LITERARY ANALYSIS AS AN ACADEMIC TASK:
A CASE STUDY OF A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

By
MARY ELLEN DRUMMOND

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
1990
Copyright 1990
by
Mary Ellen Drummond
To Mrs. Edwards and the students
who shared their class with me
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT ...............................................................</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ........................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Things Stand .....................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Present Study ...................................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Setting ..........................................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Preliminary Study ..................................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Questions ...................................................</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 METHODOLOGY ..................................................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Method ......................................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Teacher .............................................................</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Students ............................................................</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Program .............................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection ........................................................</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis ...........................................................</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biases .........................................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Reliability ...............................................</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Issues ...........................................................</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH .......................................</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in the Teaching of Literature ................................</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Case Studies of Literature ................................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction ..............................................................</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental studies ..................................................</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observational case studies ..........................................</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Task Research ................................................</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies of Aesthetic Reading ..........................................</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies of Classroom Discussion .....................................</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary .......................................................................</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CLASSROOM CULTURE: A CIRCLE OF SCHOLARS .....................</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Senior Year ..........................................................</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking About Important Matters .....................................</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>DOING LITERARY ANALYSIS: TWO CASES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilary and Susan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining Literary Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading the Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>RESEARCH BIOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Nature of the Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research in the Teaching of Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>REPRISE: THEMES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guiding Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Related Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implications for Further Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coda: Personal Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

LITERARY ANALYSIS AS AN ACADEMIC TASK: A CASE STUDY OF A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

By

Mary Ellen Drummond

May, 1990

Chairman: Margaret Early
Major Department: Instruction and Curriculum

This case study used the terminology of academic task research to describe the interactions that took place between a teacher and 23 of her academically talented 12th-grade students as they studied literary texts in a high school classroom. A previous ethnographic study of the same teacher had indicated that she emphasized aesthetic language and certain kinds of textual connections as she taught literary works. The present study clarified the nature of the strategies for gaining entry into literary texts that she taught and focused on students' perceptions of the academic work of the class.

The researcher spent 72 days in the classroom observing interactions about literary texts. She audiotaped,
transcribed, and analyzed text-centered talk and interviewed the teacher and students. The following patterns were apparent in the data: (a) the teacher's task system was unified in that nearly all reading, writing, and speaking tasks involved doing literary analysis; (b) literary analysis included two strategies for approaching texts—dialogic reading and connecting; (c) academic work was undertaken in a social setting that emphasized civility, membership in an academic community, and the usefulness of literary study; and (d) discussion of the text was an important academic task in itself. Text-talk was a complex activity that involved not only clarification of meaning and rehearsal of detail but the importation of different kinds of experience to the discussion of the text. Even though student perceptions of the tasks they were asked to do did not always match the teacher's perceptions of the task, the uniformity of the task system in combination with the social circumstances of the classroom kept students at work on higher-level reading and writing tasks they were asked to complete.
CHAPTER 1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

How Things Stand

In a number of recent studies and reports (Cheney, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Ravitch & Finn, 1987) it was suggested that secondary school students are not learning what they need to know about or from the literary works they might study during their years in English classes. Hirsch (1987), for instance, stated that our schools are producing "cultural illiterates." Cheney (1987) cited loss of "cultural memory" (p. 5) due partly to poor literature instruction. Ravitch and Finn (1987) contended that the current generation of students is "at risk." On the basis of their study, they claimed that our "younger generation . . . is ignorant of important things it should know and that generations to follow are at risk of being gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entry into adulthood, citizenship, and parenthood" (p. 201). One of the important things students are ignorant of is literature, Ravitch and Finn claimed.

In addition, they stated, there are "some gaps in current knowledge about the teaching . . . of literature in
"We know," they wrote, "that every high school student takes courses called . . . language arts . . . or English. Yet no one has reliable information on how those courses are taught" (p. 23). Applebee (1988), a noted researcher in English education and historian of the English teaching profession, agreed that research in the teaching of literature has been neglected over the past 10 years. He stated that an important research priority involves an extensive look at current practice, "not to describe . . . what good practice looks like" but rather to find out from the teachers in successful programs what the issues are, what "things we need to think about."

Purves (1988), another prominent English educator and researcher, in his summary of the research on the teaching of literature, said that only two points are clear. First, "students generally learn what they are taught," and second, "what students are taught is not always what teachers think is being taught." Taken together, the voices of these researchers suggest that further inquiry into what teachers and students actually do in classrooms is a necessary prerequisite to finding solutions to any problems we might have.

Although relatively little research concerning literature instruction has been conducted in recent years, a good deal of attention has been directed toward the matter of literacy, some of which is useful in attempting to
understand what goes on in classrooms where literature is taught. Such classrooms represent complex contexts in which reading, writing, and speaking activities are intertwined. Bloome (1987, 1989) has reviewed recent research involving literacy, and much of it is applicable to questions that are being asked about the teaching of literature.

Literacy researchers are beginning to learn about the acquisition of reading and writing skills by observing classroom practice, for instance, but little notice has been taken of literacy issues among secondary school students. In her review of work in that area, Knott (1987) said that "models and discussions of literacy development and instruction have lacked research-based foundations that could have provided a basis for constructive, ongoing discussions leading to improved literacy development" (p. 354). She stated that "present literacy instruction practices in secondary schools warrant immediate and considerable attention. Although extensive research has resulted in improved knowledge of initial literacy acquisition, its continuing development through effective classroom instruction must be pursued" (p. 362).

Likewise, although attention has been paid to the literacy acquisition processes of young children and disadvantaged segments of the population, little research has been done featuring high-ability students. Heath (1985) suggested that the study of upper-level, advanced classes
could inform discussions of literacy development in other settings. She was particularly interested in observing the "literate behaviors" of students in such programs:

For decades, anthropologists have "studied down," turning their investigative lenses on those who are lower class, powerless, and generally thought of as "different"--either remote societies or non-mainstream populations of our own society. Relatively few attempts have been made to study "up," to turn the same types of detailed investigations to the habits of powerful mainstream populations or to groups which are regarded as upper class or so far above the mainstream that they set ideals for the mainstream. (p. 3)

"As researchers," she concluded, "we have an obligation to do a better job of explicating these behaviors to make them available to a wider range of students" (pp. 16-17).

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) shared Heath's interest in the behaviors and habits of students in elite academic settings. In their discussion of the characteristics of the "high literacy" tradition in American and European education, they described some positive instructional strategies and attitudes toward learning that characterize the education that has been traditionally reserved for elites. "Our concern," they wrote,

is with what would be required in order to make high literacy of some sort attainable by the majority of students. The answer, we believe, does not lie in trying to make the common school into a copy of the elite academy. Rather, it lies in constructing new models of curriculum and instruction that can bring the benefits of high literacy to students who do not already come from highly literate backgrounds. (p. 9)
The Present Study

This study is an attempt to begin to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge not only of what actually goes on in literature classrooms, but in what we know about how the high literacy tradition is pursued. What one learns from observing classroom practice, of course, depends upon the angle of vision from which observations are made. Wolf (1988) also indicated that we need to "take a close look at the schools." In addition to looking at the usual things, "the books we use, the questions we ask, the implicit messages about the place of reading" we convey, however, she suggested that we look at the "'culture' of the English classroom" (p. 2). That is another way to observe practice, one that is perhaps not complete in itself.

In their discussion of trends in classroom literacy research, Tierney and Rogers (1989) discerned two major currents that have dominated the ways researchers look at classrooms, "one which treats literacy as an abstract body of knowledge or a set of skills or strategies that can be imparted from the teacher to the students," and another in which literacy is viewed as a "process that grows out of social interaction among individuals who have communicative goals and intentions" (p. 250). They recommended that future research join those two perspectives into a broader view, a dual focus for classroom research that includes not only what is taught and learned but the social conditions in
which the teaching and learning take place. Such an angle of vision will enable researchers "to discover the kinds of literacy events that will nurture the students' growth as members of a highly literate society" (p. 263). Tierney and Rogers used the term "sociocognitive" to describe that sort of focus. In this report I will attempt to attain such a perspective as I describe the way one exceptional teacher of high-ability high school students envisioned, structured, and taught a literature class during one semester and how students in one of her classes carried out the "academic tasks" she set for them.

When I use the term "academic task," I am employing a construct from recent classroom research that helped me put order to my analysis of what was going on in a classroom. It is an idea developed primarily in the work of Doyle (1980, 1983, 1986) and his colleagues. The concept of "academic task" is "an analytical tool for examining subject matter as a classroom process" (1986, p. 365). Doyle (1986) summarized the concept when he wrote that

the curriculum exists in classrooms in the form of academic tasks that teachers assign for students to accomplish with subject matter. A task consists of (a) a product, such as words in blanks in a worksheet, answers to a set of test questions, or an original essay; (b) operations to produce the product, for example copying words off a list, remembering words from previous instruction, applying a rule (such as "plural nouns use plural verbs") to generate words, or making up "descriptive" or creative words, (c) resources, such as directions to use notes from a previous lesson, consult a textbook, not to talk to other students, not to use examples given in
class, (d) the significance or weight of a task in the accountability system of a class (e.g. a grammar exercise might count as 15% of the grade for a six week term). (pp. 365-366)

Looking at a curriculum as a set of tasks is particularly helpful in sorting out and interpreting events in a literature classroom where reading and writing activities are often concurrent. The concept of academic task is a useful way of describing classroom interactions because it combines the social and the cognitive. To look at academic tasks is not only to look at what students and teachers actually do, but to look at the ways that teacher beliefs shape instruction and student perceptions affect learning.

The Setting

This project began with the intent to study successful practice in literature instruction. With the word "exemplary" in the back of my mind, I looked for an experienced teacher with a reputation for excellence in the district. That led me to Mrs. Edwards (all names in this report are fictitious), a teacher of high school juniors and seniors in a magnet-school program for academically talented students. As described in a pamphlet distributed by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), the "IB [International Baccalaureate] program is a comprehensive and rigorous two-year curriculum, leading to examinations, for students aged between sixteen and nineteen." The
organization has a membership of 400 schools internationally, "some 150 of which are public or private high schools in the United States or Canada" (The International Baccalaureate, n.d.). As administered in Mrs. Edwards' school, the program was a four-year course of studies, two "Pre-IB" years serving as preparation for the official IB curriculum of the junior and senior years.

Mrs. Edwards initially agreed to have me in her classroom during the spring semester of 1988. At the time, she was in her 15th year of teaching, and her 3rd as a part of the IB faculty. The IB Program was housed in a large public high school (approximately 1300 students) in a medium-sized southeastern city. Before taking that position, Mrs. Edwards had taught English at the secondary school level in several states, and she had taught literature and anthropology courses in three junior colleges. Her experience also included a year teaching gifted eighth graders.

Mrs. Edwards' academic preparation was extensive. Her undergraduate study was in English literature. She had also earned two master's degrees, one in liberal studies, and one in cultural anthropology. When we met, she had completed all of her coursework for a doctorate in cultural anthropology, and she had initiated work on a dissertation in that field. Nevertheless, the focus of much of her study over the years, she felt, had been upon literature, and she
considered herself primarily a teacher of literature. She also had a strong background in art history, drawing on that knowledge during class discussions of literary texts.

The students in her high school classes, as participants in a demanding program for academically motivated students, were an elite group. Those I observed were seniors in the final year of a difficult four-year course of studies. All of them were college bound.

A Preliminary Study

A preliminary observational study I conducted focused primarily on Mrs. Edwards' beliefs about teaching literature and her methods of instruction. That study generated the guiding questions that shaped my observations for a second study, the one on which this case study report is based. I find it impossible to discuss the present study without first describing the preliminary one; in many ways, they are one and the same, being two phases of a single project.

During the preliminary study, which was conducted in fulfillment of a requirement for a class in ethnographic research methods, I observed two of Mrs. Edwards' senior classes two or three times a week over the space of three months. I spent a total of 47 hours in the classroom, observing 38 class sessions in all. I did not interact much with the students during that time, nor did I examine any of the writing that students did. Interviews with Mrs. Edwards were conducted formally and informally, and she shared her
teaching and testing materials with me. The bulk of my data consisted of fieldnotes.

I made an effort to capture verbatim as much of the classroom discourse as possible, but without audio or videotaping I was never able to record as much as I wanted of what people actually said. My research methodology was based on Spradley's (1979, 1980) descriptions of how to conduct ethnographic research. The beginning research question was the elemental ethnographic query, "What's going on here?" Spradley suggested that "both questions and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied" (1980, p. 32).

The report of that first research project described Mrs. Edwards' work with students in terms of John Dewey's (1933) conception of the ideal teacher. I wanted to emphasize my perception of her ability to work with adolescents and engage them with the academic work of her discipline. Dewey's description of the ideal teacher as one possessing subject matter knowledge "abundant to the point of overflow" (p. 274) and a "genuine enthusiasm for the subject that will communicate contagiously to pupils" (p. 275) was applicable. It seemed to me that she was so "thoroughly at home" (p. 275) in her discipline that it was possible for her to spend time monitoring the intellectual growth of her students rather than worrying about her own subject-matter knowledge.
Also in that study I came to focus on Mrs. Edwards' definition of "writing as a process of thinking" and on her strategies for connecting literary texts to a variety of different contexts during classroom discussions. I dealt almost entirely with teacher-talk during that study because I had no access to students, except as they responded during class. Ultimately, my discussion of Mrs. Edwards' teaching settled on two features, her drive to help students connect text to context (to historical context, to other literary texts, to their own personal experience, and to current events) and her own intense focus on the aesthetic uses of language. I was struck at the time by her insistence that students must consider literary works at a consistently high level. "Look at the form of the play," she would say. "Tell me how it is used, . . . how the form is used to generate meaning." She wanted to know, in nearly every discussion of a text, "what the author is doing." She wanted to know how the author manipulated language to create art.

Those characteristics of instruction are not unique to Mrs. Edwards. I felt that Mrs. Edwards' instructional emphases were unusual, however, and I became interested in trying to figure out the system that underlay her teaching practices. I observed that, in her teaching activities, underlying all reading, writing, and speaking tasks that students were asked to complete there was a similar goal.
Whether they were discussing, reporting on, or writing about something they had read, students were expected to conduct "literary analysis." I spent a good deal of time trying to figure out what that was.

Analysis, of course, involved isolating different elements in the work as a whole, the identity of which might vary from work to work. In parts of the study of *Hamlet*, for instance, the element of analysis was color imagery. In *Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man*, the element might have been repetition of a particular sound. Whatever the element of analysis, it was not enough just to identify it. Something beyond identification was always required. More important, there was an underlying uniformity in what was expected of students in all tasks, and I speculated that uniformity of task expectations supported student ability to at least attempt to work at the level Mrs. Edwards required. It was at that point that I decided to import Doyle's model as a way of looking at classroom practice as a "sensitizing concept" (Nespor, 1987a, p. 210) for observing practice.

**Guiding Questions**

Most ethnographic research generates questions. The questions generated by that first study served as the focus for the present, more comprehensive research project. After completing the first report, I decided that there was much more I could learn by continuing to observe Mrs. Edwards at work. She consented to have me return in the fall semester
of the 1988-1989 school year. Based on my previous study and my understanding of research on academic tasks, these are the questions that served to orient my observations for the present study:

1. What are student and teacher perceptions of the overall goals of the course?

2. How does the concept of literary analysis function in classroom activities?

3. Does discussion constitute an academic task in itself? What are teacher and student perceptions of that task? How does discussion relate to subsequent written tasks based on the same text?

4. How do students perceive the individual written tasks that are based on the texts studied?

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I describe the methods of data collection and analysis that were employed in this study. I, in effect, explain my "angle of vision." Several bodies of research were particularly influential in shaping the questions I asked and my methods of data collection and analysis. Much of the vocabulary I use to describe instructional practice in this report has its origin in the four sets of studies I review in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 through 8 are a case study report, my description of what went on as teacher and students studied literary texts. In Chapter 8 I focus on two students and their ways of managing texts. Chapter 9, the research biography, is a
reflection on personal aspects of the research experience. Chapter 10 summarizes findings of the study and offers suggestions for research and teaching.
Case Study Method

The examination of current practice is essential if we are to understand problems facing teachers and students in classrooms today. Case study research is one method of examining practice. Merriam (1988), in her discussion of the application of case study design to educational research problems, suggested that "one selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth, not because one wants to understand what is generally true of the many" (p. 173). Case study was a logical approach for me because I was interested not only in probing the "classroom culture" of a particular setting involving an experienced teacher of literature and her motivated students but also in understanding the nature of the academic work that was undertaken in that setting.

Merriam (1988) defined a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). In education, she said, case study research generally addresses "specific issues and problems of practice" (p. 23). The end product
of such research is a "description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 11) that "illuminate[s] the reader's understanding of [that] phenomenon" (p. 13). Methods of data collection and analysis in case study design are often drawn from other disciplines--"anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology" (p. 23). Ethnography in particular is a common choice for case study research in educational settings. I describe my own work as a case study using ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis.

Ethnography is both a process, "a way of studying human life," and a product, "the analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes or groups" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 2). Imported into educational research from its origins in anthropology, ethnography studies cultures. As Geertz (1973) explained it, "doing ethnography" (p. 5) is more than just collecting data, because "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p. 9). Both the process and the product have an element of interpretation.

Participant observation, different interview formats, and document collection are the primary means of gathering ethnographic data. Participant observation in classrooms is not simply observation. It is a method of data collection that "involves social interaction between the researcher and
the informants in the milieu of the latter" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 15). The product of such observation and interaction is generally a set of fieldnotes. Interviewing formats are varied in ethnographic fieldwork. But whether the researcher interviews formally or informally, or talks with informants in groups or individually, the "interviewer, not an interview schedule or protocol, is the research tool" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 77). The role of the interviewer "entails not merely obtaining answers but learning what questions to ask and how to ask them" (p. 77). In conducting participant observation and in interviewing, access to data is dependent on the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

The Teacher

I have already introduced the teacher, Mrs. Edwards, to some extent. Her situation during the time of my observations for this study is important. She was teaching three classes of senior IB English, and an honors/AP (Advanced Placement) English course, both new assignments during the semester of my observation. She also had taken on the responsibility of teaching an English class at a local junior college, another new preparation. In addition, Mrs. Edwards' position as one of the teachers of IB seniors gave her the time-consuming responsibility of writing numerous letters of recommendation for college applications. She was a professional involved not only with the needs of
her advanced high school students but in teaching at the college level as well. She also assumed responsibilities in her community. She was pressed for time.

Interviews with the teacher were conducted on an "as possible" basis. Toward the end of the study and after the end of the semester I was able to get 1 hour and 15 minutes of formal interviews with Mrs. Edwards on tape without unduly disrupting her schedule. Other informal interviews were collected throughout the semester, before class, during lunch, or during class while students were working in groups and individually. She was always willing to discuss her goals for a particular activity or share with me the reasons for what she did. Those informal interviews became a part of the fieldnotes that I composed for each day of observation or of the journal entries I wrote as the study progressed.

The Students

In this study, the voices of Mrs. Edwards' students are included. The class selected for study, as in the preliminary research, were IB seniors. Mrs. Edwards helped me choose one of her three classes. She already knew these seniors quite well and could assess their capacities early in the semester because she had been their English teacher for at least one semester the previous year. Some of them had been in her junior English class for an entire year. Others had been in her gifted student class in middle school.
during the eighth grade. The particular group we settled on, she felt, might have been a little more "literary" than the other groups, but represented a range of abilities typical of the IB senior class.

There were 23 students assigned to the class, 9 boys and 14 girls. No program data were available to describe the total senior group. I had been able to obtain a group profile of the previous year's seniors (a scatterplot of GPA and SAT scores) through a program brochure, a public document. No such information was available this year, at least in the public domain. My situation as a researcher (a topic I take up more thoroughly in Chapter 9) made me refrain from asking for personal data. It will have to be sufficient to note that these students had been admitted to the IB program on the basis of their achievement scores prior to the ninth grade, on teacher recommendations, and upon their own willingness to submit to a particularly demanding school program. They had given up possibly more convenient high school assignments to travel rather long distances to the magnet school. Of the about 90 students who began the program in the ninth grade, approximately 70 remained as seniors. The fact that they had stayed with a difficult program suggests the seriousness of academic purpose of most of those students.

Ball (1985) has remarked that students are rarely asked if they wish to participate in a study of this sort, but
that was not the case here. Mrs. Edwards insisted that the class have the opportunity to accept or reject participation as a group. After a week of observation in the class we had selected, I presented my research proposal to the students and answered their questions about it. Then I left the room so that they would have the chance to talk it over with the teacher. Mrs. Edwards reported to me that they were receptive if not enthusiastic, but some were a little bit worried that they might not be able to discuss things as freely as they were accustomed to doing in her classes with me in the room. Several of them suggested that I audiotape the class so that I would not mix up who had said what. My presence, and especially my frantic notetaking, had unnerved several students in the first study. At this early stage of the second study, I could see that my presence, while tolerated, was not particularly enjoyed.

Students and teacher at the beginning of the year were particularly busy. Students were wrapped up in taking SAT tests and getting their college application materials lined up. Teachers across the program were loading students with a semester's worth of demands. There was tension in the air, and I resolved not to increase anybody's stress level if I could avoid it. The thought of asking any of these busy people for so much as a half an hour of time seemed to me and to them like an enormous imposition. My research design changed accordingly.
I had originally envisioned a group of six focal students who would be interviewed at intervals throughout the entire year. Because of the immediately obvious time pressures on students and because of tension that surrounded the beginning of the year, I knew that to ask for 5 hours of time would discourage participation. I decided to reduce the number of interviews and eventually to alter the extent of my stay in the classroom to make my presence less onerous to the class and the teacher. The class had agreed to my presence, and 14 students of the 23 indicated that they would participate at some level. Three of those did not mind talking with me or having me observe, but did not want me to look at any of their papers. At that point, I decided to interview all of those who had indicated any willingness to participate at all. I eventually conducted interviews with 13 of those before the end of the semester. Some of those interviews were more extensive than others.

Many of the interviews were conducted during the lunch period that preceded the class I was observing. I made it a point always to be in the room during that lunch period because Mrs. Edwards' classroom was a gathering place for a sizable group of IB students. On three occasions, I was able to take an hour of a student's time during a study hall. Once a substitute teacher allowed me to interview students after their assigned work had been completed. On no other occasion did I ask for class time to talk with
students. Long taped interviews were luxurious events for me.

The rest of the time I had to settle for 15 or 20 minutes, usually in the book closet if I wanted any quiet for taping. Some interviews were conducted casually in the time during lunch or before class. For those untaped interviews, I used a similar series of questions, almost a questionnaire format, in the effort not to lose data. Some of those untaped interviews I conducted in the hallway. Several other interviews turned into group events with four and five students contributing answers. One interview, with a student from the first study who had graduated and was now in her second semester at college, was conducted by telephone. I was interested in her perceptions of "life after IB."

In addition, after the end of the first semester, I returned to the school to conduct followup interviews with Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Anderson, the IB Program Director, and four of the students who had agreed to let me look at their written work. Those interviews were taped. The focus of all interviews with students was on their perceptions of the activities that happened to be going on in the class at the time I interviewed. I used the previous day's lesson to generate questions about a discussion or a writing assignment. Given my resolution to make as few requests as possible and make the best of whatever I could get, I was
able to collect interview data from 60% of the class. Informal interviews were recorded in note form. Formal interviews were taped and transcribed. The total number of transcribed hours of interview is approximately 16.

The Program

The IB program itself was not under study, but several features of it became more and more important as I observed in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. First, it was selective. Second, students who entered the program remained together in many of the academic classes they pursued during the four years of high school. By the time I observed the seniors in this study, 23 of the 70 students in the senior IB class, they were well acquainted with one another and their teacher. Only one of the students I spoke with had joined the program after the freshman year. Their academic careers in English were fairly uniform. That is, they had the same teachers in the first, second, most of the third, and now, in the fourth year of the program. Whatever materials students were assigned in English classes, they had covered in common. Third, they were all taking a somewhat similar set of courses other than the English class. Most were in a course required by the program, called Theory of Knowledge, which connected in many ways to Mrs. Edwards' course. Students often were together in other academic courses; so when a history paper or a calculus test loomed on the horizon, they shared similar anxieties. Fourth, because of
the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum requirements, the junior and senior years in English were considered a two-year course of studies. Fifth, the testing program required by the IB Program was a major topic of conversation during class. The reality of an outside evaluator for program examinations, both oral and written, also became important in beginning to understand the relationship that existed between the teacher and her students.

It was also important to this study that all IB seniors took the required English course, and whether they wished to pursue the IB diploma or not, they were encouraged to take IB examinations in English at the end of the senior year. There was an oral examination and a written one. Many students also took AP tests in English as well. Both Mrs. Edwards and the IB program director took time to compare the rigor and comparative difficulties of the two sets of examinations with the students. Sixth, the program expressed a number of goals (explained below) that I felt Mrs. Edwards specifically pursued in her own instruction.

According to documents distributed by the school district for the purpose of informing potential participants about the program, IB is "a course of study designed to give high school students a strong background in the classical liberal arts and sciences." The program, described in the same document, "is comprehensive and integrated, with an
emphasis in analytical skills and critical thinking"
(personal communication from school board, January 27, 1988). Mrs. Edwards put a good deal of time into the integration of her class with other disciplines and on the development of thinking skills.

Data Collection

Because I was primarily interested in how the academic task system functioned, it was important for me to see a set of consecutive classes in senior English. As the study evolved, I spent 72 out of 85 teaching days (that is, days other than examination week) of the first semester of 1988-89 school year with Mrs. Edwards and the class. That stay excluded the first week of the semester and the final two weeks of the semester preceding the semester examination.

On each of the 72 days, I collected fieldnote data describing each class session. In order to facilitate the collection of verbatim data, I audiotaped 44 of the class sessions using a tape recorder at the front of the classroom with a microphone attached to the teacher's lectern. Transcriptions of all applicable parts of those tapes were integrated into the fieldnotes to form the basis of the observational data. The teacher's voice was generally audible from wherever she was in the room, and many of the students' voices were equally clear.

Hynds (1989) suggested the use of the term "tapescript" to describe those transcriptions of classroom discourse from
audiotape. That is a term I intend to use. The total case record—the set of interview transcripts, classroom tapescripts, fieldnotes, and journal entries, amounts to approximately 800 pages. I also drew upon 250 pages of fieldnote data from the preliminary study in the construction of this case study report. Documents collected during both studies included class materials distributed by Mrs. Edwards, program materials contributed by Mrs. Matthews, the IB Program Director, and Mrs. Edwards, and articles published in a local newspaper about the program.

The half hour that I spent in the classroom prior to class each day proved a valuable asset, not so much as a source of fieldnote data (I was careful not to take many notes or to tape during that time because it was primarily a social time for the students and often for the teacher as well), but as an opportunity to interact with students myself. Mrs. Edwards was often busy with other things during that time, and I had a chance to talk informally with a number of students, some in the case study class, some not, and even a few who were not in the IB Program at all. I spoke primarily with those students who wanted to talk, and I did not approach those who seemed shy or uninterested in speaking with me. The relationships that I made during that time were important in maintaining my ties to student informants. It is surely a weakness in my research design that my student informants were those who volunteered and
felt comfortable talking with a person like me. Given time constraints and pressures upon all participants in the setting, however, my choices were limited.

**Data Analysis**

Strauss (1987) has said that the "basic question" facing the qualitative researcher when approaching the task of data analysis is "how to capture the complexity of reality (phenomena) we study, and how to make convincing sense of it" (p. 10). Furthermore, he says, "analysis is synonymous with interpretation of data" (p. 4). Interpretation of data, was, in my case, an ongoing process that began in the first study and continued through the process of writing up this case study report.

In that first study, I followed Spradley's (1980) method of "systematic examination" of the data to determine its parts, the relationship among parts and their relationship to the whole" (p. 85). Two of the major categories or domains that came from that analysis had to do with Mrs. Edwards' ways of making connections between a text under study and various contexts and her instructional emphasis on the aesthetic uses of languages. Those two domains amounted to what Strauss (1987), in his description of qualitative data analysis methods, calls "core categories" that carried over into the second study. Academic tasks constituted a third category which I analyzed extensively in the present study. A fourth category,
attitudes toward academic work, emerged in the continued analysis of data. The case study report that follows (Chapters 4 through 8 of the dissertation) is a discussion of the ways those four categories are related. In my "search for patterns" (Spradley, 1980, p. 85) I drew on several different kinds of data.

Yin (1984) listed six sources of evidence in a case study research: documents, archival records, interviews (open-ended and focused or survey), direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (p. 79). Of those, I used all but archival records. Although it had been my original intention to collect student papers as well, that proved impossible. In four cases, however, I used several of the papers as props to structure interviews with four students. I had access to class texts and tests as well as IB materials. Such use of multiple data sources is one kind of "triangulation," "one of the strategies for increasing the validity of . . . qualitative research findings" (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). Its purpose is to prevent "the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions. It enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs during the course of the investigation" (Goetz & Lecompte, p. 11).

Multiple data sources are one way of triangulating. Collection of data across time and in different settings is another method of triangulation. My observations, including
the preliminary study, covered most of two consecutive semesters. I observed in the classroom and interviewed outside of the classroom whenever possible.

**Biases**

In a study like this one, it is essential that personal biases that might affect collection, interpretation, and presentation of data be brought into the open. In my first study, the selection of a particular case was almost accidental. I chose a teacher reputed to be exemplary in her teaching of high-ability students. When I returned to initiate the present study in the same setting, it was with the knowledge that this same teacher was one whose goals for instruction were congenial with what mine would be with similar students.

This is, of course, a subjective choice of setting and that could be problematic when it comes to deciding what use can be made of this case study report. I must, as Peshkin (1988) suggested, "tame" that subjectivity by conducting an "audit" (p. 18), a self-examination, in which the researcher investigates the different identities she carries with her into the setting. In looking at my own situation, I could discern not only a teacher-self, but a researcher-self, an English educator-self, and even a parent-self who often accompanied me on my classroom visits. My own identity was one that I was constantly negotiating, and that was an uncomfortable situation which I discuss further in Chapter
9, the research biography. It is the "monitoring" of self that Peshkin feels is important: "By monitoring myself," he wrote,

I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it—to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome—as I progress through collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data. (p. 20)

I am indeed present as a part of this study. My own experiences as a teacher and as a student are inherent in many of the research choices that I made.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability issues in qualitative research have been the center of much discussion. Validity has to do with "how one's findings match reality" (Merriam, p. 166). Reliability deals with "the extent to which one's findings can be replicated" (Merriam, p. 170). Kirk and Miller (1986) have said that "the problem of reliability is handled by field research and the problem of validity is handled by documented decision making" (p. 73). That is to say that the issues are addressed in ethnographic studies by extended residence in the field and painstaking adherence to recognized research strategies including the creation of what is generally called an "audit trail" or public record of the research process.
The term "reliability," however, may be "something of a misfit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 172) when applied to case study research.

External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar circumstances. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which other researchers, given a set of previously generated constructs would match the data in the same ways as the original researcher. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 210)

It is, perhaps, paradoxical even to discuss the replicability of a case study because of the contextual and interpretative nature of the research. Some commentators suggest that in qualitative research the emphasis is on the validity rather than on the reliability aspects of research. "It is not possible," wrote Taylor and Bogdan, "to achieve perfect reliability if we are to produce valid studies of the real world" (1984, p. 7). I am not at all certain that an auditor would arrive at an interpretation of the context identical to my own.

Internal validity in a case study has to do with the extent to which a reader can "trust the findings" of the report (Merriam, 1988, p. 166). In interpretive research, of course, there is no single reality that can be presented. For that reason, validity rests upon the researcher's demonstration that "he is representing people's constructions of reality properly" (p. 168). Such internal validity is achieved through triangulation, member checks
(reviewing findings with participants), long-term repeated observations at the same sight, peer examination (requesting comments on the interpretation from the researcher's peers) and participatory research (involvement of the participants in the project) and clarification of the researcher's biases (Merriam, 1988, pp. 169-70). I have attempted to deal with each of those requirements.

Generalizability or external validity is important to case study research. The question of how the results of a case study might be applied to other situations is crucial. If the strength of case studies lies in their attention to understanding "the particular" (Merriam, 1988, p. 173), to attempt to generalize from one case to another may not even be logical. Still, there are uses for case study findings. Yin (1984) suggested "analytical generalization" or generalization of some "particular set of results to some broader theory" (p. 39). Merriam suggested that "reader or user generalizability" is an approach "particularly suited" to case study research, one that "involves leaving the extent to which a study's findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations" (p. 177). A case is not to be thought of a sample population of one, however. Such an idea is not functional in this kind of research.

Case study research is to be distinguished from research conducted in samples. Sample-based research is concerned to establish by calculation the relationship between a sample being studied and a target population to which the findings in the sample are to be generalized. This enables
variables in the sample to be abstracted from context. Context, seen as an impediment to generalization, is not required for judgments about representativeness of the sample nor does generalization depend upon contextual analysis. . . . In case study the relationship between a case or a collection of cases that may superficially represent a sample, and any population in which similar meanings or relationships may apply, is essentially a matter of judgment. (Stenhouse, 1985, pp. 265-266)

**Ethical Issues**

Both the choice of ethnographic methods of data collection and the choice of case study design carry implications for research ethics. Obviously, in dealing with people's lives one must be careful to protect them from possible harm. Ball (1985) suggested that it is difficult to assess problems that participants in school studies might encounter should their anonymity be compromised in the report of research. Dobbert's (1982) discussion of "ethical issues in field-based research" (pp. 76-84) is a good synopsis of attitudes a researcher should hold toward subjects and setting. She identified confidentiality, honesty, responsibility, and fair return, or usefulness to the participants, as crucial. Throughout the research process, I have attempted to assure the anonymity of the participants in the study and to maintain constant awareness of my responsibility in reporting correctly what I observed.
CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

In a case study such as this one, it is generally suggested that "delaying the scrutiny of related technical literature" (Strauss, 1987, p. 282) is essential. Publications about the same or related phenomena under study may contain theories, views, or analyses different than you are pursuing in your own research study. Reading of these materials is probably best avoided until your own main analytic story (core category) has emerged and stabilized. Otherwise the reading can reduce your own creativity, or at the very least take energy out of, or the edge off, your own drive. But after your theory has begun to integrate and densify to a considerable degree, then supplementary or complementary or conflicting analyses should be grappled with. They should be integrated into your theory if possible (including some of their categories, conditions, etc.); or criticized in terms of what you are finding. (pp. 281-282)

Because of the findings of the preliminary study, I was at a stage where integration of related research was important as I began the present study. I already had identified an underlying process of gaining entry to literary texts, and I had located two strategies comprising that process. I was examining the different academic tasks the teacher devised for evidence of the ways her beliefs about teaching were enacted in the academic work of the class. A number of bodies of research became important to
my ongoing data analysis from the outset of the second study.

It is important to understand where this case study fits into several traditions of research in the teaching of literature. That body of literature requires a brief review. Three additional sets of studies—academic task research, studies of aesthetic reading, and studies of classroom discussion—were particularly important in informing my data analysis. They provided not only a link to ongoing related research but some of the vocabulary of my description as well.

**Research in the Teaching of Literature**

Strauss (1987) said that one important "way of relating one's work to the literature" (p. 280) is to develop a "perspectival view" of research in the discipline, "generalized knowledge" that "leads you to raise some of the kinds of questions that you do about your data" and to "sense its relevance to the discipline itself" (p. 281). A brief review of research traditions in the teaching of literature can establish such a perspective.

It is difficult to separate research on reader response to literature from research on the teaching of literature. Reader response, broadly defined, deals with how readers react to literary works. Studies of reader response investigate "the full complexity of the reading process, from decoding to inference, as well as the particular
demands of the uniquely aesthetic, globally contextualized reading which fictional literature requires" (Cooper, 1985, p. xi). Studies of the teaching of literature deal with teacher interventions in the processes of aesthetic reading. It is important to understand where this classroom case study fits into the current research in both reader response and the teaching of literature.

Any discussion of such research will inevitably begin with I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1929) and Louise Rosenblatt's Literature as Exploration (1938). In those works may be seen the beginnings of research traditions that have dominated inquiry about reader response and the teaching of literature for the past 60 years. Richards was interested in the individual reader's untutored responses to poems. His research involved the classification of factors that appeared to come between the reader and a correct reading of the literary work. Rosenblatt's book set forth a transactional theory of reading that emphasized the constructive nature of the reader's relationship to the work. According to her theory, the meaning of a work to a particular reader was not contained in the work alone but rather produced by the reader's transaction with it.

Before the early 1970s, there were numerous studies of reader response, but relatively few that dealt with the teaching of literature. A look at three reviews of
research in those areas gives a quick overview of the ways research has looked at those issues in the past.

Purves and Beach (1972) reviewed a number of response studies. Much of that research was devoted to the development of classification systems for possible responses to literature. Other studies analyzed the process of response. Purves and Beach reported on a few studies specifically aimed at the teaching of literature. Those were experimental in nature. Many of them used the response classification systems as a means of measuring teaching effects.

Most of the experimental teaching studies they reported examined different strategies of literature instruction. On the basis of their review of that limited body of research, Purves and Beach recommended more intensive "investigation of what the teacher does" (p. 162). The studies they reviewed had showed that intervening in response (i.e., teaching) had the power to change response. Purves and Beach reported no purely observational, that is, noninterventional, studies.

Hill's (1983) review of research on response and the teaching of literature provides a valuable update to the Purves and Beach review. She found that research in the teaching of literature in the 1970s and early 1980s tended to compare modes of instruction or kinds of instructional materials, or to attend to the personal characteristics of
teachers of literature. She found no studies that dealt with what was actually happening in classrooms. "There is," she wrote, "a noticeable absence of research into classrooms where the complex action of teaching strategies is taking place in a busy classroom environment. Most studies take place in a contrived situation unlike the context of everyday learning" (p. 19). She found that studies of response also focused not on classes but on individual students and were usually conducted outside of real classroom contexts, in "laboratory" situations. Research was largely ignoring the effect of the classroom context on teaching and learning.

A recent bibliography produced by Beach and Hynds (1988) for The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature also updates the Purves and Beach review. It provides evidence of a growing interest in studies conducted in natural settings but, because it catalogs only research that used "some systematic analysis of readers' responses to literary texts" (p. 1), a number of useful studies are not included, particularly observational or case studies of classroom interaction.

Classroom Case Studies of Literature Instruction

Hill (1983) found no case studies of classrooms. Her dissertation began to fill that void. Since that time, case studies of literature instruction conducted in classroom or school settings have become more common. Some have been
treatment studies, that is, experimental studies designed to test methods of instruction. Others have been primarily observational studies designed to examine a particular setting for the purpose of extracting useful information either about the teaching methodology employed or the context of instruction. Since my research falls into the second category, this small group of studies has been most important in helping me frame my research design and think through my analysis of data. If my study contributes to any body of knowledge, it will be that produced by case studies.

Experimental studies

Marshall (1985/1986) combined observation and intervention methodologies in his classroom study of "the role writing plays in students' understanding of literary texts" (p. 5). Marshall studied one English teacher and 80 of her 11th-grade students. He first conducted an observational phase of research involving 18 class sessions and interviews with six focal students of varying ability. He also interviewed the teacher. An experimental phase followed where the teacher and the researcher collaborated in planning and implementing an "instructional unit" (p. 40) which involved the study of a group of short stories and subsequent writing activities based on that reading.

Marshall's experimental treatment was set against the classroom teacher's usual methods of conducting literature study, which Marshall characterized as "an academic approach
to literature" (p. 83). His interpretation of what was going on in the classroom was grim. What Marshall saw in the classes he observed was that "the agenda for discussion was preestablished" (p. 87), and the students' role was "not to interpret the story, but to flesh out [the teacher's] interpretation" (p. 88). Worse, Marshall decided, students were "not responding to literature at all, but to a highly stylized communicative situation" (p. 93). In his description of what he saw during those 18 class periods, Marshall said, "what makes this pattern somewhat disturbing is . . . that the subject of discussion is a complex and deeply moving short story, one whose themes might better be negotiated in discussion than declared openly as fact" (p. 88).

Like Marshall (1985/1986) and others I have not reviewed here (see Holt, 1986/1987; Newell & Johnson, 1988, for example), Rogers (1988/1989) devised and tested one methodology either against another methodology, or implicitly against the already existing methods employed by the classroom teacher in the case. Working with high-ability ninth graders in two intact classes, Rogers conducted an instructional unit based on the concepts of "classrooms as interpretative communities" and on "intertextuality" as a way of interpreting literary texts. She found the theoretical basis for her method primarily in
the works of reader response criticism. The regular teacher's methodology was described as follows:

The strategies of interpretation were to interpret a story by analyzing the elements, particularly structure (sequence of events), characterization (particularly character attributes) and occasionally the texture of the story (the style and imagery). Toward the end of the analysis, the thematic interpretation is introduced with possibly some reference to some objective or ideal reader's response. (pp. 73-74)

It was, Rogers said, a method of teaching literature that "reflected the tradition of the New Critical approach to the study of literary texts" (p. 135).

Echoing Marshall's appraisal of Mrs. Foster (the teacher whose classes were used in his study), Rogers said that the role of the teacher (in the classes she observed) "is to guide discussion and to supply the thematic interpretation; and the role of the students is to provide the substance of the elemental analysis up to the thematic interpretation" (p. 74). Rogers' preferred definition of interpretation involved the identification of themes. In her more open approach to instruction, she said, "students participated in the interpretative process by presenting and arguing for particular thematic interpretations" (p. 74).

Rogers found that before her short story unit, students simply expected to repeat the "teacher's interpretation or 'class theme' on tests using either the same or novel evidence to support or justify that interpretation" (p. 136). After the 14-day instructional unit taught by the
researcher, however, there was a "slight shift toward more 'interpretative' reasoning operations--analyzing, drawing conclusions, and evaluating" that suggested "movement toward more sophisticated interpretative skills" (p. 137).

The notion that interpretation is an "intertextual" activity was something that I had also mentioned in my original study in Mrs. Edwards' style of instruction. Rogers used that idea as an "overarching frame" as she sought out student perceptions of the process of literary interpretation. Intertextual connections are one of several kinds of connections I further describe in the present study.

In another recent classroom study, O'Keefe (1988) studied the implementation of an instructional unit designed to "present the literature to students in such a way that they would become more active users of language" (p. 67). Her work begins to get at ways in which oral activities and writing activities in the literature classroom interact. O'Keefe's research stance was that of a teacher/researcher. She was, in effect, testing a new methodology against her own previous experience of teaching. She focused on the experiences of three 12th-grade students as they participated in especially designed speaking and writing activities related to literary texts. O'Keefe identified an "investigative mode" of classroom discourse that surfaced when students discussed literary texts. It was neither
conversational nor argumentative in nature. She noted that the investigative mode

has instructional possibilities in both small-group and whole-class discussions. The difficulty in student-led discussions without teacher-structured scaffolding is that previous classroom models of oral exchanges do not serve well, and neither do conversational models. What is required is a totally new approach that demands risk taking by students and teachers. . . . the teacher inquiry-student-response pattern, must give way to a balanced questioning, hypothesis-making, checking, and summarizing mode with the students structuring the investigation through their discourse strategies. (pp. 268-269)

Observational case studies of literature instruction

Hill (1983) located her research within a tradition of response studies, "studies that systematically describe written or oral response to a literary work" (p. 19). She also situated her research within the line of inquiry that investigates exemplary programs. Her choice of subject was based on the teacher's reputation in the district. She was a "legend" and "known as a great teacher" (p. 219). Students were fifth and sixth graders. The study emphasized the teacher's personal power in the classroom as well as her beliefs and methods of literature instruction. It was an "investigation of what it is that an exemplary teacher does" (p. 221). That is a common way of justifying the choice of a particular case for case study research. Hill provided one of the first detailed portraits of teachers and students at work studying literature.
Yarbrough (1984) conducted an investigation of a college-level teacher of adolescent literature and his methods of involving students in the work of the course. Like Hill, Yarbrough chose an exemplary teacher. She observed his teaching, interviewed his students, and isolated six ways the teacher had of "involving," that is, of "generating and sustaining student involvement in a college literature course" (p. vii). Yarbrough's interest in locating the patterns that underlay teacher behaviors was crucial in the methodology particularly of my first study. Hill conducted her study at the elementary level, and Yarbrough studied a college classroom.

Only a few similar noninterventional case studies of literature instruction have taken place in secondary school contexts. Barr's (1987) study also involved an exemplary teacher, selected on the basis of the "reputed effectiveness" (p. 154) of her class. That research looked at how the difficulty level of the texts used in a literature class functioned as a component of the interaction between the teacher and the students. The class observed in her case study was a group of juniors and seniors in a special literature class designed to "develop interpretative reading skills and skill in expository writing" (p.154). Barr collected data from 100 class sessions during a single school year.
The special strength of her research methodology, Barr indicated, was that it looked at instructional activities within a "larger context of instructional sequences that are designed to meet the goals of the teacher" (p. 155). It was largely on the basis of this model that I designed my own long-term view of what I wanted to look at in my case study.

Hillocks (1989) borrowed "for reanalysis" (p. 139) data from a study of two expert teachers at work teaching poetry. One teacher represented a "standard pattern" (p. 138) of teaching literature to high school students. The other teacher, who represented an "alternative" approach, typified a different pattern of teaching literature, one "that enlarges experiential knowledge of how literature works" and one where "there exist classroom procedures that demand [that] students actively bring that knowledge to bear in constructing meaning of texts for themselves" (p. 149).

Hillocks' analysis of the two class transcripts showed that the alternative teacher occupied only 54% of the classroom talk, whereas the "standard" teacher occupied 81%. Students in the alternative classroom gave longer responses and initiated exchanges rather than simply responding to the teacher. Hillocks attributed the differences between methods of instruction to "different assumptions about students and teaching" (p. 157). He suggested a revitalization of standard procedures for literature instruction by the use of "literature curricula which group
literary works" (p.150) and "articulated programs that prepare [students] to construct meanings and give them an opportunity to do so" (p. 151).

Hillocks' analysis of actual classroom talk about literature provided me with two more models against which I could test my observations of what was happening in the classroom I was observing. These classroom case studies, particularly the noninterventional ones, also guided my thinking about research methods. Not only did they provide me with a "perspectival view" (Strauss, 1987, p. 281) of work in the discipline, the case studies were important, to a certain degree, as Strauss suggests they might be, as "raw data" (1987, p. 281), as portraits against which I could test my own developing classroom study. Three other sets of studies further informed my data analysis.

**Academic Task Research**

English teachers teaching literature have been one focus of some of the task research that began to appear in mid-1980s. As I indicated previously, the concept of academic task as I use it comes primarily from the work of Doyle and his colleagues. Doyle's (1986) definition of academic task focused on four aspects of student work as it goes on in classrooms--the product, the operations involved in producing it, the resources used to produce it, and the reality of classroom accountability systems.
Nespor has expanded the concept in several important directions. He has discussed the ways in which teacher beliefs come to regulate task construction (Nespor, 1987b). He has also pointed out the ways that different students experience and respond to the same task (Nespor, 1987a). Nespor has suggested the use of the concept of academic task to investigate students' academic careers over time as they encounter different teachers' versions of similar tasks. Blumenfield, Mergandoller, and Swarthout (1987) have discussed academic tasks as a way of speculating on the "form of the task." They have suggested that "the more frequent the experience of similar task forms across subject matter classrooms and grades, the greater the homogeneity of how students approach and think about their work is likely to be" (p. 143). If nothing else, the concept of academic task has provided researchers with a productive way to look at the ways schoolwork comes to be accomplished.

A description of several task studies is useful for understanding the power of the concept as an analytical framework. Doyle and Carter (1984) reported on a study of writing tasks in three junior high English classrooms. Research techniques involved observation and interview. The researchers kept logs of the time spent on the writing tasks that developed over the 33 classroom observations they conducted in each class. In addition, they described the teacher's accountability system for written tasks.
Based on their observations, Doyle and Carter decided that 3 of the writing tasks were of a more complex nature than the other 11 encountered during their stay in the classroom. One was a two-paragraph comparison paper (based on a literary text), one was a report on a short story, and one was a collection of six descriptive paragraphs. What made these "major" tasks different from other "minor" tasks was that they constituted an important grade in the teacher's accountability system and required "students to use higher-level cognitive processes," to construct written products "by assembling information and making executive level decisions about its use" (p. 144). Other writing tasks, the "minor" ones, (grammar exercises, journal writing, and a paragraph defending a particular point of view) were of lesser value in the grading system, and occupied a single class period or a portion of a class period rather than extending over several days. The biggest difference between major and minor, however, was that minor task products were produced "algorithmically." That is, "minor tasks could normally be accomplished by using a standardized and reliable formula or routine" (p. 144).

In addition to making the distinction between major and minor tasks, the researchers described what happened to the major tasks as students and teacher interacted within the classroom realities of "risk" and "ambiguity." Ambiguity, within this construct, refers to "the extent to which a
precise and predictable formula for generating a product can be defined" (p. 131). The weaker the formula is, the greater the element of ambiguity. Risk involves the "stringency of evaluation criteria and the likelihood that these criteria can be met on a given occasion" (p. 131).

Major tasks were inherently ambiguous because there was no way to generate products from a known formula or procedure. Because of the greater grade risk, students pushed the teacher towards greater and greater specificity in task description. Their aim was to reduce the ambiguity of the assignment and therefore their own element of risk. While ambiguity prevailed, classroom management became a problem. Students persisted in asking and reasking public questions designed to fragment the complicated procedures that the tasks were supposed to elicit. The major tasks, originally designed to encourage students to work independently, became fragmented in the process of accomplishment. "The difficulty," wrote the researchers, "stemmed rather from tension within writing assignments between the teacher's emphasis on latitude for exercising composing skills and students' concern for guidance and predictability in an evaluative situation" (p. 146).

Other task research dealing with writing includes a study by Nespor (1987a). It is important to my case in a different way. Nespor studied tasks in a high school English class. He focused, however, on a task involving the
production of an argumentative essay. Nespor based his account on observations, focused interviews and document analysis of written products over 25 classroom observation sessions with a single teacher. Ten 11th-grade students were interviewed in depth. The most important part of the study was what Nespor called the "disjunction" between the teacher's expressed version of the task and the students' individual versions of it as they attempted to comply with his demands.

Although the teacher billed the assignment as a "persuasive essay," he presented it to the students as a five-paragraph essay format. Only the student who successfully deciphered the teacher's underlying goal to produce an essay of a particular format was actually able to deliver the required product. That student knew that the argument was less important than adhering to the format provided as a model. Another student concentrated on the argumentative aspect of the assignment. Used to writing stories, he found no way of producing an argument using his usual narrative mode, and he never saw the five-paragraph essay format as important at all. Still another student conceived of the argumentative form as similar to a previous teacher's argumentative model, one which had entailed a thesis, antithesis, synthesis approach. The argument he produced in no way matched the teacher's five-paragraph model, and their mutual lack of understanding led to the
student's failure to produce any paper at all. Nespor's work showed that differing perceptions of a task can generate totally different products.

Some task research has looked at reading rather than at writing tasks. Nespor (1985/1986) made use of the task framework in his investigation of a remedial reading program in a junior college. Murphy pursued reading as an academic task quite thoroughly in her 1987 study of fifth-grade students' definitions of reading tasks. In that study, Murphy emphasized the idea of match and mismatch between student and teacher task definitions.

Murphy (1987) based her analysis of classroom reading tasks on Doyle's (1983) taxonomy of task type. Doyle classified four kinds of tasks: understanding, opinion, routine, and memory. Memory and routine involved the recognition or reproduction of material or the use of simple algorithms to produce answers. Slightly more complex memory or routine tasks simply involved more material. Murphy found that most of the reading tasks she observed in the classroom were either procedural or memory tasks, both lower-level tasks in Doyle's system of classification. In addition, Murphy expanded upon Doyle's concept of ambiguity. Doyle had said that ambiguity was inherent not in the teacher's explanation of the task but in the nature of the higher-level task itself. Murphy expanded ambiguity to include the unintentional ambiguity that sometimes surrounds
teachers' explanations of task requirements. In other words, she focused more on lack of clarity in the explanation rather than on the inherently ambiguous nature of higher-level tasks themselves.

Erickson's (1984) discussions of academic tasks emphasized social relationships in a classroom context. He described learning tasks as "social environments" (p. 532) and said that "social relations are an inherent dimension of learning tasks. As such, "the relationship of rights and obligations between teacher and learner" (p. 534) is an important element of task structure. Erickson said that school environments often "do violence to civility," depriving a student of his right to "assent" to participate in learning activity" (p. 534). Erickson's work on tasks in combination with Doyle's task concept provided the "sociocognitive" focus I attempted to maintain.

A discussion of what goes on in classrooms using the vocabulary of academic tasks can provide some explanations of what happens to the teaching activities teachers design when those activities become a part of classroom interaction. In addition, it can provide a way of looking closely at the ways that teachers' conceptualizations of the content of their disciplines are converted into classroom activities. Doyle (1986) discussed that aspect in his description of how different teacher beliefs about the
content of their discipline result in radically different tasks.

Doyle (1986) and Doyle and Sanford (1985) took as a major implication of task research that the work of curriculum specialists and teacher educators should be to construct a "classroom curriculum for meaning" (Doyle, 1986, p. 378). As a result of his extensive classroom studies, Doyle decided that tasks aimed at "understanding"—high-level cognitive tasks that required students to determine or create meaning for themselves—were rare indeed in the classrooms he observed:

In most of the classes we observed, we seldom saw students accomplish tasks in which they were required to struggle with meaning. . . . Of course they often struggled with the meaning of work: What were they supposed to do, when did they have to finish, what was the answer to the fifth item. But meaning itself was seldom at the heart of the academic tasks they did. . . . Literature often involved memorizing facts of a story, expressing an opinion, or learning the standard interpretation of a passage rather than groping to understand what the story meant or how the author tried to communicate that meaning. (Doyle & Sanford, 1985, p. 22)

**Studies of Aesthetic Reading**

The notion of "aesthetic reading" is an important one to understand when one is thinking about how literature is or should be taught. It is part of the "general knowledge of the literature" (Strauss, 1987, p. 280) in the discipline of literature instruction. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of literary reading, her distinction
between "aesthetic" and "efferent" readings of a given text, provide a place to begin thinking about what goes on in the reading of a literary text. In an efferent reading, according to Rosenblatt's theory, "the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as residue after the reading--the information to be acquired, the logical solution to the problem, the actions to be carried out" (p. 23). In an aesthetic reading of a text, "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with a particular text" (p. 25).

Iser (1978) offered a different theory he called "interactive." As described by Kantz (1987), Iser's model also looked "at the processes by which readers interact with texts" (p. 156). Rosenblatt emphasized the events that go on between the reader and the text. Iser seemed to be more interested in what the text does to the reader, but both saw aesthetic reading as involving both the reader and the text mutually in the making of meaning. Neither theory, in my opinion, really gives teachers a way to help students gain what Mrs. Edwards once called "entry" into a text. The following set of studies, however, might provide some ideas about where a "pedagogically useful theory of literary reading" (Kantz, 1987) might be pursued. They affected my analysis of the reading tasks in the classroom.

Vipond and Hunt have been developing a most useful set of observations about the nature of aesthetic reading over
the last seven or eight years based on a group of experiments they conducted jointly. Hunt is an English professor and Vipond is a psychologist. They have a combination of perspectives on literary reading.

In 1984, they published an article discussing an initial set of experiments designed to test their hypothesis regarding the existence of not two but three kinds of reading strategies—informational, point-driven, and story-driven. Informational reading, they said, is a strategy "especially appropriate for learning-from-text situations where content is relevant" (p. 268). Both story-driven and point-driven strategies are appropriate to aesthetic reading. In story-driven reading, the reader attends to "plot, character, and event and . . . neglect[s] the 'discourse' by which the events and characters are presented" (p. 269). In point-driven reading, they said, "the reader reads with the expectation that the text will enable the construction of a valid pragmatic point" (p. 266). That point is seen not as a property of the text, something "waiting to be identified" (p. 265), but rather as something constructed by the reader, just as a listener works at constructing a point for a story someone else is telling him. Furthermore, Hunt and Vipond indicated that such a strategy has to do with how a reader relates to or engages with the author behind the text, an imagined author who at least theoretically intended to make the particular
point that the reader is in the process of constructing.

The experiments they conducted supported these distinctions. Vipond and Hunt (1984) asked university undergraduates to read a story under different conditions. Most of their readers found the story (Updike's "A & P") pointless and confusing. Only 5% of the readers made any attempt to "impute motives to an intentional author" (p. 270).

The researchers speculated that a number of strategies might be part of a point-driven approach to a work. First, they said, a point-driven reading is an attempt to "establish coherence over the text as a whole," (p. 267) and point-driven readers can tolerate seemingly useless details and put off evaluation of the work as a whole while they attempt to construct a point for it. Second, point-driven readers have narrative strategies to deal with things that may seem strange in an initial reading of a text. Odd features (such as an unusual setting) can be seen as items useful to understanding the coherence of the whole.

Unusual features are more likely to be explained as . . . a purposeful and deliberate contrivance: A dramatic device. A dramatic device, though, is used for some particular reason. Consequently someone who is reading in a point-driven way implicitly imputes a motive to an author and thus recognizes that there is a puzzle here to be resolved. (p. 272)

Third, Hunt and Vipond concluded, point-driven readers "recognize the existence of an intentional being behind the
text who is responsible for it" (p. 272). Characters are seen as the creation of such an imagined "intentional being." That attitude allows for speculation about the author's uses of language in creation of character. Basically, Hunt and Vipond split Rosenblatt's aesthetic stance into two different aesthetic strategies. They have gone to great lengths to explain that the point of a work, just as Rosenblatt suggested, is not the property of the text (or of a real historical author). The point, and to some degree both the point and the author, are constructed by the reader as a strategy for making sense of the work. Point-driven, then, is something of a game sophisticated readers play as they strive to develop their own coherent reading of a text.

Another series of experiments (Hunt & Vipond, 1985; Vipond & Hunt, 1989) explored facets of aesthetic reading based on the assumption that "any reading event is a transaction between three mutually transforming entities, the reader, the text, and the situation" (Hunt & Vipond, 1985, p. 24). The researchers looked at "evaluated" and "unevaluated" text, and the effects of different reading situations on the choice of reading strategies.

When they used the term "discourse evaluation," Hunt and Vipond (1985) referred to those aspects of a text that embody a narrator's attitude towards events, characters, and utterances. From the reader's point of view, a textual evaluation is an opportunity or an
invitation to share an attitude or belief with the narrator. Generally speaking, evaluations are words, phrases, or events that are unpredictable against the norm of the text. When that unpredictability is due not to what is told but to the way in which it is told, we call it a "discourse evaluation." (p. 31)

They found that readers were indeed "sensitive" (p. 33) to that aspect of text. When they compared novice (undergraduate) and expert (faculty) readers, the researchers found that the experts were more point-driven in their choice of reading strategy, while the novices leaned towards a story-driven reading of the texts presented to them in the experiment.

Hunt and Vipond have expanded upon their theories in a number of ways, suggesting new directions for research in aesthetic reading. "Social reading" is another idea they developed that is pertinent to my case (Hunt & Vipond, 1987; Vipond, Hunt, & Wheeler, 1987). Social reading is "a situation in which a person reads a text aloud with the intention of conveying what he or she perceives to be the text's central meaning" (Vipond et al., 1987, p. 153). In one experiment, Vipond, Hunt, and Wheeler (1987) hypothesized that the social reading situation would increase "literary engagement," which they defined as exhibiting the following reader strategies:

(a) imputing intentionality to the text, that is treating the text as the product of an intending author; (b) assuming that the text, as the product of an intending author is finished and coherent; assuming, because the text is finished and complete, that the apparent gaps or
inconsistencies are to be treated as opportunities or invitations to make connections, supply inferences, or fill gaps; (d) assuming, for the same reason, that details or textual features that do not immediately seem necessary or functional should not be ignored or dismissed. (Vipond, Hunt, & Wheeler, 1987, p. 152)

That, of course, is a detailed description of a point-driven reading strategy. What they found, contrary to expectations, was that social reading actually impaired engagement. Perhaps because of "performance anxiety" (p. 158), reading aloud distracted readers from employment of a point-driven strategy.

Recently (Vipond, Hunt, Jewett, & Reither, in press) the researchers and their colleagues have explored further implications of their aesthetic reading model. They have suggested the use of the term "dialogic reading" as a better term than "point-driven" reading because it emphasizes the fact that, "in this type of transaction, readers imagine themselves in a conversation with authors and texts" (p. 6). Hunt and Vipond are beginning to expand upon possible connections between their research on aesthetic reading and the work of Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin (R. Hunt, personal communication, November 28, 1989). In addition, on the basis of additional experimentation, they also have speculated on the existence of two additional modes or strategies of aesthetic reading, a "professional" mode and an "associative" mode.
They characterized "professional" reading as a "detached analytical type of response that critics and English professors tend to make" (p. 31). It is slightly different from dialogic reading in ways the researchers have yet to clarify. The professional mode, they wrote, is "not a matter of engaging in a conversation with an author but of stepping back to observe" (p. 32). It seems to be a kind of reading that goes beyond dialogic reading, an academic way to look at texts. "Associative" reading, on the other hand, uses the text not "as a conversational partner . . . but as a pretext for exploring one's own memories and images" (p. 32). Unlike dialogic reading where personal associations are "relevant" to the text and "illuminate" it, in associative reading the personal associations are "an end in themselves" (p. 32).

The model of aesthetic reading that Hunt and Vipond have been developing provides a way to talk about the ways students and teachers discuss literary texts. In the descriptions of their experimental work, I found a name for what I had earlier identified as Mrs. Edwards' concern for aesthetic language. I came to see dialogic reading as one of the two strategies Mrs. Edwards consistently taught students to employ as a means of gaining entry to literary texts.
Studies of Classroom Discussion

Researchers are beginning to attack the question of what actually goes on in classroom discussions. Some specifically attend to the ways students and teachers interact in their discussions of literary texts. Cazden (1988), in her review of research on classroom discourse, pointed out the persistence in classrooms of the IRE pattern (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) of student/teacher interaction (p. 53). A teacher initiates an exchange, the student responds, giving an answer, and the teacher evaluates that response. That situation is what happens in classrooms "by default" unless "deliberate action is taken to achieve some alternative" (p. 53). Cazden imagined a different and better kind of classroom talk, something closer to a "real discussion,"

- talk in which ideas are explored rather than teachers' test questions provided and evaluated;
- in which teachers talk less than the usual 2/3 of the time and students talk correspondingly more;
- in which students themselves decide when to speak;
- and in which students address each other directly. (p. 54).

Such situations, Cazden said, are not common in classrooms. In trying to define the nature of discussion, the main distinction Cazden made is between a lesson and a discussion, the lesson format being dominated by an IRE pattern of interaction. But that distinction does not necessarily define discussion.
Kuhn (1984/1985) studied talk in college classrooms, attempting to isolate segments of discourse that constituted discussion. He was looking for "characteristic features that distinguish [discussion] from other forms of group talk that occur in the classroom" (p. i). That made his study particularly important for me in considering kinds of oral discourse in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. Drawing on methods of discourse analysis, Kuhn analyzed videotapes of classroom sessions for style of talk, turn-taking patterns, and topic. He was able to extract segments in some of the classes that were distinctively "discussion." His definition of discussion involved the following characteristics: there was exchange between teacher and student; there was a deviation from the teacher/student/teacher pattern of turntaking; and there was a "constraint on the range of topic shift" (p. 12). In other words, subtopics could not vary too greatly from the topic originally initiated by the teacher, without a change of topic, something generally accomplished by the teacher.

Kuhn's defining characteristics were helpful to me because his study described activities that took place at the college level. His work provided me with a way to think about the kinds of talk that were occurring in the classes I was observing. Rather than distinguishing between "lessons" and "discussions" as Cazden did, Kuhn saw discussion as
segments of a specific kind of talk, islands in the streams of classroom discourse.

On the basis of his analysis of those discussion segments, Kuhn found patterns in discussion at the college level. First, although the teacher was still in a position of power, his relationship to other speakers was different. The teacher continued "to use controlling talk, but with a subtler hand" (p. 146). Generally, the teacher initiated the topic, students either elaborated on subtopics or initiated new subtopics. Speakers were "expected to make their talk fit with the prior speaker's" (p. 148). There was "no tolerance for speech that [did not] address itself to the topic." (p. 148) One class session might include a variety of topics. It was particularly the matter of topics that I began to analyze in transcripts of discussion sessions.

Discussion as it occurs in literature classes has also been a matter of recent attention. Conner and Chalmers-Neubauer (1989) for instance, reported on a recent collaborative study with a classroom teacher, who, at the request of the researchers, instituted a change in her classroom procedures designed to encourage more interaction among students, to break the teacher/student/teacher recitation pattern, and to decrease the amount of teacher talk. The definition of discussion in this study as verbal interchange that is "predominantly between student and
student" (p. 30) is different from Kuhn's description of what happens during discussions in college classrooms, and the researchers' intent to remove the teacher from the classroom interaction does not reflect the sort of situation that Kuhn described, where teachers retained their position of control but exercised it at a lower level.

Another recent study of discussions in literature classes defined discussion in yet another way. Marshall (1988) analyzed "patterns of oral discourse in six secondary English classrooms in discussions of literature" (p.1). "Discussion" in his study constituted all classroom talk in whatever class sessions the teachers and researchers designated as "discussion sessions." He excluded small-group talk from his study.

In Marshall's research, videotapes of 25 classroom sessions conducted by six teachers who taught literary works of their own selection (five novels and one play) to upper-level, relatively high-ability classes were transcribed. The resulting transcripts were analyzed several ways. Students and teachers were also interviewed about their perceptions of the goals of discussion. Like Kuhn's work, Marshall's study provided a picture of what goes on in classrooms. Marshall reported that both the teachers and the students who were interviewed claimed dual goals for discussion sessions.
Discussions were "opportunities for interaction," but they also needed to "go somewhere" (p. 41). Marshall verified Kuhn's observations that teachers are a part of classroom talk, a big part, contributing more or less one-half of the "communication units" (sentences), taking longer turns, and participating largely in teacher/student/teacher exchanges.

One of Marshall's significant observations was, however, that classroom talk was not exactly recitation in the sense that student responses received evaluation by the teacher. His six teachers, Marshall found, "seldom asked factual questions and seldom simply evaluated student answers" (p. 43). Yet, Marshall concluded, there was nothing in his data to suggest that the goals of interaction claimed by the teachers were being met.

Dillon (1984, 1985), dealing with the nature of discussion, offered yet another definition of discussion. For Dillon (1984), anything that was not recitation was discussion, and recitation was characterized by "recurring sequences of teacher question and student answer" (p. 50). Recitation, he said, covered "various activities called review, drill, quiz, guided discovery, inquiry teaching and the Socratic method" (pp. 50-51). The characteristic of discussion was that students and teacher talk about "what they don't know" (p. 51).
Furthermore, Dillon contended that as long as teachers ask questions, there is no discussion. Based on a series of five case studies of classroom talk in secondary school classrooms, Dillon (1985) suggested that it does not matter whether the teacher talks more or less than students do. . . . It does not matter what kinds of questions the teacher asks. . . . It does not matter what amount of questions the teacher asks. . . . It does not matter what the pace of the questions is. . . . What does seem to matter is whether the teacher asks questions or uses nonquestion alternative techniques. (p. 118)

Barnes, Churley, and Thompson (1971) studied the nature of the talk that went on in a small group of 14 and 15-year-old students when they were put to the task of making something of a novel they had previously read. The groups functioned without the help of a teacher. The researchers made the following observations on the basis of their analysis of transcripts of the taped small-group discussion sessions that included five or six students each. The talk in such sessions had some distinctive characteristics:

First, there is a perpetual returning to details of the plot, in order to sort out difficulties for one another. . . . [and second] they treat the character as if he were a real person and ascribe hypothetical feelings and emotions to him. (p. 66)

Four different "levels of talking about literature" (p. 75) were eventually discerned in the study. Those categories, which I describe further in Chapter 7, were useful as I attempted to analyze the texture of talk in the classroom I was observing.
To some extent, these studies of classroom discussion were raw data useful for comparison to my own case, other cases to test against. They represented the "supplementary or complementary or conflicting analyses" Strauss (1987) suggested it is necessary to "grapple with" (p. 282) in the analysis of data.

Summary

These bodies of research were important factors in the construction of my research perspective, that is, the angle of vision which I brought to classroom observation. They also informed my analysis of data. In the following chapters, I will describe a number of the patterns I saw in the classroom setting as the teacher and students went about the work of studying literary texts.
CHAPTER 4
CLASSROOM CULTURE: A CIRCLE OF SCHOLARS

The Senior Year

Mrs. Edwards taught all of her classes in the same classroom. The green chalkboard, single exterior window, and bulletin board were standard features, little different from other classrooms in the building. File cabinets stood in one corner, a desk in another. Two teachers shared the space during the semester I observed there, and their personal contributions to the decor were evident. Mrs. Edwards' laminated prints of paintings occupied much of the wall space. Shakespeare looked down from above a study carrel; Van Gogh's "Starry Night" swirled above the dictionary shelf at the back of the room. Two tall bookcases filled the space behind the teacher's desk, tilting precariously forward under the weight of two teachers' collections of paperbacks, reference books, and class sets of anthologies. For an hour each day, that classroom was home for each IB senior.

The focal point in the room, the college bulletin board, occupied about a third of one interior wall. It was a permanent fixture, featuring a collage of college
brochures, overlapping in multicolored chaos. When I made the final visit of my preliminary study, in May, on one of the final days of the second semester, the board was festooned with strips of white paper upon which students had listed their college acceptances. The brochures barely showed behind the lists. In early September of the next school year, when I returned to initiate my new round of observations, the bulletin board and its brochures were pristine. I could even see all of the outline of the United States map that occupied the center of the board. The stick pins that had speared the locations of accepting colleges in May now were to the side. Another senior year lay ahead.

That year was a tense one for many of the students I was observing. Not only were they finishing up a difficult set of courses, they were preparing for IB examinations at the end of the year and undertaking time-consuming college application procedures as well. I marked the progress of the year watching the bulletin board again fill up with names on white paper strips. In October, Mrs. Edwards posted lists of colleges where students were planning to apply. In November, a few early acceptances began to appear, and students posted their names. In December, just before Christmas, more prestigious "earlies" began to show up. Hopes of winning early acceptances to "dream schools" ran high or low as the holidays approached. Mrs. Edwards spent considerable time between September and December
advising students about their college choices and college application procedures. The tension just before Christmas was particularly high.

There was a good deal of conversation each day as new names appeared on the board. Mrs. Edwards counseled students:

I expect things to be written [on the board] not in this tiny little pen writing of those who are self-deprecating, but in nice, strong, fat magic markers, nice big letters so we can see them across the room, to encourage the rest of us, OK?

To those who were "waitlisted" or "deferred," she said, "don't just roll over and crumple up." She reminded the rejected that "these are some of the most difficult schools in the world to get into . . . and these people tried." The successful were warned that "these [other people] need support regardless of what happens, and those of you who get in, let's not have any undue dancing on the graves of those who didn't." Above all, Mrs. Edwards told the group, "Please realize [what all of these students] have attempted to do, and let's be compassionate with each other."

After Christmas I noted a few more acceptances on the board, a Bryn Mawr and a University of Michigan, and then there was a lull as I made return visits to conduct interviews during the early part of the second semester. At the time of my final visit in mid-April, the board was again covered with names. I sat with Susan, a student, beginning an after-school interview in the classroom. Mrs. Edwards
joined us for a few minutes. We surveyed the board across the room. I commented on the number of names. "Doesn't that look good?" Susan said. I nodded my assent. "Not bad," said Mrs. Edwards.

The growing collection of acceptances marked the passage of a difficult year for the students and for the teacher. As I measured the progress of the year by the accumulation of names on the board, I began to see that bulletin board as emblematic of a collection of attitudes toward school and learning that underlay interpersonal relationships in Mrs. Edwards' classroom.

Erickson (1984) has said that "social relationships are an inherent dimension of learning tasks" and that there is a "relationship of rights and obligations between teacher and learner" (p. 534) in a classroom. Over the course of more than a year watching Mrs. Edwards and her students interact, I settled upon the following set of attitudes toward school tasks that undergirded the interaction about subject matter: (a) the work the students (and the teacher) were doing was useful; (b) the work was undertaken in an atmosphere of civility in the sense of "a social contract that involves the assent of the learner" (Erickson, 1984, p. 534); and (c) there was a mutual sense of membership in a unique community of learners who were jointly undertaking an important endeavor.
Talking About Important Matters

All of these attitudes came through each day as the class talked of the two sets of important matters that occupied each class period: the day's text and discussions of student concerns. Generally, discussion of the day's text took at least 30 of the 50-minute period, usually more. Discussion of student concerns--the homework load, the college application process, IB requirements, AP and SAT examinations, tests and papers in other courses--never exceeded 20 minutes. These topics took up slightly more class time at the beginning of the year as students launched themselves into the business of being IB seniors.

Many days the talk during lunch hour preceding the class merged with class talk about important matters. During the lunch period, when she was not busy with other matters, Mrs. Edwards talked with individuals and groups of students who customarily lunched and socialized in the classroom. She offered personal advice and general conversation about classes, books, tests, essays, movies, TV shows, and news from IB graduates. Whenever she was in the room, students clustered around her desk or chair or congregated around her wherever she happened to be. If she moved to the filing cabinet, a few of them trailed her there, continuing the conversation.
Text talk, which generally occupied most of the class period, centered on the following texts during the time I observed:

Class Texts

Existentialism unit:
  Sartre, "No Exit," (summer reading)
  Camus, *The Stranger* (summer reading)
  Several essays about existentialism
  Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"
  Kafka, "The Hunger Artist'
  Sartre,"The Wall"
  Camus, "The Guest"
  Ionesco,"Foursome"

Hardy:
  *Jude the Obscure* (summer reading)
  Collection of poems

Essay unit:
  Gould, "Our Allotted Lifetimes"
  Bronowski, "On Being an Intellectual"
  Bronowski, *Science and Human Values* (including "The Abacus and the Rose")
  An essay about Einstein

Shakespeare:
  A group of sonnets (including two Milton sonnets)
  *Twelfth Night*

Additional texts entering into discussion were a second Shakespeare comedy and an existentialist work of the individual student's choice. Those outside assignments were called "parallel readings." On all days, both the personal academic matters and the texts came up for discussion. Mrs. Edwards invariably began class a minute or two before the bell actually rang, blending the lunch-time talk with class-talk of college concerns.
Membership

There was in all of this talk a real sense of membership in a community. Students, obviously, had been together at least four years, some even longer. Hilary told me that the students "all know each other better than we probably want to." In discussions, she said, "we're all real comfortable . . . we keep it on the level of ideas. We're all real comfortable with each other." Not only were they at ease with their peers, Hilary thought that to be an IB student was to be different from other students her age. "The main thing," she said, "is that for us the focus is school . . . we just can't ignore it. You can't just skip over it." Susan also said that IB students were probably different from other high school students, but she did not know how because she did not have much experience being around regular high school students. The IB kids, she thought, had a lot more homework and they were all "trying to make good grades . . . trying to learn . . . trying to get into a good college" and in general, "trying to get a good education." Thinking about what life might be like for other high school students, she told me,

I don't know if the regular people, if that's what they're looking for. Everybody's like that [in IB]. We can talk about grades and we can talk about tests and we can talk about homework a lot of the time, and normally, I don't think [other high school kids] talk about that. I don't know if that's good or bad, but that's how we are.
Rebecca thought that the difference between IB and regular students was a matter of attitude. "You decide for yourself that you're going to push yourself a little bit and learn everything as much as you can, and that's what an IB student has decided to do." One day in November, Mrs. Edwards shared parts of a letter she had received from a former student, Allen, who was in his first semester away at school. It echoed that sense of being a part of a unique group. "I thought [being here at school] would be like IB," he wrote. "I got used to being the best. Now I have to get used to being one of the rest."

Mrs. Edwards' class was something of subgroup of the total IB community. Even though she taught all three classes of IB senior English, there was the sense that all students were members of any of those classes. It was not unusual for one or two or more of the students from other classes to show up and participate in the class I was observing.

The sense of membership in a program was fostered by a string of former student visitors to Mrs. Edward's classroom during the semester I was observing. Some actually dropped in, and others were present in the letters they wrote to the teachers and friends they had left behind as they went off to school. Karen wrote Mrs. Edwards from college, telling seniors to be sure to sign up for the honors program in the colleges they were applying to. In November and December,
students home for the holidays appeared in the classroom. Jean, for example, a student I recognized from the previous year, came to class and spent 20 minutes answering questions like, "Has IB prepared you for the rigors of college life?" Sandra, wrapped up in pressures of her own final year in the program, was pleased to hear that Jean could make the seniors feel that they were doing all the work for some good reason; it would all prove useful in the end.

Other letters told of college life as better than IB life; college work as easier. Mrs. Edwards reported that Tracy, who they all knew had trouble with IB calculus, was "acing" the course in college. That same sense of continuity from year to year must have extended to the current year's IB juniors, who used the same classroom for IB junior English and had the same opportunity to watch the bulletin board fill up with names.

In addition to the sense of belonging to a special group, Mrs. Edwards' students also voiced a sense of being with a "unique" teacher. Ronnie, who was not an IB student, but a student in Mrs. Edwards' honors/AP class, told me that Mrs. Edwards had been a real experience for him. She was a teacher who really cared about the subject matter. Leah, an IB senior, attributed the unusual quality of the class to the personal relationships Mrs. Edwards formed with individual students. Those relationships, she thought, created a "different atmosphere from other classes."
Another student said that, in Mrs. Edwards' classes, the work was "more integrated" than in other classes. Holly, a student who had transferred into the program the previous year, did have some experience of what the world outside of IB was like. She told me that Mrs. Edwards was different because her English class "went into everything" about a text.

At the other school, in my English classes . . . the teacher would just tell us what the themes are and the major symbols and we'd write them down and memorize them and . . . then the test was to write what the things were. We never really discussed. Here we discuss everything and she asks us what we think and why.

Comparing her with another teacher, Sarah said that Mrs. Edwards asked them to do things for themselves where other teachers often said, "This is what's here. Learn it." The difference was that Mrs. Edwards "put the responsibility" on them to figure out what there was to learn. Hilary said that Mrs. Edwards was "teaching them to think for themselves." Even Rob, who declared himself less than interested in English class, thought that Mrs. Edwards' classroom provided an atmosphere different from other classrooms. "English isn't my favorite subject, but I do enjoy coming here. There's an open atmosphere. You can say [what you think] and no one will [object]. It makes you feel comfortable." In addition, he said that the class gave him insight into what people thought. It was
important, he believed, to understand that there were viewpoints other than his own.

Susan and Hilary (two girls who became my principal informants during the study) focused on different aspects of the teacher's relationship with students as they talked about what made the class unusual. Hilary said that Mrs. Edwards was different because she really knew what she was talking about. "She knows a lot more than she tells us," Hilary said. Susan told me that she had been "overwhelmed by the way [Mrs. Edwards] addressed us" initially. "She brings us up to her level," Susan thought. "We're not doing plot summary or that sort of thing . . . we're analyzing works, and she treats us like what we have to say is exceptional."

Like the students, Mrs. Edwards also expressed a feeling of being in special intellectual company. She often spoke to the group about their "high level of thinking" or said that they "were on their way to becoming really stellar thinkers." "That's the pleasure of teaching you," she would say. So when those acceptances were posted, while the triumphs were individual, it almost seemed that a group effort had been involved in getting accepted to the school of one's dreams.

**Civility**

Closely bound up in this membership theme is the idea of "civility," or the learner's right to assent to doing the
work he is assigned. Erickson (1984) further defined it as "mutual commitment to participation in society, beyond the self" (p. 534). That idea of participation functioned on several levels in classroom culture. First, because the program was voluntary, students had, in a way, already assented to doing the work by applying for admittance. There were additional elements of civility in choices that were open to students in the classroom. Class texts, for instance, were specified by a combination of program demands and administrative necessity, but "parallel readings" or individual readings were a matter of choice within a range of possibilities. On tests, there were often choices of what to write about, generally allowing students to use the texts they were best prepared to deal with. Students also had the choice of negotiating due dates on papers and days for examinations, though the topics were not negotiable. There was also, I began to notice, a large amount of choice involved in the individual student's level of participation in classroom activities.

Students chose where they sat and generally chose whom they would work with in small group work sessions. "I'm not going to play Solomon," Mrs. Edwards told them. They were to decide whom they could work best with. Effort went into that decision, at least sometimes. In group work, as in whole-class discussions, there was an element of choice about the level of participation. As far as the groups were
concerned, the members were allowed to deal with non-participation in whatever way they chose. That was the way the real world worked, Mrs. Edwards thought. Besides, there were times when some students were not up to full participation levels because personal or academic demands were preemptsing their attention at the moment. Group work, Mrs. Edwards believed, would allow them to "move in and out" of the work as they needed.

There was yet another choice involved in the issue of whether or not to participate in whole-class discussions, something I will discuss more thoroughly later. Only rarely did Mrs. Edwards call on a student who did not indicate willingness to participate on his or her own. When I asked her if class participation was a personal choice, she said that it was "something between the students and myself. . . . One or two students I never call on . . . because I perceive them as threatened." She preferred to talk with them at other times. When individual students occasionally talked too much, that too was acceptable because, Mrs. Edwards thought, they might be fulfilling another personal need.

Erickson (1984) has said that "school-like task construction may do violence to civility. In the most extreme forms of school learning environments, not only does the learner have no rights to shape the learning task, but neither does the teacher" (p. 534). In Mrs. Edwards'
classroom, both the teacher and the students had some leeway in determining how tasks would be carried out.

There were, of course, restraints on what Mrs. Edwards could do in class, but in spite of problems with class size, lack of space and materials, Mrs. Edwards felt that she was fairly free to teach, to shape the task, as she chose. Being on an IB faculty, she thought, gave her the freedom to teach as she wished, even if the lack of time often kept her from doing all that she wanted. The texts were not necessarily her choice, because the IB program specified certain ranges of works, time periods, and authors that needed to be covered. The order of the works that were covered was not entirely to her liking either, because the course syllabus was one she had inherited, but she felt that a new school year and changes in the curriculum would allow her more choice in that matter as well.

Students also had flexibility and choice in the ways the completed tasks. That is an idea I will develop as I describe the task system and how it worked in the classroom. Civility, in Erickson's sense, was not often abrogated, nor was there a violation of civility in another sense of the word. The word *civility* carries an archaic meaning that has to do with a polite education, training in the humanities, and good breeding. Civility in that sense and in the sense of politeness and proper behavior appropriate to the situation was also a part of classroom interaction. Nearly
every class began with Mrs. Edwards' call to attention: "Ladies and gentlemen," she would address them. The class session generally proceeded under the expectation of polite behavior.

Some things were simply not done in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. Eating was one of them. Lunchtime was for eating, not classtime. Doing work for other classes was another. Skipping her class was not condoned, nor was writing illegibly or without attention to spelling and punctuation. "After all," said Mrs. Edwards, "this is English class." Furthermore, the denigration of oneself or of one's peers was simply not allowed. A rude remark might have been met with a "What did you say? I will accept an apology." Lapses in adolescent decorum, of course, occurred, but civility generally prevailed.

Usefulness

In addition to membership and civility in its multiple dimensions, the idea of the usefulness of the work being done also underlay interactions about academic tasks. The teacher and many of the students spoke of the usefulness of both the subject matter of the course and of the extra effort they needed to put into doing it.

Texts, for instance, were described as "useful," even if both Mrs. Edwards (privately) and students admitted that they might have been "boring." The heavy dose of Bronowski, for example, was initially viewed as wearisome by many of
the students I spoke with, even though it had been selected to meet the interests of a group of students who were seen as more scientifically than literarily inclined. As the semester went on, however, some students found a use for those texts. Rebecca, back from a visit to a campus of her dreams, found that other students she had encountered there were reading Bronowski too. Another student brought in a college brochure that quoted Bronowski in a description of the college. Mrs. Edwards related the reading of Bronowski to the kind of reading that they would be expected to do for the next four years, a critical kind of reading:

Most of you are going to spend the next four and a half years reading essentially non-fiction . . . so it's time to start recognizing biases, recognizing prejudices, start picking apart what's going on in a given text. Just because it's well-written by a well-recognized, well-respected author doesn't mean that you can't bring some of your own judgment to bear upon it.

When I spoke with Mrs. Edwards after the Bronowski texts were in the past, she told me how many of the students had "used Bronowski" on their college essays and on their semester examination. Now that they were reading Kuhn's On the Structure of Scientific Revolutions in their Theory of Knowledge class, "all of a sudden they're seeing how useful it is." All of a sudden, they were thinking, "Well, it's done, and it's a good thing we've learned it and we're using it."
Other texts were described as "useful" as well. An essay about Einstein, for instance, showed how anecdotes could be used effectively in writing an informal essay. Mrs. Edwards talked about how the technique could be used to advantage in the college application essays many of the students were in the process of writing.

Tasks were also seen as "useful." A worksheet was to be considered a "useful outline" for study at the end of the year in preparation for the IB examinations. Students put a list of definitions into their writing folders so that it could be "used for review" at the end of the year as well. Notes on group presentations were "useful" in writing subsequent essay examination papers. Notes, in general, were not only "useful" for the class examinations, but for the four-hour semester final and for the end-of-the-year IB and AP tests. Mrs. Edwards said that some students also reported using the notes from her class in college as well.

Usefulness was also a theme in the talk about the IB Program. When Mrs. Matthews, the director of the program, spoke to seniors about IB and AP examinations and requirements for graduation with an IB diploma, she stressed the usefulness of the extra effort involved in earning college credit or in winning scholarships. A letter from Jeremy off at college confirmed the usefulness of the work. He reported having gotten a lot of credit for his IB courses; now he was pursuing sophomore-level work, studying
things that interested him rather than things he was required to study.

**A Circle of Scholars**

During the first week of my observations in the new school year, I was surprised to find the desks in Mrs. Edwards' room arranged in rows. A ragged circle had been the arrangement the previous year. I had described that as the "circle of scholars" who gathered for the purpose of "looking at the text." Mrs. Edwards told me that several of her classes were too large to permit a circle this year. By the end of September, however, the circle had reestablished itself somehow, and it remained in place for the rest of the semester, breaking up only into smaller circles when group work had been assigned. Because space was tight this year, Mrs. Edwards usually remained at her post behind a lectern at the front of the room. The circle of desks pressed against the walls of the room. Last year, she had moved from place to place in the circle. That did not happen often in the more crowded circumstances I observed this year.

Sandra expressed delight when she walked into the room and found that the rows had dissolved into a circle. Susan told me how she had never realized how hard it was to "discuss stuff" without the circle. When I spoke with Tony about what it was that went on across the circle in a discussion session, he told me that "whatever conclusions
[about a text] you're going to come to or the class is going to come to as a whole, the important point is finding it out yourself. . . . learning with everyone else." When we talked about whether there were right and wrong interpretations of the texts being discussed by the group as a whole, he said,

Well, there are majority answers and if you want to call those right then they're right. I think that . . . you're going to have a majority that comes up with a certain opinion, but that the minority is very important . . . because the minority helps the majority reexamine their conclusions towards something. And within limits there are right answers, but you know I think that it's not having the right answer but having the right question to ask the work that counts.

When I asked him whether it was permissible to disagree with Mrs. Edwards, he said that he thought so; in fact, he said, "She'll learn with you. It's not the fact that she's teaching you. It's the book that's teaching everyone."

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) differentiated between "high literacy" and "low literacy" traditions in education. Low literacy education aims only at enabling students to "extract meaning from simple texts, read popular literature . . . and cope with everyday reading and writing demands" (p. 20). High literacy education "has been aimed at developing the linguistic and verbal reasoning abilities, the literary standards and sophistication, and the moral values and precepts appropriate to leaders of society" (p. 9). In their attempt to isolate those characteristics of a
high literacy tradition that might be used in "constructing new models of curriculum and instruction that can bring the benefits of high literacy" (p. 9) to all students, Bereiter and Scardamalia settled on the concept of "intentional learning" as important. Intentional learning necessitates a kind of instruction aimed at "generating independence . . . rather than dependence on the teacher to manage cognitive activity" (p. 15). It is something that Mrs. Edwards works at and accomplishes in her classroom. Some examples of a kind of instruction that aims at independence will be developed in the next chapters as I show Mrs. Edwards at work teaching "domain specific knowledge" (Doyle, 1983, p. 168) about literature that includes manageable strategies that enable students to independently approach and deal with difficult literary texts.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) further suggested that intentional learning is really an attitude toward tasks characterized by a "willingness to invest effort over and above the tasks at hand" to learn to "manage themselves as readers, writers, and learners" (p. 16). I hope that evidence of that attitude can be heard in some of the voices of students as they struggle with a variety of tasks that are designed to help them learn to "do literary analysis."

"We can imagine," Bereiter and Scardamalia wrote, "a school environment that functions like a learned profession, to which teachers and students belong. What is supported in
this environment is continual growth in literacy— that is, growth beyond wherever one happens to be" (p. 26). Such was my sense of the environment in Mrs. Edwards' classroom.
CHAPTER 5
LITERARY ANALYSIS: A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING

Looking at Texts

The topic under consideration was a picture prefacing Chapter 1 of Bronowski's *Science and Human Values*, "Glad Day," an engraving by William Blake. Mrs. Edwards asked about the picture toward the end of the discussion of the chapter. Someone in the class mentioned a detail of the picture, a bat. There was some good-humored banter about the bat, suggestions that it looked more like a spaceship, a roach, or a bee. Tony assumed a professorial tone and informed the class, "It's a moth and it's going to cover the light up, the light of knowledge and truth . . . representing technology." Everyone laughed, of course, and Mrs. Edwards complimented Tony on his "gift of gab." But it was Lee who turned the talk to more serious consideration of the meaning of the picture and its relationship to Bronowski's text. "How are we supposed to look at this?" he demanded, not joking at all. "Give me a way to look at it. Give me a way."

On the basis of the observation I had done in my preliminary study, I had identified the underlying process
that Mrs. Edwards was teaching students to manage as "literary analysis." I saw it as a process that unified reading and writing activities in her classroom. That notion had occurred to me as I was thinking about the events of a day when students and teacher were negotiating the details of a written assignment. Mrs. Edwards, somewhat exasperated by repeated questions about the assignment said, "It's just literary analysis. You won't die." Obviously, there was a set of expectations wrapped up in that assignment that students needed to understand before they could complete it. I resolved to identify those expectations in the present study. As I listened to Lee's demand for "a way of looking," it occurred to me that it was a good definition of what literary analysis was. Mrs. Edwards was teaching a "way of looking" at literary texts, a way of gaining entry, a way to begin constructing a sense of meaning for texts that were not immediately accessible.

What I had seen originally as a unifying element in classroom activities turned out to be exactly that, a complex process for dealing with texts. The process involved mastering a body of knowledge about literary texts that included a number of strategies for reading them. The strategies I eventually came to see Mrs. Edwards teaching were dialogic reading and a variety of "connecting" strategies. Literary analysis, in other words, was the academic work of the class. The process was not necessarily
simple to learn. There was more to it than taking a work apart.

Early in the year students talked about what happened to a book when it became the object of analysis. "The magic is gone," said April one day, after a large dose of existentialism, "when you figure out how it works." Mrs. Edwards replied,

You're right, when you take it apart and it doesn't come back together, you've lost something. But when you take it apart and find something else, you can leap beyond. There comes a time when reiteration of feeling isn't enough. It gets boring.

April protested, saying that too much analysis of books was like too much analysis of music. "It makes you miss the beauty," she said. Mrs. Edwards agreed but pointed out that analysis was simply a different way of looking at a book, just as analysis was a different way of listening to music:

If you listen to music in a different way, if you find out how [the composer, the musician] did it, what is the pattern, then you add another dimension to your enjoyment. . . . You may take it apart, but you have to keep putting it back together.

"But why," Rob continued, taking up April's protest, "must we keep taking apart books?" It was not so much a matter of taking them apart, Mrs. Edwards told them, but of being able to identify and figure out what the pieces were. "Once you can identify the pieces," she went on, "you can put them back together in new and amazing ways."
Genre and Literary Analysis: The Leap Beyond

It is important to look at what the elements of analysis were in different texts and different tasks. Although I had originally thought that Mrs. Edwards' usual unit of organization for her curriculum was the individual literary text, the long-term stay in the classroom for the present study and a better acquaintance with the teacher in her own setting indicated that Mrs. Edwards used genre rather than work as a major organizing rubric. In the first study, I had watched her finishing up a group of works that needed to be studied in preparation for the year-end IB examinations. The classes in the first study covered *Hamlet*, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and "Dover Beach," and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, as they raced toward the end of their senior year. When I again observed, this time at the beginning of the academic year, I saw first a unit of works with an existential theme, then a unit of works that were essays, then a Shakespeare comedy, followed by a unit on sonnets. The strong genre orientation that runs through the curriculum is really only obvious when the analytic tasks that Mrs. Edwards designed are considered.

On the basis of observations of about 110 different class sessions, I can say that a worksheet is a rare event for Mrs. Edwards' students. Equally rare were the days when she wrote on the blackboard. College visit announcements (when recruiters from different schools would be on campus...
to talk with prospective students) and IB Program information occupied space on the board at the front of the room. Only occasionally did I observe Mrs. Edwards write something for students to copy into their notes. Those rare worksheets and board-notes, however, were good indicators of the analytic elements Mrs. Edwards was interested in.

Fiction

One task for the existentialism unit was a two-page worksheet designed to be completed in work groups as a review of the works that had been covered in the unit. Three of the groups were working with short stories ("The Wall" by Sartre, "The Guest" by Camus, "The Hunger Artist" by Kafka). The fourth group dealt with a short play by Ionesco called "Foursome." The texts had not been covered by the class as a whole. What was indicated on that sheet has a great deal to say about the kind of analysis (and synthesis) Mrs. Edwards wanted students to be able to accomplish. An abbreviated version of that form is given below.

Fiction Worksheet

Title:                       Author:

Literary Form:              Why they were used:

Major Elements of Style:   Chief points of development:

Major characters:
1.
2.
3.
4.
Primary symbols, metaphors, images
1.
2.
3.
4.

What is the significance of two of the above?
1.
2.

Major setting
1.
2.
3.

Thematic significance
1.
2.
3.

Trace the plot and thematic development. Use the conventional terms.

What are other significant elements of style used by the author?

How and why does the form of this work correspond to the theme?

The elements the teacher was requiring the groups to look at were form, character development, symbol, metaphor, image, setting, theme, plot, and style. The dual nature of most of the items is central to the process of literary analysis. It was not enough for the group simply to point out an element, to "identify the pieces." A second part to the task that asked them to "tell why" or "how" the element functioned in the work as a whole. Behind those "how" and "why" questions were questions about an author who uses language intentionally. Students were asked to use "conventional terms" from their repertoire of literary vocabulary, but it was not enough to be able to find a symbol; there was another step beyond. There was a whole
text to which they needed to relate the element, and beyond the text there was an author with whom they were required to make contact.

Literary analysis as an attempt to connect with the man behind the work, to engage him, and to understand how a writer uses language to shape meanings was also apparent in Mrs. Edwards' treatment of prose fiction and drama. I saw less of those genres than I did of poetry, essay and Shakespearean drama this particular semester, however. In general, it was necessary to have a working knowledge of conventions if one wanted to see how the author used those conventions to make a point. In a discussion of several short stories, Mrs. Edwards ran through a list of analytic elements—plot, conflict, exposition, climax, denouement and put the short story genre into an personal framework. She had a personal feeling for the genre:

The short story is not one of my favorite forms. I like to spend time with an author. . . . I like things to be developed . . . I like the game of reading. . . . For me the short story is an exercise in frustration. I like things to be developed and intricate.

That "game of reading" was particularly important in the study of poetry as well.

Poetry

Another worksheet entitled "Literary Terms" was explicit only about the analytic parts to be located in poetry. It was simply a list of 27 terms, a "review guide"
for their study of poetry. The first 13 terms, listed down the left side of the paper, referred to kinds of poetic meter. The last 6 were a mix of verse forms, common poetic devices and general terms used in the academic discussion of poetry. The specific devices she asked for were alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia.

This list was presented disengaged from any particular literary text. It was assigned and tested on its own. Later, the terms were pulled into a discussion of a set of poems. Still later, a similar list was put on the board during the discussion of sonnets when Mrs. Edwards asked for analysis by the following elements:

assonance
consonance
alliteration
rime/rhyme
meter
similes
use of punctuation
metaphor
paradox
imagery and imagery development
symbols and personification

Once again, just looking at the elements of the analysis does not tell much about how the analysis is conducted; the "leap beyond" is not apparent until one looks at how the teaching of poems went forward in the class.

Early in the semester, for instance, concurrent with the oral examination over Jude the Obscure, Mrs. Edwards spent about two and a half class days discussing a set of poems by Thomas Hardy. Students were at work on that
literary terms worksheet at the same time. Just how the poems were talked about is instructive.

Mrs. Edwards asked for a volunteer, and Tony read "Epitaph for a Pessimist." She complimented him on his reading when he had finished and then asked for the meaning of the word epitaph. The class talked about the difference between an epitaph and a eulogy. "What's the importance of the title here?" Mrs. Edwards asked. She got an answer from Tony and expanded on it a little saying, "He's playing a little bit here, making it universal." Later, still dealing with the same poem, she said, "Notice how he uses alliteration there," pointing out a place in the poem. The assumption of an intentional craftsman/author behind the text is clearer in her treatment of poetry than it was of fiction.

Students sometimes resisted this kind of reading. It was not always easy, or perhaps it was not ever easy to do. In the midst of the Hardy poems, Sandra commented that she sometimes had difficulty when she was analyzing a poem. "I can find the device," she said, "but I don't know what it means." The step beyond was difficult. Mrs. Edwards sympathized with the difficulty, explaining that "form and function are the tightest in poetry. The language is very condensed. What appears to be casual is not."

Later that same class session, the class read Hardy's poem "Oxen," and Mrs. Edwards focused on the dialect
features of that poem. "It's being done for a purpose," she said. "Why does he switch into dialect in that place?" "When somebody switches into dialect," she continued, "it's for a reason." Thomas Hardy had been much on the minds of these students. They had read Tess of the D'Urbervilles the previous year, and they read Jude over the summer. All through this poetry segment, Mrs. Edwards had been conducting oral exams over Jude. "Are we going to read absolutely everything Thomas Hardy ever wrote?" Ann complained, only half in jest, one day. Students had multiple opportunities to think about an author behind these texts.

Still later that day, as the class discussed "Hap," Mrs. Edwards found the discussion to be dragging and suggested an exercise. "Here's something to get you going," she said. "Circle every word that refers to violence. Underline all the natural images. Put brackets around anything that has to do with human emotion." By focusing on the patterns of words in the poem, she fixed their attention on images, working from the word of the poem to the device.

The same dual emphases on connecting the text to different contexts and making contact with a craftsman/author was particularly evident as a unit on sonnets went on late in the semester. Shakespeare was another author with whom students had reason to be familiar. By the time they attacked the group of sonnets in the first
semester of their senior year, these students had already read seven of his plays in the course of their study in the IB Program. They had read Romeo and Juliet, Merchant of Venice, and Julius Caesar in the 9th grade, Macbeth in the 10th, The Tempest and King Lear in the 11th, and had just finished Twelfth Night with Mrs. Edwards the week before. Mrs. Edwards had told me that she had found that it required that much exposure to Shakespeare for students to develop a sense of ease and familiarity with the language. At the time the class was considering the sonnets, they had also been assigned to read an additional Shakespeare comedy of their choice as outside reading.

Once again, with the sonnets, Mrs. Edwards began with the devices. "These are the things I want you to look for," she said, writing the list of devices on the board. "Start out with any of these and figure out how he did it." "He," of course, was Shakespeare. Starting with the devices seemed to serve a sort of priming purpose. There was more to analysis than just finding the devices. "You go through this kind of thing so you get so familiar with the poem that when you finally come to interpret it, you're 99% sure to be on the right track because you know the language so well."

There was nothing at all accidental about Mrs. Edwards' insistence on analysis by device in the poetry selections. I asked her to explain her methods. With my own experience and pedagogical baggage in tow, I thought that I would
probably start to look at a sonnet from whatever it meant to
students and work backward to poetic language. That
approach, she thought, was dangerous because it led to
paraphrase and "paraphrase isn't worth a thing." She wanted
them to deal with the structure and the images first. The
meaning of the sonnets was fairly obvious, she thought; in
fact, it seemed to me that she left that up to individual
readers. The leap beyond had to do with aesthetic language.

Genre figured into the discussion of poetic language in
the Hardy poems, and genre conventions were even more
central to the discussion of the sonnets. Mrs. Edwards told
them that "Shakespeare pretty much sticks to the
conventions, but when he alters it he does it for a
purpose." Mrs. Edwards spoke of literary texts in the
present tense, bringing the text into the students'
consciousness as a current event and following in her own
speech the academic convention of discussing a text in
present tense. Rarely was there ever an issue of "What did
Hardy do here?" or "Why did Shakespeare choose that word?"
but rather "What is he doing?" and "Why does he alter the
pattern?" The sonnet unit was a unified set of tasks.

Mrs. Edwards and I had talked last year about the ways
students resist learning about poetic conventions. I had
watched the struggle, and I was prepared to see them resist
learning to scan lines of poetry and figure out rhyme
scheme. Mrs. Edwards believed that to understand poetic
conventions and be able to use them was essential. Teaching students to scan lines and to identify rhyme schemes, she said, got them into a mode of thinking about poetry. Students were too often satisfied to think of poetry as pure emotion or inspiration when, in fact, a poem was an example of highly crafted language.

It was the second day of the sonnet unit, and Mrs. Edwards walked around the circle, looking at the students' sonnet papers for evidence of "analysis" since the previous day's class. She told Nathan that his paper did not count. He had written nothing on his copy of the sonnet. She made checks in her grade book. "How are you grading these? Checks, pluses, and zeros?" someone asked, alert to the presence of the gradebook. There was the usual turmoil that surrounded the beginning of a new and difficult task that students had no formulaic way of completing. "I didn't know what I was supposed to do," Lee complained. "I did my best." Mrs. Edwards told him that "this is like anything else. If you don't put in the practice, you don't get the results." There was an analytic process to be learned here and they undertook learning. In addition to initiating a dialogue with a craftsman/author, students were urged along to "make connections," between words, between works, between time periods.

"All right, now," she said clapping for attention. "First of all folks, like anything else, you've got to try
it... it's better to do it incorrectly at the beginning than not to try it at all." Commenting on their papers, she said, "I didn't see a whole lot of connections. I said to look for the connections between things."

They went on to look at the end rhyme scheme, and after that started with alliteration, something easy, she told them. Still there was a protest. "OK," said Sandra, "this is very nice that it has T sounds and everything, but what purpose does it serve?" Mrs. Edwards explained that "it serves the purpose of musical notation, ... why do you change the pitch in a song?" When another student questioned the meaning of predominant N and S sounds in the sonnet, Mrs. Edwards used a painting analogy. "You don't just sit down to do a painting without choosing your colors. It's the sound that gives color to the poem, you see. So it's recognizing how he's doing it that's important."

When they talked about the differences between patterns of repeated sound and consonance, assonance, and alliteration, she told the students, "He's slowed the line down, just by his choice of words and sounds. When you read that line, he slows you down by the parallel construction. It just kind of rolls. He does it on purpose. It's carefully done." They began on the next poem, working in small groups. "All right," said Mrs. Edwards. "Start figuring this out."
As in all of the analytic tasks she sets, just identifying the elements is not enough. After the groups had spent 15 minutes scanning lines, some students were perturbed. In one group Sandra and Ann worked together. "Are you doing this?" Sandra asked. "Well," Ann told her, "I'm doing it, but I don't know if it's right." They called the teacher over and Sandra, half joking, said that she was fairly sure that Shakespeare didn't just sit around figuring out stuff like this. Mrs. Edwards worked with the girls on their analysis of the rhyme and meter and then called the class to attention. "All right folks, let's go on to the next stage of this." There was a system of analysis she was trying to get them to grasp. They had to grapple with the regularity of the language before they could see how the game was played. Mrs. Edwards said,

He's going to give you things that are not regular. The purpose is so that you recognize where they're regular and why. Sonnets are all written in iambic pentameter. Every sonnet. Even the ones written this afternoon, they're 90% iambic pentameter. Once you know that you can analyze any sonnet in the world.

Sandra still resisted, saying that she could read anything as iambic pentameter. "That's OK," Mrs. Edwards told her. "It's like when you're learning to ride a horse. When you're learning to post, you force yourself to do it and after a while you don't think about it anymore." Sandra, unconvinced, said that she had never been so frustrated. "It's worse than calculus," she said. The frustration
abated as the unit went on to occupy parts of nine class days. They worked in groups, after that, finally presenting a complete analysis that had been done as a group. As she prepared the groups for the project, Mrs. Edwards coached them on the written analysis that they would subsequently have to do individually and on their own. They were past the frustration, at least as they worked together in their groups.

Mrs. Edwards was taking them to the next step of the analytic process, the presentation. She told them it was not necessary to give every little example of every little device as she explained the conventions involved in talking about a literary work. They had been doing that for practice.

The more sophisticated way to think [or] write about it or to discuss it to a group is to get it all figured out. Yes, you're responsible for that, but then tell us why he's using that form or that abnormal metrical pattern there or why the alliteration is stressed there. In other words, how does he use the form to convey or emphasize the meaning...? Do you understand? So watch it. Watch very carefully what's going on. Does everybody understand about showing how he uses the form to illustrate the meaning?

Essay

This insistence on the intersection of form and content bears an underlying assumption of authorial intent. Though most insistent and intense in her treatment of poetry, Mrs. Edwards also relied on the same concept in teaching students to analyze prose fiction. It was at the heart of her
treatment of the essay as well. Once again, the elements of analysis can be seen in what Mrs. Edwards chose to write on the board. At the beginning of a unit on formal essays, Mrs. Edwards wrote on the board,

*Montaigne 1580: Essais*
*Francis Bacon 1597: Essays*

1. narration
2. description
3. exposition
   a. compare/contrast
   b. classify and divide
   c. definition
   d. cause and effect
4. persuasion/argument

In this genre, the elements of analysis were essay types, but that is a bit simplistic. What Mrs. Edwards was getting at became clearer in the context of the discussions of the different essays and in what was asked of students in the writing tasks she assigned.

It was clear from the presentation that the development of the genre was an important concept she wanted students to learn. Writers of formal essays, the sorts of essays that, in fact, they were required to write for her, "don't worry about literary devices." Formal essays, she said, "have an insistence on unity of structure and an acuity of perception; ... they tend to be sober, serious, and dignified, and that does not mean stodgy." So, as she dealt with this genre, the intense focus on the uses of aesthetic language moved into an emphasis on how different kinds of language can be used to achieve authorial purpose.
The first essay in the set was Stephen Jay Gould's "Our Allotted Lifetimes," a short piece that students read in the same class period it was discussed. Mrs. Edwards' first question was "OK, very briefly, so you won't forget Gould's point, what's this about?" What was the point the author intended to make? Then she turned to the issue of audience. Who had Gould written this for? Then why, she asked, if it was a scientific audience, did he begin with a literary reference? Where was the thesis statement? What was the effect Gould was looking for? "This man can write," she said. "His thesis is deeply embedded in the essay. Why would he do that?" As they moved on through the brief essay, she said, "Look at what he does in the next paragraph." "What's he done here?" Gould was an author under construction whose authorial choices were up for discussion.

When the essay being studied was Bronowski's "On Being an Intellectual," there was surely more difficulty for students as they tried to make contact with an author behind the work. Most of them had taken advantage of an extra-credit assignment that involved attending a lecture given by Gould several weeks before. Gould was a real-life contemporary figure to them. Bronowski was not.

Mrs. Edwards began the examination of this text with a look at the classifications she had given them. What kind of an essay is it? Persuasive, the class decided. Given
that possible purpose, then, what was Bronowski trying to persuade his audience of? The question that dominated the discussion of that text and the discussion of another of Bronowski's works, *Science and Human Values*, was, "What's his point?" Because aesthetic language was not so central to this genre, connections to experience—personal, cultural and historical became more important.

Always beneath the other concerns was the man who produced the work and the historical moment that produced the man. The task of reading and discussing Bronowski's *Science and Human Values* occupied nine class days in October, and those discussions are revealing. Where the explicit units of analysis for other genre were devices or forms that can be isolated, with essays Mrs. Edwards seemed to drive toward ideas and to locating those ideas within the framework of the author's historical moment.

Introducing the work, Mrs. Edwards emphasized the connection between the reader and an author/craftsman: "Bronowski is doing something that is going to seem very strange to you, and you're going to have to step back for a moment from your own self and your own experience, which is very hard to do."

Then, immediately, she turned their attention to the historical moment that surrounded the construction of the work: "When he wrote these speeches at MIT, science was still trying to find a way of defining itself as a part of
the mainstream." And a moment later, she returned the focus to the present moment in time, the moment that would shape their own construction of the meaning of the work: "That sounds crazy to us because we take it for granted. These days we're arguing for the humanities, right? But he wrote this... and began to present this in the late 1950s." She went on to explain that at that time, things were very different.

A few moments later, Mrs. Edwards connected the idea again to the students' own immediate experience: "I mean you're required to take math how many years?" she asked. "Three." "Four," they answered in chorus. "Let's just say four, college-bound," she said. "Science?" she asked. One of the big advantages of the program they had chosen to pursue, she told them, was the opportunity to leave high school with five, or possibly six science credits. "What else? Math, science, sure. English, history. But how much art and music are you required to take? Half a credit. I mean, things have really changed."

**Teacher Beliefs: The Game of Reading and Making Connections**

Nespor (1987b) described the importance of belief systems in determining the ways teachers choose and structure classroom learning activities. He distinguished between "beliefs and knowledge," saying that "belief systems rely much more heavily on affective and evaluative..."
components than knowledge systems" (p. 319). Teacher beliefs, he said, "perform the function of 'framing' or defining the tasks at hand" (p. 322). In other words, two teachers with equivalent background in their academic discipline can devise teaching activities and structure a curriculum in very different ways largely on the basis of different belief systems which ultimately have their origins in personal experiences. Mrs. Edwards was explicit in her expression of her beliefs about the goals of literary education and about the needs of the unique group of students she teaches in her present position:

I'd like these particular students to see that literature is intriguing. They like things that are intriguing. They like things that are puzzles, things that are openended. Oh, they're more comfortable if it's closed, but I want them to deal with paradox, ambiguity. . . . I'm interested in them seeing how literature contributes to their understanding of themselves and their world. I guess what I want them to do more than anything else is develop interdisciplinary thinking.

"I think," Mrs. Edwards told me, that "analyzing and synthesizing from a literary perspective teaches a type of thinking." Thinking about a literary work, she said, means "seeing the connections" between one work and another, or the work and another context, or the work and some element of personal or cultural experience. Teaching a work, she said, involves "making students see the connections."

Writing about a work, she believed, is a way of thinking as
well. She expanded on those definitions when we talked about her goals for instruction.

The material of her course, she said, is not the literary text. "The material is processes of thinking." Even more than that, the material is an attitude about literature: "I expect literature to be a way of opening ideas as opposed to a way of just illustrating ideas. Therefore I want them to feel free to play." "Intellectual play" with literary works goes even further than that. "I want them to think of intellectual play as a mode of living," she said, "as a model."

In addition to these beliefs, Mrs. Edwards expressed a number of goals as we discussed specific tasks during the semester. Being responsible for the material and learning to work independently were two goals she often mentioned. Recognizing that several points of view could be applied to the same work was another. The idea that something could have two or three meanings, she said, is a difficult concept, even for these bright students. She also spoke of the need to help students discover the nature of literary language and to understand the author's artistry in constructing literary texts. What she wanted them to learn to do, Mrs. Edwards said, is "to look for systems, or to look for patterns" in what they read. "We live in a series of patterns," she said. "and I think it's important to know they are there, and we choose them. Also that we allow them
to restrict us or we break them." Those patterns are not accidental in literary works. "I think it's intentionality that's important, and I talk to my students about that. [I mean] intentionality in terms of the author and in terms of character as well, in terms of what the character is doing."

The "game of reading" she mentioned, is that sort of personal engagement, the dialogue between a reader and an author. It is a game suitable for the students in her class. The need to make connections, not only with the mind of an author, but between the text and various contexts is visible not only in Mrs. Edwards' beliefs about teaching literature but in the way she structures and presents the academic work of the class.

Student Perceptions

Over the course of the semester, I spoke with more than half of the students in the class and asked them to define "literary analysis" and tell me how they went about doing it. The questions I posed were generally in the context of whatever work the class was studying at the time the interview was conducted. Consensus was fairly clear. In general, students felt that literary analysis was (a) what they did most of the time in class discussions, (b) what they did in their essay-writing, and (c) involved some sort of partitioning of the work.

When I asked Sarah what Mrs. Edwards meant by literary analysis, she responded, "That's what we do in our essays."
We approach the novel [they were talking about Camus' novel *The Stranger* at the time] from a thematic point of view and strengthen these with symbols, style, form, the author's background." Sarah's definition made literary analysis a writing task, probably because the class had been assigned to do such an essay the following day. Linda, however, associated the task with classroom interaction:

> Oh, well, I don't think of it in terms of writing assignments. I think of it in terms of looking at a work and basically what we do in class discussion, take it apart and see maybe why the author was doing it, . . . if there was some reason for it, and looking for the symbolism and style and not just what it was but what it means and why the author did it.

Linda's definition is perhaps more acutely perceptive than Sarah's because she captures the difference between "what a text says" and "what a text means," and she has caught onto the "game of reading" as it is played in Mrs. Edwards' class. In both cases, the girls say that literary analysis is "something we do." It is an activity they engage in.

Some of the other definitions expanded a bit more on the nature of the activity. Sometimes the verbs students used in describing the process of analysis suggested doing violence to the work. Several students spoke of "taking literature apart" or "picking apart a work into its literary components," or "breaking down" a novel, or, in the case of two students who evidenced some frustration with the process
at the beginning of the year, "chopping it up" or "tearing it apart."

Early in the year, Lee, for instance, was frustrated with the class. He did not know what to do to get the grade he wanted. He thought of himself as a scientist and was impatient with literary study. "I look at something and I have to have a hard core answer," he told me. "One plus one is two. It's always two, I want it to be two." As a scientist, he considered himself to be someone who "deals with the real world." Literature, he felt, did not. When I asked him for a definition of literary analysis he quipped, "Literary analysis is the analysis of a literary work. Chopping it up. We take a novel and look at it from different concepts or aspects. . . . If I knew," he concluded, "I'd have A papers." He finished his definition in academic double talk: "It's the discussion of a literary work in terms of viewpoints or the means by which you do that."

Rebecca, another student who also saw herself primarily as a scientist, showed an equal distaste for the process. When I talked to her about the purposes served by class discussions, Rebecca said that "Mrs. Edwards tears up the story her way," but that the discussion served to allow students to "share their ways of tearing it up." "I don't think my understanding goes very far beyond that," Rebecca told me in October. "Perhaps also telling how the author
uses certain devices to affect you." At that point near the beginning of the semester, neither Lee nor Rebecca had a very clear idea of what was expected, though Rebecca seemed to be homing in on the idea.

Lisa could not go beyond the "breaking down" aspect of literary analysis. "It's finding all the symbolism and junk like that... the techniques." But she sensed that there was more to the process than that. "It's not just plot. She wants you to find everything. I mean things you don't even see."

Other students focused their definitions more on the constructive phase of the analytic process. Several focused on the idea of making connections. For John, it meant "to take literature apart and see what it means, basically, to see how it is connected to society." Rebecca, at another point, mentioned seeing how the work was connected to our society and to the society of the person who wrote it. Susan was a little vague early on about what literary analysis was, other than the "interpretation of the works you're reading." But she did know that "making connections" was something essential. When I asked her what was the essence of an A paper written for Mrs. Edwards, Susan told me that a paper that parallels one book with another could be an A. "Make a connection?" I asked. "That's it," she said. "If you can make connections. Someone will do that
in class and Mrs. Edwards will go 'That's great, you made a connection.' That's what she's looking for I think."

Still other students had a more sophisticated sense for the purposes of analysis, focusing more on the synthesis aspect. April believed that literary analysis involved "picking apart the work into its literary components," such as "plot, theme, symbols, metaphors." But she also saw that next phase and how identifying the pieces helped her to "look at the work as a whole and relate it to things."

Jenny's definition went right to the synthesis phase. Literary analysis, she said, "was not so much breaking [the work down into pieces] but looking at it as a whole and also in pieces" at the same time. "The themes, the plot the characterization, and all the parts that make up the whole."

Hilary's understanding was even more sophisticated. To conduct literary analysis she thought, meant "examining it for what it's trying to say, . . . what it means in a modern sense, applying it to modern thought." Sometimes, she said, analysis involved "picking it apart" in order to "see how it pulls together as a whole."

There was some disagreement among students as to whether there was room for differences of opinion with the teacher over just what the interpretation of the work might be. One student in particular voiced a concern that Mrs. Edwards "gives very set ideas on certain subjects" and that challenging her interpretation would not be the thing to do.
Another felt that the teacher's goal was to make literary critics of them and that they were supposed to "speak the Edwards school of thought." But by and large, most of the students I spoke with, and of course those were students who volunteered to talk with me, felt that a difference of opinion was not only possible, but encouraged.

Linda was especially convinced that any interpretation was acceptable as long as she could "support it with examples from what they had read." She told me a story about a friend of hers who had answered an essay test question wrong but had gotten an A+ because she had supported her point so well. "I mean," she told me, "if you can show it, you can't be wrong."

That is an understanding other students also articulated. Tony said that he often argued with Mrs. Edwards during class, "sometimes just to play the devil's advocate," or to find out if "there's anything valid" to the point he was choosing to argue on a given day. He felt that was quite acceptable in her class. When I talked with Hilary about whether Mrs. Edwards expected given specific answers on her tests, Hilary thought that she probably generally looked for a couple of key ideas that should be present in some form or another, but as long as you argue it logically and within the text, . . . as long as you stay on track, . . . I don't think there's any set answer she's looking for."
In general, the students who were able to articulate a more developed sense of what literary analysis constituted and how it worked were those whom Mrs. Edwards had identified to me as particularly capable students in her discipline. The students who were somewhat less clear were those Mrs. Edwards identified as having difficulty in her class. Many of the students mentioned the necessity of making connections between the work under analysis and other texts they had studied, but two in particular, who Mrs. Edwards had told me were struggling with her class, had settled upon "making connections" as a readily available formula for undertaking the task of literary analysis.

Rebecca, for instance, joked about how you always could pull Plato into an analysis, but Lisa, who did not appear to have a clue about what Mrs. Edwards wanted her to do, at least grasped the necessity of making intertextual connections. "Mrs. Edwards likes it when you relate things, your essay, things that are in your essay, to previous works that we've done." But when I asked Lisa what Mrs. Edwards expected to see on an essay, she told me that Mrs. Edwards just wanted "what we said in class, I think."

Of the 14 I spoke with, 10 mentioned "making connections" as a requirement of the task. Only 5 of them, however, made reference to the underlying necessity of examining how and why the author used language to make meaning. Four of those 5 had been identified by Mrs.
Edwards as particularly able students in her class. The other one was Rob, who consistently was able to tell me what was being asked but apparently consistently unable to produce it in writing. Frustrated or less capable students concentrated on the decimation of the work rather than on the subsequent creation of something new, an interpretation, or a synthesis. Generally, at least early in the year, they also missed the focus on the author as craftsman as well.

There was obviously a certain amount of tension between the teacher's set of expectations for academic work and students' perceptions of the kind of work involved, but it did not seem to disable students. They continued to participate in the tasks she set for them, even if they did not completely perceive the goals of the task in the same way the teacher did.

Thomson's (1987) developmental model of adolescent response to literature might have some explanatory use here. On the basis of a large-scale research project involving written questionnaires and taped interviews, Thomson isolated six hierarchically related stages or "kinds of satisfaction" in adolescents' reported feelings about reading:

1. Unreflective interest in action
2. Empathizing
3. Analogizing
4. Reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behavior (distanced evaluation of characters)
5. Reviewing the whole work as the author's creation
6. Consciously considered relationship with the author, recognition of textual ideology, understanding of self . . . and one's own reading processes. (pp. 360-361)

Few of the students in Thomson's study "reached the level of considering literature as the creation of an idiosyncratic and fallible human being" (p. 210). The idea of a literary work as a construct is at the heart of Mrs. Edwards' teaching of literary analysis. Her work on dialogic and connecting strategies place her teaching almost always at what would be the equivalent of Thomson's stages 5 and 6, even though, as I will show in Chapter 7, she also consistently works at lower levels as well. Sometimes her students follow her to upper levels; sometimes they work below, primarily at stage 4 in both reading and writing activities. Even students like Rebecca, who was mystified about what was being asked of her, and Lisa, who really had the wrong idea altogether, had some way of producing an essay that was usually within the range of acceptable.
CHAPTER 6
THE ACADEMIC TASK SYSTEM:
DOING LITERARY ANALYSIS

Describing the Context

Mrs. Edwards' students were assigned their first writing task on the ninth class day of the new semester. It was an in-class essay based on one of the required works on the "summer reading" list, "No Exit," a play by Jean-Paul Sartre. Discussion of that play and other existentialist texts had occupied parts of the three preceding class days. The fifth period seniors were agitated as they rushed to complete their essays after the bell had rung. "How much can you say about that topic?" one girl said to another as they gathered their belongings and left the room. Her friend agreed that she had little to say and added, "It wasn't the question I wanted."

As the sixth period group pushed into the room, a new question intended for them was put on the blackboard. It centered on a quotation of two lines of dialogue from the play and the following directions: "Discuss the tenets of existentialism using the above quote."
Mrs. Edwards told the class to take out pens and paper and pointed out the location of dictionaries on a shelf at the back of the room. There was considerable chatter. "Can we use notes?" asked one student. "No," Mrs. Edwards replied. "The book?" asked another. "No," she replied again. "Do I have to organize this or just write?" asked yet another. "Is this a test?" "Anguish," Mrs. Edwards joked, and turned to me saying, "You can tell it's the first one, can't you."

The questions kept up: "We have the whole period, right?" "Can we look at the book?" "How much are we supposed to write?" "How much are you expecting?" "OK," said Mrs. Edwards. "Settle down. Let's just do it." After 5 minutes, only six students were writing. By 10 minutes into the period, everybody was at work putting words on paper.

At the beginning of the year, both the process of literary analysis and the task of writing essays were rusty. Students pressed the teacher for specifics about how they should complete the assignment. The classroom dynamics of students and teacher at work on difficult academic tasks were evident.

Doyle has said that "tasks are contexts to be described, not variables to be measured" (personal communication, March 3, 1989). In this chapter, I will offer a description of context of instruction in Mrs.
Edwards' classroom. One key to understanding what is going on rests on the idea that literary analysis is a process of approaching texts that provides unity for a complex interlocking and overlapping system of reading, writing, and speaking tasks. Before I can do that, however, I will expand further on the academic task model as Doyle and others have explained it. That will provide a vocabulary for my description.

**The Task Model**

In his earlier versions of the model, Doyle (1980, 1983) described only three factors involved in any school task: a product, operations to produce that product, and resources available. A later version (Doyle, 1986) included the significance or weight in the teacher's accountability system as a fourth factor. Taken together, these four factors represent the realities of the work that teachers design and students do in classrooms. Doyle (1983) further identified four types of tasks: memory tasks, "which ask students to recognize or reproduce information previously encountered"; procedural or routine tasks, where students "are asked to apply a standard or predictable formula to generate answers"; comprehension or understanding tasks, where students must "apply procedures to new problems or choose from among several procedures those which are applicable"; and opinion tasks, where students are asked to "give an opinion or preference" (pp. 162-163).
In more recent work, (1986) Doyle clarified the classification system, pointing out two basic types of tasks, lower-level tasks, those which call on the student to reproduce or recognize information already encountered, and higher-level tasks, those "involving higher cognitive processes to make decisions about how to use knowledge and skills in particular circumstances" (p. 367). Examples of the two types would include, at the lower level, memorization of vocabulary definitions, spelling words, lines from a play (memory tasks); doing sets of subtraction problems or sets of grammar exercises (formulae); finding sentences in a text that answer factual questions (search and match). Higher-level tasks might be "word problems in mathematics, or . . . predictions about a chemical reaction" (Doyle, 1983, p. 163). Such higher-level tasks would require the selection of a procedure to solve a problem or that "inferences be drawn from information for the purpose of formulating new propositions" (Doyle, 1986, p. 367). Doyle's example of such a task was planning a complex writing assignment. In other words, lower-level tasks ask students to reproduce or recognize information already presented to them. In higher-level tasks, "the focus is on interpretation, flexible applications of knowledge and skills, assembly of information and resources from several sources to generate a product" (p. 367).
Doyle also made a distinction between procedural and comprehension tasks (1983), where procedural tasks are those that use a standard routine to produce answers, and comprehension or understanding tasks are "those that are accomplished by knowing why a procedure works and how to use it" (p. 165). That notion fits easily into the 1986 two-level classification system.

Elements of risk and ambiguity, Doyle said, permeate work in a classroom environment. Both result from the evaluative nature of the classroom work when tasks are a part of a classroom accountability system. High-level or understanding tasks, according to Doyle (1983), are inherently high-risk and high-ambiguity. Students do not have a known way of producing the product the teacher wants, nor, when they are assigned a complex written report, for instance, do they know how strictly the teacher will grade. Low-level (memory) tasks are low in ambiguity, but can be either high or low in risk depending on the amount of material a student might have to recognize or reproduce or the complexity of the procedure he must apply.

Both students and teachers, Doyle has shown (Doyle & Sanford, 1985), manipulate ambiguity and risk for their own purposes. Teachers keep students at work on difficult higher-level tasks by lowering the students' risk of bad evaluation. Students consistently attempt to get teachers to reduce ambiguity of higher-level tasks by pushing for
specific directions that may have the result of "proceduralizing" the task.

Furthermore, Doyle pointed out another way to look at task systems with his idea of novel and familiar tasks. Familiar work is "routinized" (1986, p. 372). It is "predictable" in that there is little "ambiguity" about "what to do and how to do it" (p. 372). Novel tasks consist of "assignments for which students are required to assemble information in ways not specifically laid out by the teacher" (p. 372). There is a great deal of ambiguity about the product the teacher expects. These classifications coincide with the major and minor tasks identified previously, the important difference being the students' familiarity with a way to produce the kind of product a teacher expects. Below is a chart that locates the different terms that describe types of tasks in the model (Figure 6-1).

The difference between a task that asks students to produce their own sentences and one that asks them to complete a sentence combining exercise might illustrate the difference between the high and low levels. Better still, a complex writing assignment asking a student, for instance, to discuss recurring imagery in a set of sonnets is obviously a higher-level task. An assignment that simply asks a student to repeat a teacher's interpretation of a poem is a low-level task, involving only memory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Tasks</th>
<th>Risk and Ambiguity Levels</th>
<th>Task Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH COGNITIVE LEVEL TASKS</td>
<td>High Risk</td>
<td>UNDERSTANDING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Ambiguity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW COGNITIVE LEVEL TASKS</td>
<td>Low Ambiguity</td>
<td>PROCEDURAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High/Low Risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MEMORY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6-1. Academic task model.

The task model enables an observer to consider the "notion of curriculum enactment" (Doyle, personal communication, March 3, 1989). That is, it helps an observer examine "the ways a curriculum is represented to students as work" (Doyle, 1986, p. 371) within the realities of a classroom setting.
The World of Academic Work

In my initial study, the world of work, as I saw it in Mrs. Edwards' class, seemed simple enough. Students were asked to read texts, talk about them, and ultimately, to write about them. The basic unit of instruction appeared to be the single text. As I indicated previously, the notion of text as unit gave way to genre as unit as I looked at the way an entire year fit together in the second study. When viewed as academic tasks, however, the world of work began to look complex. Literary analysis was carried on in multiple contexts in the form of different reading, writing, and speaking activities.

Reading Tasks

The tasks were the assigned literary works. Those works are specified in Chapter 4 (see page 73). The general expectation was that students would come to class with the text already read. On a few occasions, students were given class days for reading (four such days during the period of observation) specific works available only in class sets that remained at school. Some texts (all poetry selections and Twelfth Night) were first read aloud, or as Vipond, Hunt and Wheeler (1987) called it, read "socially."

There are, as Doyle explains it, several ways of looking at reading. It can be conceptualized as a higher or lower-level activity, and tasks can be designed accordingly. For instance, if a student is asked to recall the plot of a
story, he or she is called on to do a memory task. The product, the answer the teacher is looking for, is the reproduction of previously encountered knowledge. On the other hand, a reading task also can be a higher-level task if the answer the teacher looks for consists of an understanding or interpretation of what was meant by the work under study.

**Task requirements**

The idea of getting at the mind behind the work is apparent in the directions Mrs. Edwards gave for reading assignments. Likewise, applications of the work, ways the work might relate to the student and the students' world, were also a focus of instruction. Those are not goals that would direct a student toward merely reading for plot. In fact, Mrs. Edwards said that she is not really interested in the plot. She assumes that they know that. "It doesn't even occur to me that they wouldn't [know the plot of story]. So, when she assigned a work to be read either socially or individually, the understood task was a higher-level one. Students are expected to "draw inferences from previously encountered information" (Doyle, 1983, p. 163) once they have read a text. They are, in other words, expected to do literary analysis.

Few directions accompanied the assignment of readings other than simply to "read." In fact, very little time was spent in making assignments for any written, oral, or
reading tasks. She would probably assume that students with a minimum of a semester and up to three years of experience in her classroom know what she has in mind. Occasionally, however, she would focus on one or another aspect of a reading task while assigning it, generally a structural or genre-related characteristic. A brief essay by Stephen Gould, for instance, was to be read with attention to its probable audience. Another essay was to be read with attention to the function of anecdote, and still another with attention to determining the author's underlying purpose in writing it. For a Shakespeare comedy, the direction was to read "looking for recurring images." With a novel or play, they were to "read the book as if you were going to write about it." That expectation of eventually writing about nearly anything accompanied all reading assignments students were given.

When I spoke with Mrs. Edwards about what she wanted her students to learn about reading, she said,

Because of their age and because of their background, they like puzzles. They like hard puzzles, and what I try to get them to do is to look at a book, a poem, not as something that's been set out to confuse them, but as something that's meant to engage them emotionally, aesthetically. And I think the way to help them with that is to have them look at the work as a kind of open-ended play, puzzle. So what I do in having them look at a text is to really be able to deal with the text on a fairly mature level. And that doesn't mean looking for the obvious. That means to play with it, to try to see the author behind it in some way.
In addition to being cast as high-level tasks, another characteristic of the reading activities is that students were expected to juggle a number of reading tasks simultaneously. Parallel reading assignments, for instance, meant that students were often reading one play socially while reading another on their own. Summer reading brought back into the context of classwork meant that students were reading or reviewing for a test three or four major works at one time and holding all of them in memory in preparation for semester testing.

In fact, the teacher's examination practices, in concert with the overall examination structure of the IB program, meant that students never got to drop a work entirely from their repertoire once it had been brought into the curriculum at any time during the junior or senior years. Because reading requirements were, in a sense, predetermined by the program in combination with the director and teachers, students could assume that they would be tested by outside evaluators on whatever they had read. In addition, most students took examinations for AP credit, and those examinations also included the entire repertoire of works. At the level of Mrs. Edwards' own test schedule, a work was not necessarily tested immediately after it is read. The examination on Twelfth Night, for instance, was given a week after the reading had been completed. In the interim the class had spent four days analyzing Shakespeare
sonnets. Mrs. Edwards customarily gives a four-hour semester final examination, as a sort of practice for the IB examinations. Therefore, works that were covered during the first semester had to be held in mind for at least the length of the semester and indeed for the remainder of the year.

Evasions

A complex set of overlapping and interrelated reading tasks is not easy for all students to manage. There were some holes in the task system that students could find if they chose. When a work was long, difficult, or thought to be boring, a student might have elected not to read it. Cliffs Notes, a generally forbidden resource, did show their yellow and black stripes from time to time.

One student told me that sometimes she did not read all of the works they studied, and gave Tess of the D'Urbervilles, a work they had read in their junior year, as an example. "I got behind on Tess," she said. "I read the first hundred pages or so, and you can't really catch up, ... but I read the Cliff Notes, and if you don't read the Cliff Notes and just come unprepared, you will fail." She reported getting a C on that particular examination. This student's generally low grades in English might have something to do with her concept of "preparation" and her lack of understanding of what the reading task was about.
Another student, one Mrs. Edwards told me was having some difficulty in class, made a different use of the *Cliffs Notes*. She told me that she had difficulty reading Shakespeare on her own, and so for the parallel reading play they were assigned, she said,

I have the book and I have the *Cliffs* and what I do is read the *Cliffs* and then I read in the book. It already has a summary that I think Shakespeare wrote, and I read that and then I read the dialogue already knowing what is supposed to happen and then I go back and read the summary.

She had formulated a strategy for reading and using the notes as an aid to understanding rather than as a replacement for the text. She generally reported getting Bs and Cs and could remember having once gotten an A.

Two students, one an A student and one who got Cs, confessed to occasionally not reading the entire work. One, the B/C student above, thought she could get by "reading a little bit," reading "the *Cliffs,*" and taking good class notes. The task for her was reporting what happened in the book, what "the *Cliffs*" had said, and what the teacher and other students had said in class. If a C was a success, then that perception of the task was sound. The student was not particularly pleased to get Cs from Mrs. Edwards, but not terribly interested in developing a new strategy.

The A student reported once and only once evading the text by using "*Cliffs.*" She hated the book, she told me, and she was unable to get through it. "What I did was I
just paid super attention in class." She reported getting an A on that test. Task evasion happens.

Both ways around reading, using *Cliffs Notes* or reporting what other people said in class, would constitute a downgrading of the task, from the higher-level task of constructing a meaning, to a lower-level task of reproducing from memory information already encountered. Mrs. Edwards was aware of the possibility and tried to structure assignments so that evasion was difficult. In presenting a group of Shakespeare sonnets, for example, she required students to do a workup sheet to be used for subsequent writing assignments. All their analytic work—scanning the lines, looking at rhyme, marking connecting words and images—was to be written on the sheets, and she made a visual check of their progress as they worked on each poem. She told me that she "wanted to make certain that they do the work themselves," that they made "their own discoveries" and did not rely on someone else's prepackaged ones. An examination of the writing assignments she gave (see below) does suggest that total reliance on *Cliffs Notes* would have been difficult in most cases.

Another possibility, particularly for the student, a very good one, in fact, who was able to pay close attention in class and succeed without reading, was that she was constructing her own higher-level task by integrating what other students and the teacher said in class with her own
minimal acquaintance with the text and with her own previous knowledge of the author. That may not have been the teacher's concept of the task, but it was a workable one, it appeared.

Another possible hole in the task system involves social reading assignments. Those included all of the poetry selections (some of which were handled in small groups, but still in a social setting) and the reading of Twelfth Night, which took seven and a half class periods. One student reported difficulty following the social reading of the play. Such difficulty would be in line with Hunt, Vipond, and Wheeler's (1987) work on social reading. In their study, the researchers defined "literary engagement" with a text as a dialogic reading of the text. Social reading, the practice of reading aloud with the intent of conveying a central meaning, "impaired" (p. 158) the literary engagement level of the reader if there was "performance anxiety" associated with the context in which the reading took place. The atmosphere in Mrs. Edwards' classroom, however, was not tense during readings.

I was intrigued by the events of social reading sessions. Most of the class seemed to enjoy the format of such classes. Student oral reading was punctuated by intervals of rehearsal of plot detail and discussion, a format I will describe more fully when I deal with the conduct of instruction by discussion. Students looked
forward to reading days and vied for parts. Mrs. Edwards used those days to encourage oral participation from otherwise quiet students. It is possible also that the in-class reading served to orient subsequent individual readings, something that several students indicated was true for them. I wondered if such social reading occasions offered an opportunity for evasion of the higher-level reading task or if the real task intended by the teacher was something different. Perhaps such sessions had more to do with a sharing of voices around the circle, with building a sense of community membership.

Reading as a higher-level task

To discuss reading as an academic task is to realize that different end-products result from different conceptions of task. Resources vary from student to student as far as what each one has available or chooses to bring to the reading. Weight or significance is how much the task eventually counts in the accountability system. That aspect is difficult to assess here because the reading enters the evaluative system in the form of writing tasks. Ambiguity of the reading tasks is inherently high because nearly all of the reading tasks are higher level. Mrs. Edwards is after a point-driven or dialogic sort of reading rather than a story-driven reading of the work. Risk level is also difficult to assess because of the tie of reading to written
products and because of the tie of reading tasks to discussion.

Writing Tasks

Task requirements

On the top of the layer of overlapping reading tasks lies another layer of writing tasks that is equally complex. They provide accountability for reading tasks, as I have indicated, and they serve other purposes as well. The teacher's goals for writing instruction are also served by those tasks. Those goals have to do with teaching the conventions of academic discourse in her discipline. Mrs. Edwards taught only "formal essay style" in the classes I observed, though she did recognize the creative writing students that did outside of class, and she privately encouraged their attempts at personal writing. She distinguished between formal and informal essays and talked about the differences during the discussion of the essay as genre. She defined "what you write for me [as] formal essays, mostly literary analysis, but formal essays." I noted a good deal of instruction in how to write from a personal point of view, as Mrs. Edwards helped students gear up to write their college application essays; but when it came to the writing specifically for her class, formal essays were what she wanted. When I asked her what she wanted her students to learn from her about writing, she said,
I'd like them to develop, and most of them have it by now, the ability to generate a concise thesis and write about that thesis in a logical and organized way, supporting that thesis with appropriate transitions, analogies, examples. What I'm not looking for is creativity in terms of their own opinion and experience [even though] they may have plenty of that.

Whether "they go into scientific writing or legal writing or literary criticism," she wanted them to see writing as a "demonstration of their thinking on paper." The major purpose of the writing assignments was to "help them demonstrate what they've learned" and, she believed, that "almost more important than the writing" they produced was the studying they have to do to sort through and "narrow" the "barrage" of information they have accumulated in reading any work. "They do think on paper," she told me, as we discussed the sort of written products she expected.

They may start at one point and end somewhere else and they know they've changed. . . . That's fine in terms of an essay. If they discover as they're writing, that's fine with me, as long as they indicate that they know [that] their original thesis has to be changed.

In addition to an evaluative function that required students to have read and understood the work, the "knowledge demonstration" function, there is the additional goal of encouraging students to sort and evaluate their knowledge about the text from their own reading, from class discussion, and possibly from parallel or previous readings.

Just exactly what constituted "formal essay style," like what defined "literary analysis," was not explained all at
once to students in my presence. Both seemed to be concepts "under construction" even before students first encountered this particular teacher. Like "knowing the plot," Mrs. Edwards expected students at this point in their senior year to know what writing style was appropriate. For me, however, she reconstructed her requirements.

"A formal essay should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, and I want to see some kind of sequential, logical development in the body," she told me. "I don't want it to be boring, but it better be clear." Five-paragraph essays, a standard classroom format, would not do. Mrs. Edwards rarely specified length. Personal experience was not the issue, and first-person writing was not allowed. Also unacceptable were grammatical errors, lack of a thesis, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences. She realized that these requirements, particularly the personal experience part, might be thought "cruel," but she wished to show students how to approach "formal academic writing in [her own] discipline." Mrs. Edwards told students that there are "keys to academic disciplines that they must acquire if they are to have credibility." One of those keys is the "jargon" of the discipline. Another way of "acquiring credibility" is to "use the authority of the author" for support of "their own good ideas."

In addition, she said, "programmatically, they are not writing for me but [rather] for a British professor." And
because of the IB Program test requirements, there would
indeed be an outside audience for IB examination papers and
extended essays. That "British professor" is an image Mrs.
Edwards evoked on occasion during instruction.

**Major and minor writing tasks**

I observed the following major and minor writing tasks
during the course of my observations.

**Writing Tasks**

**MAJOR TASKS** (higher-level or understanding tasks). These
assignments were worth one examination grade or more. Tasks
1-6 and 8-12 were written during class time; tasks 6 and 7
were "papers," that is, essays written at home.

**Writing Task 1:** Students were given a quotation from "No
Exit" and directed to "Discuss the tenets of existentialism
using the above quote." (9/1)

[This task asked students to connect a work that had been
read individually as part of the summer reading list, with
essays on existentialism that had been read individually and
discussed in class.]

**Writing Task 2:** Students were given a quotation from The
Stranger along with the following directions: "Mersault
disCOVERS one truth regarding human existence. Discuss this
using illustrations and examples from the three authors you
have read this summer and/or fall." (9/13)

[This would include Hardy, Camus, Sartre or any of the short
works read during the fall.]

**Writing Task 3:** Students were directed to "Discuss the
roles of action and responsibility vis a vis existential
philosophy." (9/30, 10/3)

[Directions refer to "Kafka's seminal ideas, ideas from
Sartre and Camus' Stranger."]

**Writing Task 4:** Students were given a quotation from
Bronowski's, "On Being an Intellectual." They were asked,
"How does this quotation relate to 'the habit of truth'?"
(10/4)
[This task relates a concept discussed in *Science and Human Values* with another essay by the same author.]

**Writing Task 5:** Students were asked to write two separate essays during one class period. For the first essay, they were given a quotation from "The Abacus and the Rose" (Bronowski) and directed to "discuss" it. In the second essay they were required to "analyze" a poem that appeared in the same piece. (11/5)

[This writing task dealt entirely with a parallel reading assignment which was not discussed in class.]

**Writing Task 8:** Students were given three quotations from *Twelfth Night*. They were asked to "discuss theme, characterization, and dramatic metaphor." (12/5)

**Writing Task 9:** Students were allowed to use their analysis worksheets from classwork on sonnets. They were asked to "write on" Shakespeare sonnets 116 and 130. (12/9)

**Writing Task 10:** Final examination. Students wrote for four hours on two topics: The first item read, "'We have Art that we may not perish from Truth.' Do you agree?" The second read "Analysis." Students were asked to analyze a short poem by Yeats which had not been covered during classes. (During final week)

**Writing Task 11:** Notetaking.

[This was an ongoing task; notebooks collected once during the semester.]

**Writing Task 12:** Students were asked to write an octave (or finish it as a sonnet). (12/15)

**Writing Task 6:** Students were directed to write an essay about Shakespeare parallel reading. They were directed to "Look for recurring imagery." (11/28, collected 12/20)

[This essay, because it was to be written outside of class, was called a "paper."]

**Writing Task 7:** Students were asked to analyze sonnets other than the ones covered in class discussion. (12/28, collected after Christmas)

[Like Writing Task 6, this paper was to be completed outside of class. It was eventually required only of students who were not writing extended essays for submission to IB readers.]
MINOR TASKS. In terms of time, at least, these were lower-level tasks, occupying less than a class period. They were of little importance in the accountability system, except where noted).

Group Tasks

1. Worksheet on fiction

2. Summary on chapter of Science and Human Values

3. Sonnet worksheets

Individual Tasks

1. Literary terms worksheet. Students were required to define 20 items.

2. Literary terms objective test. Students were presented the terms and asked to write the definitions. This was said to count as an "exam grade."

3. Students were asked to write (in notebooks) a one sentence summary of a Gould essay.

4. Students were required to take notes (in their class notebooks) in paraphrase, summary, direct quotation form. They read and took notes on a chapter about dramatic conventions from a textbook.

5. Sonnet worksheets. Students were asked to figure out rhyme, meter, imagery.

OTHER IMPORTANT WRITING TASKS (Outside the English curriculum but discussed in class)

1. Extended essay. This was a program requirement for IB Diploma candidates, to be completed by the student with minimal help from the teacher in the discipline of the student's choice.

2. College application essays. They were the subject of much discussion throughout the semester.

3. History paper.
The differences between major and minor tasks, aside from their grade-weights, were, curiously enough, not marked. All major writing tasks, whether they were called tests or papers (and the in-class, out-of-class time factor is the only real difference between those) were decidedly high-level tasks that "require students to make decisions about how to use knowledge in particular circumstance" (Doyle, 1986, p. 367). Minor writing tasks, however, at least in terms of class time they occupied, were not necessarily memory tasks or procedural tasks.

One brief assignment requiring a one-sentence summary of an essay is interesting in that it may actually have been a higher-level task, in spite of occupying only ten minutes or so of class time. "Write a one sentence summary of the article without looking at it again" were the directions. That was probably less a memory task than a task aimed at the formulation of an understanding of the work.

A group assignment to summarize a chapter of Science and Human Values was surely a higher-level task rather than a memory task because the point Bronowski was making was not immediately evident in the reading. There was no possibility of using a lower-level "search and match" strategy to summarize the chapter. The text was too complex for that. The specific assignment to the groups was to "write down some notes summarizing the chapter that you can
turn in to me and talk about in class." The group that I observed struggled with the meaning for some time.

Hilary: Have you read it?
Leah: I tried reading part of it in biology.
Sandra: I actually did read this part.

Hilary: He starts with a collection of, they're talking about creativity, and what science is creating, like bringing together different things you don't think are alike and finding their similarities. . . . I think that's basically what this is about.

Sandra: Right, right.
Hilary: There was one point I didn't understand.
Leah: What about the diary thing?

They continued to point out things in the text that had caused them trouble, hashing out the meaning. Aware of the necessity of writing something down, Leah took on the job of recording for the group.

Leah: OK, what are we saying here? That all science is a search for--
Sandra: Or that it's not really just the facts--
Leah: All science is a search for unity and not just the facts but how you put them together.

Even though this activity took up only a portion of the class period, a number of higher-level activities were going on. Students were at work on the interpretation of a difficult text, interested in inferences rather than in a simple paraphrase of what the author had said. They were assembling a reading by marshalling the individual members'
assorted notions of what the author was intending.

There were a few truly minor writing tasks in the entire system. The literary terms worksheet and the literary terms objective test were decidedly lower-level, however. The worksheet was a list of terms. Students were required to look them up; later they would have to write down definitions from memory. For the test (it was weighted equally with an in-class essay), Mrs. Edwards read the terms and students wrote the definitions. The preponderance of higher-level writing tasks in the system is a departure from Doyle's observations that most classrooms base accountability on lower-level, less risky and ambiguous tasks.

Ambiguity in the task environment

I was struck by an additional level of ambiguity in the task system beyond that which is inherent in higher-level tasks where students have no precise formula available to generate a product. Mrs. Edwards did not spend much time spelling out what students were supposed to do in a written assignment. Such moments came and went quickly in the class, and there was little time for students to work at making her specify the assignment more clearly. She seemed to keep the task environment ambiguous by avoiding those classroom situations where it was possible to downgrade the task. There were, of course, frequent discussions of due dates, and she changed those whenever possible to
accommodate student needs for more time or because of conflicts with other pressing assignments in different classes, but the task itself was not negotiable.

Classroom procedures for assigning, turning in, and passing back papers were routinized and tended to occupy little time. Typically, an out-of-class writing assignment would be made orally. For a parallel reading assignment involving an existentialist work of the student's choice, for instance, Mrs. Edwards said that they "would be able to find lists and lists" of such works in the library. For a writing assignment that covered that reading, she told them, "I have a question that asks you to incorporate your current readings with other books you've dealt with." The two paper assignments (Writing Task 6 and 7) originally made orally, were eventually re-explained and the requirements written on the board, but that was unusual.

The original presentation of the paper (Task 7) to be written out of class on a Shakespeare parallel reading (one comedy of the student's choice) was given orally the first time:

Now this is what I'd like you to do. I'd like you to look for recurring imagery. . . . You've read a lot of Shakespeare by now. Watch for things that recur. See how Shakespeare unifies his plays, . . . focus on what's interesting to you and write that up, please.

She indicated across perhaps 10 minutes of talk (while giving another Shakespeare writing assignment, Task 6, as
well), that the paper was to be three to five pages typed, that she did not want plot summary, and that they were to support their ideas with specific quotes from the play. Two weeks later, as the due date came closer and the assignment became more real, Mrs. Edwards wrote on the board "Comedy paper: concentrate on the use of several dominant images to create/depict/emphasize characterization." She had narrowed the topic, but it remained a high-level task.

Students had to listen intently to catch such assignments because they usually were announced orally. Directions seldom were written down for the students. Test days generally were announced at the end of a class period. Less attentive students would miss the announcement. Rob was in that position several times, but he made little secret that he napped behind his dark glasses when he lost interest in the class. In Mrs. Edwards' view, that was his choice.

Mrs. Edwards depended heavily on routine as she presented in-class writing assignments. She also depended on the scarcity of time to preclude much wrangling over what was being asked. The commotion that accompanied Writing Task 1 was a thing of the past by November, when Writing Task 8 was assigned. In November, Mrs. Edwards simply passed out the papers, and within two minutes the room was silent.
Writing Task 8 was based on the parallel reading, "The Abacus and the Rose," a text which had not been discussed in class. The writing task came 11 days after the announcement of it in class. Students were a bit surprised because two complete essays were required in the space of an hour. Nathan arrived at the sound of the bell and found that people already were working. He fussed a little and sat down complaining. Sandra, hard at work at his side, told him to get to work. He had no time to complain. He got to work. Silence prevailed as students raced to complete both essays. Students knew what was expected, and time was short.

Not only was there some intentional ambiguity in the task environment, but there also was some in the evaluation system. Mrs. Edwards gave a double grade for every essay written. It was curious that few students could say right off what the two grades referred to. Hilary, for instance, an A student, said that she knew that one was content and one was grammar but that she did not know for sure which was which because her grades were generally the same. Other students echoed that uncertainty. As far as Mrs. Edwards was concerned, only grades other than A and B constituted a problem. She said, "If you have less than a B, see me." Otherwise, when papers were returned, they were discussed briefly and students put them into their cumulative writing
folders, which contained all of their English writing for the past two years.

**Other important major writing tasks**

Several non-essay major writing tasks are important to examine for their place in the task system. Mrs. Edwards told me that the notebook grade constituted a "test grade" in her system and the task was known to be an "easy A." The notes constituted a real written product, one that proved to be important in the accountability system and one that constituted an important link between written, oral, and spoken tasks. Notetaking, one would ordinarily think, would be a sort of lower-level task, where students reproduced what they heard in class or saw on the board. The more I watched what went into notetaking, however, the more I became convinced that for those students who chose to take the task seriously, notetaking certainly could be considered a higher-level task.

An indication that it was "time to take out your notebooks and get to work" often marked the beginning of text-centered discussion. As I indicated earlier, when Mrs. Edwards said she would "give notes on this" (it happened only twice), the presentation was oral, and the students had the job of organizing the material. There was one handout, and there were no overheads. Just when the notebooks would be collected remained intentionally ambiguous. In other words, students were forced to have them ready if they
wanted that "easy A" test grade. There was an indication that the notes served long and short-term purposes in the task system.

As Mrs. Edwards handed back a box full of notebooks, she said that she was worried about those where the notes were "sketchy or brief." She would be collecting the textbooks soon, she warned the class, and they would have nothing to study from if they did not have complete notes. Some of them did have fine notes, she said. But now "would be a great time to start highlighting them as opposed to May when you have three inches of English notes, and you're wondering what to do with them." She was speaking in early November about preparing for their IB and AP examinations at the end of the year. There was a real use for the notes, not only in preparing for her class examinations but for the program examinations as well.

It was indeed possible for students to get that A if they worked at notetaking. Hilary told me that it was difficult to take notes in some of the class discussions. "I generally take really good notes to sort of summarize what we're talking about in a few words . . . putting down examples . . . like every paragraph there's a new concept we're progressing through. It's really hard to take notes." She said that she took "reams and reams" of notes for English and that she didn't know how other people survived without doing it.
One of the ways Hilary and several others fought the ambiguity of not knowing exactly what "ought" to have been in the notes was to work in study groups or study pairs. Some of the groups, like Hilary's, were long-standing, stable sets of students from any of the three senior IB English classes Mrs. Edwards taught. Hilary told me that they all had learned that Mrs. Edwards might emphasize one point in third period and a totally different one in seventh period, even if the text that both classes covered was exactly the same. In the groups they had to work through the differences in what was said in class, quite literally, by comparing notes.

Lisa, generally less successful in managing the task system, also could get a good grade on her notebook, but she felt that her lack of success in the class (she got more Cs than she wanted) resulted from not studying her notes enough. Leah emphasized the individual nature of the notetaking process. She liked to write down the different sorts of connections to other literary texts that occurred to her during class discussion because she knew that Mrs. Edwards was always "looking for relationships." She told me that she liked to "go off on a tangent" in her notes. "I have other ideas. I have other books I've read, and I put them in there." Like Hilary, Leah was using the notes to construct a meaning from the ongoing discussion of the text. It was a matter of ordering, or synthesizing, or connecting.
Unlike Lisa, who saw the task as simply a matter of writing down what everybody said, and then studying hard for the test by memorizing and repeating it on the examinations, Hilary and Leah worked at making sense of what was going on. Susan, somewhat like Lisa, was struggling with the task at the beginning of the year. She also saw the notes as simply a record of what was said by Mrs. Edwards. She figured that "everybody's notes must say exactly the same thing." Both Lisa and Susan, at least in October and November, missed the sense that the meaning of what went on in class was somewhat negotiable. Hilary and Leah knew that it was better to do that negotiating in a group.

A final non-essay major task also merits attention. Writing Task 13, done in the hectic days prior to the Christmas holiday, put into sharp focus Mrs. Edwards' belief that students should become cognizant of the skill and craft that goes into poetry writing. In conjunction with the sonnet unit, she required students to write "an octave or two quatrains, in other words a little more than half a sonnet." That was the only creative writing task I saw undertaken or assigned, though some students were writing for the school literary magazine and consulted with Mrs. Edwards about their work. It was not that there was no creative writing in the classroom; the work of the class was simply something else. But on this one assignment, undertaken as a relaxing break from the pressures of a
history paper that was occupying students at the moment, and from the rigors of literary analysis, task dynamics were evident.

It was a new task and, as such, difficult to establish within the expectations for classroom activities. Students might have been developing some strategies for attacking the written tasks involving analytical essays, but not even that much of a procedure was available to most of them for the sonnet writing task. Groans and complaints accompanied the assignment. The teacher increased the weight of the assignment by offering extra credit if they could produce an entire sonnet.

I spent that day, one of the last days of my observations, with Lee and Rebecca. The atmosphere was relaxed during the days just before Christmas. Lee wanted to write a sonnet based on the idea of the university as a fishing pond. Rebecca, an aspiring scientist, was put off by the task and felt it was inappropriate. Lee, a promising mathematician, seemed to be enjoying the challenge, however. Some of the sonnets turned out very well, Mrs. Edwards told me later. Some were perfunctory, but that was all right too. It was the struggle with the form that was the point. And, she told me, some were very good sonnets. She had recommended that some students submit their sonnets to the literary magazine. Even better, she said, she now had two soccer players who voluntarily submitted sonnets to her
every week. She thought that the assignment had been successful. Clearly a higher-level effort, students were required to integrate their knowledge of sonnet form with personal experience in order to produce the required product.

Reading tasks overlapped one another, and they overlapped writing tasks. Writing tasks may be seen as an overlapping set as well. Of course, the notetaking task overlapped the whole task system and was explicitly tied to the program examinations. Other writing tasks also overlapped. Some tasks required students to write about one text in the middle of the class discussion of another, totally different text, for instance. When dealing with Shakespeare, for example, at one point late in the semester, students were simultaneously analyzing sonnets, preparing themselves for a test on *Twelfth Night*, reading another comedy on their own, and preparing to write a paper about another sonnet, all at the same time. Such a task environment would be difficult for most high school students to handle. Yet, nearly all of Mrs. Edwards' class seemed to handle the situation at some level of competence in the accountability system. There were some failures in her classes, both on individual tasks and semester grades, but those were relatively few. Ds and Fs, she told me, were for work that was "unbelievably bad" and indicated an "I can't do" attitude. Fs in particular were for students who made a
"willful effort not to produce," who "wouldn't even keep a notebook."

Writing as a higher-level task

Doyle and Carter (1984) studied writing activities in a junior high school language arts classroom. Major writing tasks, they found, followed a "pattern of lengthy explanations, long transitions from explanation to actual working on the assignment, and frequent student questions" (p. 242). Minor tasks, on the other hand, were "algorithmic. That is, minor tasks could normally be accomplished by using a standard and reliable formula or routine" (p. 144). Students were able to manage undertaking and completing the minor tasks without the turmoil that accompanied the major tasks because ambiguity about the expected product was low. Major writing assignments were designed by teacher to allow for the exercise of higher-level processes.

There was, in other words, a degree of intentional ambiguity built into writing assignments to allow students to practice composing processes. As work on the assignments progressed, however, there was a clear drift toward greater explicitness and specificity concerning the nature of the final products and a narrowing of the range of judgments students were required to make on their own. In other words, the teacher gradually did an increasing amount of work for the students by clarifying and specifying the features of an acceptable product. (p. 145)

Some of those same task dynamics functioned in Mrs. Edwards' high-ability senior classroom. But where Doyle and
Carter's junior-high-school teacher found her high-level tasks transformed into lower-level ones, Mrs. Edwards generally did not. Perhaps that was because all of the ambiguous higher-level writing tasks (with the exception of notetaking and sonnet writing) involved the enactment of the process of literary analysis.

**Speaking Tasks**

**Task requirements**

Most writing tasks involved doing literary analysis. That is by design what essays involved. Oral activities took the form of whole group discussion, small group discussion, oral reports of group work, and oral examinations. They asked students to do literary analysis as well. Mrs. Edwards told her students that they wrote "literary analyses for her," and when I asked her if literary analysis was what was going on in a discussion she said that it was. Sometimes she spoke of "modeling literary analysis" during discussion. Students agreed that was what went on.

Of the four types of oral tasks students encountered, group discussion was the most prevalent. To study a work meant to discuss it in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. For that reason, I will examine discussion as an academic task in itself as the next chapter of this report. But one important major oral task involving literary analysis needs
to be discussed briefly. That was the "oral exam" given during the semester I observed.

The "oral exam"

This particular task was new in Mrs. Edwards' task repertoire. She had not employed the format the year before. The individual oral examination over Jude the Obscure, a text assigned as summer reading, proved to have nearly the overlap of notetaking as it was superimposed over the rest of the network of other oral, written, and reading tasks. First announced on September 20, Mrs. Edwards did not complete the individual examination sessions until November 2. For some students, the summer reading list had to be kept in active reading status for many months past summer.

Mrs. Edwards explained the format to me. She did not want me to sit in on any of the actual examinations, however, because she did not want students to be unnerved by my presence. She had selected 25 items (quotations) from the text. Students, she felt, were supposed to know that "she could ask them anything" about the book and they must be prepared to present some response. Once given an item, students had 10 minutes to prepare for the exam, that is, to think about the quotation. That testing format was designed to echo the IB oral literature examination, conducted by an outside examiner, that was a part of the battery of end-of-the-year tests most students were expecting to take.
Students were to "do analysis" and "relate to overall themes." Also explicit was the requirement to "relate the quotation to Tess (they had read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the previous year) in terms of style and development of theme." Most of the examination sessions were held either after school or during the lunch period. Because there was no available space in the classroom during lunch, those examinations were conducted in the moldy privacy of the book closet adjacent to the classroom.

It is important, I think, that no time was taken away from the class to conduct these sessions. That meant that students had to give up a lunch or come after school for the task. That also meant that Mrs. Edwards had to give up most of her lunch periods and time after school during the six or seven weeks the testing went forward. What I learned about the test itself I learned from talking with and listening to students as they awaited their turns in the book closet during lunch and, of course, from whatever was said in class. Students immediately latched onto the part of the task that required them to relate *Jude* to *Tess*. One girl said to another that if "you compare it to other things well enough" the teacher would forget that you were supposed to talk about *Tess*. They attempted to reduce the ambiguity by finding a workable procedure.

As the weeks went by, Mrs. Edwards spoke several times during class about how the examinations were going, saying
that she could tell who had not read the text well, just by
the ways they spoke of it. She warned students, "Remember,
you're analyzing a passage for images, and symbols, and
style. It's important to relate it to other works." Even
though she clarified the exact elements of the analysis
there, the ambiguity inherent in the high-level task
remained great. Students found the necessity of making
connections to other texts less ambiguous and fell upon that
strategy first.

Maintaining a System of Higher-Level Tasks

Nearly all of the tasks in Mrs. Edwards' interlocking,
overlapping network of reading, writing, and speaking tasks
are high-level according to Doyle's scheme. Only rarely do
tasks require simple memory. It is not enough just to know
the plot or to reproduce the teacher's interpretation.
Expectations for most writing tasks do, however, have a
procedural element. The format required for essays,
however, is less algorithmic than heuristic. Structural
requirements really only include a beginning, a middle, and
an end. Also required, of course, was a set of conventions
of formal academic writing about literature (such as the
prohibition of the first person, the necessity of examples
from the text) that are somewhat more complex and limiting
than the structural specifications. Both the structure and
the essay conventions, however, are uniformly required
across almost all major writing tasks. That alone would
have familiarized students with task expectations without taking all choices and decisions about managing material away from them. Some students look for lower-level ways of completing essay tasks. They adopt a strategy of trying to repeat what the teacher says or they identify a simple procedure, like making text/text connections, in order to complete the task. Such an approach is successful only in meeting a portion of the teacher's goal for the task.

Doyle and Sanford (1985) discussed the common classroom fate of such novel, high-level or "understanding" tasks, involving "higher cognitive processes" and focusing on "comprehension, interpretation, flexible application of knowledge and skills" (p. 16). Very often such tasks, in which "students must make decisions about what to produce and how to produce it" (p. 18), fall prey to the necessities of classroom management processes. Because they are inherently ambiguous, pressure from students to break down higher-level tasks into lower-level procedural ones often degrades the intentions of teachers to have students engage in high-level tasks. "In response to pressures teachers may redefine or simplify task demands or reduce risk by softening accountability" (p. 26). I suggest that Mrs. Edwards avoids the degradation of high-level tasks by several means.

First, all major tasks, and I include discussion in that category, involve some sort of literary analysis. That
alone insures that, as Doyle and his colleagues recommend (Doyle & Sanford, 1985), tasks be "closely related and built upon one another in a careful logical progression" (p. 26). Second, an ambiguous task environment becomes clearer for most students as they observe, participate in, and conduct, at some level of competence, analytic reading, writing, and speaking tasks. Third, Mrs. Edwards does indeed adjust risk by lowering grade stringency for major tasks. Students are likely to get an A, B, or C if they make any attempt to do the work at all. Of course, few of these students wanted Cs. Few of them wanted Bs either. Fourth, Mrs. Edwards avoids fragmenting the high-level tasks by routinizing the task environment rather than the task itself. Furthermore, the existence of an extra-credit economy make it possible for a student to decide to reduce his or her own risks.

Extra credit is a real element in Mrs. Edwards' accountability system. Doyle and Sanford (1984) suggested that use of accountability "safety nets" (p. 42) softens the risk of engaging in novel tasks. They indicated that such practices as allowing students to revise work and resubmit it, or encouraging students to work together, may be useful in keeping tasks from being degraded to a lower level. When judiciously used, adjustment of the credit economy is also helpful. Doyle described the practice as "creating a cushion of surplus grade credit" (p. 42). That seemed to be Mrs. Edwards' safety net of choice.
The extra-credit task system is yet another superimposed network of related tasks, a top layer where participation is totally voluntary. In the time I observed, there were nine assorted extra-credit possibilities: attendance at two lectures and two plays (put on at a nearby university), an assignment to bring in cartoons or advertisements that connected with any of the texts under study, an item on a literary terms test that asked the identity of the newly named Poet Laureate of the United States, an offer of an extra A or B test grade for producing a revised writing folder for participation in a school competition, an offer to write out a memorized sonnet, and an offer of extra credit for those who would provide personal copies of Twelfth Night because there were not enough school texts for each student to have his or her own.

Student perceptions of the actual value of the extra credit (recorded as checks in the gradebook) varied. Lee saw it as a rather useless activity. He told me that he only did the assignments that interested him personally because "I deserve the grade I get and not the one I get adding 20 or 30 points to something." Tony said that he did not know what the activities were worth exactly. "I don't do them for the grade. I just do them because they're fun and I enjoy them." Holly told me that she did not originally believe that extra credit was significant, but she went to lectures and plays because she enjoyed going.
She was surprised when her grade at the nine weeks came out higher than she had expected. When I asked her whether extra credit was actually important enough to change a grade, Holly said,

We have yet to determine that. She [Mrs. Edwards] keeps saying that you get extra credit if you go see this, extra credit if you go see that, and a lot of us have done it, and it doesn't seem to make much difference. But it's fun to go anyway. The plays are good . . . so if you're on the verge say, like B+ and an A, and you do the extra credit, she'll give you the A . . . but if you have a solid B or C, I don't think it changes much.

Holly had the system fairly well figured out. If students did at least five of the tasks offered, Mrs. Edwards had some leverage to "adjust upward" if, for instance, a student was "doing his darndest" or if a particular essay proved to be a personal low.

A couple of observations are in order before we move on to classroom discussion as an academic task. First, the attitudes toward academic work that I mentioned as characteristic of this classroom come into play as students cope with the tasks they are assigned. The idea of choice becomes particularly important. Evasions of the real reading task are choices that students can make. They can choose to read only "the Cliffs" or to attempt to write their essays only from what was said in class. Those choices might well endanger the grade one eventually gets on an essay, however. As Jennifer said, it would be possible
to write without reading, but she imagined that the essay would be "quite a mess." A successful evasion of reading, however, might also be seen as something of a higher-level task in itself. It would take a student a certain amount of higher-level effort to produce an acceptable essay by integrating what she knew with what she could pick up from class discussion.

As students struggle to clarify ambiguity in the task environment, their identity as members of an academic community becomes important. Groups or pairs voluntarily convene outside of class time to go through notes. Small group interactions provide further sense of group endeavor. Perhaps at times, when the texts are difficult—opaque or simply boring, it is only the expectation of eventual usefulness—on tests, in college, or in adult life—of the effort that is enough to keep the group at work at all.

Second, there are several levels of permissible response available to students for most tasks, not all equally valuable in the accountability system. A student, for example, may be able to respond to a question about plot when the teacher asks him about a quotation from Tess, but may not be able to handle the text-text connections that are more valuable in the grading system. Another student may respond to the request to "discuss" the tenets of existentialism by attempting to repeat what the teacher and classmates said, itself often a difficult memory task.
There is, after all, a "knowledge-telling" goal evident in major writing tasks. But he or she may not always be able to reach the level another student reaches when discussing Joyce's uses of auditory imagery in *Portrait of the Artist*. One student may have to ask why Kafka chose to turn his character into a cockroach in "The Metamorphosis." Another may be able to speculate out loud on that in class discussion. There are, in other words, multiple levels of acceptable response for reading, writing, and speaking tasks.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AS AN ACADEMIC TASK:
AN ACCUMULATION OF CONVERSATIONS

Playing the Game

Two tape recorders were running one day in December—mine, as usual, and Mrs. Edwards'. She was, she said, capturing the discussion that day for the purpose of submitting the tape to IB program officials. "I want to be able to use it . . . to send to Europe [to show] that you have done the extra work that I have not lectured you on," she told the class. The students were presenting their reports of group work, analyses of Shakespeare sonnets. Students were doing literary analyses, and I was able to hear them producing, for the benefit of an evaluative audience, their version of a competent academic discussion of a literary work.

Alexis began the presentation of her group's analysis of Sonnet 64. They had been given an hour the previous day to prepare.

Alexis: Basically, the point behind this is that he's talking about what time does . . . and aging and what happens to time. The fact that even though you know time is occurring and that things won't last forever, you can't let that stop you from loving other people . . . and having relationships. You can't, just because you know
that it won't last forever, you can't stop appreciating life.

Having expressed the group's version of a meaning for the sonnet, Alexis explicated some sets of "images and symbols" having to do with the transitory or cyclical quality of time--the ocean, Roman ruins. Then she turned to a set of "battle images," centering on the word "brass," which, she said, the group had originally felt had something to do with time and clocks. Tim picked up the topic and talked about battle imagery in the sonnet. Alexis summarized her introduction to the sonnet saying, "In the last quatrain, he's talking about, from seeing all this happen . . . from the effects of time and decay. He realizes he won't have his love forever." Tim continued:

Tim: At this point, we really found it similar to, for those of us who took psychology last year and know about Erik Erikson, one of his stages of life. One of the early adult stages is generativity versus stagnation, when a person decides whether to keep the species going by having a child or just to stagnate, to live alone . . . does this make sense?

Up until this point, students had been acting as if this were a regular class day featuring presentations by their peers. Then Tony broke into the report from the "audience," the remainder of the students in the circle. Assuming his professorial voice, playing to the tape (Mrs. Edwards' not mine, I presumed), he said gravely, "Tim, I think you're hitting upon the right point." The respectful silence evaporated into giggles.
Tony: I don't think you're really taking the comparison too far. You know, a lot of people would say to compare Shakespeare to somebody like Erikson, I mean there's a span there of 500 years.

A couple of others joined Tony in his game from their places in the circle.

Nathan: Tim, [solemnly] you speak about intimacy, the isolation stage, but generativity usually comes--

Sarah: I think he's talking about generation and stagnation.

Nathan: No, he's talking about--

Sarah: They fit together. Intimacy is what? The sixth? And generativity is the seventh. I mean they can't really be separated.

Tim: Yeah . . . the dividing line is so cloudy.

Sarah: Yeah.


Sarah: Did Erikson read Shakespeare?

The circle joined in with laughs and comments from all sides. "Yeah, sure, everybody reads Shakespeare." Alexis picked up the pieces of the presentation and returned the talk from the tangent to the text, just as Mrs. Edwards might have done. The tapes continued to run.

The class was playing that day, more than usual, with the conventions of classroom discussion. Everybody knew it, of course, including Mrs. Edwards. But there is a good deal in that segment of classroom discourse that is fairly typical of what usually went on. Alexis, for instance, can
be heard attempting to bring in the dialogic reading strategy that Mrs. Edwards so often used herself. Tim was using the connecting strategy, in its most obvious "text-to-text" form, making a link across time to Erikson. Nathan picked up on that connection, initiating a tangent, in which the others gleefully participated. That is not untypical of how talk about other texts might have proceeded on any day in class.

In Alexis' initial explanation of a meaning for the poem, she began with an obvious point-driven approach, even using the word "point." The "he," however, the connection the group has made with the mind of the poet/speaker, took a curious turn to "you" in her second thought. Although that second-person talk is common in conversational speech, here it has a more powerful effect. Alexis connected experience of the poet to the personal experience of her listeners. It is a pattern of talk she shares with Mrs. Edwards and one that she follows throughout the remainder of the presentation. All of the text-centered talk takes place in the present tense, with the exception of Sarah's obvious time-specific question about Erikson and Shakespeare. These students know the tense-convention of academic talk about literary texts very well. In their present-tense talk, they are a part of the text of Shakespeare, having already eliminated what Tony mistakenly thought was a 500 year gap.
Another segment in that same presentation shows students around the circle continuing to struggle to construct a meaning for the sonnet. Sarah was persistent. She wanted to know "what is he saying in the last two lines?"

Alexis: He's saying even though he realizes he can't live by that, it can't make him stop loving. There would be no point at all if you couldn't do things because you knew they weren't going to last forever.

Other students from the circle joined with personal comments.

Rebecca: It's sort of like the idea of somebody having a child and then crying because they know the child is going to die someday.

Lee: This may sound silly, but there's actually the realization that love must end some day, even if it be death.

Rebecca: The death is the stagnation Tim was talking about.

Sarah: There's a lot of death words in here too. "Bury," "age," "mortal," "decay," you know death is kind of ... is he saying that love is eternal or is he just saying it hurts him to realize it might end? ... Is he crying because he's worried that it might, but actually he knows it won't?

Hilary: I just think he knows it, well, and it makes him weep, but you have to get past it, you can't let it stop you right there.

Sarah: So this is a time sonnet, but it's not saying that love is going to last forever?

Nathan: Is he being realistic in that sense? In some of his other time sonnets. . . .

Nathan was beginning to take up the academic doubletalk game again.
Rebecca: I think his main point is that just because you know it is going to end, that doesn't mean you don't engage in love or a relationship.

Sarah: Well, is he making a moral point or is he just discussing how he feels?

Somebody made a comment the tape did not pick up.

Sarah: Yeah. It's not like he's giving the moral of an Aesop story. To me, it's just like he's in a pretty bad mood and he writes this sonnet.

Alexis moderated a little, "It seems pretty negative up until the point where he says you can't--" Sarah interrupted her with the statement that this is a "morbid, morbid poem."

Rebecca: But isn't that the thing when he says, this is death? It's making the assumption that you don't want to be dead, you want to be alive and thus, don't think this way. Don't let this thought--

Paul: Deter you from living.

Rebecca: Exactly.

The talk must have been getting a bit serious for Tony's taste. He assumed his "teacher voice" and commented, "But death is the ultimate victory of life." We all laughed.

Mrs. Edwards, in her first comment of the day, suggested that Tony was carrying the game too far. The report continued for another five pages of tapescript, with Mrs. Edwards joining in towards the end, directing their attention to the images and "how you can interrelate them."

When her tape was turned off, she passed out copies of a new sonnet, Number 30.
Mrs. Edwards: I'd like you to concentrate a little bit closer on the adjectives and the nouns that go together to form the imagery and symbolism. I've been a little lax on that. Let's sharpen these skills.

Just to make contact with the author and struggle with the meaning had been a good beginning, but there was another stage. She gave them a few minutes to "circle, to pull out the words that seem to go together." In 10 minutes she asked the students what things they had found to be connected. "Do you see something else in this poem?" she asked. "Did you notice the amount of repetition? Why?" Leah gave an answer: "Because he goes over these memories time and time again. He doesn't do it [just] once. "Absolutely," Mrs. Edwards replied. "These have been good presentations," Mrs. Edwards told the class. "From my perceptions of your group work, you seem to be doing good work with this material. It is coming easily to you."

Rebecca: In the group if you get off track, they're there to get you back on track.

Mrs. Edwards: Well, you've had some practice with that now. Between the group and yourself and me, hopefully you can do it on your own. Right? Sonnets not quite so threatening?

Rebecca: They're getting fun.

The report had been acceptable, good, but there was more to it than only looking for a meaning. That was what Mrs. Edwards showed them with the Sonnet 30 exercise. There was more to do: it was necessary to attend to the way the poet used the language to construct that meaning.
The Texture of Talk

Talk is the most important activity that takes place in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. Of the 72 class sessions that I observed for this study, only 15 were "quiet days," when silence rather than talk dominated the entire 50-minute period. Eleven of those quiet days were writing days, and four were reading days. Mrs. Edwards arranged for the "substitute days," the days she needed to be out of the classroom during the semester, to coincide with silent days. When she was in the classroom, in other words, talk was generally the class activity that was going on. Those remaining 57 days were filled with voices, people talking and thinking together about all sorts of things. However, there were really only two sets of topics that took up much time during class: personal academic concerns (college application procedures, long-term assignments, work in other classes) and topics relating to the texts under study.

The talk of mutual academic concerns usually occupied between 5 and 15 minutes of the class period. Mrs. Edwards nearly always initiated the text-talk with a comment such as "OK, ladies and gentlemen, let's finish this up. Chapters one through seven," or "OK [whistle] pages 37-38," or "All right, will you please take out your Bronowski." Such directives were often cemented into place, if the noise level was high, with a clap or a whistle to draw students' attention to the center of the talk, the day's text.
In the remainder of this chapter, I will describe the text-centered talk that was an almost daily event in class. What went on in talk was important. Through talk, literary analysis was enacted, tasks were set and completed, academic discourse was modeled and practiced, meanings were pursued, and topics for writing developed. Most of the academic work of the class was conducted through talk of different kinds.

Two studies of classroom talk formed the basis of several of the ways I analyzed the talk in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. Kuhn (1984) alerted me to the mechanics of topic shifts, and Barnes et al. (1971), who developed a hierarchy of "levels of talking about literature" (p. 75) in small group discussions, led me to begin to think about the kinds of talk I heard in the classroom I was studying.

In the following pages, I will consider five different ways of looking at what was happening as the teacher and the students talked about literary text: (a) kinds of text-centered talk, (b) small group and large group talk, (c) discussion as an academic task, (d) talk as a way of making connections, and (e) talk as a preparation for writing about a literary work.

First, however, there are a number of methodological issues that must be taken into account. In the first study, the importance of the volume of talk and the patterns underlying classroom talk escaped my full attention, probably because I was struggling with the effort to capture
verbatim the comments of all of the participants in the classroom. Because I began the second study with the academic task concept in mind, the importance of discussion in the task system quickly became apparent. I was still recording data in fieldnote form at the beginning of the study, however. The change to audiotaping relieved the necessity to fight for verbatim material, and I began to hear a good deal more as I reviewed, transcribed, and summarized parts of the tapes. Still, the quality of the recordings, because they neither captured the side-conversation and the call-out comments, nor isolated the multiple voices that responded to a question from the teacher, prevented me from producing a transcript suitable for microanalysis. The tapes were still simply a contribution to fieldnote data suitable for looking at the larger patterns, and I was interested in patterns of talk as a part of the task system. As my methodology evolved along with the focus of my observations, I found it necessary to return to the tapes from time to time, transcribing verbatim segments I had relegated to summary, finding that what was actually important I had thought was marginal. Where I was focusing too much on questions and answers at first, by the end of my analysis of the talk, I had turned to a focus on levels of talk and on topic shifts in the talk rather than on trying to make a distinction between discussion and recitation.
Types of Talk About Texts

One of the first observations I made as I began to transcribe and summarize classroom discourse from the audiotapes was that different voices dominated the talk on different days and in different segments of a given day. I began to look at the domination patterns of the talk, and I eventually devised the following spectrum:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher dominated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lecture, mini-lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tangents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7-1. Types of talk spectrum.

With few exceptions, I could find examples of most of these types of talk on any given day when the class was dealing with a text.

Lectures and Tangents

Lectures were rare events. Only one full day of the 57 talk-days was occupied by a proclaimed "lecture." That
particular day, Mrs. Edwards devoted most of the class session to "giving notes" on Hardy and popular reception of *Jude the Obscure* in its time. She was also proposing a reading of the book as a deviation from the popular expectations for a novel in Hardy's day. Her voice dominated the tapescript that day, but student voices were by no means silent, even in a lecture. After an initial 15 minutes of "teacher-talk," punctuated by a single student question, there followed a "tangent," during which teacher and student voices were mixed. A "tangent," or what Mrs. Edwards called "a digression," is an important characteristic of the flow of classroom talk. For my descriptive purposes here, a tangent is any segment of talk that had its origins in some reference to the text under study.

Mrs. Edwards was explaining the intellectual atmosphere in England preceding the publication of *Jude*. She was talking about the emergence of a popular literacy movement at that time. The availability of books to middle-class readers was a cause of that movement. She mentioned the availability and abundance of leather-bound books, particularly books of sermons. That led her to make a comment on the practice of "buying books by the yard," a reference to modern-day interior decorating practices. What she meant by that was clear to some students but not clear to others and the following interchange ensued:
**Student:** [Comment about the current availability of leather-bound books.]

**Mrs. Edwards:** Today, when you buy them by the yard, I think so.

**Sarah:** I think it's really crass to do something like that.

**Students:** [Side comments, to one another for perhaps five seconds.]

**Mrs. Edwards:** You've heard of that haven't you?

**Sarah:** Yeah, one of those really weird twists of culture.

**Mrs. Edwards:** Oh yes.

**Tony:** Like the commercial on TV if you want leather-bound copies of all the classics.

**Sarah:** [Laughs.] Leather-bound copies of *How the West Was Won.*

**Mrs. Edwards:** [Laughing.] Well, you don't want to do that. You can still buy, I know this is a real digression, but you can still buy beautiful bound books, new books as well as old books, and there is a pleasure in reading which Mrs. Drummond has taught me, having lent me the tapes of [Stephen Hawking's best-selling book, *A Brief History of Time*] which I'm enjoying. But I realize [now] how much I enjoy the physical nature of sitting down and opening up a book and reading it. She's lent me Hawking's book on tape, and it's just that I missed that [physical part of reading].

The tangent went on for a while, with a series of personal contributions—Tina's reference to all the uncut books decorating the shelves in Gatsby's library, Sarah's comment on her mother's way of selecting paperback books by the picture on the cover, Lee's question about what Mrs. Edwards was talking about when she mentioned "buying books
by the yard." Eventually, Mrs. Edwards drew the talk back to the issue of the intellectual climate prevailing at the time of the publication of *Jude*, but tangents like this one continued to permeate the lecture format. They were also to be heard in other discussion formats as well.

**Minilectures**

A much more common type of teacher-dominated, text-centered talk was what I called a minilecture. Minilectures were different from lectures in origin. Lectures were proclaimed as such. A day like the one described above was really devoted to offering material in addition to what could be found in the text itself; such days were rare. Minilectures were generally part of a social reading of the text of the day. True social readings happened with poetry or the Shakespeare comedy, when the class was really conducting a first reading out loud as a group. Social readings also tended to happen when the reading was hard or thought to be boring, and not all students had read the text beforehand. Good examples of minilectures, segments of teacher or student talk in the flow of classroom talk, come from the class sessions devoted to Hardy's poems.

The focus of the talk about one of the poems, for instance, was Hardy's use of dialect. Mrs. Edwards' voice predominated on that topic. Other such minilectures took place as the students read *Twelfth Night*. Mrs. Edwards often would stop the reading to review the action and draw
attention to Elizabethan dramatic conventions, what we know about Shakespeare's life, or the intellectual history behind the play.

Mrs. Edwards was not the only "minilecturer." Although other students could dominate a tangent occasionally, Sarah knew enough about a number of subjects to qualify as minilecturer from time to time. She was an expert on primate research, for example, and Mrs. Edwards called upon her to talk about recent developments in that research in order to refute a point in Bronowski. Hilary was responsible for at least a tangent if not a minilecture on animal rights. Rob sometimes minilectured on military matters. Minilectures, delivered either by a student or teacher, typically lasted several minutes. Occasionally they went as long as 10 minutes.

Recitation

Recitation patterns also happened at times. I use the word carefully, referring only to the teacher-student-teacher interaction pattern described by Cazden (1988). Such patterns emerged under two circumstances: either the class had not read the text, which happened now and then, especially with Bronowski, or the text was difficult to follow, which happened in the social reading of Shakespeare. Some of the recitation segments in the latter case are notable because there is more to the recitation than a simple dredging for plot details.
The students were reading *Twelfth Night*, Act III, Scene ii. Parts had been chosen and the students read until the end of the scene.

**Mrs. Edwards:** OK, what's the business about the duel?

**Tim:** [Explains what went on in the scene.]

**Mrs. Edwards:** OK. Is this true?

**Sarah:** I think they were telling it to him because they want Sir Andrew to go and fight him but he's such a wimp that if he has as much blood in his liver as would clog a flea, or whatever it is... I don't think he's going to go through with it.

**Mrs. Edwards:** OK, basically, why is Toby so interested in getting him to fight?

**Nathan:** Because if she marries Andrew, he'll get some money from her.

**Mrs. Edwards:** Well, who's borrowed money from whom and how much?

**Tony:** About three thousand dollars.

**Mrs. Edwards:** All right. Toby's borrowed it from Andrew with the expectation he'll marry Olivia and therefore get her fortune. So, in a sense, Toby has borrowed against his niece's marriage to his friend, got it?

This "recitation" has some unusual elements. Even though it does have a student-teacher-student pattern and some degree of evaluation ("OK, all right," in the teacher's response to the student's statement), other things are going on. First of all, several people are telling what went happened in the play, rehearsing the plot; second, Mrs. Edwards is not just asking what happened. Her questions are
inferential, dealing with character motivation, and leading the discussion toward the issue of why the author/playwright would have portrayed a character in such a way.

**Whole-Group Discussion**

Whole-group discussions were the most typical class format. Because of the problem of knowing what constitutes discussion, I simply use the word here to refer to all text-centered talk, tangents, minilectures, side-conversations and all. Whole-group discussions usually developed from talk about a text that had been assigned for a previous reading.

Mrs. Edwards usually held control of the general direction of a whole-group discussion only in the sense that, like Alexis in the presentation that I discussed earlier in this chapter, she continually directed the talk back to the words of the text itself once the tangent, or the lecture, or the minilecture had spent itself. The astonishing thing about whole-group discussions was the wide range of subtopics that could be occasioned by the directive to "look at page 43."

The tapescript of a day's talk about a few pages in Bronowski's *Science and Human Values* is rather typical. I originally had thought the day unimportant, except for some introductory talk about the formal essay as a genre. I had, in fact, summarized most of the text-based talk as to topic, leaving myself only five and a half pages of fieldnotes.
Much later, however, as I began to see how much of the important talk went on in those minilecture and tangent segments, I returned to the tape and retrieved an additional 13 pages of verbatim data. I looked at the subtopics and how they emerged.

Preliminary talk was cut off when Mrs. Edwards clapped for attention and to mark the change of topic.

Mrs. Edwards: All right. Bronowski. We have several different classes in here now, at least for the rest of the week. Where is the common understanding of where we stopped? We did not talk about page 44, and I want to. This touches upon what some of you might find yourself facing at times. I trust not for the same reasons, but please be aware of it. We're all counting on there not being another war.

This segment of the text dealt with incidents from World War II. Tony, generally ready to start a tangent, said something about the only people who make money in wars being undertakers. It was not a productive tangent, but quite a few students joined in until Mrs. Edwards commented that Tony seemed to be using deduction rather than statistics in his argument and that it was a macabre subject anyway.

After 19 comments, 13 from students and the remainder from the teacher, she returned the talk to the text.

Mrs. Edwards: Well, probably. Where did you get this? Where did this come from anyway? I'm more interested in the ones that survive under duress and there are a lot of types of duress. It doesn't have to be a war. It can be when the academic climate changes and that's a serious thing for you to be aware of all right. When the academic climate changes, those people who are on the cutting edge often find they've been pushed off. And this is a very tough thing to take. How
do you cope with it? He talks about the French and how destructive that dual way of looking at truth was for the French population during the war. What's he mention? [three second pause] Pardon me? Didn't you read this last night? All right, page 43 at the bottom.

What the next 30 minutes covered was a segment of text about six pages long. It included the end of a chapter entitled "The Habit of Truth," and the beginning of the chapter entitled "The Sense of Human Dignity." In the segment of the text where Mrs. Edwards began, Bronowski discusses the German occupation of France, and the fate of the intellectual Werner Heisenberg in the Nazi regime.

After a few moments of attention to what happened in France during the German occupation, Mrs. Edwards turned to the larger issue, the "habit of truth," returning to her academic analogy.

Mrs. Edwards: It seems to me that this works with academia too, to some degree. I mean people who are working on their doctorates. I mean not working on the same problem because you can't. But on a related issue, and you simply go and clear the bookstacks. I mean that's a very nasty, and as far as I'm concerned immoral thing to do, but it does happen. What happens to truth there, do you see? If you check out all the books on a given subject so that nobody else can compete with you. If they catch you at it, by the way, you're usually kicked out.

Mrs. Edwards changed from the third person here to a more conversational "you" drawing students into her academic analogy. Not everyone got her direction.

Student: What is this now? I don't quite understand what you're saying.
Mrs. Edwards: If you're assigned a topic for a paper--

Student: And you want to take all the books--

Mrs. Edwards: If you take out all the books--

Student: If you check them all out--

Mrs. Edwards: If you check them all out and don't let them be available to the rest of the students in the class, what, in a sense, are you doing?

Student: Cheating.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, you are cheating. It's a type of theft, isn't it. It's a type of intellectual theft.

Mrs. Edwards was making the analogy even more personal. Not only was she using direct address, she cast the situation as one they knew. A student picked up on that and offered some personal experience.

Student: When we are doing a paper, and we go to the library and we see that a professor has a pile of, you know, all the same books checked out, because they all have the same due date and it's six months from now, what can we do about it?

Mrs. Edwards: Well, if it's a professor, not a whole lot.

Student: Weren't you talking about professors though?

Students: No. No. Students.

Mrs. Edwards: Students are competing for grades, all right? There's a lot of difference. With a professor what you do is put a recall on the book and very often it comes back.

Several other student comments followed, and then Mrs. Edwards headed out of the tangent and back to the text.

Mrs. Edwards: It happens you know. You are morally bound to get [the book] back. . . .
What's the important thing . . . if you take it from your own moral view, what is shaping you as a person? It's your actions and also your attitudes, right?

She turned to the Himmler example in the text. A student asked who that was.

Mrs. Edwards: Himmler? The Nazi? Page 44. He was really kind of in charge of the arts and education. What happened. How it was going to be taught. We literally almost lost one of the minds, incredibly creative and important minds, of the 20th century. Why? Who am I talking about? This was in your reading.

Students might have read this section, but the connection between Himmler and Heisenberg was dim for them. Mrs. Edwards expanded upon the situation in a minilecture of several hundred words. She talked about Bronowski's comment that Himmler had insisted that the stars were made of ice and that was what he was going to have taught in his Nazi scientific academy. Another tangent was born when somebody did not understand the significance of that comment.

Mrs. Edwards: That's the kind of thing that happens. I mean you know that the stars aren't made of ice. You've known it for years, right? There are still a lot of people out there who think the world is flat. I mean that's a metaphor. OK. There are a few that do. They belong to the Flat Earth Society.

Four or five student comments about the Flat Earth Society followed, and Mrs. Edwards mentioned that it was "tongue in cheek." A few more comments were made about people who think that the earth is flat. There was a joke about how NASA made the earth's surface to look curved in the space
photographs by using a curved lens. Laughter followed, and Sarah offered a personal experience to the tangent.

**Sarah:** Did you ever see that Bloom County series on penguin evolution? Where they had the guy testify?

**Students:** Yeah, yeah, I remember that one.

**Student:** That evolution was untrue and the guy says "and the world is flat, too."

**Students:** [Laughter, comments].

**Student:** And the guy says "Shut up, shut up." [He laughs]. "And the guy says "But it is."

**Student:** A burrito.

**Students:** Yeah it's shaped like a burrito.

**Mrs. Edwards:** But I'll bet that around a quarter of the American population refuses to believe in evolution.

Some comments centered on that, and on fundamentalist beliefs about the origin of the world. Mrs. Edwards turned the talk back toward the text again.

**Mrs. Edwards:** What happens when you start dealing with things in math and science that are not so readily demonstrable from bones and stones of earth's history? . . . OK? So what's the point of all this in terms of Science and Human Values? Why did I bring it up?"

The next tangent had to do with teachers and their mispronunciation of words. It was occasioned by the mention of a visiting graduate who has not found the atmosphere of her chosen university very intellectually stimulating. Three students offered examples from their repertoire of stories about teachers who say silly things or mispronounce
words. Mrs. Edwards cautioned them that those are "little things." "That's not the point. Pronunciation we can all learn. It's understanding, it's the depth of understanding."

That was not all of that day's discussion. It went on for a few pages and a few more tangents. The group arrived at page 52 by the end of the hour, having talked about oriental cultures, Bronowski's mistaken assessment of them, values in western civilization, human rights, the rape statistics for their town, the Soviet space shuttle, what they would do with 50 million dollars, and Blake's picture "Urizen Unfettered." When I try to sort out the topics in retrospect, they seem like colored balloons of talk tied to different words in the text, floating before the eyes of students.

There is probably more teacher-talk than student-talk in a whole-group discussion, but many voices mingle and talk at once. I would have difficulty quantifying individual comments given my taping technology. Student voices do have a dominant, indeed, exclusive role in some tangents and minilectures, in reports of group work, and in small-group discussion sessions, which are important class formats as well.
Small Group Talk and Class Discussion

Twelve class days were devoted to small group discussions and the presentation of their findings. Except for the presence of the teacher in whole-group talk, on-task (Mrs. Edwards spoke of groups as either functional or dysfunctional) small groups sounded much the same as the group as a whole. I used the Barnes (Barnes et al., 1971) categories to describe the "levels of talking" (p. 75) about literature that I was hearing in Mrs. Edwards' whole-class discussions.

Barnes and his colleagues had discerned four levels of talk about texts in the naturally occurring small-group discussions they analyzed:

1. putting oneself in the character's position;
2. treating the character and incident as if they were real;
3. being aware of the novel as an artifact, an expression of the author's intentions;
4. discussing the novel as existing in its own right as a virtual experience. (p. 75)

The researchers found that most of the small-group talk was at Levels 1 and 2, though students "made occasional sorties" (p. 75) into Levels 3 and 4. Much of the time in the group was spent in clarifying plot details for one another and rehearsing events in the story. The suggestion made by the researchers was that teachers often tend to short-circuit natural responses by leaping too quickly to levels 3 and 4. Barnes' Level 3 is a good description of the dialogic reading strategy that Mrs. Edwards often
modeled. Level 4 would be the level where most of the connections between texts and texts might be made, being as Barnes said, the level at which "published literary criticism tends to be pitched" (p. 75).

It was my observation, however, that whole-group talk in Mrs. Edwards' classroom was a good deal like what Barnes described in his small groups. In the tangents, in the minilectures, and even in the reports, I was able to see all four levels at work simultaneously, even though Mrs. Edwards was consistent in pulling the talk towards Levels 3 and 4. There was ample opportunity for these students to enter into the story world and even to bring their own personal experience into the discussion. Mrs. Edwards also participated in talk at all four levels.

Analysis using the Barnes scheme was most productive in dealing with the social reading of *Twelfth Night*. Some examples of the levels of talking about literature are apparent in this excerpt of one of those class sessions. Parts had been chosen. The students read the scene. Mrs. Edwards stopped the reading.

**Mrs. Edwards:** OK, what's going on? [The "perpetual return" to details of the plot.]

Students called out different versions.

**Mrs. Edwards:** All right. There's the pun of the hart [Level 4]. Who does he fall in love with as soon as he sees her [Level 2]?

**Mrs. Edwards:** What's this guy's problem [Level 2]?
Mrs. Edwards: I mean to the point it's almost sappy [Level 2]. If you look at freshmen when they have their first crush, [she brings in personal experience at Level 2]. Have you ever noticed that? . . . It's very funny sometimes, right? They're overwhelmed with their own passion.

The class laughed and offered examples of people they knew.

Mrs. Edwards turned to Lee.

Mrs. Edwards: I can't wait to see what happens to you [when you fall in love] because it's going to happen one day. [It is almost as if she is drawing Lee into Level 1 by putting him in the character's position.]

The class laughed, and Lee fussed, and fumed, and feigned outrage at the personal attention. He even turned around and asked me if I had gotten that comment on tape.

Mrs. Edwards: Isn't it true? Can you imagine Lee in love?

Now she was pulling the class into the experience.

There was no mocking in this at all, just a gentle teasing from Mrs. Edwards and the class, something Lee seemed to relish. Then she turned her attention to the "lords of silence," three or four boys who sat clustered together in their own section of the circle and rarely spoke during discussion.

Mrs. Edwards: Paul, Scott, don't laugh too hard. The laughter was good-natured, and there were side conversations about what those boys might be like if they were head over heels in love.

Mrs. Edwards: Girls are allowed a little more leeway in their expression of emotion in our culture. [This is still probably at Level 1
because she is in the "falling in love" tangent which involves getting them to put themselves in the characters' positions.] When Orsino talks like this, they can't say "you are acting like a fool." They try to distract him. "Do you want to go hunting?" [Level 2.] It's pretty extreme. [Perhaps heading toward Level 3.] He picks up on something that you see in Romeo and Juliet. He's raving on about music . . . and he says this is how love is. First, you fall in love, and it's like everything changes, but then like music being cut off . . . your emotion can change too . . . which shows [rapid switch to Level 3 and the idea of an intentional author] does he [Orsino] really understand love?

Students offered various answers.

Mrs. Edwards: Infatuation yes, love [Level 3] is something else again. And he compares it to music [Level 4] and he's punning [Level 4].

The reading proceeded for one more speech. Lee noticed that it ended in a rhyming couplet and asked whether the speech was a sonnet [Level 4]. Mrs. Edwards cleared up that misperception.

Mrs. Edwards: OK . . . what do you find out about Olivia? [Return to matters of plot.]

Tim: Her brother died and she's waited seven years [Level 2].

Mrs. Edwards: How does that parallel what's gone before [Level 4]? Tony answered. Others called out details about Orsino.

Ann: She doesn't understand love either [Level 3].

Mrs. Edwards: Why not [Level 2 or 3]? Ann: Because she thinks she can just turn it off and just go "Oh," after seven years and marry [Level 2].

Mrs. Edwards: And what about her love for her brother [Level 2]?
Student: She thinks it'll stay alive [Level 2].

Ann: She thinks that . . . it's not going to go away after seven years [Level 2].

Mrs. Edwards: And what is she going to do with the rest of her life [Level 2]?

Tim: She's getting herself in--I didn't understand the brine and water. [He starts on Level 2 and shifts perhaps to Level 3 or 4 as he looks at metaphor.]

Mrs. Edwards: Salt water, tears [Level 4]. She's going to spend every day . . . cloistered for seven years in her household mourning for her brother [Level 2]. You have an excess of passion here, don't you? I mean Olivia and Orsino seem well matched in not understanding love [Level 3]. I mean you have to go through this kind of really exaggerated mourning if you love someone [the "you" puts the experience into a Level 1 framework] but seven years sound a little arbitrary [Level 3]. Why do you think Shakespeare picked seven years [Level 3]?

The next few minutes of discussion proceeded at Level 4 as Mrs. Edwards joked with students who did not recognize the allusion to the biblical story of Rachel.

There is a definite mix of "levels of talking about literature" present both in the voices of the teacher and the students. Barnes and his colleagues (1971) pointed out that "one virtue of small groups is that they sometimes allow talk at different levels to go on side by side, and enable rapid movement between levels." They suggested that "we should aim at this in lessons" (p. 75). Mrs. Edwards seemed to be accomplishing something like this in her management of the social reading of this segment of Twelfth Night.
Barnes' "levels of talking," of course, were based on a small-group discussion of a novel, and so are more applicable to a discussion of a work with characters. A similar sort of multilevel talk can be seen as the whole group entered into the group presentation of Shakespeare Sonnet 116, however.

Susan reported for the group. She said that the basic meaning of the sonnet had to do with how real love would not change. Shakespeare, she said, used a number of images to reinforce that idea. Tony asked why the poet broke the rhyme in lines 10 and 12. Sarah asked why he used a kind of slant rhyme in the poem. So far, the talk was at the level of authorial intention [Level 3], perhaps with all of the talk of devices, at Level 4 in the voice of criticism. Tony joked and said that "he [they were talking about Shakespeare] was hard up to find a rhyme," playing with the idea of the imputed author. After a few more exchanges, still at Level 3, Tim mentioned line 11. "Did Shakespeare make that typo in line 11?" he asked playfully. "No," said Mrs. Edwards, "I did. You're doing very well folks, fine, just fine. Think of the predominant imagery in this poem and think of what he might be referring to." She pulled them back to Level 3. The discussion stayed there for a few more moments until Mrs. Edwards asked, "What do you think of it, the rest of you. Would you be flattered if it [the sonnet] were sent to you?" That immediately sent the talk
to Level 1 and 2, where some exchanges took place. A
segment of several minutes ensued featuring a number of very
personal contributions.

**Hilary:** Maybe I'm a pessimist, but I don't think
love is that unchanging and--

**Leah:** I have a lot of faith in it, but a lot of
what he says here is not true.

**Alexis:** It might be nice to know if it's going to
last forever, but also, if it can't get worse then
it can't get better either. You can't appreciate
[love] if it doesn't have its good days and bad
days.

**Leah:** There are occasions where you love someone
and stop loving them. I speak from experience
here.

That conversation continued several more exchanges, a sort
of a tangent, before Mrs. Edwards pulled the talk back to
Level 3 with a comment about Shakespeare's probable age when
he wrote that sonnet.

Such pockets of personal talk, contributions from
personal experience parallel to Level 1, were not at all
uncommon in whole-group talk. Barnes et al. (1971)
indicated that in their observations of small group talk,
"there were no references to the pupils' own first-hand
experience--in the first person, as it were . . . though
incidents from the novel were frequently compared with
aspects of real life as they saw it" (p. 75). Tangents into
the first person initiated by both students and teacher were
quite common in the talk I heard, though Mrs. Edwards would
eventually pull the talk back to Level 3 or 4 once the tangent had run its course.

Further examples of the mix of levels come from practically any day of the reading of Twelfth Night. The following excerpt of talk is from the reading of Act II, Scene iii.

Mrs. Edwards stopped the reading to ask what "betimes" meant. A student answered, and Mrs. Edwards repeated the answer, "Betimes, before, early. OK. Any questions about the plot of that section?"

**Student:** It's funny.

**Hilary:** I'm confused about the end. They're going to write letters to Orsino.

Mrs. Edwards did not necessarily carry all of the burden of clarifying plot details. Nathan was particularly good at that in the Twelfth Night reading, even if he was not so cooperative at other times.

**Nathan:** Malvolio. They're going to play a practical joke on Malvolio [Level 2].

Nathan fielded a few more plot questions, then Mrs. Edwards took one.

**Mrs. Edwards:** They don't really use his name [Level 2]. There are just little bits of description here and there. . . . They assume that he's so vain and so proud of himself and his skills that his mistress has fallen in love with him. . . . That's how he'll interpret these little bits and snippets [Level 2].

**Hilary:** They're just doing that because Malvolio is telling them to stop?
She was trying for a Level 2 understanding, treating the character and incident as real. Mrs. Edwards carried it up a level.

Mrs. Edwards: Well, it's the way she tells them to stop. [She reads] These are famous lines [Level 4] "Dost thou think, that because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" What does that mean?

Sarah: Just because you're a goody two-shoes we're going stop drinking [Level 1 or 2]?

Mrs. Edwards: Well, even more than that. You'd think that the whole world went dry just because you went on the wagon. OK? [Level 1] . . . Malvolio does kind of think that way [Level 2].

Nathan: That's his name, Malvolio [Level 3].

Mrs. Edwards: What does this scene start with a little Latin for [Level 3]? Page 27, Act II, Scene iii.

Nathan: Early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise [Level 2].

Mrs. Edwards: That's what it says. I want to know why it's there [Level 3].

Mrs. Edwards may have been asking questions here, but there is little to resemble the recitation pattern that Cazden (1988) and Dillon (1984, 1985) found characteristic of classroom talk, at least in this segment. Students asked and answered questions. Both students and teacher practiced several levels of talk. What Barnes (1971) described as the "sorting-out" and "re-experiencing" (p. 75) are as much a part of this whole-group talk about literature as other researchers found them to be of the undirected small-group
talk in their study. The teacher was simply an important part of the group.

Making Connections

Contextualizing the Text

Many of the above segments of classroom talk about literature show both the teacher and the students driving toward a Level 3 reading, that dialogic strategy that I determined to be one of two major strategies Mrs. Edwards modeled when dealing with literary texts. The other strategy, which I simply called the "connecting strategy," has been apparent throughout, but the way that "connecting" functions in discussion merits attention as well.

I already have mentioned the text-text connection as commonplace strategy in both reading and writing tasks. Because the curriculum stressed multiple works by the same authors, such an approach was logical. "Seeing relationships and making connections" was a strategy that many students could articulate easily when they were asked to say what it was that the teacher wanted them to do. Students such as Hilary and Leah, for instance, who could usually make the A grades they wanted to get in the class, mentioned the necessity of "making connections" as something Mrs. Edwards looked for, not only in their writing but in the class discussions as well. The connecting strategy, as I came to see it being practiced in Mrs. Edwards classroom,
was more complex than simply finding similarities between one literary text and another, however.

**Intertextual Connections**

The concept of "intertextuality" has to do with "the factors which make the utilization of the text dependent upon knowledge or utilization of one or more previous texts" (deBeaugrand, 1981, p. 10). It is an idea currently enjoying the attention of literary theorists. Culler (1981) has reviewed the origins of the idea very well. Two recent doctoral dissertations (Rogers, 1989; Short, 1986) suggested the idea as a basis for literature curricula at the elementary and secondary levels. Work in progress (Beach, Appleman, & Dorsey, in press), for example, is beginning to investigate "adolescent uses of intertextual links to understand literature." The connections that are fostered in Mrs. Edwards' classroom, both in talk and in writing, go beyond text-text connections.

In the original study on which this dissertation is based, one of my major observations concerned the teacher's tendency to link text to text in classroom talk about literature. The connection between one specific text and another, however, was only one kind of text-centered connection that Mrs. Edwards consistently forged for her students in the attempt to weave the texts under study into their experience. Connections were not only intertextual (among texts), but extratextual and intratextual as well.
Text-to-text links are almost a joke in class. Like that "good old journey motif," they were a part of the repertoire of students' knowledge of ways to talk about literary texts. Many students talked about "being able to throw in Plato anywhere" for the purposes of producing a text-text connection. In my telephone conversation with Gloria, an IB graduate who was away at school, she indicated that the Plato connection was still usable with her college instructor. The intertextual connections that were made in discussion, however, were more subtle than many students may have immediately perceived.

Students sometimes brought their own experiences with different texts into the discussion unsolicited. Julie, for example, brought in her reading of The Dream of the Red Chamber in connection with Bronowski's comments on oriental culture. Tonya mentioned Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle in relation to Bronowski's "habit of truth." April was the first to mention Pirsig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance with reference to Bronowski. Mrs. Edwards often made a connection to Kuhn's On the Nature of Scientific Revolutions while they were reading Bronowski.

Intratextual Connections

As the group went about the work of "looking at" a particular text, Mrs. Edwards often alerted them to the relationship between the particular piece they were studying and the whole text. In the reading of Science and Human
Values, for instance, Mrs. Edwards consistently emphasized the way that one chapter fit in with the whole, an approach I saw echoed as Hilary and Sandra struggled to summarize their assigned chapter as part of their small group task. "Let's break it down," they decided, "just a little bit more so that we can go through the examples and relate it to the [chapters] before and after and how it ties in." In teaching sonnets, in an instance I have mentioned, Mrs. Edwards conducted a brief exercise in helping students focus on intratextual relationships. As she attempted to get them to notice the ways image patterns were used in the poem, she told students to "look for the connections between things." She had them stop at one point and circle the words that go together in some ways. "What are the things [in the sonnet] that go together and why?" she asked.

Extratextual Connections

Extratextual connections to the historical moment that surrounded the production of the text were crucial, and connections between the ideas in the text and current events were also important. The social and cultural milieu, in other words, that resulted in the writing of the text was vital, as was the social and cultural milieu that we bring to a 20th century reading of it. Many of these concerns, of course, become enmeshed in the "game of reading," but as I came to see it after further observations, it was the
process of connecting the text to other contexts that was most important.

Making connections between the literary text and real events was an ongoing practice during discussion sessions. For example, one of Mrs. Edwards' goals for introducing existentialist works (other than fulfilling an IB specification) was to have students see contemporary applications for the texts. She was pleased when a student brought in an article which discussed anorexia using references to Kafka's "Hunger Artist," a story that had just been covered in class. As important as connections between works and the present was, Mrs. Edwards' emphasis was on the historical moment of a work's creation.

Bronowski's lifetime, for instance, was a piece of ancient history to 17-year-olds, but Mrs. Edwards worked at recreating the intellectual circumstances that produced such a mind. Likewise in her treatment of Shakespeare, she often made references to Elizabethan times and how that moment in intellectual history was different from our own.

Another thing that I missed in my first study, probably because I did not know the students as well, was the force of personal experience as an extratextual link to the texts being studied. Watching a single group in consecutive class sessions, as I did for the present study, showed me that both the teacher and the students brought in segments of personal experience as the talk of the text went forward.
Tangents were loaded with such references, some of which I have mentioned. A few other examples are in order.

In one instance, before I was taping, while the class was talking about a character in *The Stranger*, a girl initiated a tangent on two funerals she had attended during the past year, one for a child and one for an adult. People had not cried at the adult's funeral, but they had at the child's. Another student told about a year when she had attended six funerals. A segment of talk about why people cry at funerals ensued. Certainly tangential, it was still text-centered and related to an important incident in the novel, perhaps at Level 1 or Level 2 of Barnes' scheme.

In a discussion of Bronowski one day, Mrs. Edwards turned the discussion to the topic of "where the art is" when one is looking at a picture or reading a book. "The art occurs between you and the work," she said. She continued to develop Bronowski's ideas about the creative mind. "It means that there is always the necessity of building on what you've got in the way of knowledge," she told them. "Otherwise you're a couch potato." "But I want to be a couch potato," joked Lee. Students laughed and chatted about television programs. Ann said she still watched the Flintstones on TV every afternoon. It was, she thought, a chauvinistic program. Television comedies were a legitimate personal connection to the text.
Mrs. Edwards elicited still other personal connections by switching from a reading of a segment of Bronowski to a mention of senior photographs.

Mrs. Edwards: That's why I want to talk about the difference between art and illustration, music and notes, photography and photography. Why aren't your pictures from [she names the studio] art? Anybody think they're art?

Students: laughs, comments

Mrs. Edwards: Why aren't they art?

Student: Because they're simply replications.

Students: other comments

Student: It's just a representation.

Mrs. Edwards: At best, it's a representation.

Julie: Not even that. No real caring . . . to be sure you're represented accurately.

Several comments ensued, until Tony, in his pseudo-academic voice, suggested that "the reason it isn't art is that art has to be appreciated and nobody appreciated their pictures." Everybody laughed. Hilary offered a personal experience, connecting herself to the conversation.

Hilary: For my picture I took one that was with that little drape, and that's not me. That's kind of weird, and my mom looks at it and [says] "It's a good picture, but it's not you." And everybody who sees it says, "Well, that looks more like you, so it's more of my own personality, but I don't know why it came out that way.

Mrs. Edwards: Part of the way that we project is our clothes, what we choose to wear.

Some tangents were filled with student experience. In others, the teacher revealed her own personal experiences as
well. The text was again Bronowski, one that seemed to require a good deal of connecting. The topic was the creative mind, a favorite of the teacher's.

Mrs. Edwards: This is a dangerous chapter. What's he saying? [Pause 12 seconds.]

Tony: Artists can recreate nature, therefore they can equal God.

Mrs. Edwards: Yes, right to the heart of the matter, good Tony . . . it's the creative energy, the discovery . . . it's that fusion of your mind with the mind of the poet, through the work that's been done, we in ourselves recreate afresh, anew, all right, and that's the divinity he [Bronowski] mentions.

In a long tangent, which was something of a minilecture, Mrs. Edwards talked about creativity.

Mrs. Edwards: When you're on your stride, when you're doing something that is just right, and you know it's great and you're right . . . everything is just rolling along and you know that what you've done is going to stand the test of time.

I am not entirely sure here whether she was entering into Bronowski's mind and explaining his thoughts or expressing her own here, and linking them to student experience with second person. Soon, however, she switched into first person and revealed some of her own related experience teaching Chaucer to her honors class.

Mrs. Edwards: I was shocked this morning driving to work, and I'm thinking, OK, 7:30, I'm supposed to be teaching Chaucer . . . and I'm thinking on Monday morning, there are worse things I could be doing. It's fun. Then I'm thinking, well, this stuff is written 1360, 1370. You know I forget how old it is because for me it has become fun. . . . The span of years is kind of wiped out. The clothes are different but the people are the same. . . . We can read things and see things . . . and
listen to things that are really old. But sometimes it takes entrance.

She headed back to Bronowski's argument.

Mrs. Edwards: And he [Bronowski] doesn't deal with [those issues], and that's the fallacy of his argument.

Personal feelings and experiences were legitimate and useful connections to the text as well. In fact, Mrs. Edwards said that it was in those connections that the text took on life for these students.

Mrs. Edwards and I talked about the "tangents" in discussion and how important they were. "The material is more than the book," she said.

The material is the application of the book. Therefore it has to be something that is relevant to them, something they can latch onto. They laugh and joke and will talk about very easily, I mean without being threatened, either one of us, the class or myself [about] the tangents. But they are able to understand and articulate that a tangent is what reminds them of the book, and also they see how it's applicable. . . . very often that's what makes it come alive and what's going to give it a kind of confirmation in their minds. I mean they're only 17 or 18 years old.

In those text-centered tangents, all sorts of connections were forged.

Discussion as a Task

It is also revealing to place talk into the framework of academic task and consider it a part of the academic work that was undertaken. When I asked Mrs. Edwards whether literary analysis was what was going on during discussions, she said that it was. Most students agreed. But if a task
is to exist, in the same sense that Doyle (1983) used the term, a product must be expected. I believe that talk was a major and important part of the task system, so I speculated on what the product might be. Participation (talking in class) is one possibility. Notes are another possible product, and Mrs. Edwards did believe that "if they don't take notes, they're dead." Another possibility is that the product of discussion as an academic task is "a goal state" rather than a product task (Doyle, 1986, p. 366). Still another possibility is that the end product of all the talk is ultimately the written essay upon which much of the weight of the accountability system rests. I will consider these possibilities briefly.

Participation as Product

Mrs. Edwards encouraged the perception that participation in discussion was important to her evaluation of student performance. When progress reports (standardized forms indicating standing in the class) came out in the middle of the semester, for instance, she marked a check in the box that indicated that the student's level of participation "needed improvement." That puzzled a number of students I spoke with because they felt that they had been participating actively. I asked her one day, in public, whether participation was graded, and she gave me her vehement assurance that it was. In private, however, Mrs. Edwards said,
I try to create an atmosphere where [students] don't feel threatened, which means that I don't necessarily call on the ones who are quiet. We've got some that are shy, some that don't have the background, and we've got some that this isn't their milieu. Never will be.

Of a brilliant but generally silent student, Mrs. Edwards said, "She's not disengaged . . . she's thinking." Paradoxically, students tended to see participation as both a choice and an important element in the accountability system.

The choice to remain silent was one that I found important to the texture of discussion. Mrs. Edwards honored such a personal choice by calling only rarely on students who had not volunteered. Discussion, as many of the above excerpts show, was conducted almost entirely on a call-out basis. Oral reading was thought of by both students and teacher as a valid sort of lower-level participation in the ongoing talk of the classroom. Students who rarely contributed to talk about texts often offered to read aloud, and she would call upon the "lords of silence" to read where she would seldom force a contribution to discussion from anyone.

Both students and teacher were concerned that this year's larger classes (23) were making real whole-group discussion difficult. Last year had been different. This year, most people thought, discussion was not as free because people had difficulty getting a word in edgewise.
Others said that they simply preferred to listen rather than to talk. Linda, for instance, told me that during discussions she listens and "sees their points and I make my own. I just don't say anything." Hittleman (1988) has suggested that, contrary to general beliefs, silence during classroom discussion does not necessarily indicate that a student is not actively engaged in the academic work. I think that may be the case with a number of the students in the class I observed.

Notes as Product

As an end product of the task, however, I think that participation may have been more a perceived product than a real one. Notes, however, were a concrete, written product and worth consideration as an end product of the task. Given the "morass of material" that went into the classroom talk about texts and the lack of overheads or outlines or review sheets to organize it, I have no difficulty seeing notetaking as it was undertaken by some students as a truly higher-level task where students were asked to integrate and synthesize material.

Various opinions existed among the students, however, on the value of the notetaking. Hilary, for instance, could not understand how anyone could get by without taking copious notes. She observed, however, that Sarah and Ann could do it because of their good memories. Part of the reason that she took such care in taking notes, Hilary said,
had to do with maintaining her attention to the talk that was going on. Taking notes, she felt, kept her from losing track of what was going on. Rob felt that listening was more important than notetaking. Several times, however, he missed an announcement of an impending essay test because he was not paying attention. In that sense, the element of ambiguity in the task environment made notetaking even more of a higher-level task. Only rarely were assignments repeated. Students would need to share perceptions of what was required if they had missed the announcement of the assignment.

Goal-state as product

Thinking about the product of discussion as a goal state is also productive. In that sense, the goal state can be seen as the arrival of some sense of meaning, of an understanding of the text. Mrs. Edwards articulated that as a goal for discussion. When I asked her what constituted a discussion, she told me that her class is a "conversation about the material, how there's meaning in the material" or what the "meanings are ... and how they're generated."

That plural ending on meanings is important to her. She said that she wants students to see that multiple meanings are possible. Mrs. Edwards told me that she "allows the conversation to range" over many topics at times, "always pulling it back to the literature." What she wants students to see, to "discover," is that they are dealing with a
"nexus" of possible meanings in any text, in contrast to one answer or one solution to the puzzle that a text may represent. She fights the adolescent tendency, strong even among these high-ability students, to fix upon a single interpretation of a text and reject all others.

Students, in general, echoed the teacher's sense of what goes on as a freewheeling sort of conversation about reading. One boy even used the word "conversation" interchangeably with the word "discussion." He was, however, bilingual, and I could not be certain if the combination of terms was a result of first-language interference. "It's the accumulation of conversations that leads me to a thesis," he told me. "I listen and I relate them and get to a general understanding." What he did during class was to listen to all the views and "rake them all together" and derive from them his own view of what the text meant. Participation, he felt, was a matter of choice, and in fact, other than reading out loud, I never heard him offer any public comment in class.

Sarah, who was very vocal, likened in-class discussions to "free thought, you know, like Eastern free thought, like what she says goes through you and around you and comes out clear." The teacher's purpose, she thought, was to encourage students to think about what they had read. Rob, as usual, saw things a bit differently. He saw discussions as times when the teacher could get a sense of what he knew
and how his mind worked. Discussion was evaluative in his mind. When we talked about what he had gotten out of a particular discussion of a Kafka story, he said that the talk had opened up a different side of the idea of responsibility and action for him, and that was an idea he could "work into a test."

Jennifer, who contributed at times and remained silent at others, said that during a discussion students were simply supposed to "figure [the text] out, . . . why the author wrote what he did." She was supposed to figure out what she thought of the story. Participation in discussions was important, she thought, because discussing meant sharing views. Mrs. Edwards had one way of looking at things and students could have others.

Both the students and the teacher agreed that literary analysis was what they did in discussion and what they did in written work. It is also possible to think about the writing assignments, the essays produced by students, and end-product of both the reading and speaking tasks, perhaps as the synthesis phase of literary analysis, where things were put back together in "new and exciting ways."

Reading Into Writing

At the end of my first experience in Mrs. Edward's classroom, I felt that I needed to focus on the written work students were producing as they completed the assigned tasks. I have come to realize, however, that in the task
system as a whole, what students write in relationship to a
given text is less important than what they learn about the
process of academic writing in general. The products, the
essays, so long as they are completed, are essential to the
accountability system, but the doing of the work is more
important than the papers that are produced. What matters
in reading is the learning of strategies for dealing with
texts. What matters in discussion is practicing and
developing those strategies, and what matters in writing is
developing strategies for producing texts.

The connection between discussions of the text and
essays about the text was one that I talked about at length
with the teacher and some of the students. One obvious
similarity between the talk about literature that went on on
a daily basis and the writing assignments that Mrs. Edwards
constructed for students was the word "discuss" itself.
Dillon (1984, 1985) has said that only non-question
alternatives would produce talk about what neither the
teacher nor the students already know to be true. Perhaps
that is so in writing. Mrs. Edwards said that she does not
want students to "answer [the] question" anyway. Her
writing assignments were seldom posed as explicit questions
for that reason. "I want them to write around," she said.
And "what we do as class discussion, what I model for them,
is the same sort of thing, except in an organized essay."
The more Mrs. Edwards talked to me about the essays, the less formidable the expected product seemed, except that she expected students to do all of the work for most essays in a very limited period of time. What she wanted from those essays, so much as time would allow, was on the model of class discussion, but without the "conventional openendedness and informal grammar we have in class and [without] the acceptability of every idea." In an essay, a more formal kind of academic discourse was required. But that did not preclude creativity of a different kind. The creativity came in how students synthesized the material they had read, talked about, and listened to with knowledge they had brought to the reading of the text. In that personal synthesis lay the "sparkle" that Mrs. Edwards wanted the paper to have if it was really to be an A or an A+.

Discussion was the place where students should feel free to take risks. Some risks, however, were not appropriate to essay writing. "In terms of content," she said, risks were fine. "In terms of style, no." Risky text-to-text connections were fine; they were "creative connections." She gave examples of students who had "dragged the darndest [texts] into the final exams . . . just trying something new and risking it, not sticking to what we had said in class." Those were the students who could synthesize, the ones who were able, at least some of
the time, to "put things together in a different way."

There was a sense as she spoke of the possibility of responding in academic writing at a variety of levels, just as Barnes (1971) and colleagues had documented the possibility of different students responding in "levels of talk" as they dealt with literary texts on whatever terms they could.

When I asked Mrs. Edwards if students could get by on the essays by simply writing what had been said in class, she told me that she did not believe her assignments would allow that. That was probably true except for a few of the topics. Students were called on to draw on their notes, or failing to have those, an inspiration, and their own reading, but it was their job to "synthesize" and "present a coherent essay with a fairly clear thesis using the material." For instance, with reference to one fairly openended assignment that asked students to "write on" two sonnets, she told me that what would be "wrong" would be "not synthesizing, [but] just taking one [sonnet] and writing about it and then taking the next and writing about it." If they had simply repeated what had been said in class, there would have been no effort at synthesis, no effort to integrate material. What was said in discussion, then, was of use, but rarely was it possible to simply reproduce it.
There was a difference of opinion about whether or not one indeed could get by by repeating what was said in class in an essay. Two students, two who had expressed some frustration or mystification about the kinds of grades they got, felt that it was entirely possible. Lisa, for instance, who more often got Cs than the Bs she would have preferred, said, "You can regurgitate what was said in class on your essays." Susan, who had the occasional C but usually got some kind of B, and would have, of course, preferred As, thought it was possible as well. Neither one of the girls, however, saw this as "knowledge telling" where the task was simply an invitation to write all they knew. At least they knew that approach would not get them an A. Lisa thought that she could get perhaps a B by doing that, but she dimly recognized that something else was required. She had never gotten an A, but she speculated that A papers were those that related one work to others read previously. Both girls adopted a sort of procedural definition of what they should do, but at the same time they recognized that what they were doing was not necessarily all that Mrs. Edwards called for. They both fell upon that one obvious strategy of text-to-text connections as a way to get closer to what the teacher saw as the actual task.

When I spoke with Linda about what she saw as the relationship between discussion and writing tasks, she echoed the idea that in a writing task she "sometimes
regurgitates what was said in class." But Linda did not say that she repeated what the teacher said in class. Linda also said, "Sometimes I'll add my own points, if I have any. Usually, however, I just use what we say and relate it to whatever." To "use what we say" surely involves higher-level processes than to simply repeat what the teacher and other students said. That was the "step beyond."

There were, and I think that this is particularly important, different sets of expectations for the discourse of discussion and the discourse of academic writing about literature. Where discussion allowed for risk, verbal play, and the importation of many kinds of experience, formal essay style was another kind of discourse entirely. The eventuality of the outside audience, the IB examiner, was real. "Remember," Mrs. Edwards told me, "they are not writing for me. I know them. But they are writing for a British professor." That meant that their written work demanded a "more formal style." Between these two poles was another kind of discourse, "a more sophisticated way to talk" about a literary text, something a bit more formal than the "conversation about the material," and students practiced that kind of talk in their oral reports and examinations.

The real task of turning talk into writing involved managing two kinds of academic discourse--two sets of discourse conventions--and a "morass" of ideas from the text
and from the talk and transforming it all into a written product in the space of an hour or two. Even if a student did choose to respond by repeating what was said, he had to make some higher-level decisions about what to use and how to use it.

**Talk as Task**

Perhaps the most intriguing element in my analysis of what was going on as the class talked about texts was that what usually happened was, in many ways, contrary to what research indicates does or should go on in literature classes. It is an accepted notion among English educators, for instance that "less is better" when it comes to teacher-talk. Hillocks (1989) and Marshall (1988) are in agreement on that point. There was indeed considerable teacher talk in some of the segments of the classes I observed. At the same time, there was no teacher talk in others. In this class it is more important to examine the type or the purpose of the talk that goes on. As I observed her, Mrs. Edwards often engaged her whole class in the same kinds of multileveled talk that small groups of adolescents naturally used (Barnes et al., 1971) when trying to sort out a meaning for a literary text. In that sense, she was a member of the group as well as its leader. Perhaps she was even just a slightly more knowledgeable peer some days.

I found Kuhn's (1984) description of discussions in college classes applicable to what was going on, but in this
class, there was one major difference that seems important. Kuhn claimed that discussions were distinguished by a "lack of tolerance" for topic changes that went too far afield from topics initiated by the teacher in a discussion segment. There was, in Mrs. Edwards' discussions, a genuine delight in wide ranging "tangents" that were initiated by the teacher and the students.

Marshall's (1988) recent investigation of discussions suggested that literature teachers are concerned with keeping the talk "on track," and that most teachers and students saw their roles as developing and fleshing out an interpretation as suggested by the teacher. Mrs. Edwards, and her students, for the most part, saw more value in the tangents and in the multiplicity of possible connections a text could suggest.

A recent study of talk in literature study groups (Eeds & Wells, 1989) casts doubt on the assumption that teacher talk is inherently harmful to discussion. Fifth and sixth graders were observed as they discussed novels in small groups with the direction of a teacher. The researchers expected to judge as successful the groups where teachers talked less and where students spent less time retelling the stories. Those expectations were not borne out. "We realized that our intuitive judgment of too much teacher talk in the less successful [groups] was wrong. . . . Our perception that students made more literal comments in the
[groups] we had identified as less successful was not supported" (p. 10). Not even the number of questions a teacher asked was necessarily a predictor of success. Eeds and Wells suggested that other factors might be more important, such as "encouraging" comments from the teacher or the practice of "responding to many opportunities for dialoguing about the elements of literature" (p. 11) as they came up naturally in the conversation. Literature discussions, they decided, did not need to be "gentle inquisitions" about the text when "grand conversations" provided ample opportunities for teachers and students to "build meaning" (p. 6) together. Such conversations took place in Mrs. Edwards' classroom on a daily basis.

**Summary**

Talk is the primary activity that takes place in the classroom under study. Examination of classroom talk from a number of different angles reveals the complexity of the activity as it is carried out. Rather than measuring the quantity of teacher or student talk, I chose to look at several kinds of patterns that dominated the text-talk of the class. Such talk can be classified according to the degree of teacher or student domination. Tangents are a possibility in lecture, minilecture, recitation, whole-group or small-group discussion formats. Whole-group discussion is the most common framework for the treatment of texts. Analysis of whole-group discussion shows that in Mrs.
Edwards' classroom, the whole-group talk bears a striking similarity to the kind of unguided small-group talk that Barnes (1971) described.

Talk is the place where texts were "contextualized," (Graff, 1987, p. 256) that is, where different connections were made between the text under study and a variety of contexts. Mrs. Edwards models and students practice making such connections orally. In addition, discussion is indeed an academic task. Although active participation in discussion is a perceived task product, class notes and class essays are the functional products.
Hilary and Susan

In text-talk, students practiced literary analysis. They learned to connect the text under study with other texts, with historical and personal contexts, with other parts of the text itself. They learned reading strategies for coping with texts whose meanings they could not immediately construct for themselves. Two cases, two portraits of individual students working at the task of dealing with unfamiliar texts, illustrate personal adaptations of the strategies students learned in class.

Hilary and Susan had time for everything, even in April of their senior year. I had conducted long taped interviews with them earlier in the year and had established some rapport. They were a good pair as well because Hilary was one of the students Mrs. Edwards had pointed out as the most capable. Susan, she had said, was struggling early in the semester. Both were open, friendly, and willing to share their papers and their grades. That alone made them good subjects. Each of them spoke with me for an additional hour.
Defining Literary Analysis

Both girls defined "literary analysis" for me twice, once during the first semester, in the context of the works they were studying, and then again near the end of the second semester.

Susan's first definition was given in December, toward the end of the sonnet unit.

Susan: Gosh. Hm. I guess it's interpretation of the works you're reading. That's what I would think.

She could be more specific when I asked her "how to do" literary analysis.

Susan: We look at the author and how he places the words and things like that. . . . I have to find the real meaning of it . . . then I can go back and analyze why he decided to use this word, this phrase, this imagery, but I need to know the overall picture.

At that point in the year, coming directly from an extensive engagement with sonnets, her emphasis on the dialogic reading strategy was strong.

When she defined literary analysis for me again shortly before the end-of-the-year examinations, a recent study of Joyce was still on her mind.

Susan: You go through the work and look at major themes and images and their recurring, and the style that the author used, like the words and the kind of tone he's trying to get across and . . . the character development and the style the work was written in. That's what I would look for in a literary analysis . . . and I'd bring in other works, how other works can relate.
In the second definition, the engagement with the author was still strong, but she had a more secure list of analytic elements to start with—theme, images, tone, character development, and style. She also mentioned the text-text connecting strategy as part of her definition.

Hilary's first definition, given in late October while the class was in the midst of the Bronowski texts, was more developed than Susan's early one.

Hilary: It's going into a piece of literature and examining it for what it's trying to say . . . the objectives it has, what it means in a modern sense. Applying it to modern thought . . . a lot of times it involves picking it apart and looking at all the different parts and how it pulls together as a whole. Then there's the technical aspect, the devices the author used to achieve what effect. But in the end, I think it's all just to find out what it's all about, what it's trying to say.

Both of the girls saw the effort as one directed toward arriving at some sense of meaning. There was a goal beyond just finding the pieces. Hilary's definition pointed to a dialogic reading strategy just as Susan's did, but she relegated it to the "technical aspect" of "going into a piece of literature." More important to her was the emphasis on making connections with the text under examination. Here she mentioned extratextual connections to ways the text relates to modern thought and to its own historical context. She also mentioned intratextual connections, that is, part/whole connections in the structure of the text itself. She expanded on that
definition with some specific analytic elements as she talked about doing literary analysis.

_Hilary_: We tried to get at major themes. To understand it, you have to understand the plot first . . . then we went through and traced character development and all of those things that combine to pull out the major theme in the work.

Later in the year, her definition added some different kinds of connections to bring to the work. She was also less certain about the existence of "the theme," or a single meaning for the work. We talked about literary analysis near the end of the school year.

_Hilary_: Well, first you have to understand what you're reading . . . then I think it's a way of applying it to modern things and other things and see how it can influence other works of literature and how it can apply to the status of man. . . . I think it's just finding something personal in it for yourself, because each person can interpret something in a different way and apply it to their life.

The matter of authorial intention, something that a dialogic strategy of entering the text plays with, was on Hilary's mind.

_Hilary_: That's something we talked about this year, how when we were interpreting something in class we said, "Well, that's what Joyce . . . [was saying]." How can you say that's what he meant when he wrote it? That's something that's been bothering me. How do you know that's what he meant? . . . It doesn't matter if that's what he meant or not or if that's what you can see in it and you could talk to the author and he'd say "Yeah, I didn't write it that way." But he could have. It's what you can see and find a meaning in the work.
Hilary seemed to have recognized that the dialogic reading strategy was a part of the "game of reading." She could get beyond it as a search for the author's true intended meaning and find the importance in the search itself. While Susan, at the end of the year, shows an understanding of the strategies, Hilary is able to distance herself and reflect upon what she is doing.

Reading the Text

I asked both girls to "do literary analysis" for me during the April interviews. It proved to be an effective means of understanding how each perceived the strategies she had been learning in class. For the purposes of analysis, I chose two short pieces, one a story by Virginia Woolf called "Monday or Tuesday" and the other "Ozymandias," a well-known poem by Shelley. I guessed that the Woolf piece would be new to them and that they would have studied the Shelley poem during high school. I was correct. Both were pieces brief enough to read aloud and discuss in the space of the interview. I judged that the story would prove less accessible than the poem. I was only half right on that account.

Some differences became apparent as the two girls worked their way through a first reading of an unknown text for me. Susan, who said she felt uncomfortable with an ambiguous piece, proved remarkably at ease with the Woolf text. Perhaps that was because we had been talking about
how much progress Mrs. Edwards thought she had made during the year and what a good student of literature she was becoming. She approached the text with a great deal of curiosity and skill. I asked her to read it as if she were going to have to write an essay about it in an hour's time. The story was new to her, though she thought she had heard of the author and had perhaps read something by her in school. Susan's explanation of the approaches she would take to reading the story mirrored her definition of literary analysis.

**Susan:** First, I'd read it just to get an idea of what it was trying to say, like the plot or whatever. Then I'd go through and look for...the tone that they're trying to set and then I'd look at the words and how the words reflect the tone that the author's trying to get across. Then what would I do? And then I would, I'd probably try and look at it like a theme work. There should, there you should be able to, like, trace...the development of either characters or images or whatever.

Susan's reliance on dialogic strategy was apparent also as she read and dealt with the first part of the story.

**Susan:** (reading) "Lazy and indifferent, shaking space easily from his wings, knowing his way, the heron passes over the church beneath the sky. White and distant, absorbed in itself, endlessly the sky covers and uncovers, moves and remains. A lake? Blot the shores of it out. A mountain? Oh perfect--the sun gold on its slopes. Down that falls. Ferns then white feathers, for ever and ever--." Well, he has a lot of, like animal imagery. There's a lot about birds and...so he uses heron and uses, I mean like, white feathers, and also he uses a lot of "covers and uncovers" and "moves and remains" that's trying to, um, she's trying to obviously get something across by using, because it is a complete contradiction of each other. And, um they do a
lot about the sky and space so you could talk about that. . . . Gosh, this is really neat.

Susan had not yet read the whole text, but she was finding a way into it. She spoke of the author first as "he," as she speculated about some of the language uses, then as "she," as the real identity of the author came back to her mind. Finally, it seemed that she conflated the imputed author with the real author whose name was on the book cover, and she resolved the tension by using "they" to refer to what Mrs. Edwards called the "mind behind the work." Susan also noted the pairs of opposing words and speculated on those, which is a fairly sophisticated observation. Also evident was an awareness of an image cluster around bird/sky words. She was also aware, even in the beginning of the encounter with the text, of a search for some way to write about it. There were parts "you could talk about."

Susan went through the rest of the brief piece with me in the same manner, reading a few lines and then talking out loud about them. She noted sentence length and speculated on how that related to meaning, and she mentioned a few other works it reminded her of. Sensory imagery, still on her mind from a recent study of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist, was a major part her first reading of the poem. The hesitation between the he/she/they to refer to the author/craftsman continued throughout the reading. Never
quite certain about the meaning of the text, she continued to attack it with a basically dialogic strategy, but bringing in connections to the text as well. Joyce was a readily available text-text connection, and she made repeated intratext (part/whole) connections as she read.

Susan: (reads) "This foggy weather. Sugar? No, thank you--The commonwealth of the future--the firelight darting and making the room red, save for the black figures and their bright eyes, while outside a van discharges, Miss Thingummy drinks tea at her desk and plateglass preserves fur coats--" OK. The, um, let's see in this paragraph it goes back to this one (points to a place in text). They're using red and black a lot so you'd talk about that and then look at the whole structure of the whole book or whole piece of work. Why she used that. [Pause]. It's still all description and, hm. I don't know.

Susan was making clear use of both the dialogic strategy and the connecting strategies she had learned in order to make sense of what she was reading.

Hilary's first reading of the same text also followed the definition of literary analysis she had made. She took a different tack however, from the beginning. She relied primarily on different kinds of connections to experience to negotiate some sort of entry into a text that was not immediately accessible. She read the same opening paragraph of "Monday or Tuesday" and commented.

Hilary: Um well, it's very descriptive. It seems as if you're almost one with the bird, flying the way it, um, it's almost like a stream of consciousness kind of thing. A lot like Joyce would do, and the short sentences . . . almost make you feel like you're going over it as you see it, as it comes. The things like "blot the shores out of it," . . . it's focusing you on, like as
you go by, you would only be able to focus on certain things. It seems as if that's what's the bird is doing, just focusing on the things he wants to see as he goes by, just a feeling of movement through it and . . . there's repetition of "sky," reminding you of where you are and what you're doing.

Hilary used "it" to refer to the text rather than "he" to refer to an author. She immediately noted a series of characteristics of literary discourse, mentioning that the piece is "descriptive," "stream of consciousness," and had short sentences and repetition. Even in this brief segment of her analysis, she began to make a number of important kinds of connections that helped her find an angle from which to look at the text. The first connection was to personal experience. She switched to the second person in order to associate personal feelings or experience with the text. "It seems as if you're almost with the bird flying," and "you almost feel like you're going over it and you see it as it comes."

Hilary seemed to be thinking more about her own personal vision and generalizing it to other readers as she connected personal experience to the text. She made another extratextual connection as she brought in her recent experience of Joyce as well. Like Susan, Hilary was unsure of the meaning of the text, yet she continued to use her own strategy for finding a way into it. She went on with her reading.

Hilary: I'm not really sure what's going on here. I guess I'll just keep going. "Flaunted, leaf-
light, drifting at corners, blown across the wheels, silver-splashed, home or not home, gathered, scattered, squandered in separate scales, swept up, down, torn, sunk, assembled, and truth?" Hm. This is really hard . . . well it brings you back to truth, which it hasn't done in the previous paragraph. It kind of hits you, kind of like "in truth." It really emphasizes where, in all of this up and down, with the different social, the comments about the social scene. You know this last paragraph with the "leaf-light," you almost have the light coming down through the leaves and drifting and blowing and you get a feeling of, I get an image of leaves swirling all around and then with the "up and down" and torn and sunk" brings you down. Then "assembled," those words sort of give you a feeling of being blown around. Then all of a sudden you're hit with "in truth" at the end. So where is, again, where is truth? In, I guess, in life and all the different aspects of life.

Personal experience was Hilary's main source of connections, but her need to make intratextual, part/whole connections, was clear here as well.

She continued to make a link with her reading of Joyce, commenting that a phrase "while space rushes blue and stars glint" reminded her that they had done a lot with stars and star imagery in their reading of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*. She also went on to tie this text to a theme that had been important in other texts the class had read, the theme of artistic inspiration and its sources. She did not use any dialogic thinking about the text until she talked about how she would go about writing her analytic essay about the piece.

Hilary and Susan had very different ways of "cracking" the text, of coping with the puzzle that a text such as the
One of the girls relied heavily on a dialogic approach and the other relied more on connections to personal experience and other texts. Both used a set of terms that they had learned with which to talk about literature. Neither one arrived at the end of the text with an absolute idea of what it meant, but both felt that, given a little more time to go over it, they would be able to write an essay about it. Vipond et al. (in press) speculate upon the existence of several additional modes of aesthetic reading that they have yet to identify. I wondered if Hilary's responses were not on the way toward what those researchers call the "professional" (Vipond et al., in press, p. 31) mode, a detached critical level beyond dialogic. Susan had grasped the dialogic level firmly by the end of the year.

**Writing the Essay**

Hilary and I spoke in October at our first interview about the relationship between talking about a work and writing about it. The class was discussing "The Metamorphosis" at the time, and I asked her whether that discussion constituted literary analysis. She said that she thought so.

**Hilary:** It [the discussion] tried to get at the major themes. To understand it, you have to understand the plot first. So that was one thing we did. Then we went through and traced character development and all those kinds of things that combine to pull out the major theme.
Writing, she thought, was different from talking about a text, even though in writing she did literary analysis as well. When I asked her if her essays were literary analysis, she said,

**Hilary:** I would think so. It's usually a synthesis of what we've done, pulling it together, maybe in a little broader sense than all the details [covered in discussion].

Both girls could easily describe the way they would go about producing an essay about this text. After we did the same sort of reading and thinking aloud analysis of "Ozymandias," I asked them to describe the way they would go about writing an essay based on a reading of that poem. Susan was uncomfortable with the poem, more so than with the prose piece. Her reading was punctuated with comments like "I feel stupid here" and "I could be totally wrong." But when it came to the task of writing, she was able to tell me what she would do.

**Susan:** Um, I would go, I would say something really general like, I would do it like, "Shelley uses his literary devices and techniques to portray an image of . . .," and then I'd talk about how--

She went on to explain the theme.

**Susan:** I'd do something like that so that I can talk about the literary devices . . . then I've stated my thesis.

We both knew the mandatory format—introduction with thesis, body of indeterminate structure, conclusion. I was interested to see if she had a structure in mind, and she
did. Her examples, the devices, would include "the structure, like the first seven lines of this, they present a problem, and this is the answer . . . and then I'd talk about images, and then, I'd like [talk about] the tone, I mean like you get the words like stone, desert, lifeless, decay." Even a brief reading combined with the simple format for writing gave Susan an immediate sense of the possibility of producing an essay. It is easy to imagine that with such a plan she would have to do some "thinking on paper" as she wrote.

Hilary was at home with the poem immediately. She remembered having read it in 10th grade but did not remember much about it. Her way of coming up with an essay in an hour was more developed, probably because she immediately picked up on a theme that was familiar to her from other works, "how nothing that man makes is permanent." I asked her how she would go about writing an essay on this poem.

Hilary: Essay for this, hm. Let's see. I would say something like "He uses," whatever, his major use is, I mean through imagery, if that's the most important, he uses [it] to produce the effect, then I'd say, "Shelley uses his imagery, or rhyme scheme or whatever, to produce or show that, to expand upon the thought that, what man makes is not permanent."

I was not clear on what the center portion of her essay would talk about. She decided that it would be a discussion of sets of images and that she would develop them in the order they appeared in the poem. Like Susan, she had a
rough and ready way to set about the task of writing an essay based on Mrs. Edwards' required format, but not really constrained by it. Both girls not only "knew about" literature, they knew some ways to deal with it.

In their assessment of "what our 17-year-olds know" about literature, Ravitch and Finn (1987) asked 121 high school juniors "knowledge" (p. 43) questions about literary works. On the basis of the responses of nearly 8,000 students, the researchers concluded that "our eleventh graders are ignorant of much of what they should know" (p. 200) about literature.

Certainly Hilary and Susan and their classmates learned "about" the texts they read. They knew who wrote *Paradise Lost* and that it "is about rebellion of Satan, [and the] fall of Adam and Eve" (1987, p. 275), as Ravitch and Finn suggest students should. They knew something else as well. They learned about the texts, and they learned conventional literary vocabulary with which to discuss them. They learned patterns of academic discourse appropriate for discussions of literature in an academic setting. More important, however, were the strategies they learned for considering a text and gaining some sort of grasp on it. They learned, in other words, how to "do literary analysis."

Miller (1989), in a discussion of current trends in literary theory, distinguished between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" modes of literary study. "Intrinsic" or
"rhetorical" methods "focus on language as such, its nature and its powers" (p. 102). Extrinsic methods "focus on the relation of language to something else, God, nature, society, history, the self, something presumed to be outside language" (p. 102). The two modes are inextricable, he believes, for "without the rhetorical study of literature, focused on language, its laws, what it is, and what it can do . . . we can have no hope of understanding just what the role of literature might be in society, in history, and in individual life" (p. 105). Literary analysis, as it is pursued by the teacher and the students in Mrs. Edwards' classroom, with its constituent connecting and dialogic reading strategies, concurrently employs both rhetorical and the extrinsic ways of looking at texts.
CHAPTER 9
RESEARCH BIOGRAPHY

Personal Factors

Now that I think about it, this research project actually began a long time ago, when, at the age of 18, I ran into two teachers who gave me some "ways of looking" at literary texts. I happened upon both of those teachers in the course of my freshman year at the university. Dr. Andreasen was a Shakespeare scholar who taught an honors literature course. I had read some Shakespeare in high school, Romeo and Juliet at least, but in class we had gone little beyond trying to figure out who killed whom. Maybe we talked about the "star-crossed lovers" theme. I do not remember. I was tired of high school, I knew how to figure out what happened, and I did not particularly enjoy just chatting aimlessly about books. Dr. Andreasen talked about Shakespeare as a product of his historical and intellectual milieu. She alerted me to the idea that different historical eras can produce different readings of a work. She also introduced me to the notion of imagery--something no high school teacher had done. At least no high school teacher I had paid attention to had mentioned the idea. Dr.
Andreasen gave me some new ways to talk and think about books, ways of reading texts that went far beyond the particular ones we read in her class.

The other teacher, Professor Gertel, taught contemporary Latin American poetry. I recall that I was astounded to learn about the craft and skill that went into arranging words and sounds for effect. The idea that, in a literary text, meaning lies at the intersection of form and content was new to me. I struggled with it, and I wondered why no one had mentioned it before. Of course, it did not occur to me that I simply might not have been ready to understand it. I suppose I had been taught some poetry. I do not recall, but no one had ever brought up the idea that language choices have consequences, that the repetition of sounds can contribute to the overall effect of a poem, that the violation of a convention might have been a purposeful authorial move. Perhaps I was simply getting the heady sense of purpose I usually find when I begin to get hold of the idea of what inquiry in a particular discipline means. Some teacher had finally stopped just rambling about literature and had begun to teach me things I could use—ways to think, and talk, and write about literary texts. I still use what those teachers taught me.

Perhaps that is why I was so interested in pursuing a study of Mrs. Edwards' methods of instruction. I knew immediately that she was offering students something of use.
Perhaps I did not even remember my two teachers until I began watching Mrs. Edwards and her classes. Frankly, I have not been able to sort that out.

Another very personal element drew me towards the research setting I chose. The social context of a group of high-ability, highly-motivated high school students who had survived a rigorous academic program together, the strong peer attachments I saw among them, the sense of isolation from the flow of ordinary school experience, the quality of interaction between a teacher and students—the sense of community that I found in the classroom, echoed my own experiences as a student in a university laboratory school in the 1960s. It was a situation in which I felt at ease.

As I sat in Mrs. Edwards' classroom, listening to Tony play games with academic doubletalk, I might as well have been in my 12th-grade "Readings in the Social Studies" class listening to one of my own peers. I may not have read Matthew Arnold in English class (or evaded reading Matthew Arnold), but I read, or looked for ways to evade reading, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in that social studies class. Like Mrs. Edwards' students, I also found Plato a useful connection to have on hand. Like Mrs. Edwards' students, I had learned to write something acceptable about a text at the drop of a hat. Discussions, like Mrs. Edwards', where an intricate web of tangents becomes the source of meaning, were an experience I rarely ever had again. When Mrs.
Matthews told me about the teachers' fears that, for many of the IB students, the intellectual intensity and social interactions of high school might turn out to be the best educational experience of their lives, I felt she might be right. As I said, studying in the setting I chose felt a good deal like going home. That has to have an impact on research choices that I made along the way.

Personal factors influence research decisions, and they surely affected my choice of setting and subjects. Other forces were at work as well and acted to shape decisions I made as the study progressed. It is my purpose in this chapter to discuss some of those factors.

Ball (in press) said that "the problems of conceptualizing qualitative research increase when data, and the analysis and interpretation of data, are separated entirely from the social process which generated them." He suggested two remedies for that problem—first, the elimination of the pretension of "pseudo-objectivity" in writing ethnographic reports, and second, the requirement "as a matter of methodological rigour," that

every ethnography be accompanied by a research biography, that is, a reflexive account of the conduct of the research, which, by drawing upon fieldnotes, and reflections, recounts the processes, problems, choices and errors which describe the fieldwork upon which the substantive account is based.

I do not claim to have written an ethnography here, but rather a case study report. Its methods of data collection
and analysis, however, are ethnographic and so too suggest
the inclusion of a biography. Much of that material I have
incorporated into my report as pertinent to the differences
between my observations in the first and second studies.
Some additional discussion of some of those issues is in
order. A number of issues shaped the research decisions I
made during the fieldwork, data analysis, and report writing
phases of the study—the nature of the setting, some
concepts from research in the teaching of literature and
writing, and the necessities involved in writing up a case
study report that is also a dissertation.

The Nature of the Setting

In all, I spent more than a year going in and out of
the setting. My residence in the field was lengthy, yet it
was not until well into the second study that I got over the
feeling that I was about to lose access to the setting. The
program itself was a political issue in the school district.
There were letters in the local newspaper during the period
I was in the classroom about the "elitism" of the program
and the unfair distribution of school district's funds.
There were calls for the evaluation of the relatively new
magnet school program. That, of course, made my presence
suspect, even though I only became interested in the program
as I saw its effects on Mrs. Edwards' task system and on
classroom culture. Lurking in the back of my mind all along
were potential political uses of anything I might write,
even though my intentions were and continue to be
descriptive rather than evaluative. Any potential harm to
the teacher or students who had been gracious enough to
share their class with me for so long was something I could
not ignore. Nor could I jeopardize a program that was
already under public scrutiny.

There would have been no second study at all had I been
uncomfortable with the quality of instruction. The
sensitive political nature of the setting and that nagging
fear that my access to the setting or access to informants
affected my decisions in all sorts of ways. In order to
avoid upsetting anything, I resolved to deal only with data
that were part of what would be considered publicly
available. I did not ask for test scores or personal data
on students, and I settled for only that program data that
was available in public documents.

Maintaining access to the setting was always on my
mind. I resolved to be as accommodating as I could be of
people's wishes and to avoid intruding on the time of my
informants in order not to jeopardize my access. In the
first study, for instance, I had attempted to discourage
communication with students other than any talk individuals
might initiate. My attempts to avoid contact with pupils
and my constant notetaking backfired because several
students told their teacher they were worried about what I
might be writing down about them. Since I had permission
only to observe, I did not want to irritate students or their parents. That "unobtrusive" stance was difficult because I am used to high school students, and these were pleasant, charming, and, for the most part, friendly young people who were accustomed to talking with adults and became quite open with me. For the second study, I adopted a different stance with students, explaining more fully the position I was in as a graduate student, discussing the project when they asked, trying to act like a friendly adult, perhaps more like a family friend than a teacher. Still, I continued to make it a point not to bother students who did not approach me, and I settled for personal contact only with students who specifically agreed to talk with me.

That meant, of course, that my sample was not inclusive of the whole class, except as I observed the whole group interacting during the class sessions. I might have had a different study had I pursued other informants. Then again, I might have had no study at all, had I been my more forceful in my pursuit. By the time I exited from the scene, my rapport with students was quite good. I even joined them at times in their small groups, at least a few of them who generally sat near me, as they talked about sonnets. Once my teacher-self got away from me and Mrs. Edwards told me to let the kids figure it out by themselves.

I do not know exactly how my presence affected the class sessions. Mrs. Edwards said that she thought that my
being there occasionally stopped her from bringing up a topic that she might not have wanted on tape. She had noted, she thought, a certain lack of vigor to the discussions in that particular class as well, but was willing to attribute that to the unusually large size of the group. My relationship with kids was something that I worked on during the lunch periods I spent in the room, and I think they did get used to having a stray adult around. Sometimes they included me in their talk, and sometimes they ignored me. I was amazed at the topics of conversations that took place in my presence. They were perhaps testing my promise that I was not reporting what they said to their teacher. That idea intrigued them. One incident hinted that I might be "OK" with students after a while.

Two boys, one of my informants and the other a stranger to me, were playing chess in the classroom one day during lunch. I was reading and chatting with anyone who cared to talk. One of the boys swore at his poor chess move, and the stranger looked my way, raising in eyebrows in mock horror. My informant told him not to worry about me. I was not a teacher, and besides, I was not allowed to tell on them. That was a warm moment for me. It had not been easy to work out the proper relationship with students. I had hoped to make myself nontthreatening and friendly, and I think by the end of the semester, I was doing well with that. I also saw the necessity, once the study was underway, to limit any
requests for student time. There were demands enough on the students in the first semester of their senior year, and I did not want to exert any additional pressure on them. That eventually altered my plans for extensive interviews with a small group of students. When some students resisted sharing papers with me, my plans changed. I let go of anything that students resisted.

Even more difficult than negotiating a relationship with students was the issue of maintaining a workable relationship with Mrs. Edwards. Much educational research conducted in natural settings these days is billed as "collaborative." That is, the researcher and the teacher both have a stake in the findings and ownership of the project. That was not the case in this study. While she was gracious and cooperative, there was little for Mrs. Edwards to gain from the experience of having me in the class. I could find no way even of helping her out in order to introduce some element of fair return into the situation. There was inevitably a tension between my needs as a researcher and her needs as a busy teacher. I have been a busy teacher myself. I will be one again. It was not the most comfortable situation.

Ball (in press) addressed the difficulty of "maintaining the research self" in the field. It is, he said,

a deliberate process quite unlike most other social interactions. It requires careful planning
and sensitive and reflexive involvement with actors in the field. It requires a studied presentation of self or selves. It is much closer to a blind date than going in to work.

The idea of a "studied presentation of self or selves" was new to me and a little repugnant. My inclination was to relate to Mrs. Edwards as one teacher to another or as to another woman friend, both roles I knew how to handle. But the situation was not natural. Very few teachers ever share 110 class sessions and hours of formal and informal interviews with another person. Even a confident, experienced professional, used to having observers in her classroom had to be concerned about what I might eventually write. It particularly distressed me to know, as I did, that I was "just one more thing," one more burden in the life of a good person and busy teacher.

We talked about the experience of being "researched" after the semester was over. Mrs. Edwards said that she now understood how the natives must feel when anthropologists move into their houses for a couple of years. "I think I would kick them out," she said. She laughed, but not very hard. It was the length of my stay that got to her. She perceived a change in my plans that made her unsure of what I wanted.

There was indeed a change that became necessary about a month into the second study. I had originally planned to stay eight weeks in order to observe several units of
instruction and then to continue the project primarily through student interviews and analysis of written work through the remainder of the year. I had underestimated the tension and demands on students at the beginning of the year. I had also misjudged the difficulty of attracting student informants in a basically noncollaborative atmosphere, genial though it may have been. I threw out the notion of doing extensive work with written tasks, and I decided to do my talking with students as much as possible within the range of my normal contact with them in the classroom. That meant that my primary data source and the strength of the study would have to rest on the observation data. That was when I took the students' suggestion and began to tape class sessions. That also meant that I really needed a longer initial stay in the classroom in order to get the sense of how talk changed over the course of a number of instructional units. Besides, I really wanted to see Mrs. Edwards teach those Shakespeare sonnets. It was the talk about aesthetic language I was interested in. That meant staying nearly to the end of the semester. As Mrs. Edwards said, from her point of view, "it was long, . . . more than anything else, it was really long," and, of course, she was right.

Gaining entry was nothing compared to achieving rapport with the people in the setting. I was, after all, asking an enormous favor. That is the "work" in fieldwork. Ball's
"blind date" analogy highlights the emotional element involved in that work. I remember that tears actually came to my eyes somewhere in November when Mrs. Edwards first began really talking to me "teacher-to-teacher," "friend-to-friend." There is, among people who "do ethnography," a worry about the effects that "going native," losing one's distance and objectivity, will have on the outcome of the research. I was, in effect, a native all along. I was also very much an outsider. That made the going rough.

Research in the Teaching of Literature

Some of the concepts surrounding current research in the teaching of literature also came to affect the way I made decisions as the study progressed. One of those was the issue of what constitutes exemplary teaching. One way of justifying the study of a particular classroom setting is to establish the teacher as exemplary in some way. Then the point becomes one of studying the situation to figure out how and why it was good. That is a common rationale for case studies in the teaching of literature. Hill (1983), Barr (1987), and Yarbrough (1984) all used that approach. Marshall (1985, 1988) used an exemplary teacher or teachers in order to question what we commonly accept as exemplary teaching. I came to realize that the notion of exemplary meant that the study one conducts inevitably turns out to be as much about the researcher as it does about the setting under study. Some of the subjects in the case study reports
I read seemed less than exemplary from my point of view. When I wrote my first research report based on the preliminary study, I was surprised to find out that what I saw as good teaching did not necessarily appear as such to some of my readers.

There is something futile about trying to establish one or another method of instruction as more exemplary than another. Methodologies are based on goals, and there are a number of reasonable goals that could support good literature instruction. A more fruitful pursuit for research is to look at how a teacher conceptualizes the work of her discipline and translates it into classroom tasks. That stance frames classroom inquiry in terms not of what ought to be done but rather in terms of what actually happens.

My decision to bring Doyle's academic task model into my observations and analysis of data was a reaction to the issue of exemplary. That decision was made in the interim between the first and second studies. I think that it was, on the whole, fortunate. Doyle's task categories began to illuminate my observations of teacher/student interaction. I think that they helped me look at literature instruction as it is shaped by realities of evaluation and program requirements.

Several other ideas from current research also gave me some problems as I observed. Willinsky (1987) gives the
best description I know of what constitutes the "ascending paradigm" (p. 267) in English instruction, something he calls the "New Literacy." The "New Literacy" is a collection of attitudes about the teaching and learning of reading and writing that are presently enjoying the favor of researchers and teachers in various literacy fields. There is, writes Willinsky, a "commitment to the New Literacy among educators, a commitment to nurturing thought and language as it matures naturally within us" (p. 269). In the teaching of writing, for instance, the "process model" has been brought into play to ensure that "the student's writing takes on a development of its own starting from personal experiences in life and literature" (p. 274). In teaching literature, the "alternative to the traditional methods and texts is reader response theory. In this approach, readers are understood to no longer take in the text, but to read in a state of transaction with it" (p. 278). Willinsky explains the historical origins of many of these ideas about reading, writing, and education in the Romantic era.

I find nothing objectionable about the ideas of the New Literacy. But in order to examine the setting I had chosen, I needed to set aside those ideas. When a distinction like the one researchers often make between a "response-based" and a "text-based" method of teaching literature is introduced, the researcher is introducing an evaluative
bias. The dichotomy that is often drawn between literature instruction that is text-based and literature instruction that is response-based, and the dichotomy that is made between writing instruction that is product rather than process-centered, have always seemed hazy to me.

As it turned out, I think that I can say that a distinction between response-based and text-based literature instruction is probably a false one, at least if the way things happen in Mrs. Edward's classroom are taken into account. All sorts of personal and group responses are incorporated into study of the text. I chose to use the term "text-centered" to describe her methods rather than "text-based," which is something of a pejorative in the New Literacy. Product-based writing instruction is likewise not sanctioned currently, but observation in Mrs. Edwards' classroom made me question the product/process dichotomy that researchers have emphasized as well. Written products were the basis of the accountability system in the class I observed, but there was little made of the product itself, once it was complete. It was the process of turning it out, it was the process of learning to write academic discourse quickly and well that was the more important goal.

As Graff (1987, 1989) showed in his discussion of the evolution of the profession of literature teaching in this country, "academic literary study has never possessed an agreed-upon theory of what it stands for" (1989, p. 256).
At present, much of the New Paradigm that Willinsky describes participates in what Graff calls a "return" of the "Literature Itself" (1987, p. 254) argument. That means that a recurring theme in pedagogy stresses the value above all else of letting the work speak for itself. If we as teachers partake of that belief, then we must see it as our job to help students achieve some state of "literary bliss" (1987, p. 255); that means it is our job simply to bring the work and the student together without disrupting the natural aesthetic processes that ought to occur. If we buy into this idea, then to speak of "academic tasks" in the same breath as we speak of literature is, perhaps, to blaspheme. "Bliss" and "task" seem inimical. In teaching literature, however, Graff does not find the "Literature Itself" argument to be entirely useful:

One salutary lesson of current theory is that though the experience of reading a text may feel like a pretheoretical, precritical activity, that feeling can arise only because the reader has already mastered the contexts and presuppositions necessary for the text's comprehension. (p. 255)

Once texts become tasks, the work of the classroom, I also believe, has more to do with "contexts and presuppositions" than it does with "bliss."
Writing the Report

All the minutely important facets of fieldwork—the researcher's relationships with people in the setting, the research decisions, the hours of fieldwork and transcription, the analysis of data—are all leveled out by one decision—how the report is written. Merriam (1988) speaks of the importance of the decisions one makes in writing up the research report, and she notes that the "great amount of qualitative data that must be woven into a coherent narrative makes the task seem especially laborious" (p. 185). She is correct on both accounts. It is especially difficult to decide which stories to tell and which to leave out.

One way to solve the problem of too much data is to use only a small segment of it—a lesson, a unit, a day, a single student's perceptions, even a tiny fragment of classroom discussion—to typify the rest. I wanted to describe the whole system, and that made my work difficult. Some chronology was involved because I moved out of one academic year with the first study and through most of the next academic year with the second. That sense of moving through the year seemed important to convey. At the same time, my basic writing structure was based on nested categories: classroom culture, literary analysis, the task system, and the quality of discussion. I also tried to pull the idea of teaching strategies of dealing with texts
through all of the chapters. Perhaps the tension between a topical structure of my report and the underlying narrative nature of ethnographic writing resulted from my choice to use the task model as a way of categorizing data.

There are many issues and stories and voices that I simply chose to leave out—for example, Lee's discovery of what Mrs. Edwards meant by literary analysis, scientist Rebecca's creative extended essay, Tony's failing grade at the semester, Nathan's perpetual resistance. The task model occupied my writing space. There are other stories that I could have told, but using the idea of task took me out of a purely ethnographic mode inquiry.

Van Maanan's (1988) book, Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, is a commentary on the consequences of the different strategies writers can use when reporting their fieldwork. He describes three ways writers can elect to represent cultures in their ethnographies—they can tell their stories as "realist tales," "confessional tales," or "impressionist tales."

Realist tales report on a culture by relying heavily on the writer's "interpretative omnipotence" (p. 51).

[A] realist tale offers one reading [of the situation] and culls its facts carefully to support that reading. Little can be discovered in such texts that has not been put there by the fieldworker as a way of supporting a particular interpretation. (p. 53)
Confessional tales are told from the fieldworker's point of view—how he came to understand what was going on. The "implied story line of many a confessional tale is that of a culture and a fieldworker finding each other and despite some initial spats and misunderstandings, in the end, making a match" (p. 79). Impressionist tales "present the doing of fieldwork rather than simply the doer and the done. They reconstruct in dramatic form those periods the author regards as especially notable and important" (p. 102).

Impressionist tales lend themselves to stories of teaching, I think. But my skill as a writer and the necessities of dissertation writing do not really permit that stance, though I tried for a few impressionist elements. I also left a few confessional elements in because what I wrote was about my discovery of what was going on. On the whole, however, this is a realist tale.

Van Manaan said of such ethnographic writing that

rarely is the interpretative omnipotence candidly or overtly claimed in realist tales. It is simply a matter of closing off or nailing down an interpretation without allowing alternative views to creep into view. The narrator speaks for the group studied as a passive observer who roams imperialistically across the setting to tell of events that happen this way or that. (p. 53)

Dissertation writing demanded the realist stance and necessitated other choices about how to report data.

Fitting a case study report into a dissertation format had some effect on how the analysis was presented. The case
study report became an expansion on what dissertation writers often think of as Chapters 4 and 5. The review of the research, which was a part of the study that evolved alongside of the emergence of the questions, was relegated awkwardly to its Chapter 3 location, almost as in a traditional dissertation format. I found it impossible to follow the injunctions of the American Psychological Association (1983) and "use past tense to describe results," "use present tense to discuss results," (p. 33) and to keep all the tenses in any one chapter the same. In effect, in all the chapters I both describe what I saw and then discuss it. The solution I settled on was to report what happened in the past tense and then to make my comments in the present. There is a consistency in that.

Obviously, I have not adopted the "pseudo-objective" stance that Ball criticizes in much ethnographic research. With this account of some of the decisions I made in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data, I hope to further establish for a reader a sense of how data were managed.
CHAPTER 10
REPRISE: THEMES

The Problem

In this study, I set out to learn more about the behaviors of a group of highly motivated high school students and their teacher as they studied literary texts together. I intended to attain a "sociocognitive" perspective, that is, to view literacy learning as "both a cognitive and a social process" (Tierney & Rogers, 1989, p. 251). I was interested not only in the classroom "culture" (Wolf, 1988, p. 2) that prevailed but in the nature of the academic work students undertook.

Briefly, I saw a task system that functioned within a network of attitudes about the value and nature of school learning. The teacher and her students saw learning how to work with texts as a community effort. Classwork went on under conditions of civility. Mrs. Edwards attempted to make students independent learners in her discipline by teaching them "ways of looking at texts." Students learned strategies for approaching texts, and they learned appropriate kinds of academic discourse for discussing them.
There was also a sense in the learning community that students are always working toward a higher level of competence in their ability to deal with texts. They were neophyte scholars in the teacher's discipline.

Literary analysis was the process being enacted in nearly all the academic tasks that students engaged in. It was a way of approaching texts, not a recipe for writing or talking about them. In general, reading and speaking tasks were aimed at the analytical phase of the process of literary analysis. Writing tasks involved more synthesis than analysis. The particular strategies I saw being modeled and practiced were dialogic reading and connecting. Students managed those strategies at different levels of competence and with different degrees of resistance.

The task system, though complex, was unified because nearly all tasks involved doing some version of literary analysis. Nearly all the academic work Mrs. Edwards asked students to do was higher-level work in Doyle's (1983) scheme of task classification. Nearly all tasks asked students to make decisions about using the material they had encountered previously. Nearly all tasks asked students to integrate different sets of knowledge they might have brought to the task. It was never enough to know about a text. Students needed to be able to do something with their knowledge.
Students explored texts by talking about them in large and small groups. In wide-ranging sessions, the group investigated aesthetic language and tied the text to the various contexts in which it was embedded. Intertextual, intratextual, and extratextual connections were pursued consistently. Text-talk provided room for play, and experiment, and sharing of personal experience. Writing tasks involved a more disciplined set of expectations and a more limited range of discourse than discussion.

I can only speculate of course, on the effect of the "high-literacy" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 9) setting on ways tasks were devised and completed. The setting affects both social interactions and the task system. I hoped to capture the most obvious effects in my description of "classroom culture." These motivated students can see immediate usefulness for the academic work they do as they contemplate the college bulletin board. They have assented to the tasks they are given, and, after four years together in the program, they have membership in an academic community. They also are members of a classroom community and initiates into the teacher's discipline. In addition, the inevitability of cumulative examinations and the reality of outside evaluators, as specified by the IB Program, probably affected attitudes towards learning as well.

The "high literacy" setting, however, does not necessarily control the task system. Even with a group of
academically able, highly motivated students, the dynamics of tasks are visible. There were efforts to downgrade or evade tasks; occasional resistance was evident. The students were, after all, high school seniors. It is the unity of the task system that prevents classroom dynamics from downgrading higher-level tasks. The match between the teacher's beliefs about literature instruction and the tasks she sets and the fact that students have multiple chances to complete the same tasks with different texts are also important. There is a sense that each task is a practice for the next, that each essay is a practice for the one to come, that there will always be a chance to do better.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggested that a "supportive school environment" that would foster high literacy would be one where "what the milieu supports is not a particular level of knowledge but rather a continual process of going beyond where one is" (p. 26). That is the kind of environment I observed and have been attempting to describe in this report.

Guiding Questions

On one level, the central portion of this report offers an answer to the basic ethnographic research question, "What's going on here?" Chapters 4 through 8 present a description of the ongoing activities involved in teaching and learning in a literature classroom. The following questions were intended only to guide observations.
Question 1: What are the student and teacher perceptions of the overall goals of the course?

Question 2: How does the concept of literary analysis function in classroom activities?

Many of my interview questions dealt with student and teacher perceptions of the goals of the course and the different tasks that constituted the academic work students were asked to do. As the study evolved, I became interested in knowing whether student perceptions of the individual tasks matched the teacher's vision of what she was asking them to do. That is, did students perceive the expected product in the same way as the teacher?

There was no single answer to that question. Like the 5th graders in Murphy's (1987) study of reading tasks and the 11th graders in Nespor's (1987a) study of writing tasks, these high-ability seniors sometimes misperceived the task and produced incorrect responses. In Nespor's study, one student did not distinguish between a previous teacher's concept of the expected product and his current teacher's concept. In Murphy's study, the teacher's poor directions led to misperceptions. Both kinds of mismatches disabled students. Something in Mrs. Edwards' task system, however, lessened the impact of such disjunctions. Rarely were students so incapacitated as to fail to produce a product at all. I identify several possible reasons for that:

1. Students could respond at different levels of
competence and still receive credit in the accountability system. Lisa, for instance, misperceived the task of writing a literary analysis, thinking it was her job to "regurgitate" previously encountered material. She reduced the ambiguity both in the task and in the task environment by writing a report of what the teacher and her classmates said.

2. Nearly all tasks involved doing literary analysis. If the product (the written or spoken response) was ambiguous, repeated experiences doing literary analysis across a network of similar reading, writing, and speaking tasks clarified expectations over time.

3. The task environment became proceduralized rather than the task. Because students knew that a literary analysis was expected each time they wrote and knew that an essay was expected each time they wrote, they stopped the pressure to downgrade the task itself. The expected essay format did not remove from students decisions about manipulating material; in fact, it may have helped them manage the superabundance of material they had to deal with.

**Question 3:** Does discussion constitute an academic task in itself? What are teacher and student perceptions of that task? How does discussion relate to subsequent written tasks based on the same text?

Chapter 7 is a response to this question. Discussion is at least a perceived task with a number of possible products. During discussion, students practice ways of
talking about literature. During whole group discussions, the teacher participates as part of a learning group. Sometimes she models ways of talking about literature, and sometimes she provides information. Sometimes students perform those roles. During discussions all sorts of links are made between the work and personal, cultural, historical experience. It is the students' responsibility to make what they can of all that talk, to manage it and manipulate it into the proper kind of academic discourse appropriate for an essay. The real existence of an outside reader and evaluator of students' written and spoken products affects the way students perceive the teacher. Because she is not the ultimate evaluator, she can be perceived as a coach.

Perhaps, as Heath (1985) has suggested, it is the opportunity to talk often and in a wide-ranging fashion about literary texts that is a functional element in environments that are conducive to literate behaviors. On the basis of her examination of the history of literacy in our society, Heath has said that "for those groups or individuals who do not have ... occasions to talk about what and how meanings are achieved in written materials, important cognitive or interpretive skills which are basic to being literate do not develop" (p. 15). There must be, she believes, "sustained occasions for practice of talk and writing--and a lot of both--about the meanings of texts which do not demand action. Such texts are most commonly
available in literary works" (p.16). Mrs. Edwards provides such opportunities daily.

**Question 4**: How do students perceive the individual written tasks that are based on the texts studied?

Question 4 proved to be only partially functional in guiding my observations. It turned out that I had only cursory contact with student papers. Some students did perceive the task of essay-writing as a matter of repeating what the teacher said. That was a misperception of the intended product. Still, such students could deliver an essay of that sort, and because of the complexity and volume of material they had to sort through, they were still working on higher rather than lower-level tasks.

**Related Research**

There are important differences between this case and some of the other recently reported case studies of literature instruction that I mentioned. Marshall's (1985/1986) Mrs. Foster provided interpretations for her students, and "the agenda for discussion was preestablished" (p. 87). That was certainly not true in Mrs. Edwards' classroom. Unlike Rogers' (1988/1989) teacher, Mrs. Edwards neither supplied the "thematic interpretation" (p. 74) nor settled for thematic interpretation. She insisted that students go beyond the theme to aesthetic uses of language. She insisted also that they contextualize the text.
The task system in Mrs. Edwards' classroom does not much resemble the cases presented in task research either. That seems important. Unlike the teachers in the classrooms Doyle reported on, Mrs. Edwards was able to keep her students at work on tasks that required them to do more than repeat previously encountered information. Nor does discussion, as it occurs in Mrs. Edwards' classroom, resemble the few descriptions that we have of actual practice of discussion in literature classrooms. Mrs. Edwards favors rather than rejects wide-ranging discussions.

I am not entirely certain how this case relates to other research on aesthetic reading. Clearly, I show a teacher teaching reading strategies that research has identified among experienced readers. There are, however, other elements in the case that also relate to the issue of aesthetic reading, elements I have not pointed to explicitly. The teacher's passionate feelings when she talks about reading and the value of reading seem particularly striking, for example. Her feelings about the "game of reading" and her belief that texts are "puzzles" are also important. The words "play" and "fun" occur often in her talk about teaching; play itself, verbal play, is an everyday feature of classroom interaction. I hope that these aspects of classroom culture have come through in the voices of the teacher and her students.

Implications for Further Research
Interpreting a classroom context is not unlike reading a novel. Mrs. Edwards teaches her students to "look for patterns" in the texts they read, and I have been doing essentially the same thing in the text of my own observations. The problem, of course, is that my text is incomplete. There are entire chapters of experience in that classroom that I never had the opportunity to look at.

Geertz (1973), in his discussion of the nature of interpretive anthropology, however, says that "it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something" (p. 20). That wisdom permits me to present this description of the case. It is, of course one interpretation of what went on. Other interpretations are possible. Much remains to be studied both in the larger world of practice and in this particular setting.

One important area for further research suggests itself immediately. Obviously, other teachers working with different sets of students would provide additional portraits of the ways tasks are undertaken in literature classrooms. There is much we do not know about what goes on in classrooms. The use of the task model has been one productive way to make sense of the myriad forces at work in such settings. There are certainly other ways of looking at what teachers and students do as well.

There are, in addition, issues in this setting alone that might be pursued further. I have not finished with the
matter of how students manage to transform the discourse of open-ended discussions into some version of acceptable academic written prose. That may constitute an essential feature of this particular high literacy setting. Each student is an important case. I have left untouched all of the literature that describes personal modes of response to literature. Some of the students coped better with Mrs. Edwards' approach to instruction than did others. Some resisted. Other cases beg for pursuit. Susan, for instance, seemed to catch on to the idea of literary analysis during the time I knew her. What use will she make of it as she goes on to higher education? Hilary's personal way of connecting with texts seems at odds with her organized and thorough way of managing academic tasks. Perhaps productive personal connections to texts are more difficult connections to make. Perhaps Susan has yet to reach that stage. A student like Alexis who chose not to be a vocal participant in class discussion would be an informative case for further study. A student like Tony who participated heavily in class talk but chose not to turn in papers would be another. Students who were experts at evading the tasks are intriguing as well. There is more to know about how and what each student learns.

Questions remain concerning Mrs. Edwards' methods of instruction. Does she teach her honors and community college literature classes differently? How much, in other
words, does the selective setting affect the teacher's ways of teaching?

There are questions to be asked of the IB literature curriculum as well. Students have experienced three different teachers before they come to Mrs. Edwards. Their "careers" as English students performing similar tasks deserve attention.

Coda: Personal Implications

This report is my description of the way that one teacher teaches and the way her students respond to instruction. I may be able to make some general comments about teaching literature based on my observations, but the advisability of generalizing from a case study is debatable. I may choose to rely for the moment on "reader or user generalizability" (Merriam, 1988, p. 177). That simply means that I leave "the extent to which a study's findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations" (p. 177). Even though the students are a select lot and the teacher has an academic preparation that goes beyond that of most high school teachers, I, as teacher, find certain elements in the situation that I think might be transferable to other settings.

Would I be able to extract the strategies she models and apply them to my own teaching in a different classroom? Perhaps. What I might adopt, for example, is the notion of helping students learn ways of dealing with texts. I might
also consider the idea of developing a unified task system that supports student engagement with texts that are ambiguous and difficult for them. A classroom environment that supports continued effort is something a teacher can achieve. Those are ideas that could travel well from situation to situation, classroom to classroom, and text to text.

Throughout the nearly two-year process of completing this study, I have had ongoing opportunities to reflect upon how my own teaching will be affected as a result of what I have observed. What Mrs. Edwards offers students, in addition to knowledge about literature, is a process of approaching texts and some strategies for reading them and writing about them. In the two strategies, dialogic reading and connecting, she is teaching students to deal with literary discourse itself. Unlike other teachers portrayed in recent studies, unlike transfer student Holly's experience with a teacher who taught her a single interpretation, Mrs. Edwards is not teaching interpretations of literary works. She is going "beyond interpretation" in the sense that Culler (1981) suggested is appropriate: "To engage in the study of literature is not to produce yet another interpretation of King Lear but to advance one's understanding of the conventions and operations of an institution, a mode of discourse" (p. 5). Culler (1975) further defined "literary competence as a set of conventions
for reading literary texts" (p. 118). Mrs. Edwards' students work toward literary competence. Interpretation, that is, the construction of meanings for particular texts, is one of the tasks of the class, but there is a step beyond those interpretations. Those are ideas I will carry with me back to the classroom.

I also see Mrs. Edwards' "step beyond" as directly related to what Scholes (1985) has called "textual power." Scholes recommends a "pedagogy of textual power" that consists of "ways in which teachers can help students recognize the power texts have over them and assist the same students in attaining a measure of control over textual processes, a share of the textual power for themselves" (p. 39). We must, Scholes said, "stop teaching literature and start teaching texts" (p. 16). Power comes from knowing how to do something with what you know.

I have surely learned from watching Mrs. Edwards and her students at work. I have also learned something about how one can profitably observe in classrooms. Elliot Eisner (1988) has said that "American educational researchers are beginning to go back to the schools, not to conduct commando raids, but to work with teachers as colleagues in a common quest . . . to rediscover the qualities, the complexities, and the richness of life in classrooms" (p. 19). That is what I have attempted to do. I echo Eisner's feeling:

My hope is that those of us in the university will be smart enough to learn from what good teachers
have to teach us. I hope we will even learn how to see what we are not able to describe in words, much less measure. And, through the consciousness borne of such an attitude, I hope we will be creative enough to invent methods and languages that do justice to what we have seen. (p. 20)

And my hope is that along with my description of "the qualities, the complexities, and the richness" of classroom life, I have offered some ideas about "the way things ought to be" as well.
REFERENCES


271


Mary Ellen Drummond was born in 1946. She has spent perhaps 35 years of her life going to school, either as a student or as a teacher, often as both. She graduated from the laboratory schools of the University of Iowa in 1964, and she completed her undergraduate study at the University of Iowa in 1968, graduating with a major in Spanish and minor in English. She then studied in Chile where she met her husband, Evan. They lived in Brazil for several years. Following their return to the United States, Mary Ellen completed an MA in Spanish at the University of Georgia in 1974. She has studied and taught in Oklahoma and Florida since then, generally finding more opportunities to teach English than Spanish along the way. Upon completion of an MEd in English Education at the University of Florida in 1986, Mary Ellen undertook doctoral studies in the Department of Instruction and Curriculum. She plans to return to teaching upon completion of her degree program.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Margaret J. Farly, Chair
Professor of Instruction and Curriculum

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

David Leverenz
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Robert R. Sherman
Professor of Foundations of Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Rodman B. Webb
Professor of Foundations of Education
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Robert G. Wright
Associate Professor of Instruction
and Curriculum

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May, 1990

David E. Smith
Dean, College of Education

Dean, Graduate School