too, but I forgot now. There were a lot of decisions but I finally got them all down.

Around that time, I told James I'd be happy to type his mystery on my computer, if he wished and if Nancy agreed it was okay. He was delighted by the idea and Nancy subsequently gave me permission. He gave me his introduction and first two chapters, and when I returned the typed copies, even though I had spaced them so that each chapter went beyond a page, he was surprised they weren't longer. After reading them, he tried to think of anything more he could write in them to make them longer, but concluded that they said everything they needed to say, adding that they couldn't possibly be combined because "when it changes from one idea you really need to change the chapter. Because I really don't think there's a way I could connect them without putting in a new chapter because they're two BIG things happening."

Ownership and Originality: Planting Seeds

James' sense of ownership seemed to be attenuated by any recognizable idea that came to him from outside his own head. What he said and what he did were at odds: he used many ideas from the

mystery books he read to construct his own mystery (despite his constant remarks that "that was already used in such-and-such mystery") and also he sought regularly Nancy and I to get help with planning ideas and decisions. Over the months and often, he brought up the subject of using ideas that I had come up with. After I had suggested using Indian symbols on the coin he said, "Remind me to put your name on this book." I had replied "all writers ask for ideas from others in some way but that didn't entitle them to be an author." I had also given my opinion on several occasions in response to his worries about taking ideas from books. One such time, described in an earlier section (in Planning: Promises to Make, Promises to Keep) he discovered that ideas that came off the top of my head were featured in the Three Investigators series, and that I had never read these books. Another time, he told me that he had thought up the idea of having a passageway and later discovered that idea in a mystery. In response, I had asked him, "James, do you think Franklin Dixon never read a book or saw a movie that had a secret passageway involved? These ideas are just in the air. A secret passageway has a lot of appeal for a lot of us-- to imagine finding a space like that." At another time, he remarked to me that when he wrote in the past, he usually would write by himself. "But this one I've mostly been up to you for help. And we've been discussing the ideas for it and all that and it's helped me a lot so far."

Nancy had a quarterly evaluation conference with James about his writing and writing processes. Nancy got him talking about his sharing habits as an entry into encouraging him to meet with his classmates for writing conferences. He said that he preferred to sit

and do his own writing and reminded her that he did ask for her help and mine. He began to list some places in his writing that he got stuck and we helped him, even recalling the time I gave him the radio announcer idea for his early year piece, Trading Places. They went on to discuss the purposes of Whole Class Shares and Peer Conferences. James told her that if he got ideas from people "then the piece is not yours anymore." This was the answer Nancy was expecting to hear and ardently disagreed with him, giving an example from her own experience. So far that year, about thirty visitors had come to her room to observe how reading and writing were taught. She asked him what he thought they came for and he replied, "help?" She told him (paraphrased):

> "Absolutely. They are here to see different ways to do reading and writing. Do you think that most people are any different? After all, they are all teachers-- they do teaching-- but they are coming here for help and then they're taking what they learn back to their classrooms and they change or do things differently because of what they learned-- because they asked for help."

James replied, "Now that you put it that way, I see what you mean and maybe that's all right." Nancy reminded him that the choice was his if he took someone's idea and developed it, citing that morning's example of Sarah coming up with an idea that helped Kim. She encouraged him to share with his classmates, telling him that that was at the heart of why she encouraged them all to share-- because they all have ideas that can help each other. After their chat, Nancy hoped that he would take her advice to heart, saying to me, "Now the seed is planted."

The truth that James had a hard time facing was that this mystery writing threw him some curves he'd never encountered before. In the past, he had been able to manage as the solitary writer at his desk, picking up ideas from his classmates here and there when they shared with the whole class. He generally had not needed to seek help from outside himself. In order to succeed, he had to compromise his sense of ownership by borrowing freely from books for his plot, setting, and characters. As well, he found he needed someone (in his mind, an adult) to listen to his ideas and talk them into a plausible construction of a mystery. The cumulative effect of our talks seemed to take hold in James' behavior in the upcoming months, partly because of his own move towards his classmates, but also because of what his classmates taught him about themselves as writers and responders.

Seeking a Peer Conference: The Seed Sprouts

On March 29, James sat at his desk, alternating between writing a few words and staring off in space. Hal, who sat at one of the desk clusters across the room, came over and stood beside James' desk. It was clear they had planned ahead of time to have a conference because Hal didn't say a word. James got up and they went to sit on the floor near the windowed wall. Although I didn't ask, I feel certain that James was the initiator of the conference because people didn't ask James to confer with them (having known his solitary habits for many months). I was pleased with the pairing because Hal was especially thoughtful and serious in his comments to peers.

Hal read his piece first, a tale of a boy's encounter with a witch. Hal represented the boy's inner thoughts as subtexts following the various statements the boy actually said to the witch. James had listened carefully, glancing occasionally at Hal's text as he read. He was very complimentary: "I liked that, like, '"I'll always come back' (I'll never come back)'. That's a neat technique. "A beautiful house (a spooky haunted house)." I never learned that technique. That's so neat."

James then read all three of his chapters. Hal sat very still, taking in every word. When James finished, Hal displayed his ability to follow James' thoughts and provoke further ones.

Hal: Do you know where you're going with it?
James: Yep. Well, okay. Here are the Indian symbols [showing Hal the picture of the coin] and its says MOON MAN RUN RIVER ...and you know where they found that, right?
Hal: Yeah.
James: Well, Tom's going to find in the history book there's a statue that, like, runs the river... [describes his plot]
Hal: Are they're going to get the men that were talking? What were their names? Pete?
James: Pete was one of them-- he was the one that was there the night before.
Hal: Yeah
James: Well, when I started out the story, he was--

At that point, Nancy had already called for the peer conferences to break up because it was time for the whole-class share. Regrettably, she had to tell them to put their discussion aside to rejoin the class. Although their conference was started too late to go its full course, I was surprised and pleased, especially because their interchange gave validation to what Nancy had said to James two

days before. However, James didn't continue to confer with Hal. He was getting a lot of help from Nancy and me and I think we, inadvertently, offset his finding the need to reach out to classmates.

"Reading" Adult Opinions

James' writing was going slowly. He labored over everything and continued to check with Nancy and me about various writing concerns he had. Nancy and I felt James' desire to abdicate choices to us that he was very capable of making himself. On such occasions, we tried to lead him to answer his own question. For example, James came to me and read his last few sentences:

> "We'd better get Mark and tell him what happened to you," said Tom.
> "Let's go."
> "Wait a minute. First I have to check these books out. I even found a book to read tonight on the history of our town."

James asked, "Do you think it would be all right to just say 'After about two minutes, Tom came out.' or should I explain what he did?" These kinds of questions were becoming more frequent. Even though, by this time, he knew I wasn't going to answer these kinds of questions for him, he tried to "read" my opinion by what I did say. This happened with talks with Nancy, as well. James would sometimes tell me the opinion she gave him when he asked her about such-and-such, and I, having watched the interchange, knew she had done no such thing. On the occasion of this question to me, I turned the question back to him by turning back to his first chapter where he had written: "After about an hour, Tom woke up."

MM: Does that sound okay to you?
James: [rereading text] Yeah.
MM: But saying "After two minutes" sounds kind of funny to you?
James: Yeah. [He rereads his newly written section again.] Now it sounds pretty good.
MM: You think it sounds okay?
James: Yeah.

In many interchanges such as this, if he wasn't sure he had "read" my opinion or Nancy's, he would answer, "I'm not sure" rather than a straightforward "yes" or "no", and then ask, "Do YOU think it would be better if....?" But in this particular incident, he either was led to make up his own mind or had decided that, since I hadn't suggested a rewrite of the sentence in chapter one, then it probably was okay to just write "After two minutes, Tom came out."

Although both Nancy and I tried to keep the choices in James' corner, there were times when James became clearly overwhelmed by the multi-layered concerns he tried to juggle. In the following month, his frustration would begin to reach an uncomfortable level, and we would step in to support him.

The Muddle

On March 30, James managed to write one sentence. He had a bad cold, but it wasn't the cold that was holding him back. It was decisions. He already had described Oliver joining Tom in the library and telling him what happened at Tom's house. Now the two boys were going to join Mark at the Historical Society. James was trying to decide if Mark would discover information about the coin in a coin collector's book. Also, he was toying with having "something exciting

happening" as the three boys left the Historical Society and headed to their homes.

He read and reread his sentence: "When they got there, they found Mark glancing through a book on coins." He made several trips to Nancy's desk to get tissues for his nose and chatted with Keith. He was overwhelmed with decisions.

He reread his sentence again, this time aloud in a commanding voice, willing it to tell him what to do. It didn't listen. He lightly pounded his fist on the desk several times.

Jonathan and Cameron went to a spot on the floor to plan a series of drawings to accompany Jonathan's story. Keith decided to join Jonathan and Cameron. James followed. He didn't bring his writing.

The following day marked a week since Nancy gave James the goal to "get them out of that yard" (sparking a spurt of writing that day), and James had barely written twenty words. She decided to step in once again. It was the beginning of the writing period and she asked James to tell her his immediate plans. He told her Tom and Oliver were going to go tell Mark what happened to Oliver at Tom's house, and then the boys were going to disperse to their own homes. Tom was going to be looking in the Indian sign language book and deciphering the coin's symbols. Nancy set a very reasonable goal: to have Tom IN the book by the end of the period. He went to work. Within a few minutes, he had written:

> When they got there, they found Mark glancing through a book on coins.
>
> "Wait until you hear what happened to Oliver," said Tom.
>
> So Oliver told his story once more to Mark.

"Wow!" said Mark in amazement.

"I better get back to my house before my mother gets worried," said Tom. "Look, it's nearly 1:30."

"I was supposed to be home at 1:00," said Mark.

The boys ran outside, got on their bikes, and headed for home.

When Tom got home, his mother said, "Lunch won't be ready for an hour." Since Mark and Oliver had gone home, Tom decided to read the book he got from the library on Indian symbols. He got the book and started translating.

At the end of the period, he showed Nancy his writing. She laughed and affirmed that he'd met her goal.

On April 1, James was writing about Tom looking at the Indian Symbol book to translate the symbols from the coin. Tom was going to find the four symbols in the book. Then he was to figure out what the knife symbol meant. The coin's knife symbol, centered among the other four symbols, was supposed to inform Tom of the order the four symbols were to be read in by pointing to the MOON symbol. James was searching for a way to show Tom struggling.

James: "I can't figure how to put it. I could say 'Along the way, he figured out what the knife points to' but that doesn't make much sense. It just doesn't sound good. It should take him a while."
MM: How can you show that?
James: I don't know. But he shouldn't figure it out instantly.

So far he had written:

He got the book and started translating. In about half an hour he found the coin read Moon Man Run River.

I asked him to tell me the process Tom has to go through, from start to finish, and as he relayed me the steps, I wrote them down: *Finds out what symbols mean* [MAN RIVER RUN MOON], *Finds out what*

knife means [tells the order to read the symbols in], *Puts symbols in order* [MOON MAN RUN RIVER], *Finds statue in book* [reference to lost Indian statue in town history book]. I told him to not worry about anything else for now, reassuring him that what he wrote wouldn't affect his future plans "I think you'll find that you're not going to get yourself in a muddle." Because he wanted to show Tom struggling, he needed to ignore the two sentences he had written, which didn't show the struggle the way he wanted, and start from the beginning --when Tom sits down to decipher the coin. I told him to show Tom struggling through these steps. My direction proved to be of no help. My words to him, to SHOW the steps, would have been better shown themselves.

Three school-days later (April 5), he had added a sentence.

> He figured out the logic of the knife was to point to where the symbols start.

The next day James was still in a muddle. He still recognized that Tom had deciphered the coin "too fast." His frustration was very high. A fourth grader from the year before told me that if he knew all the ideas before he wrote them, it got boring to write, and he usually quit. But James was different. He felt a strong need to plan everything-- and as I followed him through the writing, his instincts were pretty much true. And he had the gumption to see his plans through. He was just so cautious and perfectionistic that he had a hard time putting down ideas that later might have to be cut. At this juncture, he needed someone to help him through the particulars of his current writing process, to show him how to show. I sat down next to him, telling him, "We've just got to get you out of this muddle.

James." James' reply to me was, "Yeah, 'cause I'm really stuck." I engaged his imagination and together we "lived" through Tom's discovery.

MM: Let's create this from the top [drawing the coin with its symbols]. He's got this coin. Okay, you're Tom now. You've got this Indian symbol book and you're sitting at home and you're settling down in your chair. You've got this coin and this book in front of you.

James: Using a magnifying glass.

MM: You're looking at it through a magnifying glass.

James: And then he starts looking at these symbols. It seems like it would take him more than a half hour because he has to look through the book to find the symbols. He can't, like, look at the back of the book [index] for the words and then see the symbols. He'd have to be looking through the book and at every symbol I'd have to stop to look at the coin to see if it matches.

MM: Okay. [writing down what he said]

James: He just has to keep doing that and once he finds the symbols.

MM: Which one does he find first?

James: Uh, well, he'd probably draw a coin and then write the words for what the symbols mean and he'd probably use a magnifying glass to make sure it's the right symbol [pauses] or maybe he thinks it's the right symbol but there's, like, just a line difference and so it's really a different word. So it could have been simple but it turns out to be really hard [to figure out]. Like, maybe have two similar symbols but one has two lines, one straight and one across and the other...

MM: Okay [writing] He finds a symbol...

James: Maybe, I said maybe. And, oh, he looks up the wrong symbol

MM: [I felt him making more subplans that would lead him further into a muddle] All right. Now James, there are consequences-- that's why you're saying "maybe"-- do you want him to find out what the

symbol means because if you don't, you have to think about when he will discover his error that the symbol he translated was slightly different than the one he wanted to translate.

James: Probably I want him to do that because then he won't be able to find the statue in the [history] book. And if he doesn't find the statue in the book, well,

MM: Then what?

James: Well, if he doesn't know what the symbol means, he won't be able to find the statue in the book.

MM: Right. So what are you saying?

James: Well, he probably has to know what all the symbols mean. [James recognizing the consequences of Tom's not finding out what the symbols mean]

MM: Okay. That idea of him finding symbols that are similar-- you could use that to have him recognize that he made a mistake-- and he keeps looking. You could have him saying "Oh but that's a little different-- it's got a line that's diagonal..." like that OR you could tell what's happening-- like, "he found a symbol that looked similar but he recognized that one of the lines was diagonal instead of straight." Either way, James, you are showing that he's struggling and you've accomplished what you wanted to do.

James: Yeah.

MM: Okay, so try not to look at those sentences you wrote and just start new. Just imagine him like we were doing.

James instantly started to write. I sat with him a couple of minutes to ensure he put pencil to paper. He voiced a sentence and then wrote it. Then came a second sentence. He was on his way again.

The next day, he went up to show Nancy what he'd written.

He got the coin and started translating. He was flipping through the book. At every symbol, he stopped to look at the coin to see if the symbols matched. He

> found that various symbols looked similar. He drew a coin, and every time he found a symbol that was on the coin, he put the word on the piece of paper. He was looking for the last symbol, the knife. Finally on the last page, he found the knife. He found that its meaning was to point to where the symbols start. So he had not found out the meaning of the symbols. MOON, MAN, RUN, RIVER. But what could that possibly mean?
>
> Tom didn't realize fifty-five minutes had gone by. Just then, Tom's mother yelled, "Lunch is ready!"

Nancy complimented him on how he showed how tough it was for Tom to figure out the symbols. James relayed to her that writers give away what's going to happen by saying, "finally on the last try" (see earlier section: Influence of Books on James' Writing: Reading Like a Writer), a comment he had made to me in the past and to Nancy in his journal. He went on to say, "You know, I've learned that you can't *not* do that." Nancy replied, "Sure you can, you can say: 'about in the middle of trying'" and James said, "But that's the same thing." Using his knowledge of mysteries as written, he had concluded there was no way to get around "giving away" the success of a character's efforts: he had written: "Finally, on the last page he found the knife."

The next section of his text was influenced by Nancy and the Hardy Boys mystery James was currently reading (The Sinister Signpost). James had just finished the part of his own mystery where Tom deciphers the coin and then is called down to lunch. James went to Nancy to let her know how he was progressing in his writing.

(Paraphrased conversation - April 8)
Nancy: I know Mom is going to make him eat that lunch because moms make their kids eat their lunch but how do you think he'll eat that lunch?
James: He'd be anxious to tell his friends.
Nancy: Well, how can you write about his eating lunch to make the anxiousness show through?
James: Oh yeah, well, "He ate his lunch hurriedly."
Nancy: Well, whatever is your style. Maybe he's going to shove it in his mouth or maybe he's going to take big gulping bites or maybe he's going to eat it hurriedly but yes, there is a way to show that Mom is going to make him eat that lunch but he needs to eat it in a hurry so that he can go off and tell his friends.
James: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, okay.

Similar to Katie, James took a characterization of Tom's mother from The Sinister Signpost. He used his own unique language but he wanted to portray Tom's mother similarly to the Hardy boys' mother. He had read a part where one of the Hardy boys was rushing out of the house and his mother "didn't have a chance to protest." James acknowledged this passage from the book and Nancy as helping to write the following part of his chapter.

"I'll be there in a minute," yelled Tom.

When Tom came downstairs, he found lunch on the table. He immediately sat down and began to shove a ham sandwich down his throat.

"Slow down," said his mother who had just walked in the room.

Tom began to slow down, but was still eating at quite a rapid pace. His mother, who was watching, just gave a sorrowful look.

"Can I be excused?" asked Tom, who at the minute had his mouth full.

"I guess so," said his mother, who by now had her head in her hands.

Tom picked the coin off the table, put it in his pocket, and dashed out of the door yelling, "I'll be at Oliver's."

> Before his mother had a chance to protest, the door slammed shut, leaving Tom's mother with her mouth open, but no words coming out.

I didn't talk with James or observe him for about a week, except to note that he had continued to write. He appeared to be light-hearted as he wrote; the brooding James was gone. He wrote a little more of the chapter and then the week long spring break came which lasted, if you count weekends, for nine days. On April 27, the Monday they returned, James chose to work on his lynx report for science class, as were most of his classmates. The following Monday, May 3, I stopped at his desk to just say hello, and I asked if he'd worked on his mystery. He said he'd been working on his animal report. I asked, "Does it feel good to be taking a break from it?" and he nodded. I added, "I'll bet it does."

James' New Vision of his Classmates: Asking for Help

Nancy and I had helped him through his rough beginning chapters and had started to back off from the close collaboration with him. After the first week of April, he seemed to take off on his own. Both of us were pleased to find him separating from his close engagement with us. As he broke with the close pattern of interaction with us, he also was developing a new vision of his classmates, looking for who could help. It couldn't be just anyone. It had to be someone of his intellectual equal. It began slowly, with his conference with Hal, but then he did something totally unexpected.

After May 4, he had finished his lynx report and was back to writing the mystery. He worked on it for several days and on May 11, got up to share the latest chapter with the whole class, something

he had not done for quite a while. In his story, he had written that Tom had ridden his bike over to Mark's house and the two were off to pick up Oliver. When James finished reading, he specifically asked Gary for ideas! I had observed children making book recommendations to particular people before, but I had never before seen a student, within the context of the whole class share, ask help for their writing from a particular individual. James wanted ideas but wanted control over who would help.

Gary was a brilliant student, one whom I think James felt himself akin to, although they had not developed any particular relationship together. Gary had listened carefully and quickly came up with ideas for James. He suggested changing the setting from Stratham to Arlington, Virginia so that the boy investigators could be near the national mint, having the boys investigate the coin's origin there, and having the man at the mint, from whom they get assistance, have a limp-- he would be the bad guy Oliver saw at Tom's house. James loved these ideas and was to use every one in his mystery.

Over the course of writing his mystery, James' notions of the solitary writer constructing a text from nothing "out there" had been maximally tested in this mystery-writing venture. His notions of unqualified ownership and originality didn't hold up as he propped ideas up with those from books, Nancy and me, and finally, a classmate. In the end, he learned that he could reserve his choice over the ideas and particular resources he would use, thereby maintaining ownership of his writing.

That Whole Class Share in which James asked Gary for ideas marked the beginning of a bond between the two boys. The two

boys read eagerly each other's book recommendations and brought their enthusiasm to the small reading groups. Although James continued to spend time writing his mystery, he and Gary also began meeting together during peer conference time to read their own writing and, eventually, to plan and begin writing their own piece together. When I would pass by them as they sat on the floor-- so animated and excited-- I marveled at the transformation James had made. I never would have predicted such development.

He would continue to share with his classmates and receive accolades for such things as his descriptions, "use of words" and the length of his piece. As well, Kenny would volunteer an idea about having twin brothers (the man with the limp would masquerade as his twin brother who worked at the mint) which solved a plot glitch James was working on.

At the end of the year, James would still be working on his mystery. He would not finish the story that year but would continue it into the next one. I made visits to his fifth grade classroom and took installments of what he finished home to type for him. He stopped writing it some time during the middle of the year. I gave him my phone number to call me if he resumed writing it but he never called. I don't know if he ever did finished it but, to me and, perhaps to James, finishing it was of little consequence. It had served its purposes.

Conclusions

James' decision to write a mystery brought unexpected challenges to his writing processes. His "plan as I go" strategy had to be

abandoned within two chapters. The process of writing itself coupled with his knowledge of how these mysteries he read were written, revealed the necessity for long range planning.

Alfred Hitchcock's Three Investigators mystery books provided a story structure for setting up and resolving a mystery with a progression of clues. He was able to borrow a myriad of ideas to support his writing: from characters, setting, and dialogue, to ways of constructing clues and ways for the characters to figure out their significance (e.g., the boys do library research). His position to authors was one of apprentice-writer, looking to learn how to craft a mystery. In this position, James imitated their style as much as content, and he was aware of doing so.

James promoted Nancy and I to the level of collaborators and mentors, seeking us at every turn for ideas related to planning, specific ideas (e.g., the coin's clue, the bad guy's limp), and opinions. We added strategies to his writing process repertoire: outlining a local plan so as to have a visual representation to support thinking, "living through" a scene to enhance ideas and planning, and writing for discovery. We also encouraged him to try, in various parts of his text, a show-not-tell style of writing. When James became paralyzed with indecision, Nancy, especially, tried to foster James' ability to face uncertainty and commit to decisions.

James also learned the power of joint attention through our sustained, focused conversations. As we made our private thoughts available to each other for exploration and revision, attention shifted from his thoughts to mine, to the text, and back again in continuous triangulation. In doing so, the individual contributions of each of us

became blurred. Through this, I think his initial concern for delineating my contributions from his became less of a concern over time as he discovered the benefits of collaboration.

Of equal importance was our exchanges with James which aimed at altering his notions of ownership and originality. His behavior (of seeking collaboration with us) and observations about ideas (original ideas are hard to come by), coupled with discussions with us, made him confront the inescapable social influences we all face as we invent.

Nancy encouraged James to meet with his classmates and get ideas from them. He began by participating in conferences and hearing others ideas, but when his need for ideas became great, he exercised his option to choose who would help him. As he ventured to collaborate on a joint-authored piece with Gary, he entered the effort with past experience with Nancy and me, knowing what two minds could do together. And as he became more open to all of his classmates, he discovered resources in people he would not have expected to have been able to help.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Eliot Mishler in his article "Meaning in Context: Is There Any Other Kind?" (1979) reminds us that our traditional methodology, with its intent to establish universal laws of behavior, has stripped away the contexts in which individuals are situated. In so doing, we have not been in a position to be, as Judy Dunn says, "sensitive to the subtleties of their social understanding" (quoted from Bruner, 1990). Writing research is beginning to redress this situation.

In this study, I described the workings of a socially-charged classroom and the particular ways that it functions for three children who participated in it. The ways in which these children "read" and "take" from it is both a function of what it offers and their own personal characteristics, development, and motives.

To summarize and draw conclusions to my findings, I will begin with the motives that drive each of these individuals in relation to the community. Kenny was a child who by virtue of his less sophisticated persona was seen by the community as somewhat different. He was not invited into the informal networks as much as he used the latitude of permissable participations to assert himself in. His motivation for writing, and the written products themselves, were the means to place himself centrally in the community.

Katie enjoyed an easier relationship with the class-- she was popular and had a comfortable niche with her friend Mandy, and many other friends outside of this classroom. Her motivation was to do well academically and she used writing to that purpose, pushing herself towards fiction to achieve what her friend Mandy enjoyed.

James stood in greatest contrast to Kenny in that James sought insulation from his classmates' influence in order to retain his uniqueness as a writer. He wanted his writing abilities and achievements to stand out in the community.

The motivations of the three students, in tandem with what the classroom offered, determined their interaction patterns. Kenny, in not being invited to join peer conferences, talked casually to those at his desk cluster or those who were involved in making book covers for their published work or typing pieces into the computer. During the weeks The Love Book was being created, Kenny had everyone coming to him during peer conference to drop off their contributions and to ask how the book was coming. The Whole Class Shares allowed him to take center stage in his community and so he used this context constantly, sharing anything but his current piece. His teachers were his main responders as he wrote so that he could feel the full impact of his writing on his classmates when they heard it in Whole Class Share for the first time. By writing action-adventures with classmates as characters, he maximized their responsiveness to him when he shared.

Katie's pattern of interaction was to meet mainly with her friend and classmate, Mandy, who could help her learn how to write the kind of fiction she loved to read. The action-adventure variety that

so many of her classmates wrote was not held in high esteem by Katie, so meeting with them did not offer her what she wanted. She did, however, value the group as an audience and shared willingly her writing in Whole Class Shares.

James, for the first part of the year, generally avoided sharing in peer conferences and Whole Group Shares because of his fear of being plagiarized. He held his writing to different standards than most of his colleagues and so he sought out the adults in the room to help him, and beloved books.

Each of these students "read" what the classroom interaction contexts had to offer and used them in accordance with their motives.

Sources of Influence

Being a part of a classroom community in which the flow of talk around classmates' and authors' texts was constant, the resources of books, classmates, and teachers made their imprint on Kenny, Katie, and James in ways unexpected by them.

In the next three sections, I will summarize the influence of these resources on each of the three children and draw attention to the unique pattern of impact each of these resources rendered on them.

Books

For Katie and James, the excitement of particular books led them to try to write like the authors, which lead both into unexpected challenges. Both had acquired a sense of plot structure from their considerable amount of reading which helped frame their stories. Whereas James was able to talk about and use the plot structures

consciously and flexibly for his writing, Katie could not. She had a hard time coordinating plot structure with the local plans she faced. To offset this difficulty of creating, she often attempted to use snippets of scenes from books she was concurrently reading, to some success. This strategy provided evidence of her tenuous sense of control over the process of fiction-writing, not because she used scenes, but because in two of the three times she did, she was not able to adapt them to her text.

All three children enjoyed the "living through" feeling of texts described by Rosenblatt (1983). This feeling involves the identification of the reader with characters-- their situations, motives, and perceptions. Katie and James identified with characters in their books: James became the bright, logical leader of the three young sleuths and Katie, the student overwhelmed by schoolwork and the friend who felt mistreated by friends. Kenny came by this experience more directly by using himself and others in his writing. This feeling of living a life in a text world was a powerful one for all three children and inspired them to write.

Rosenblatt (1983) and others (e.g., Bleich, 1975; Culler, 1981) discuss the reader's response to literature as one in which the person "reads" his or her own life's contexts into those contexts created in the text world. Katie had imagined the settings of the books (e.g., theater, restaurant, pajama party at home, school) as those in her real world, as best shown in her second fiction, Friends Forever. She then adapted her own experiences in those settings to meet the needs of her plot and theme, however unevenly. Her sense of control over the enterprise of fiction-writing remained shaky but, overall,

her identification with characters and their settings and circumstances from books was an asset to her writing.

Katie and James acquired various elements from their beloved books. For example, both had picked up the authors' tone and style of dialogue. I have wondered about the extent to which the "lived-through" feeling of books, of knowing characters (especially those that were constants in series books) and what they would say, helped them. Katie told me on a number of occasions that she wasn't aware of trying to "sound" like them. It was the direct lived through experience that allowed her to create conversations in her writing that closely matched those in her books. James, on the other hand, acquired the tone and style of dialogue but was very much aware of trying to sound like the three boys' in the books.

James and Katie differed in the way in which they read books. Although both "lived through" the experience created by authors, they differed in their abilities to consider the author's writing independent from the experience the author created. Katie was unreflective about authors' writing craft whereas James paid attention to the decisions they made. His position to authors was one of apprentice-writer. He was able to consciously imitate style and content in greater depth and in a more integrated manner than Katie which was shown not only in his writing but in his ability to talk about his decisions and those made by authors. His greater skill and control in writing fiction may have contributed to his ability to turn outward and take in what authors do.

Classmates

The direct influence of Kenny's classmates showed up constantly in his writing. He decided to write fiction because others did so. His mentors were his classmate-writers, all boys who wrote action-adventures. Like James and Katie who were drawn to write particular kinds of fiction because of beloved books, Kenny was drawn to action-adventure fiction because that was the kind he most enjoyed hearing in Group Shares. The genre was entertaining but its real attractiveness to Kenny was its ability to get classmates involved in the writing through its use of classmates as characters and the heightened responsiveness these texts received. Kenny was also quick to pick up on the literary devices classmates used that received accolades from the class audience. And he used the ideas classmates offered to him for future adventures.

Katie's move to fiction was, in part, prompted by the high value fiction received in this class, but also because of her desire to achieve what Mandy achieved: teachers' high praise and winning the Young Authors Contest. She, like Kenny, was willing to leave the relative comfort and ease of personal narrative to meet these goals. In doing so, her classmates took a more critical stance toward her fiction writing when she shared during Whole Class Share. Their comments had great potential for helping her with her logical inconsistencies.

When I spoke to Katie about what she noticed about authors' writing, the lived-through feeling seemed to circumvent conscious attention to craft. However, in reading her classmates' texts, she was better able to talk about their individual writing traits. I think that the living-through feeling she experienced reading books did not

accompany her reading of classmates' texts and thus she was able to abstract herself from them, and look objectively at features of their writing.

Katie heard Mandy's texts daily and recognized strengths that she admired. However, Katie didn't understand Mandy's writing processes because they were so different from her own. Although they shared the same values on character, theme and realistic plots, Katie wasn't able to learn from hearing the development and revisions of Mandy's texts. In Katie's inexperience in writing fiction, her concern for plot overshadowed her attention to character. From the standpoint of Katie's own concerns, Mandy's explorations of characters and plot were misunderstood and confusing. Although the girls didn't generally help each other to write, Mandy drew Katie's attention to craft when she changed some of the verbs in Katie's text to more descriptive ones (e.g., "said" to "muttered"). Without their close affiliation, I doubt Katie would have attended to crafting her language as she eventually did.

James got ideas from classmates for his early-year fiction when they shared their writing with the class. He didn't like to admit that he got ideas, but he did. The need to hear his audience's praise of his mystery prompted him to read his work during the Whole Group Shares and peer conferences a little more often than during the first half of the year. But in both contexts, he kept his guard up to ward off ideas they might volunteer.

His choice of Hal as a conference partner was quite telling. Of all the boys in the class, Hal was least likely to "inflict" his ideas on James' sensibilities. This suggests James knew his classmate-

resources but had held firm in his avoidance of them. When James conferred with Hal, he found himself acquiring a structural form from Hal's writing that he found very interesting. As well, he found Hal willing to ask questions to fuel his thinking without asserting unwelcome ideas on him. When he became overwhelmed with his need for ideas, he finally accepted help from a particular classmate whom he thought was on par with his intellect. And subsequent to that move to a particular classmate, he discovered that help could come from classmates he didn't expect could be helpful. Although I feel certain he retained some need for separateness from his classmates, he revised his notions of classmates as viable resources.

Contrasting Features. The contrasting features found within classmates' texts allowed all three children to define more clearly for themselves what it was they wanted to strive for in their writing.

Kenny, in facing the challenges of creating a piece of fiction, continuously tested his notions of how "fiction," "true fiction," and "true stories" are composed, by asking classmates questions about the degree to which they worked from their own experiences within a piece. Kenny's concern for "putting in action and adventure" led him to perceive (or followed from his perception of) the variation of action in the class and to define two kinds: mundane ("scratching their heads") and adventure ("swinging from a vine"). Katie viewed the action-adventure fiction as not for her. Listening to it helped to shape and define, by its contrasting features to the fiction she read, what she considered good fiction: attention to character, theme, and realistic events. As well, she recognized Mandy's attention to language craft as different from the attention she gave in her own

texts. James described his early-year fiction as being similar to many of his classmates' in that it contained comedic elements but different in that it was not action-adventure. With his knowledge of classmates' texts, he was able to distinguish himself further by deciding to write a hundred-page mystery, something he knew no one had tried nor was likely to try.

Both Katie and James were able to counterpose books as models of fiction against the prevalent models of texts provided by classmates. This ability allowed them to triangulate between their own texts and those of authors and classmates. It played a significant role in their evaluative stance toward their own texts. Katie's ability to do this was most significant in that she had very little more experience writing fiction than Kenny yet she had a stance somewhat removed from the class in her ability to see, for example, that most of her audience did not attend to character like she had come to value through her book-reading. Both Katie and James cared about classmates' response to their writing, as Kenny did, but did not rely solely on it when they evaluated their writing.

Teachers

Nancy and I (and Lin Roy for the time she was there as intern) played an important role in providing support to the three children's writing through sustained interactions with them in conferences, and we directed them to concerns underrepresented in their attention as they wrote. Over time, this refocusing of their attention took hold. Kenny attended more to writing conventions (spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and word differentiation). Katie began to attend to crafting her words. James expanded his repertoire of strategies

(brain-storming, visualization, etc.) and altered his concepts of ownership and originality.

As well, we affected the ways in which they used the people resources in the room. Nancy supported Kenny's need to connect with his classmates by not interfering with his need for constant sharing and by embracing his enterprise of getting class contributions for The Love Book.

Both Nancy and I encouraged Katie to reflect on writing. I asked her to comment about various classmates' writing and the differences between theirs and hers. And Nancy, in joint conferences with Katie and Mandy, drew Katie's attention to Mandy's crafting, as well as her planning and character development. I think that our conversations with Katie heightened her sensitivity to these areas when she met with Mandy. Also, both Nancy and I required her to take seriously her classmates' comments and questions about her texts in Whole Group Shares, and to address them in her writing. In doing so, she was able to see the positive effects on her writing.

Nancy urged James to take advantage of his classmates rather than to rely just on her and me. Under Nancy's urging to use the peer conference to get help, he approached Hal. But it was only after Nancy and I had backed off from our interactions with him that he made a serious move to his classmates as resources and learned what they offered. As well, both Nancy and I affected his notions of ownership and originality in relation to the threat he felt from classmates and books. He was better able to acknowledge that ideas exist in the culture, and that originality comes in the rendering. Through his collaboration with me, he learned that it is not so easy to

delineate from whom ideas originate when his ideas became webbed with mine. He also experienced the intensity, challenge, and advantage of conversations given to the common purpose of creation.

Nature of the Children's Literacy Learning Processes

Standing back from these specific conclusions, I want to ask the question, "How do Kenny, Katie, and James learn from the particular social interactions in which they are engaged?" I call again on Vygotsky's theory and counterpose it with Piaget's theory where they bump heads: the role of social forces in cognitive growth. Piaget believed that cognitive growth happens naturally, that it is on a somewhat immutable course of development originating in a preset internal logic. By "natural" Piaget meant that there are maturational processes, originating in our biology, that set the course for development; however, maturation is also dependent on the person's engagement with the social and object world. Through this engagement, *cognitive conflict*, arises in the child's current theories about how the world works, a process he calls equilibration. Piaget placed the engine of cognitive growth squarely in the individual. Although social interactions may initiate cognitive conflict-- by, for example, expressing an opinion or taking action that causes an individual to reassess his/her own opinion or action-- the process of growth, itself, involves a restructuring of the internal logic.

There were instances of cognitive conflict which I could identify. For example, Katie's classmates pointed out to her in Whole Class Shares places in her writing that were not logically consistent. When Nancy and I required her to address these places, cognitive conflict was initiated in her. Also, classmates' unenthusiastic response to

Kenny's early fiction signalled to him that he needed to get more action in his stories. The contrasting features, also discussed earlier, of books and classmates' texts (or in Kenny's case, contrasts in classmates' texts) also initiated cognitive conflict.

Vygotsky, on the other hand, placed the engine of cognitive growth in the individual's engagement with others, giving language a central role for bringing about shared understanding. He acknowledged the contributions of biology but saw this contributing primarily to elementary mental functions, such as that which apes attain (See Limber, 1977). As language comes to mediate thought processes in the young child, the sociocultural influences become inextricably tied to the biological contribution and transform our mental potentials (See Wertsch, 1985). Abstraction comes into being. Thus, Vygotsky posited, cognitive growth is initiated and transformed through our social engagements. The social interaction involves not only that which is being talked about, but also tacitly carries a culture's ways, forms, and values for internalization. Vygotsky's conceptualization was one that was more encompassing of what I saw in Nancy's classroom-- instances in which cognitive conflict was not evident, yet cognitive growth was occurring.

Vygotsky's theory could account for those interactions that, rather than relying on direct teaching, were events which relied on immersion in the experience for internalization of forms and values. Some examples include: Katie and James' immersion in reading which lead to internalization of plot and style forms found in their books; conventions of response-giving in Whole Class Shares (although initial rules were taught in early year) and those within peer

conferences; learning about literary devices, forms, styles, and crafting language from hearing texts in Whole Class Shares and peer conferences; value placed on fiction; value of the action/adventure genre and its use of classmates as characters; the value of breaking down written language into analytic parts, as displayed in reading groups; value of audience.

Vygotsky's theory also accounted for the learning that involved direct teaching processes. Some examples include: classmates and teachers pointing out features of classmates' texts that affirmed the characteristic styles and skills of individual writers, both in Whole Class Shares and teacher conferences; Nancy's chats with James about the value of conferring with classmates, and about the nature of originality; talking about literary devices, forms, styles, and crafting language, in teacher conferences and reading groups; strategies to help composing and planning, in conferences.

What I see is that the resources in this classroom do more than promote changes in cognitive functioning, they are affecting the qualities of the changes. When, for example, Nancy collaborates with Katie about changes to her text, she assigned value to Katie's classmates' comments, value to attention to various elements in her texts, and engaged with Katie in such a manner as to affect Katie's value on and ability to sustain her attention. Through the ongoing interactions, cognitive growth is being channeled into the community's values, forms, and sensibilities.

The Web of Resources

Marilyn Cooper (1986, p. 369) writes:

> One can abstractly distinguish different systems that operate in writing, just as one can distinguish investment patterns from consumer spending patterns from hiring patterns in a nation's economy. But in the actual activity of writing-- as in the economy-- the systems are entirely interwoven in their effects and manner of operation.

Using the metaphor of a web, Cooper posits that "anything that affects one strand of the web vibrates throughout the whole." This is the metaphor I use for viewing how this classroom functioned to promote literacy learning.

The preponderance of fiction-writing, for example, was signaled by a number of interacting strands of activity. Reading groups, although at times required reading in a number of genres (biography, newspaper articles), the groups primarily focused on questions related to fiction-writing. People sometimes brought books (e.g., fact books, poetry) that didn't easily match Nancy's organizing question for the group, such as "How did the author establish the setting of the story?". Nancy made situated adjustments in the discussion to accommodate other textual forms, but there was a message signaled, nonetheless, that fiction was highly valued. Also the love for reading fiction was self-perpetuating and extended by hearing excerpts from books that incited other students to read them. Also, fiction-writing became a form for interacting with classmates in imaginary worlds, which was a contagious motive for writing fiction. Generally, the teacher's acceptance of the prominence of fiction reading and writing, the love of fiction books, and the classmates themselves, all formed a gestalt of influence.

This web that extolled fiction, however, constrained the exploration of other genres for the group as a whole (although it

nudged Kenny and Katie into what was, for them, an underexplored genre). It wasn't enough for Nancy to make available diverse reading materials. Nor was it enough to have them writing their animal reports for science during the writing period. The class' common interests needed to be harnessed and put to purposes other than just creating stories. For example, have students write letters that got things done-- like inviting guest speakers to class, or requests for changes in the school cafeteria menu, or letters to congress. My point is that imbalances existed in this class, as in any other, which affected the community's support of other genres which, in turn, constrained their exploration of differences in style, qualities, and audience that accompany the various genre.

Peer conferences remained a province of the classmates themselves. Nancy did not try to teach or sanction particular interaction structures, although the purpose of the conferences was signaled in her ongoing suggestions to students to meet with classmates <u>to get ideas</u>. The more formal interaction and purposes of Whole Class Shares, where helpful comments and questions were expected about specifics of the texts, perhaps served the needs of the responders for displaying what they saw in texts that was good, and what needed work. But the more formalized nature of the Whole Class Share, coupled with time constraints, more often than not constrained the depth of exploration of writers' texts. Relying on the peer conferences to provide depth did not prove successful. Their purposes for engaging in peer conferences filled complementary functions related to affiliation with each other and each others' texts. Thus writers' needs for talking about plans and

ideas in progress were constrained by the purposes classmates put to the peer conferences and, in addition, put more pressure on teacher conferences to fulfill these needs.

On the more local level, through the case studies, I have described Kenny, Katie, and James' unique and overlapping uses of resources for their writing. All three children gained a strong sense of audience and set their stance toward their own writing in reference to the writing found in their community-- from classmates and favorite authors. I have come to see that their patterns of use yielded unique effects on their writing, given their writing development and personal characteristics and motives. I found that the potential for influence from one resource was, more often than not, bolstered by the influence from one or both of the other resources.

Implications for Teaching

Reither (quoted in Cooper, 1986, p. 367) states, "Writers and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social-rhetorical situations in which writing gets done, from the conditions that enable writers to do what they do, and from the motives writers have for doing what they do." When we start to think along these lines, we start to address ourselves, as teachers, to the conditions we provide our students for writing. This study provides information about particular individuals learning to write in their social-rhetorical situation. Hopefully, through its concrete situatedness, the study sheds light on the importance of viewing writers and their writing within their ecological niche.

There are advantages wrought by creating a classroom that connects writing to its social purposes and processes, and that widens the field of resources. Writers are able to connect with a concrete audience and learn to deal with the concerns of writing that knowledge of audience brings. It allows writers access to other writers, both present and distant ones of books, to learn from their texts and processes.

The resources we provide, as well as those we don't provide, will affect the purposes and audience stance of the writers and the qualities of their writing. Also, the properties of the interactions connected with resource use will affect what writers gain from the interactions. And finally, individuals' use of resources will reflect their motivations, development, and characteristics, but may also be related to their "reading" of what particular resources offer. In total, the availability of resources, the properties of the interactions connected with these resources, and the individuals themselves make up a complex system.

Teachers have a stake in creating situations within the classroom that maximize the power of resources for promoting growth in writing. This involves creating situations wherein students learn not only how to use resources but also how to be helpful agents to others. The success of the classroom for promoting writing development depends on the effectiveness of the interactions wrought within the contexts created.

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