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Keeping that honest voice: teaching writing to adolescents through the adolescent novel

Janet R. Lavelle
Iowa State University

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Keeping that honest voice:
Teaching writing to adolescents through the adolescent novel

by

Janet R. LaVille

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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INTRODUCTION

Junior high teachers often brainwash early adolescents with our answers. This brainwashing sometimes continues on through high school. Those who learn our truths, read our books, write on our topics, pass our tests, learn our grammar, and, if they choose to, pass on to college, make up the voiceless writers of colleges and universities across the country.

Like many other junior high teachers, I was aware that the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills measured such things as reading comprehension and questions of grammar, mechanics, and spelling. Consequently, these are the skills we teach in the junior high schools. There was no score for writing skills. So I, as I'm sure many junior high teachers still do, directly or indirectly, taught the "writing skills" deemed necessary by these tests. Nancie Atwell, also a former junior high English teacher, describes a typical junior high language arts program in this way:

It (English class) involves listening to teachers talk about English, writing an occasional theme about the English teacher's ideas, reading assigned literature texts, memorizing vocabulary definitions, correcting errors of usage and punctuation in English handbooks, and drilling assorted "facts" about static, inaccurate versions of English grammar. (In the Middle 40)

I agree with Atwell's observations and know (from experience) she describes a typical junior high English program. This teacher-centered curriculum built around memorization and drill explains the lack of interest in reading or writing by many adolescents. It's no surprise, then, that John Goodlad found in his studies conducted in the early
1980s that the subject rated "interesting" by the fewest number of
students at both junior and senior high levels was English (120).

As a teacher of college freshman composition, I'm constantly
reminded of several faults often identified with young writers entering
college:

1) Late adolescent writers often write voiceless prose.
2) Essay content is often dull or immature.
3) Students have difficulty relating their own experiences
   with experiences encountered in the assigned reading
texts at this level.
4) Students often are not aware of their own writing processes
   nor do they understand why they might benefit as writers by
   being aware.

Now that I've seen the results in college of those methods I used
in junior high schools, I've theorized that a gap in writing development
and enjoyment begins at around age twelve and widens until corrected, if
ever. Writing becomes more of a major concern for educators during
early adolescence than at an earlier age because at this age (12), a
student's proficiency in speech and the use of the English language
equals writing proficiency (Bereiter and Scardamalia 6). These students
are just beginning to separate oral communication from written
communication. Average students have the ability to become competent
writers from eleven or twelve years of age onwards (Kress 2).

Therefore, junior high is the ideal time to prevent the illness of
dull, voiceless writing that often "breaks out" in college freshman
composition courses. Rather than relying on college teachers to cure
this illness, teachers can prevent it in junior high.
Anyone remembering junior high language arts may be able to recall heavy doses of grammar injected between the "fun stuff." Some of us who survived grammar and went on to become English teachers, on one level or another (usually because of our early love for reading), learned to write in spite of those grammar units. Those who didn't learn to write, though, may have been stifled because of what happened in their classroom in those early adolescent years.

Students are often led to believe that they can't become good writers without memorizing parts of speech or knowing every comma rule. Those who have these talents are often rewarded and told (usually through grades) that they are good writers. When one of these "good" writers gets to college and gets back his first freshman English composition with a "D" on it because he produced a mechanically error-free paper that said absolutely nothing, student and teacher are both frustrated.

But grammar units need not be blamed for all the ills of a developing writer; teacher-centered classrooms with teachers asking all the questions and assigning all the writing topics also contribute to voiceless writing. Students need to find their own topics and discover their own voices through things they want to say in writing. New topics can be opened up when the students read and study adolescent novels in junior high. Assigning students literature they don't understand or even read doesn't do much for furthering their reading ability either.

The purpose of this paper is to show how and why adolescent literature can be the catalyst for these young writers. When they find topics to write about through their reading, they will do more writing
because they will be writing about things that interest them—things they really care about.

Forecasting the Thesis

I will begin this thesis by defining the adolescent student and then by re-defining the student in the junior high English classroom by focusing on reading and writing skills of the average student. Next, I will bring these two communicative functions together and show how they are naturally connected and must be taught as one discipline in order for students to develop an appropriate voice in writing. Lastly, I will offer some suggestions for promoting this connection in the classroom.

Chapter One: The Early Adolescent Student: I will discuss the adolescent student, identifying characteristics every junior high teacher should know before teaching students at this level. Physically and mentally students change more during early adolescence than they have changed since infancy. Teachers aware of these stages in development can use this knowledge to help create a better junior high language arts curriculum instead of fighting the inevitable results of these changes in the classroom.

Chapter Two: The Early Adolescent Reader: In this chapter, central to my thesis, I will discuss the reading development of the adolescent with a focus on the development of adolescent literature and how it has gained in popularity over the past 20 years. I will also examine reasons some students resist reading.
Chapter Three: The Early Adolescent Writer: I will emphasize writing development and discuss some problems that begin to surface during the adolescent years. I will also discuss the importance of making a clear distinction between oral and written communication for early adolescent students and talk about why this age is the prime time to begin teaching the students the effectiveness of writing. In addition, I will discuss three functions of writing important for junior high students to learn and explain why a particular order for teaching these functions seems to work well based on the adolescents' growth patterns.

Chapter Four: The Reading/Writing Connection: Continuing this central focus for my thesis, I will discuss, as the title suggests, meshing reading and writing into a holistic unit for achieving writing competence on the junior high level. The focus of this chapter will be on taking the characteristics of the early adolescent students and intertwining their interests and abilities with reading and writing activity.

Chapter Five: Keeping That Honest Voice: In this chapter, I will define voice and discuss its importance in the composing process. The importance of voice in writing is, as some say, the heart of the writing.

Chapter Six: Implications for Teaching: I will offer some suggestions from those who have researched and/or taught at this level and have taken the theories of reading and writing and put them into practice in the junior high classroom.
If we are going to encourage writing as a relevant, purposeful experience, then changes need to be made at the junior high level. These students are eager to learn truths. Because they are often difficult to control in traditional classroom settings at this age, we sometimes keep them orderly and in their seats by giving them our answers, our truths. That's when their honest voices from infancy through elementary school begin to change—gradually. Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia have observed through their research that when writing is viewed from the standpoint of language, it often seems that children do a better job of expressing what is on their minds than adults do of expressing what is on theirs, and so the challenge to writing instruction becomes that of preserving and nurturing the early genius. (xvi)

The first step toward a change is recognizing the early adolescent student as someone undergoing tremendous changes and realizing why this age is the prime time for making writing competence a reality. It is my intention to show that because many students lose their "honest" writing voices during the junior high years, this loss contributes to problems in writing proficiency on the college freshman level.

The type of writing that many students are producing is ineffective communication although it may be mechanically error-free writing. Somewhere in the cognitive stages between childhood and adulthood, many adolescent writers, for various reasons, lose or misplace their "honest voices" that as children they wrote with naturally, and instead, develop a generalized "say-nothing" writing style so prevalent in the college freshman composition class.
Teaching writing to adolescents through the reading of adolescent novels will more fully develop proficient writers who write with honest voices.
CHAPTER ONE: THE EARLY ADOLESCENT STUDENT

Atwell says that in adolescence, "the worst things that ever happened to anybody happen every day" (In the Middle 25). First of all, their bodies are going through physical changes unmatched only by the rapid changes that take place in the first year of their lives. Secondly, they are moving from the concrete operational stage into the formal operational stage, so they are beginning to think in the abstract. Thirdly, because their bodies and brains are starting to function differently, they often feel out of control in both areas. Any teacher who has spent any time in the junior high classroom can attest to the difficulty in managing this age group.

In this chapter, I will be discussing the concept of the junior high school in America, past and present, noting some of the physical and mental changes adolescents experience, and then relating these changes to the junior high English classroom, and in particular, to the teaching of writing.

"Eighth graders shuttle back and forth between naivete and worldliness. They shuttle back and forth between everything. They are self-confident and self-doubting; they are responsible and irresponsible. They never know—and I never know—what they'll be when" (Atwell, In the Middle 161). They belong in an identifiable class by themselves which was recognized by educators and psychologists in the early 1900s.
Early Beliefs about Adolescence

The junior high school, "invented" in America around the turn of the century (1909), was established for two basic reasons: 1) keeping children in school beyond the elementary grades was becoming important in a growing culture, and 2) there was a growing recognition of adolescence as a "separate stage in the life cycle of youth" (Everhart 2).

Stanley Hall, an expert on adolescence around the 1900s, called this period in the young person's life one of "storm and stress." He went on to define adolescence as a time when "the social instincts awaken.... Youth awakens to a new world and understands neither it nor himself" (Everhart 10). Although Hall made some observations about adolescence that have been refined and replaced by later psychologists, his view of the role of the teacher is still relevant: "The whole future of life depends on how the new powers now given suddenly and in profusion are husbanded and directed" (Everhart 10).

Current Findings

After doing two years of field work in one junior high school in the early 1980s in California, Robert Everhart wrote a book Reading, Writing and Resistance: Adolescence and Labor in a Junior High School. Throughout the book, he talks about the importance of the junior high as a social culture for adolescents. In fact, he concludes that instruction in junior high school is less engaging to students than
group-centered activities either during or outside the context of class. Everhart found that "students have a propensity to coalesce into friendship groups that provide...the real meaning of their daily life in the school" (231). Teachers attuned to these adolescent concerns can create curriculums that build on things meaningful to this age group.

One of the significant distinguishing characteristics of the early adolescent child is his or her search for identity. This self-imaging develops in response to how they see others seeing them. Jeffrey Golub remarks that they "can't see their own face(s) except in the mirror of others" (80). They go through a process of defining themselves through their interaction with others.

At this age, the young person feels an "almost fanatical" allegiance to one's peers--often to the exclusion of family and other significant adults (Everhart 1). Goodlad found in his research that over one-third of the junior high school students when asked "What's the best thing about school?" responded "My friends" (77).

Academic achievement is not high on the scale of priorities. In fact, in a study done by James Coleman, academic achievement rates lower than social acceptance, athletics, and clothes (Everhart 12). Philip Cusick, who attended high school for six months as a kind of undercover adolescent in the 1970s, stated that adolescents would rather flunk a test than be denied the opportunity to sit by friends in the lunchroom (Everhart 12).

Adolescents' involvement with the rest of the world is largely in the role of consumers of sex, drugs, music, and clothes (Everhart 15). "Adolescents must cope with their insecurities and struggle with their
growing independence, but at the same time 'faddish' clothing, 
hairstyles, and lingo emerge as codes of acceptance" (Silver 24). Junior 
high teachers need to understand priorities in the lives of their 
students and realize that adolescents are looking for their own values 
and their own identities without separating too far from their groups. 

Physical Changes

Adolescence is also a time of incredible physical change. John 
Bushman identifies several physical characteristics of the typical 
adolescent. The boy or girl falls between the ages of 9 and 14, has 
grown to within 25 percent of adult height, possesses a craving for 
food, and experiences periods of fatigue (117). He goes on to cite 
Klingele (1979), a scholar in the field of middle-level education, who 
suggests that teachers must be aware of the following factors concerning 
adolescence:

--Girls are around two years ahead of boys in growth.
--Muscular development and the body framework are 
disproportionate.
--Minor accidents are common due to rapid growth.
--Alertness, excess energy, and high activity are followed 
    by fatigue and a stoop in posture.
--Girls have less stamina.
--Physical abnormalities may be first discovered at this age 
    due to the onset of peer competition.
--Fads are important.
--They wriggle and squirm.
--They show a curiosity about their bodies.
--Physical changes for girls are more pronounced. (118)

Knowing these things about this age group can be an aid to teachers when 
making assignments, doing group work as in workshop or peer-editing 
situations, and even in choosing literature for the classroom.
Cognitive Development

A central characteristic of cognitive development is the increasing power of abstraction associated with the formal operational stage of development and a decentering—a movement from the self outward (Tamburrini et al. 189). Although Bushman refers to adolescence as a time when the brain is "on vacation" (120), Conrad Toepfer suggests that no more than 12 percent of 12 year-olds, and 20 percent of 13 year-olds and 24 percent of 14 year-olds have moved into the Piagetian formal operational level (18). Students who are still in the concrete operational stage often seem bored, lifeless, and turned off between growth spurts. These students may need special attention, especially in the English classroom since so many have rated English as the least interesting subject to study in junior high.

Adolescents in the English Classroom

Atwell makes frequent references to three critical basics for working with adolescents: time, ownership, and response. She credits Giacobbe for this theory (In the Middle 54). Atwell says that it is necessary to allow time in the English classroom for reading and writing. "Regular, frequent time helps writers grow" (In the Middle 56). Often students are not given time just to sit and read or actively write in the classroom period. Especially where adolescent novels are
concerned, teachers often encourage them for outside reading but don't allow time for in-class reading of them.

Atwell encourages ownership in the way she arranges her classroom as a workshop, in the way she displays writers' work, and also in the way she teaches her students how to publish their own work and encourages them to do so. She stresses that when students feel they own their own work, their classrooms, their topics, their reading choices, etc., their investment in reading and writing goes beyond just completing teacher assignments.

She responds to her students during mini-conferences on a daily basis to guide them in their reading and writing. Referring to the importance of response time, she quotes Vygotsky who said, "What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow" ([*In the Middle*](#70)). Atwell responds to her students in large group, small group, and one-on-one conferences.

If we know that social relationships come first with adolescents—even in the classroom—it simply makes good sense to put this information to work in teaching the adolescent student. It's important that they see the teacher as an ever-present support system ([*Silver*](#25)). "For adolescents to share their innermost thoughts and feelings with others involves courage of the highest sort, but if teachers are to lead students to the threshold of their own minds, students can give no less. To enable students to risk their egos and their self-esteem, they must trust their teacher..." ([*Bushman*](#15)). The more they trust their teacher and their peers, the more they will
communicate. The more they communicate, the more they will get a chance to figure out who they are.

Adolescent literature can supply the context for discussion in reading and writing. Adolescent literature speaks to students from ages 12 to 20 on their own level. Everhart asks, "What if somehow we were able to treat early adolescents as responsible persons whose knowledge system was not inferior to that of adults, and instead just different?" (265). Adolescent literature is different from adult literature, not inferior, just different. Teaching reading and writing through the adolescent novel will help students to become active, responsible interpreters and not what Steven Anthansas calls "passive attenders" (48).

More can be accomplished in the junior high classroom to encourage learning when teachers thoroughly understand the characteristics of the age group they are working with. One of the reasons adolescent novels have become so successful is because students have found authors who can create characters who speak to the adolescents' inner selves. Authors who know what's important to adolescents are capitalizing on their knowledge of the adolescent. Junior high language arts teachers should be doing no less. In order for teachers to help their students as writers, they need to begin by helping their students as readers.
CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY ADOLESCENT READER

According to the 1987 Books for Young Adults Poll published in the English Journal (Conner and Tessmer 100), "contemporary realism" remained the most popular category for books read by adolescent readers as selected by a majority of 450 young people in individual reading and English classes in rural, suburban, and urban southeastern Iowa high schools. This category was followed by mystery, adventure, and the supernatural. "Contemporary realism" helps students establish their own identity within their own environment. This solidifying of identity is very important to students who are just beginning the search for who they are. In addition, some of the novels adolescents are reading take them out of their own cultures into the cultures of the characters they read about in the books—cultures unlike their own.

The English teacher plays a primary role in leading students from the community of the less educated to the community of the culturally literate. We are the ones who can explain the language of the new community. We can also provide our students with systematic instruction and practice for conversing with each other. English instructors can create an environment that simulates that of the academic community at large—a community made distinctive by the lively exchange of ideas. (Maimon 122)

This exchange of ideas, though, has to have a context from which to come, and that context is reading. In this chapter, I will introduce some characteristics of the adolescent reader and discuss several theories as to why they aren't all avid readers, including a discussion of their cognitive development as related to reading. I will define adolescent literature and show how it has gained in popularity and
acceptance as an avenue for readership in the last 20 years among adolescents. In the last section of this chapter, I will relate the adolescent reader to the English classroom and especially to the teaching of writing.

Characteristics of the Adolescent Reader

The exchange of ideas about literature is a desirable way to improve taste. William Palmer lists three other reasons we teach literature to students: 1) Students need to read for pleasure and personal involvement. Reading helps them find their own identity for the present and helps them see what they can become. 2) By reading, they can experience life vicariously which will help them comprehend and work out new concepts and relationships they encounter in their own lives. 3) The readers can transcend the "here and now" and project their own emotions or their own personalities into the stories they read (61).

Alleen Nilsen and Kenneth Donelson in their text, Literature for Today's Young Adults, say that good readers begin developing a critical sense in literature at about the same time that they begin developing a critical sense about life—during adolescence (40). Plot no longer dominates because they begin asking "why." Younger children read to "lose" themselves in literature. Adolescents read to "find" themselves. On the one hand they are searching for characters with lives as much like their own as possible while also curious about those living lives in the books much different from their own (Nilsen and Donelson 41).
Atwell cites the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress reporting that American thirteen- and seventeen-year-olds spend less time reading than nine-year-olds (In the Middle 156). Goodlad found that junior high students spend less than three percent of their time in school reading, and this percent decreases in high school (107). Why is this? Elizabeth Flynn says that students usually do not read well because they are unable to integrate what they read with what they already know about the world (139). These non-reading students lack the content necessary to process the material they encounter in their reading because they are often times assigned reading beyond their cognitive level. Flynn goes on to say:

Everyone needs to make sense of the present in order to reduce uncertainty. We cannot function without asking questions and finding answers through interaction with the environment. Motivation to read is therefore present in everyone. If readers are not gaining meaning from texts, then those texts are probably inappropriate for those particular readers; they provide no satisfying answers, or the answers they do provide cannot be comprehended. (141)

Adolescent novels are the appropriate motivational books these early adolescents need because these books are appropriate for this age group, provide many satisfying answers, and are readily comprehensible, at least on a surface level. In addition, adolescents like to read these novels written especially for them.

In a research study conducted by June Birnbaum, young readers identified as being less proficient than their peers tended to equate being a good reader with having speed and word recognition skills. Good readers in the study, on the other hand, identified such things as being
able to predict outcomes if reading literary forms they were familiar with, becoming involved in the story, and being able to read quickly for information (255).

Alan Purves says that for the junior high student, home, background and sex (girls tend to be better readers than boys) strongly affect the achievement in reading (64). Why certain students become good readers and others don't is more complex, though. Albert Somers and Janet Worthington ask the question, "Why don't people just naturally read for joy and insight and beauty and inspiration?" (ix). In gearing their book toward teachers of adolescent readers, they answer their own question by listing some causes as to why adolescents sometimes lack motivation for reading (ix):

--- work habits of teenagers,
--- work load of teachers,
--- dominance of basal reader in elementary school,
--- ever present threat of censorship,
--- apathy on the part of parents/administration,
--- poor preparation of teachers, and
--- dominating influence of television.

All of these "symptoms" can point to the "illness" of aliteracy--the condition of being able to read but never reading (Somers and Worthington x). "Most students are neither lazy nor recalcitrant. They resist that which cannot be integrated with past experience and embrace that which yields new insights" (Flynn 151). Students in early adolescence are looking for answers to help them sort out things in
their lives. If the reading is not relevant for them, they may not even try to read an assigned text even though they are capable.

Susan Hynds, in her research of content knowledgableability and the benefits of this knowledge on reading and writing, found that when adolescents read, they increase their knowledge base about themselves. She studied written responses gathered from 83 11th-grade students enrolled in English. These students had previously completed a questionnaire on a liked and disliked peer and had been given a peer-complexity score. Then, following the reading of a particular short story, they were asked to describe the character they liked most and least in the short story. Hynds found that peer-complexity predicted character-complexity to a significant degree. And, although the construction of peer-complexities obviously begins at an earlier age than children begin to read stories and thus are able to construct character-complexities, literary interest tends to more highly develop both peer-complexities and character-complexities (398). In other words, students not only get a better understanding of themselves through reading, but they can better understand other people around them who might have traits similar to those they meet in their reading.

Even though reading traditionally got more attention than writing from researchers and educators in the past, reading problems are more difficult to detect among students because they are not as visible as are most writing problems (Flynn 139).
Because early adolescents think of themselves in terms of physical behaviors; for example, they answer the question "Who are you?" with a response of what they do, they carry this trait over into their reading and conceive of characters' acts in terms of surface physical behaviors or immediate emotional reactions. This kind of thinking causes them to see experiences (real and fictional) in terms of immediately available data rather than underlying beliefs, motives, or goals.

"Cognitive developmental research indicates that early adolescents reasoning at the initial formal operations stage are more likely to think in terms of surface aspects of phenomena" (Beach and Wendler 287). Often times in a junior high classroom (as well as in the higher grades, also) students will bemoan the fact that they can't see any of these underlying values unless these elements are specifically pointed out to them by the teacher or classmates. Sometimes they get discouraged by questions searching for this kind of information in a text they've read. As these readers mature, they move into a less egocentric world, and as they begin to infer or adopt other peoples' perspectives, they carry this skill into their reading and begin to infer the social consequences of the actions of the characters they are reading about.

In an empirical study of readers from eighth grade to college juniors, Richard Beach and Linda Wendler found that eighth graders placed significantly less emphasis on the characters' beliefs or on their long-range goals in answers the students gave to questions asked of all the participants in the study. As the population for the study
got older and the students moved into the formal operational stages, emphasis on perceptions and goals as related to the characters' activities increased.

James Marshall, in citing Louise Rosenblatt, says that text and reader are equally powerful in working together to construct literary meaning. So, if readers tend to see characters in fiction in the same way they see themselves, a highly developed novel intended for a reader well into the formal operational stage might prove to be frustrating for the reader not yet into that stage as well as for the classroom teacher. This mismatching of reading assignments, in turn, may affect the students' written responses because the students will be trying to write about concepts they really don't understand, and thus, effective writing will be at a minimum. Students in early adolescence responding to adolescent novels, literature geared toward their early developing stages, however, will be more successful in their written communication.

Adolescent Literature

Adolescent literature can be defined simply as literature written specifically for adolescents, whether about them or not (Hipple 22). The growth in adolescent literature might be compared with the growth in television material for young adults. Thirty years ago, adolescents were watching *Leave It to Beaver* or *The Donna Reed Show*. Today, adolescents can learn about that same era in a show considered more realistic called *The Wonder Years*. It's not that adolescents don't
enjoy watching the old reruns of Beaver and his family, but as Theodore Hipple puts it, "Adolescent literature has gone well beyond hand-holding and the trauma associated with taking a 'C' on a report card home to a stern but ultimately forgiving parent" (23). Adolescent literature began talking about sex, social problems, and politics. And, as a result, serious social and personal problems emerged for adolescent characters (Small 81).

Interest in finding and recommending material suitable for adolescent readers began over 50 years ago. During the 1930s, Rosenblatt was very influential in changing the general attitude that there was a required reading list that every young person should complete before he or she finished formal schooling. Although there are still those educators who feel the books on these lists are the only books worthy of the adolescent reader, Rosenblatt proposed the literature curriculum change its emphasis on books to an emphasis on the adolescent (Anderson 21).

Adolescent literature puts its emphasis on the adolescent. Somers and Worthington equate good adolescent literature with any good literature. It's well written and crafted with attention given to plot, point of view, style, structure, characterization and theme. It works as a good transition to other reading as does any good literature (x). However, adolescent books are no longer thought of as just "bridges" to adult books (Rochman 40). In fact, Robert Small cites several authors who write their books for adolescents and adults simultaneously: Sue Ellen Bridgers' Home Before Dark; Katherine Patterson's A Bridge to Terebithia and Jacob Have I Loved; Richard Peck's Father Figure; Robert
Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death*; and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and its sequel, *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, among others (84). Not all classics were written before the turn of the century. Some adolescent literature can even be classified as young adult classics. A few listed by Hipple that fall into this category are Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, S.E. Hinton's *The Outsider*, and Ann Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* (22).

The American Library Association recently published a list of 75 young adult books under the heading "Nothin' But the Best: Best of the Best Books for Young Adults 1966-1986" (Appendix A 103). This list was made up of titles spanning 21 years of adolescent literature compiled from school librarians' choices. Of these 75, half of them were "solid" young adult novels by established young adult authors. Ten percent were adult fiction and science fiction, 14 were non-fiction titles about subjects like rock music, sexuality, feminism, the Holocaust, and Vietnam. There was one play on the list and no poetry books (MacRae 98). According to Cathi MacRae (99), the eight books listed below have made all the "best books" lists since each title was published:

Books written in the 1970s may not be considered classics yet, but for some of the titles listed above, it may only be a matter of time before they will be classified as classics for young adults.

Some teachers are worried about adolescent literature completely replacing the classics for an adolescent reader. Some educators are still not convinced that there is a place for adolescent literature in the classroom. Literature, though, is only "good" or "bad" in relationship to other factors. Somers and Worthington define good literature as that which a student can read and relate to. It is literature that is within the range of a student's experience. The student enjoys reading it and in turn is encouraged, then, to ultimately become a permanent reader of literature because she likes what she is reading (Introduction x).

Liking a selection is also related to achievement and to a general interest and involvement with the text (Purves et al. 65). Students who are always asked to read selections that are beyond their comprehension seldom turn to reading as a leisure-time activity. "Teachers informed about adolescent literature know Judy Blume's books can go through a school faster than news of an unexpected holiday" (Hipple 22). Adolescents have proven in the classroom, the library, and bookstore that they like reading adolescent novels.

Many teachers of adolescents also like adolescent novels. In 1980, ALAN (The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents--an assembly group of NCTE) had 1,500 members (Hipple 22). This interest shown on the part of adolescent educators adds support to using this body of literature for classroom study.
Teachers who use a lot of in-class drill, little homework, little writing, and who individualize reading selections on the basis of skill instead of interest, are doing little in the classroom to stimulate more reading. These teachers often focus on decoding or "busywork" because they find the students unmanageable, so they try to keep them busy and out of trouble (Purves et al. 105). Atwell says the students are more manageable if given the freedom to choose what they want to read and the time in class to exercise that freedom (In the Middle 21). She has compiled a list of all the books that her former students rated as a 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10 (Appendix B 105). (At least three students must have voted for a particular title.) Teachers unfamiliar with adolescent novel titles can find this list current and comprehensive.

In her book In the Middle, Atwell lists 21 things that teachers (and she puts herself in that category—in the past tense) inadvertently demonstrate about reading (152). Listed below are some of these "things":

--Reading is difficult, serious business.
--Literature is even more difficult and serious.
--Reading is a performance for an audience of one: the teacher.
--There is one interpretation of a text: the teacher's.
--"Errors" in comprehension or interpretation will not be tolerated.
--Student readers aren't smart or trustworthy enough to choose their own texts.
--Reading requires memorization and mastery of information, term, conventions, and theories.
--Reading is always followed by a test.
--It's wrong to become so interested in a text that you read more than the fragment the teacher assigned.
--Readers in a group may not collaborate; this is cheating.
--You learn about literature by listening to teachers talk about it.
--Reading is a waste of English class time.
--There's another kind of reading, a fun, satisfying kind you can do on your free time.

Obviously, these faults listed above can persist in a class reading adolescent novels as well as other literature. The point is, if teachers are going to allow students the freedom to choose the kinds of things they want to read in class, these other difficulties in the teaching of junior high English may begin to correct themselves. As a teacher becomes more knowledgeable about adolescent literature, she will become knowledgeable also about the adolescent student. She will see that if students are allowed to find their own answers through their own literature, the students will be reading more and then, consequently, writing more worthwhile pieces.

Before adolescents can be good writers, they must be good readers. In Loban's 1976 study of children and language development, he found that children who were high achievers in one language process tended to be high achievers in others--better readers were also better writers (Birnbaum 257). Using the adolescent novel in the junior high English classroom will encourage young writers to compose texts meaningful to them and thus meaningful to other readers.
CHAPTER THREE: THE EARLY ADOLESCENT WRITER

Why should teachers of adolescents concentrate on teaching their students to write when teachers know the number of adults who will write professionally are small compared to the number who will read regularly? We know many more of our students will read short stories or novels than will write them. We also know that more will read editorials in the morning paper than will write them. Why then is learning to write as important as learning to read for the adolescent student?

Gunther Kress answers this question by saying, "Those able to produce meanings and messages are few by comparison with those who consume meanings and messages. Hence, the control of messages and meanings is in the hands of a relatively small number of people" (3). Control is the key word here. Teachers need to be concerned with who will be controlling language and help adolescents control the language through their writing.

Controlling the language is difficult for the students to learn if they don't practice writing to influence an audience other than the teacher; yet, secondary school writing, according to studies by Janet Emig and James Britton, requires that the largest percentage of writing be informative rather than speculative or persuasive (Freisinger 5). Much of this so-called informative writing is voiceless. Ken Macrorie claims that most English teachers have been taught to search out errors and "put down those bloody correction marks in the margins" (4). Students begin to write what he calls "Engfish," that say-nothing writing that gets by the teacher's red marks and says absolutely nothing
of meaning or importance to either the writer or reader (3). These students have temporarily "lost" their honest voices in English class. The concentration on grammar, because of the emphasis it receives in the junior high classroom, begins to dominate and control the writer.

Students need to learn the power of language through reading and learn how they can control language for various purposes through writing. An important element in the developing maturity of the young writer is discovering that writing can be used to affect the reader. One's own writing can make someone laugh, cry, get angry, learn something new, or move someone to action (Bereiter and Scardamalia 89). The realization of this during early adolescence may be as valuable to the young writer as the realization of the power of the spoken word is to the toddler. Maybe if teachers capitalize on this writing discovery and nourish it as much as young parents delight and encourage their babies toward learning vocabulary, the adolescent might feel more confidence in using this newly discovered skill—writing.

In this chapter, I will briefly discuss how writing develops through our educational system and through the cognitive development of the individual student. Jean Piaget's cognitive stages of development have influenced several writing theorists. One of these theorists is James Moffett, whose theories I'll outline. I will also discuss Linda Flower's theories for beginning writers. Flower, an advocate of reader-based prose, does not discourage all writer-based prose for the beginning writer, even though this writing is considered to be egocentric. I will also discuss several unsuccessful approaches to the study of grammar, and then, I will explain Bereiter and Scardamalia's
psychology of composition concerning knowledge telling and knowledge expanding. This section closes with an extensive discussion of the differences between oral and written communication and their influences on adolescent writers. The last section of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of James Britton's functions of writing—poetic, expressive, and transactional—and why each are important to a junior high language arts curriculum. Ultimately the dominant objective of this chapter is to show how writing develops naturally for the junior high student and what teachers need to know to move with this development instead of against it.

Having an overall picture of how writers develop is important in understanding where the junior high writer has come from and where she will be going after leaving junior high.

**Writing Development**

Adolescent writers will develop in their own way at their own pace no matter how much teachers would prefer every member of the class be at the same stage at the same time. If a toddler were assigned new words to learn each day, how different the learning process would be for the young speaker! Atwell says that if junior high students are allowed to choose what they want to write about, they would "write for all the reasons literate people everywhere engage as writers: to recreate happy times, work through sad times, discover what they know about a subject and learn more, convey and request information, apply for jobs, parody, petition, play, argue, apologize, advise, (and) make money (In the
According to her, writing will develop naturally for each student if the process is not forced.

However, there are some objectives that teachers expect most students will learn before they leave secondary school. Kress cites three of these objectives for adolescent writers (13):

1. Understand the messages they read.
2. Gain some insight into the meaning of others and into their own writing as well.
3. Learn the skills needed to manipulate, control, and organize language for their own purposes.

These are general long-range goals. In the middle school years, though, the teachers should begin to see that the adolescent writers are beginning to utilize the knowledge about writing they've been accumulating through the primary and elementary grades (Klein 74).

Cognitive psychologists believe that at age 12, children are beginning to see that writing has a purpose. Teachers no longer dwell on penmanship and form. Those students moving from Piaget's concrete operational stage at this age into the formal operational stage can begin to understand the power of the written word. Most middle school students can begin to concentrate on what they are writing rather than how they are forming the letters to say what they want to say. This, of course, is a development that has taken them from pre-school until early adolescence. Beginning at age 12, the child begins to separate the thought process from its oral and written context. The adolescent begins to think abstractly. All content thought doesn't automatically become part of the essay or piece of writing as it does with younger children's writing (Bereiter and Scardamalia 211).
Generally, Marvin Klein shows the major stages of writing development in this way (76):

1st Grade--When students are able to write the letters for the words they want to use, they are caught up in the content of what they want to say. Unless instructed to do so, they will produce only one draft with no notes prior to the draft. The student is totally interested in the subject of the composition which is often times pets, family members, or recent activities.

4th Grade--Students now begin to recognize the relationship between grammatical structure and modes of discourse. Because these students have been exposed to more complex subordination developments in their reading, their writing begins to grow in complexity. Their variety of syntactic skills in writing is also related to the variety of writing experiences that have been produced in several modes as opposed to the one or two in primary writing experiences.

Middle School--Students show increased sophistication in persuasive writing, but their narrative mode is still dominant and has been fleshed out in greater detail.

These generalizations show an increase in the complexity of the writing tasks accomplished at various stages of growth. A student's cognitive development, though, underlies the individual student's writing development.

Cognitive Development

Though our secondary public school system groups children according to age rather than developmental levels, there are certain stages of cognitive development adolescents pass through during the junior high years. The influence of Piaget's four intellectual stages of cognitive maturity has caused teachers of adolescence to look more closely at what they are teaching, how they are teaching, and when they are teaching it.
Although not primarily concerned with the sensorimotor stage (birth - 2) or the preoperational stage (2-7), teachers of early adolescents need to be aware of the last two stages: concrete operational (7-11) and formal operational (11-adult) (Freisinger 8). Students at the junior high level are moving "from physical interaction with the material world into the abstract hypothesis about that world" (Freisinger 8).

According to Bereiter and Scardamalia, readers have little conscious awareness of the process going on in their minds, but writers, on the other hand, are "keenly aware" of some aspects of the cognitive process (xiii). The writer may be even more aware than usual if the writing task is especially difficult for him. Andrea Lunsford, in writing about basic writers, notes that many writers cannot transfer skills learned in drills into their own writing because the drills use sentences often beneath the cognitive developmental level of the student (261). As a result, students may do well in drills or exercises and never transfer what the teacher feels they have learned into their own writing. Because of this finding, many researchers recommend teaching mechanics, grammar, and/or spelling through the students' own writings because this writing is produced at their own cognitive levels.

Several writing theorists, including James Moffett, have based their theories on Piaget’s theory of developmental decentering—moving from egocentrism to awareness of a wider audience (Tarvers 10). Although few junior high writers will be mature enough to move through all the stages that Moffett sets up for fictive and nonfictive discourse, an awareness of the progression can be helpful to teachers and students in understanding cognitive development and its effects on writing.
Moffett's stages of fictive discourse begin with the personal expression of poetry and plays and continues through fiction to the abstract level of the essay (Tarvers 10). Randall Freisinger cites Moffett's four nonfictive modes in a sequential order intended to encourage more impersonal forms of discourse as a writer progresses through the stages (10):

1) What is happening (dramatization)
2) What happened (narration)
3) What happens (exposition)
4) What should happen (argumentation)

Moffett's stages of decentering not only follow the desired order of the telling-expanding-writing means of composing (discussed later in this chapter) but also show a close correlation with Aviva Freedman's study of narrative writing discussed later in this chapter in the section on narrative writing. Britton's studies of writers ages 11-18 also show that younger writers begin with the self as audience and move to a wider audience. His criticism of product-oriented writing programs came about as a result of a study which began in 1966 and resulted in the book, *The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18*. His findings showed that adolescent writers were "largely forced to compose transactional writing for an audience of teachers, even if they were cognitively before or past the stage at which such writing was appropriate" (Tarvers 11). Atwell, teaching and writing 20 years later than Britton's research, is still reporting the same information in 1987 in her book *In the Middle*. As far as junior high writers moving into Piaget's fourth stage of cognitive development, Freisinger claims that in the last 10 years (since 1972) there has been evidence that as many
as half of the students from junior high on into adulthood are apparently unable to think abstractly or to process and produce logical propositions (8).

The junior high teacher needs to develop an awareness of the stages of cognitive development suggested by Piaget. Knowing the developing patterns of the adolescent's capacity to reason logically and understand the abstract will enable the teacher to help the young writer move away from egocentric writing into more audience-centered writing.

**Writer-based Prose**

Teachers hope to move young writers from writer-based prose to reader-based or audience-centered prose, but this cannot happen immediately for junior high writers. Junior high students are egocentric. It is difficult for many of them to imagine an audience that they do not know. Especially for those students still operating in Piaget's third cognitive level (concrete operational), writing reader-based prose will present a problem. Flower, in her discussion of writer-based prose, says that writer-based prose is "natural and adequate for a writer writing to himself or herself" (268). The problems begin to develop when there is a necessity to write to a less personal audience. Writer-based prose is egocentric and often uses a narrative framework to present ideas. In reporting information, for example, the writer follows the steps of discovery, giving little attention to the organization of the material to be presented for the readers (Flower 277). Flower suggests that teachers build on the
writer-based prose process--generating lists, writing scenarios--and ignore the reader for awhile (291). She also states that giving recognition to the content generated by writer-based prose writers will instill a confidence the inexperienced writer often needs to keep writing (292). Once writers can write for themselves, teachers will be better able to make the transformation to reader-based writers. Each building block is important in the development of the adolescent writer. Moving too quickly through the necessary stages will not lead to effective writing for these students. Teachers find that students move through the stages of development at different times in the maturation process. For this reason, many educators suggest workshop approaches to teaching writing so students can be allowed to advance at their own pace.

Most teachers used to think a block of grammar was helpful in building this tower of skills leading to becoming a successful writer but have instead found it to be stumbling block.

Unsuccessful Approaches in the Junior High English Classroom

Teaching grammar is one of the most controversial areas associated with the teaching of writing. English teachers tend to teach the way they were taught to some extent. If they learned grammar separately from writing and feel they have a better understanding of the English language and are also better writers as a result of this knowledge, they might be doing the same things in the classroom as their predecessors. It's the old story of "I walked five miles to school as a kid, so...."
Times have changed, though, and research about how grammar should be taught has negated some of the old theories.

Several attitudes toward teaching grammar units in the junior high stemmed from teacher preparation and the nature of the junior high student body. William Coles, for one, says that teachers didn't know how to teach writing to secondary students, and they didn't know that they didn't know how to teach writing (21). Atwell describes the attitude that still prevails among educators about the junior high years. "I'm told that my role is to keep the lid on, consolidate 'basic skills' covered in the elementary grades, and prepare my students for high school, regardless of the logic or appropriateness of the high school program in question. We mark time waiting for somebody's idea of the real thing" (In the Middle 36). She goes on to say that junior high students "don't look at school as a place to get ready for what really matters in life" but rather "look in school for what really matters in life" (In the Middle 37).

Beginning in the late '70s and early '80s, the teaching of writing went through what Bereiter and Scardamalia refer to as the "reform movement" (xv). Freisinger, in referring to Janet Emig's The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, says the shift in consciousness as a result of her work from product to process is the single most significant change in composition pedagogy in the last decade (6). For junior high writers, the emphasis had unfortunately been on heavy doses of grammar with a carry-over in some programs of the elementary spelling workbooks or some other spelling memorization program.
One thing that most researchers agree on is that studying grammar as a separate unit is not a good idea. In 1969, studies showed that the study of grammar as a separate unit was neither meaningful nor successful in teaching writing. Klein cites an observation by Sherwin and others:

After a tally of procedural and other limitations, the research still overwhelmingly supports the contention that instruction in formal grammar is an ineffective and inefficient way to help students achieve proficiency in writing. (77)

In John Flanagan's 1971 book written to outline objectives for individualized learning of language skills at the intermediate level, which includes seventh and eighth graders, the section labeled "Writing Skills" occupies one-and-one-half pages while the section labeled "Grammar Skills" takes up ten-and-one-half pages! It is no wonder teachers in junior high language arts were teaching so much grammar! In the section of Flanagan's book for objectives at the secondary level--grades 9-12--the writing skills section is combined with the grammar skills section under the heading "Writing Skills" with no separate heading for grammar as is shown in the section geared toward junior high (26). The objectives he outlines are typical of the way language arts texts were organized during the '70s.

Since adolescents are generally thought to be more difficult to control in the classroom than primary or upper-secondary students, working on grammar skills at this level became almost a disciplinary measure. Instead of trying to expand the adolescents' minds and work with the attributes of adolescent learners, teachers were fighting them
in the classroom with a one-two punch of coordinate and subordinate conjunctions.

Exercises require less thought and effort to complete in a handbook assignment or on a worksheet for the students than learning these skills through their own writing (Silver 24). Though they complain about exercises, they can quickly copy someone's paper in study hall and probably get about as much out of this "exercise" as did the student who took the time to figure out the answers. In contrast to the grammar-as-writing lessons, Jane Hansen says a writing period should be "a block of time that begins on the first day of school and continues from day to day" rather than a 40- or 50-minute class period one or two days a week squeezed in between spelling, grammar, and reading (6).

Don Smedley, in his book *Teaching the Basic Skills: Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar in Secondary English*, refers to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, style, and even tone as "by products...of general linguistic developments in the secondary schools" (114). He wrote this book after the emphasis in the '60s of teaching writing in the secondary classrooms "seemingly" paid no attention to grammar and mechanics. Smedley stresses the importance of teaching correct English appropriate to formal written work through the student's own reading. As the young writer undertakes more demanding and more varied writing tasks, these tasks force her attention toward what she needs to write about and how she can best express herself (114).

In addition, Freedman found in a 1979 research study that at grades seven and eight, students displayed a breakdown in control of their spelling and punctuation conventions when they went from story writing
to argumentative writing (167). This study shows how these mechanical skills must be incorporated into the teaching of their everyday writing and not treated as subjects for separate units in the junior high language arts curriculum.

Atwell probably summed up the whole problem with teaching writing to adolescents best when she wrote about her own experience in the junior high classroom. "Up until three years ago, nobody wrote much of anything at my school. Nobody wrote because nobody taught writing. Nobody taught writing because nobody was trained to teach writing" ("Writing and Reading Literature" 240). She described the approaches to teaching writing in junior high as either the "skills/drills" approach using a basal textbook, or as a watered down high school "lit crit" approach ("Writing and Reading Literature" 241), neither of which, she says, was successful in teaching writing at the early adolescent level.

The best approach to teaching writing, then, is to teach grammar, mechanics, and other roadblocks to clear writing, through the student's own writing. In this way, the teacher is assured that the problems being addressed are 1) problems that particular writer is having; and 2) problems within the range of that particular writer's cognitive learning stage. In the next section, I will introduce Bereiter and Scardamalia's terms for two broad categories for writers in different cognitive stages.
Knowledge Telling/Knowledge Expanding

Bereiter and Scardamalia, in their text The Psychology of Writing, use the terms "knowledge telling" and "knowledge expanding" to differentiate between two major stages of writing. According to these authors, writers will begin with the knowledge-telling stage and, hopefully, gradually move into the knowledge-expanding stage.

Knowledge Telling

Knowledge telling is common to basic or early writers including some college freshmen writers. In knowledge telling, the writer records words as they are composed in memory keeping the finished writing on a particular topic in the same order as it was composed in memory. There is very little, if any, revision attempted or completed for the knowledge-telling writer (13).

Similarly, John Harris and Jeff Wilkinson, in examining the results of a 1983 survey in Scotland (Scottish Council for Research in Education--SCRE), found that on the secondary level, there was little evidence of any self-initiated writing, and that the major concerns of secondary teachers were to teach their students what needs to be written, not how it is to be written (9). In other words, the teachers were teaching them about writing rather than teaching them how to write.

In teacher-assigned compositions, the norm was that the first formulation of the composition was also the finished product (8). The SCRE was a writing-across-the-curriculum project rather than a study of writing in the English classroom. The results of the study also showed
that seventy-five percent of the writing done in the secondary years is "short-burst" writing (4). Short burst writing is made up of copied notes, dictated notes, fill-in-the-space answers on worksheets, and short answers of one sentence or less. On the primary level, where there was more discussion prior to writing, there was more personal and fictional narrative writing completed, but much of the topic work was frequently copied from sources. According to this research, expanded writing was rarely called for, and since there was little self-initiated writing going on anyway, most of the writing being done was telling-writing.

Oral Versus Written Communication

Writers writing in the knowledge-telling category do not understand or are not even aware that written composition differs from oral composition. These writers think they are writing exactly as they speak and also think that this is how written composition operates. To illustrate the vast differences between the two methods of communication, Emig outlines eleven differences between writing and talking (35):

1. Writing is learned behavior; talking is natural, even irrespressible behavior.
2. Writing then is an artificial process; talking is not.
3. Writing is a technological device--not the wheel, but early enough to qualify as primary technology; talking is organic, natural, earlier.
4. Most writing is slower than most talking.
5. Writing is stark, bare, even naked as a medium; talking is rich, luxuriant, inherently redundant.
6. Talk leans on the environment; writing
must provide its own content.

7. With writing, the audience is usually absent; with talking the listener is usually present.

8. Writing usually results in a visible graphic product; talking usually does not.

9. Perhaps because there is a product involved, writing tends to be a more responsible and committed act than talking.

10. It can be said that throughout history, an aura, an ambience, a mystique has usually encircled the written word; the spoken word has for the most part proved ephemeral and been treated mundanely.

11. Because writing is often our representation of the world made visible, embodying both process and product, writing is more readily a form and source of learning than talking.

These 11 differences are important for the adolescent writing teacher to be aware of when being confronted with classrooms full of students beginning to separate the differences between these two forms of communication for the first time. It might be well to remember that "the teaching of composition is primarily a practical matter. Writing well is learned gradually as an acquired habit, like speech itself" (Miller 40). Walter Ong, in comparing speech with writing says that speech is structured "through the entire fabric of the human person" while writing "depends on consciously contrived rules" (120). Kress compares learning to write with learning a second language. It is still language, but distinct in its own textual forms and genres. He cites sentence structure, for example, as being a function distinct to writing—not a part of oral informal spoken language (8). When adolescents make the distinction between the powers of oral and written
communication, they can begin to understand what Bereiter and Scardamalia refer to as "knowledge expanding."

Knowledge Expanding

"Knowledge expanding" is that kind of writing college freshman composition teachers struggle to teach their students to do. Knowledge expanding may begin with knowledge telling, but as the name suggests, the writing expands. Whereas knowledge telling is barely beyond the stage of oral to graphic expression (Bereiter and Scardamalia 55), in knowledge expanding, writers move from depending on a conversational partner to being able to "converse" autonomously through writing (55). These writers, then, aren't merely writing down oral communication in the absence of a conversation partner; they are aware of audience and purpose in their composing process and revise to achieve this autonomous conversation.

Learning to control writing, separating it from speech, requires concentration on many things experienced writers take for granted. Teachers expect these young writers to give at least some consideration to all of the following:

--Think of something to write about.
--Write in a certain direction.
--Control the space-time dimensions of writing on a flat surface.
--Understand what this medium can do as opposed to the medium of speech.
--Know the relationships between sound and symbols.
--Put these symbols in a particular order.
--Understand how it will be related to the whole composition.

And to top it all off, the young writer is asked to compose to an audience that is probably not even present at the time of the writing.
Britton suggests that rather than concentrate on the development of the writing process from self to audience, seeing different modes of writing in terms of functions makes more sense in the teaching of writing.

**Functions of Writing**

Britton's three major functions of writing--expressive, transactional, and poetic--are referred to by many researchers as ways of categorizing most of the writing done by students. Because early narrative writing is closest to being poetic, I will discuss this function first even though Britton believes that poetic writing comes out of expressive writing.

**Poetic (Narrative) Writing**

Poetic writing is the language of art. It's an aesthetic medium used to create verbal objects (Freisinger 4). The early writer writes poetry and short-stories and, for the ambitious adolescent, maybe a novel. (S.E. Hinton, author of the *The Outsiders*, wrote this novel when she was 15 years old.) "The drive to represent experience as narrative is indestructible," says Harold Rosen (qtd. in Warawa 50). It seems to be widely believed that young writers are more advanced in their ability to produce narrative than exposition.
Quality of Narrative Writing

In 1985, Michael Reed and others researched the quality of writing produced in the three discourse modes—narrative, descriptive, and argumentative—by participants while engaged in another cognitive activity. Sixty-three college freshmen (equally divided among honors, average, and basic writers) were given specific assignments during writing sessions to produce essays on alcohol-related topics fitting into the aforementioned modes. While prewriting, writing, and revising, each timed participant sat in a carrel equipped with a microcomputer programmed to sound a tone at random. Students were to press the red space bar on the microcomputer to stop the sound each time they heard it. The computer measured the amount of time it took each writer to react and shut off the sound. The researchers used this number to determine how "engaged" the writer was in the writing process. If the writer showed less engagement to the writing task and responded quickly to the sound, researchers determined either the task at hand was easy, or the writer (in the case of the basic writer) wasn't involved in the writing task.

The results of the study were broken down into the three discourse modes. Each paper produced was rated on the quality of writing based on complexity and coherence. Narrative writers in all three groups showed little difference in essay quality or engagement. Quality was generally good at all three levels. As a result, this type of writing was determined to be the easiest for all writers in the study. Descriptive writing correlated with more engagement for the average writers who also
produced their highest quality writing at this level. Honors writers, the least engaged while writing in the descriptive mode, also produced quality work, while the basic writers engaged between honors and average writers produced the lowest quality work of the three at this level. Descriptive writing was more difficult for the basic writers than narrative writing.

While writing in the argumentative mode, high-level engagement did not differ for the three groups, but quality dropped dramatically from honors down to basic writers. These researchers then concluded that narrative writing is the easiest form to master, descriptive the next, and argumentative the most difficult (283-297).

If effective narrative writing has already been mastered by most college freshman writers, it would have been developed during childhood or adolescence. Hansen, in her book, When Writers Read (1987), says that in her adolescent classroom, she usually starts with personal narrative to help students gain confidence in their knowledge base and get to know each other in the classroom. Adolescent writers already have a familiarity with narrative writing.

Orally, children can comprehend and generate stories even before they enter school because they receive frequent exposure to the narrative structural schemata from media, books, and conversations (Bereiter and Scardamalia 77). This exposure, though, doesn't guarantee that the children can successfully make the leap from oral narrative to written narrative. It does, however, mean that students are comfortable with narrative structure because of its familiarity. Therefore, this makes a good starting point for early adolescent writers. If they can
tell a story well, whether fiction or nonfiction, teachers can work with students on other writing skills while they are generating texts they can do with relative ease.

Use of Orientations and Codas

In a 1987 study of 13- to 18-year olds, who were analyzed in order to find some differences between their written and oral communication, Christine Sleight studied the use of orientations (beginnings) and codas (endings) in narratives. Participants, selected at random, were given four subtests to reflect their expressive and receptive language abilities.

After language skills were determined for the subjects, they watched the film The Pear Story in small groups and then were asked to write down the story of the movie as if they were writing to a peer. In addition, each subject orally related the story, twice, to unfamiliar peers. Although subjects tended to use few orientation features or elaborate codas in their oral narratives, they used significantly fewer orientations and codas in their written narratives.

Sleight did show that organization of oral narratives, by using effective orientations and codas, may not be necessary when relating a story orally to a peer. On the other hand, effective organization of a total narrative structure would be necessary in writing. Leaving out details of orientation, such as setting, description, or mood, may indicate that more effective writing at the adolescent level could begin with the narrative discourse (169-180). These young writers have been doing narrative writing since their primary years and experience a
maturity in this area compared to other kinds of writing done in junior high (Bereiter and Sardamalia 59). Teachers can build on the skills already mastered, like knowing how to tell a story, and show writers how they can more effectively tell their own stories. This is where the adolescent novel comes to the aid of the teacher. Students can use models from the literature they are reading to develop their own effective stories.

**Narrative--A Workable Starting Point**

Narrative writing doesn't require as much expanding as some other types of writing because in many ways, it is the ultimate telling writing. Because the adolescent isn't hindered by the lack of external signals present in conversation but missing in autonomous conversing (writing) when writing a narrative, the writer often generates more material.

While many young writers even in early adolescence are hampered in their writing by mechanical interferences of putting pen to paper, the telling-writing quality of narratives allows for the success associated with producing the young writers' short stories. Kress agrees that narrative writing is a workable starting point in teaching writing to an early adolescent because the teacher can draw on the child's already established abilities in spoken language (59).

Because narrative writing often draws on well-remembered personal experience, adolescents are often able to write more on paper rather than talk about these experiences face to face when not interrupted by the social restraints of conversation prevalent in adolescence. Writing
expressively about a special feeling may be easier for many at this age than discussing their feelings aloud, thus allowing them an outlet for emotional growth as well as gaining writing practice (Bereiter and Scardamalia 61). However, real-life narratives will be more of a challenge as shown by the study made by Freedman in 1987. In researching writers in elementary, junior high, and high school, Freedman compared imaginative (or invented) and actual-happening stories written by students in grades 5, 8, and 12. Freedman studied developmental differences and differences by story type.

Generally, what Freedman found was that invented stories were more successful if written by the students in grades 5 or 8, but writers in grade 12 were more successful in writing personal narratives. "Rather than simply presenting a good story, they were attempting to illuminate life's mysteries, to define stances in life, to explore paradoxes" (153-169). In attempting to incorporate these more complex themes, these writers were comparatively less successful in telling a good story.

Younger students, on the other hand, were not old enough to successfully relate personal narratives and had greater success with the simpler imaginary episodes. Younger writers also incorporated more action in either story while the older writers tended to incorporate more reaction. Freedman concluded that "the ability to negotiate the demands of story structure as well as the sequence of actual experience is one that is acquired later than the ability to incorporate story structure in invented stories" (167).
If, then, younger writers are more successful than high school students in writing invented narratives, successful narrative discourse must have been mastered at a lower level. Young writers can also learn acceptable formal-writing standards through their own writing during these narrative essays because they will not be concentrating so much on the narrative schema as it is already familiar to most by adolescence.

However, students at the junior high level are capable of moving into higher levels of cognitive development in writing. Children have more natural aptitude for writing than teachers see when teaching in older traditional methods (Bereiter and Scardamalia xv). Because adolescents produce more words when doing narrative writing, teachers might be inclined to want them to stay with the type of writing they can do well rather than move to another developmental level.

Encouraging narrative writing in early adolescence:

-- serves as a time to review primary and elementary writing skills,

-- allows teachers an avenue to teach formal English, and

-- gives students a chance to build their writing confidence before moving into another discourse mode.

If one of the junior high teacher's objectives is to use social motivations recognized as primary to the adolescent, then the function of expressive writing can be a primary motivator.
Expressive Writing

"Given that development in any one of the functions of language tends to promote growth in the other functions, all the basic functions need to be encouraged and continually fostered in every writer—whether the second grader, remedial college student, or professional writer" (Huff and Kline 9).

The function of expressive writing is to use language close to the self. It helps get students in touch with themselves. "Writing expressively for an audience of one is the best ways to explore the self and discover what one wants to say" (Maimon 20). It reveals as much about the speaker as it does about the topic. Many secondary teachers have learned the value of this kind of writing through reading student journals. Roland Huff and Bob Kline are advocates of journal writing in their text The Contemporary Writing Curriculum (1987). Journal writing, they say, gives students, as well as teachers, a chance to listen to the students' natural voices (13). The expressive function is primary in two respects:

1. For young writers, especially children, it is the primary vehicle for acquisition of all the functions.

2. It is necessary for developing the cognitive skills needed for mature writing and thinking in all three functions. (Huff and Kline 9)

Freisinger stresses the importance of using expressive writing prior to learning transactional writing. He says students must get newly-explored subject matter "right" with themselves before they attempt to report or argue their conclusions in public discourse.
(transactional) (9). They can do this by asking questions of themselves: How do they feel about it? How does it relate to their experiences? This connection must be personal.

Freewriting--An Expressive Form

One way of accomplishing this kind of personal expressive writing is through freewriting. Peter Elbow encourages this ungraded/undiscussed writing to be done in 10- or 15-minute time periods. The writer begins writing and continues uninterrupted for a set amount of time. It is important not to stop writing during this period of time, so Elbow suggests the writer write "I can't think of anything to write" or something similar to keep the words flowing onto the paper throughout the set time period.

However, students need to understand the difference between freewriting and writing for an audience other than themselves. Freewriting isn't intended to be a composing method but rather a generating technique or a way to unlock the subconscious and begin making some connections. It's a way to help writers avoid what Murray calls "writing too soon." Huff and Kline say that through freewriting, or what they refer to as "nonstop writing," writers begin to see writing as a process of discovery and exploration (11). Expressive writing produces much more than just private thoughts. For example, expressive writing can generate questions of values, attitudes toward social issues, political opinions, aesthetic responses, and responses that may need to be realized through a transactional or poetic function (Huff and Kline 10).
Freisinger says, "Product-oriented transactional language promotes closure. Its function is to report mastered fact, not to assist learning" (9). Students expand their existing image of the world by connecting their present cognitive structure with new experiences. Expressive writing is a means of making this connection. "Without ongoing practice in the expressive function, a composition course may actually retard cognitive development rather than promote it" (Huff and Kline 10).

**Transactional Writing**

Britton says that writing begins in the self (expressive) and moves toward the transactional or poetic. Transactional writing is geared for a larger audience than expressive writing. It is mainly used to convey information clearly to others as in newspapers, courts of law, technical reports, and school reports. It helps connect students to others. It often requires content outside of the self or personal experience.

Bruce Petersen, however, doesn't agree with Britton's theory that the move from expressive toward transactional or poetic is a move toward the more complex or abstract. Rather, Petersen feels this move is just one toward a different audience (116). It is this lack of knowledge of audience that many college writing teachers feel is a void in their students' composition processes. Larson, in his introduction to William Coles' *The Plural I*, infers that many students who take college freshman English have been encouraged, either directly or indirectly by their former teachers, to adopt a generalized writing style that makes them
oblivious to their role as writer and unaware of any audience or reader of their work. Obviously, this "encouragement" he refers to comes from secondary teachers.

Students doing expressive writing learn how this kind of writing can often become the "raw material" for transactional writing (Huff and Kline 23). Unfortunately, there is an attitude among teachers and a tendency to teach adolescent writers that expressive writing is fun and transactional writing is boring (Huff and Kline 24). This attitude almost totally negates the honest voice students were beginning to find in their expressive writing.

Conclusion

Harris and Wilkinson view the junior high experience and its relationship with writing in this way:

This phase of schooling...marks a stage of development at which children begin to move towards making a range of conscious choices in their writing, to developing different styles and suiting styles to purposes. (xii)

If students become competent writers of narratives and are given time in junior high to find an expressive voice and are encouraged to use it, how do teachers bridge the gap between this honest voice in early adolescence to this generalized, "the public is my audience" voice of later adolescence? I propose that teachers encourage the reading/writing connection to ensure this honest voice. In the next chapter I will discuss reasons for making this connection in the junior high English classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

For the first time, in junior high, most American children are confronted with different teachers for different subject-area content. Even though teaching reading and writing should be a concern of all teachers at every level, when students move into junior high, the language arts teacher is expected to teach these things—often unassisted by teachers in other content areas (Kress 5). Elements associated with language arts should be emphasized in all subject areas, and the following passage illustrates the ludicrousness of limiting these mental operations to language arts:

Recalling, comprehending, relating facts, making inferences, drawing conclusions, interpreting, and predicting outcomes are all mental operations that go on in the head of a non-literate aborigine navigating his outrigger according to cues from weather, sea life, currents, and the positions of heavenly bodies. Not only do these kinds of thinking have no necessary connection with reading, but they have no necessary connection with language whatever. (Moffet and Wagner 123)

Nevertheless, if the burden of teaching reading and writing and all the other skills associated with doing this is on the language arts teacher, it's important that the teacher understands that separating the teaching of writing from the teaching of reading is "detrimental to work in both areas" (Horner 1). The teaching of reading and the teaching of writing must go hand in hand. "The writer is always reading and the reader is always writing" (Comley and Scholes 99). Students who read well will write well, and students who write well will read well. They are so interrelated that often times it's difficult to even separate the two.
"The major connection between reading and writing is the constructive mechanism in the mind that acknowledges both the form and substance of what is being read or written" (Smith and Dahl 4). Reading provides the writer with a "sense of how to communicate in writing" (Smith and Dahl 2). Through writing about reading, the student becomes more interested in the act of reading and writing.

In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of bridging the gap between reading and writing, some problems encountered in this process, and the importance of making sure that the reading done in and out of the English classroom is relevant for adolescents in helping them make their own connections.

Bridging the Gap

Winifred Horner, editor of the book, Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap, put together this text in an attempt to close that gap that still exists between the two. She says, "In reality, literature and composition cannot be separated either in theory or in teaching practice" (2).

Reading and writing are interconnected; in fact, they build on one another. James Marshall says, "Writing about reading should provide students with an opportunity to enrich and embellish the meanings they have tentatively constructed, coming to a fuller possession of whatever the text may hold" (31). In addition, teaching reading and writing together is "mutually beneficial" to one another. Vocabulary, organization, phrasing, and techniques of clarity, for example, can be
taught equally from either medium (Smith and Dahl ix). Teaching reading and writing together not only involves the reader in the text but gives him something to write about (Scriven 118).

Teaching reading and writing together is not a new theory. In 1938, Louise Rosenblatt discussed the value of blending reading and writing. Her view is that perceptions begin in emotions. In order for response to take place in the first place, students must read literature that causes strong responses in them. Rosenblatt suggests the readers write down their responses, discuss them with a group, and then reconsider and revise their views (Brookes 82). In choosing literature that works well to evoke strong responses, Gerry Brookes suggests that the literature must present people and predicaments like those students would encounter in their lives. If the situations seem real for the readers, then the writing that students produce will seem more genuine (83).

Adolescent literature presents people and predicaments adolescents can clearly identify with and can lead them to respond genuinely—with their honest voices. There have been, however, some problems identified when teaching reading and writing together, but most of them are not hindrances on the junior high level.

Some Problems with the Bridge

Bridging the gap between writing and reading may be a problem in college teaching, according to Maxine Hairston, due to political as well as pedagogical problems, but those problems are not the current difficulty in secondary schools (White and Wright 102). Karen Scriven,
also presenting arguments against reading and writing in the composition classroom, says that combining them would be difficult due to the limited reading experience of many college students (116). Again, this is not applicable for the junior high student because the introduction of the adolescent novel for many students will not only expand their limited reading experiences but also will eventually help them in their college writing because through reading, they will be gaining a larger knowledge base.

Scriven also argues that teaching literature and writing together limits the focus of the writing that can be done in the college classroom (117). In junior high, much freedom to go beyond critical analysis is possible because of the subject matter presented in the adolescent novels. These novel's topics become springboards to all kinds of writing--from letter writing, to career searches, to research papers.

Another argument presented is that in a literature class, certain interpretations of literature are not acceptable. If literature and writing were taught in the same class, teachers would be grading writing ability and the development of that ability based on the interpretation of the piece of literature (Scriven 117). In junior high, students can use their writing skills to discover what the text is saying to them. There are no wrong answers. Teachers encourage students to think about what they read--a valuable skill for any age level.

One final argument Scriven presented would need to be dealt with in junior high. She says that using literature to encourage writing may be treating literature as nothing more than exposition, which could
belittle the importance of both reading and writing (118). Teaching the importance of each while interconnecting them is also an important consideration on the junior high level, but neither need be diminished in connecting reading and writing.

Learning Writing from Reading

"It takes a reader to make a writer. Nobody can write better than he or she can read, for we must all read our own writing even as we produce it." (Hirsch, "Some Principles of Composition from Grade School to Grad School" 51). E.D. Hirsch goes on to say that literature, reading, and writing, must be seen as one subject rather than three (52). Unless teachers start seeing them as one subject, students will have a very difficult time seeing the reading/writing connection.

Wayne Booth calls his reading-writing connection approach, "Litcomp" (71). Students studying reading and writing together are building up their own mental files of rhetorical resources. These files become active through regular writing assignments (Booth 71). It's important that students continue to build their knowledge bases in both the areas of reading and writing. Those who don't, often have nothing to write about.

Wayne Booth and Marshall Gregory say beginning writers who claim they get bogged down in the writing process trying to find the right word are actually confusing "their intuitive sense that they have something to say with the false sense that they already know precisely what that something is" (17). These writers actually need clearer ideas
and intentions. As Bereiter and Scardamalia discovered in questioning children, their main problem in generating texts is not having the content in the first place (62).

Edward Corbett encourages writing teachers to assign texts that not only promote understanding but also provide pleasure and stimulation. He goes on to say:

The English teacher who feels comfortable only with belletristic texts is not likely to be contented or even an effective teacher of the kind of reading and writing our students will have to deal with as citizens of the world. (180)

Students having difficulty finding topics to write about can often find topics in literature—images, stories, values—a number of things that intersect their lives more often than teacher-assigned topics (Crews 165). Studies have shown that knowledge about a topic is in direct correlation with fluency in writing.

**Domain Knowledge/Discourse Knowledge**

In relating discourse to content, Deborah McCutchen studied the contribution of domain knowledge to writing. In other words, do writers write better on topics they know well? More specifically, McCutchen wanted to find out if high-knowledgeable writers could overcome the linguistic complexities of writing and produce better texts or could proficient writers with little knowledge of a given topic produce better texts. These two concepts can be divided into the content component or what is being discussed, and the discourse component or how the content is being discussed.
McCutchen screened approximately 300 children in grades four, six, and eight in three urban parochial schools by giving each a 30-item completion test over football knowledge—terminology and rules of the game. Five high-knowledgeable and five low-knowledgeable students were then selected from each grade level. All participants had similar reading abilities.

The students wrote papers on football and non-football topics. Texts were analyzed for complexity of language use, coherence, and organization. Results showed that regardless of grade, students produced more coherent texts on topics in which they were considered knowledgeable.

McCutchen concluded that content knowledge did play a significant role in the kinds of writing produced. Students wrote better on topics they knew well. The texts they produced were more coherent and fluent (431-444).

Most teachers reading the results of this study will not be surprised. The point is, are the students aware of this connection? Do they need help in making this reading (domain knowledge) and writing (discourse knowledge) connection?

If young writers have access to and learn to give order to their content, many of their writing problems may be solved (Bereiter and Scardamalia 64). Adolescent novels represent the kind of reader-based prose many adolescent readers already turn to indirectly for this knowledge. In reading about people, places, and situations that interest them, they may make the connection between reading and writing naturally if nurtured in the classroom.
A Natural Connection

Atwell claims that adolescents make the connection between reading and writing in a natural way. "Their knowledge of genre is more subtle and more accurate than the definitions and distinctions I used to make kids memorize" (In the Middle 237). She goes on to say how much more meaningful learning terms like plot, character, and setting are to the students who learn the meaning of these words through discovering the concepts in the literature they are reading and then transferring them into the stories they are writing. Robert Probst feels this connection is much more meaningful to the students when they are able to discover it for themselves ("Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum" 26). As Probst points out, it is much more important twenty years after reading a metaphor or a simile to remember the effect the language had on one's life then, rather than to remember the definition of either term ("Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum" 28).

If teachers teach about literature, students often lose the opportunity to experience literature because they are occupied with memorizing names, dates, places, and terms (Probst, "Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum" 26). "Without realizing it, we wrest control away from the children and place roadblocks that thwart their intentions. Then we say, 'They don't want to write. What is a good way to motivate them?'" (Graves 219).

The story should be just as much a part of the reader as it was a part of the writer (Anton 52). Hillis Miller takes this observation a step further and talks about the theory behind this concept:
Writing is composition, putting words together in the right order so they will produce a certain effect on the reader or accomplish a certain end. This is rhetoric as persuasion. It works by synthesis. Reading, on the other hand, is decomposition, deconstruction, the analysis or untying of the links that bind a piece of language together so that the reader can see how it works and make sure he has grasped its meaning correctly. The act of reading well seems, then, to go in the opposite direction from the art of writing well. Reading is not rhetoric as putting together, composition, but rhetoric as taking apart, the study of tropes, decomposition.... No skillful composition is possible without that prior act of decomposition practiced through reading models of composition by others. (42)

One type of model that adolescents naturally seek out is the adolescent novel. As pointed out in Chapter Two, for the past twenty years, the popularity of the adolescent novel has been growing constantly for adolescents and teachers and librarians who have contact with adolescents.

Adolescent Literature as the Catalyst

Adolescent literature is right for the students now—in early adolescence. It is not a bridge to something better or a substitute for "better" literature for the poor readers; instead, it offers a real literary experience. Probst says, "To be always preparing and never doing, is a mistake" (Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum 29). If adolescent literature is not presented as real literature in the classroom, then teachers are robbing the students of the potential to make some critical judgments about this literature students are reading
in and out of the classroom (Probst, "Adolescent Literature and the English Curriculum 29).

As Theodore Hipple points out, adolescent literature is the best choice for early adolescents for several reasons (22):

1. There's more of it now to choose from and the list of good texts grows constantly.

2. It has continued to improve as a subgenre of contemporary fiction—a genre specifically written for young adults.

3. These texts deal in immediate ways with today's adolescent problems—things the kids want to read about.

4. Adolescent novels are typically shorter than other novels traditionally read in junior high. For this reason, less able readers aren't so intimidated with the size.

5. Several adolescent novels have been made into movies and after-school television specials, thus allowing the students to enjoy them visually as well.

6. If these students go on to become lifetime readers because in junior high they were not only allowed but encouraged to read adolescent novels, they will help the next generation—their own children—become readers also.

Adolescents are interested in issues significant to them. Adolescent literature "has the virtue of addressing itself to matters in which the students are likely to take an interest and thus to stimulate the effort to 'actualize,' or to make meaning out of the text" (Probst, "Mom, Wolfgang, and Me" 35). Students will not be interacting with texts if they don't encounter situations in their reading that are of interest to them during early adolescence.

Hipple suggests studying adolescent novels in place of or alongside of Huckleberry Finn or Great Expectations. It is just as easy to teach
the elements of a novel with adolescent literature as it is with the classics; besides, more students will be reading and understanding the class discussion because fewer will be experiencing reading difficulties (23). He goes on to say that students are less bored and less mystified by adolescent literature. It is important that teachers keep students reading. What the students are reading should not take precedence over that they are reading (23). "NCTE to You" in the English Journal (1988) says:

The study of literature is a complex process in which readers engage a text and integrate meaning into their own experiences. The student thus attains meaning that is far more significant than a fixed body of knowledge. (np)

A fixed body of knowledge is an adolescent novel or a classic. One of the best reasons to read adolescent novels in the classroom is because the meaning is more significant to adolescent readers. These young readers are capable of integrating these meanings into their own experiences. For example, in Chris Crutcher's Running Loose, the protagonist must make a decision concerning his future in football. He's a very good high school player. In fact, he has a chance to play college ball if he plays the way the coach tells him to play. The coach wants him to cheat to win. How many of his own principles will he have to compromise to play the way his coach is encouraging him to play? This conflict is relevant to adolescent readers. This is similar to a real decision a reader may be making or be called upon to make in the future whether he's an athlete or a musician preparing a contest piece.
Adolescent Novels--Bridges to Writing

When students are reading and understanding the text, they begin to allow the teacher-centered classroom to become student-centered. If the teacher always activates the topic for discussion or writing, young writers won't be able to do for themselves what skilled writers do--"select content in the light of goals" (Bereiter and Scardamalia 69). Writing may provide students with the opportunity to learn more about a topic in the very act of composing (Marshall 30).

If students come up with topics for papers based on the novels they have read, they learn to think for themselves. Allowing for discussion of several ideas on one theme helps students to realize there is no single way to think--no single way to begin telling about literature through writing. They are free to choose whatever seems the natural starting point for their ideas. This eliminates the worry or frustration over teaching the essay form. Writers can begin with an incident, a quote, a question, a thesis statement, or an observation (Sears 8).

Jim Corder's Ninth Law of Composition is "Everything comes from somewhere and goes someplace" (13). He relates this to reading and writing by saying that when you read a book, you take it into your world. The book moves into your thoughts, "giving texture to the universe you live in, becoming finally the words you speak" (13). The best way for students to make some meaning for themselves out of the text is to have them respond to the text in writing.
To begin with, this writing could be underlining, circling, writing questions in the margins—a participation with the writer as students are reading. Even prior to class discussion, formulating ideas in writing gives the students time to think about their own responses before they become swayed or overshadowed by peer response (Probst, "Mom, Wolfgang, and Me" 37). Anton agrees: "Nothing blocks real thought more than a group's superficial agreement on a particular idea" (53).

Once the students become interested in the text and begin reading it, they can begin responding to the text based on their own experiences. When given the chance to read adolescent novels, students are motivated to make sense of the text for themselves because they are reading about characters relevant to them, about situations close to them, and about problems that might lie before them. Adolescent literature helps writers make this natural connection.

Helping Writers Make the Connection

All writers borrow from their heritage, which is made up of everything they've ever been told, experienced, or read for themselves. The more material that is available from their heritage, the more they will connect with this knowledge when writing (Atwell, In the Middle 241). "Elementary school students who read only the voiceless committee prose of basal readers don't borrow, nor do secondary school students who read only the prescribed canon of anthologized 'classics'" (Atwell, In the Middle 241).
If students are not reading the assigned classics, then the classics are just texts. They only become literature when the texts pass through the readers' minds (Probst, "Mom, Wolfgang, and Me" 33). Probst goes on to say, "It is only in minds of readers that a word becomes more than ink..." (33). If students aren't reading the assigned classics, some have probably caught on to the secret of Cliff Notes. Probst equates "reading a text" through Cliff Notes with reading the review of the movie rather than experiencing the viewing ("Mom, Wolfgang, and Me" 34). Students are, in fact, "encouraged" in their reading of those abbreviated texts if the only purpose they can see in the assigned reading is to extract the highlights of the text.

Flynn encourages the use of writing if for no other reason than to make the reading more "purposeful" (141). This writing is not fill-in-the-blank writing or even short-answer writing, but response writing. Dissecting literature and testing over details will not lead to a better understanding of writing or reading; instead, it may only make the students better trivia experts.

It's important for teachers to keep adolescents reading at this age. Gone are the reading contests of elementary schools and other gimmicks that once worked well. It's not popular in the junior high to be overly concerned with academic "stuff." Adolescent novels have a built-in incentive—they deal with the "stuff" that does interest kids this age. If we can't keep them reading, their writing will suffer. As Richard Lanham says, "If the schools' curriculum (secondary) is not restored, the colleges' curriculum will continue a patchwork of short-term remediation and long-term confusion" (26). Some of the
problems with college freshman English classes stem from the lack of reading the students have done prior to high school graduation.

Helps Writers Understand the Connection

Walter Ong says there is no way to write unless you read a lot (132). Even on the college freshman level, though, teachers often present reading assignments in the average college freshman writing-reading anthology as objects. The student, if she reads the assignment, often answers the questions in class discussion or at the end of the text but never equates this reading assignment as being a piece of writing (Comley 193). The reader often is blind to the fact the literature provides the best models of language (Buckley 371).

Moreover, E.D. Hirsch claims that you cannot have linguistic literacy without cultural literacy ("Reading, Writing, and Cultural Literacy" 145). He defines cultural literacy as "that knowledge that enables a writer or reader to know what other writers and readers know within the literate culture..." (146). Because writing conventions are not formal but changing through changes in our culture, one cannot keep up with the changes without reading (147). Where do early adolescent students acquire cultural literacy except through reading—reading something meaningful to them?

Nancy Comley believes our educational system has been working at "cross-purposes" by teaching reading and writing separately (193). Getting the reader actively involved with her reading through written response has proven to be an effective way to study the interrelationships between an individual's reading and writing processes
(Comley 193). If readers only read and don't write about what they have read, they may become manipulated by the text (Comley and Scholes 99).

One of Atwell's eighth graders in a letter to her teacher says:

One of the best things you've done for me is you've opened books up, almost like dissecting something in science. I think I enjoy them more now that I can understand and appreciate what the authors have done. For me, writing and reading are starting to combine. When I finish a book, if I can go back and picture different parts, I know the author added many details and descriptions. This is something I try to do with my own writing. ("Writing and Reading Literature from the Inside Out" 247)

This young girl has discovered the reading/writing connection. Because her teacher never tried to separate the two forms of communication and, in fact, was fully conscious of the connection, the student appears to learn the connection by herself, therefore, making the learning more meaningful for this adolescent.

Conclusion

With all this reading and writing that could be going on in the junior high classroom, there is no reason to stick in a unit on grammar. Grammar shouldn't be taught anyway without using student writing. Students can't write well enough to produce anything meaningful without a context base. Students can't acquire a context base without reading. Teachers can't get them to read if they are not interested in the reading assigned. Students will not be interested if the subject is not relevant. It's not relevant unless it fits into the realm of the adolescent world. Since adolescent novels are written specifically to
speak to the concerns of the adolescent reader, adolescent literature is the obvious choice for teaching language arts in the junior high classroom.

Responding in writing to reading that has significant interest to early adolescents, texts like adolescent novels, encourages writers to use their honest voices in their writing.
CHAPTER FIVE: KEEPING THAT HONEST VOICE

Children use honest voices in their writing naturally. At the junior high level, voice becomes stifled because students become so caught up in the mechanics of writing that they often begin writing voiceless prose—that writing Macrorie calls Engfish. Voice also becomes stymied because the material students are asked to read and/or write about is irrelevant and meaningless.

Younger children don't seem to have the problems adolescents have with voice. They are less apprehensive socially, and more trusting, so they naturally write in more honest voices. When reading children's writing, one can usually recognize it as such; however, the kinds of expressiveness and ease in communicating real feeling is that which is often associated with more experienced writers with literary talent (Bereiter and Scardamalia 5). Elementary children's honest voices are not hampered by social circumstances or lack of trust in their teachers.

Trusting the teachers they are writing for is important in developing voice (Sedlacek 51). Adolescence is a time of apprehension. Students are putting the toys on the shelves and beginning to realize that interaction with human beings is more interesting than interacting with their Barbie dolls or G.I. Joe figures—but it's much riskier! Students must feel secure enough with their writing teacher to "uncover their voices" (Sedlacek 51).

Creating honest voices comes naturally when students write about things they care about. In this chapter, I will define voice, in order to emphasize the importance of this element in all writing. I will also
discuss teaching voice in the classroom and the problems inherent in that quest. I will conclude with the assumption that if students are allowed to read adolescent novels that deal with subjects relevant to their own lives, they will uncover their honest voices despite social pressures beyond the control of the classroom teacher.

What Is Voice?

Voice is an abstract concept difficult to define. Donald Murray defines voice as "the force that drives a piece of writing forward, which illuminates the subject for the writer and reader" ("Write Before Writing" 58). He uses an interesting analogy to illustrate voice as being like water coming out of an outdoor faucet. If there is no hose attached, it just splatters all over the cement below the spigot. If you attach a hose, you can give the water force and direction. Voice is that hose. Nancy Bunge refers to using voice in writing as having trust in oneself and in the world (xii). Voice reveals the writer's attitude toward the piece of writing.

In helping adolescents keep those natural, honest voices they had in elementary school, teachers must realize the importance of voice, some of the problems encountered in teaching and learning voice, and why getting students' trust is paramount before their students' honest voices begin to re-emerge.
The Importance of Voice

How important is voice in writing? Thomas Moore and Joseph Reynolds call it a writer's "strongest asset" (7). If a paper is mechanically clean, well organized, and deals with a manageable and interesting content, voice is what gives it character. In other words, voice is the personality of the piece. Someone you meet may be outwardly attractive, have a pleasing figure or shape, a pretty or handsome face, and be able to carry on an interesting conversation, but without those elements that we call personality—sense of humor, conviction of character, courage, and sensitivity—this person has little depth. So it is in using an honest voice in writing. Teachers can teach organization, content, and mechanical correctness, but how do we teach voice? How do we show students how to put soul into their papers—that inner being? How do we get the net over Engfish?

Teaching Voice

Teaching the concept of voice to adolescent readers is difficult because many in the junior high have not passed into the cognitive level of understanding abstraction. It is not impossible, though, as one of Atwell's eighth-grade students aptly illustrates in this journal entry:

During in-school suspension I read two books, both by Jim Kjelgaard, one Lion Hound, the other Big Red. I liked Big Red best because the writing got me really into the book. Like sometimes I read a book and just see the pages. But when I read a good book I see right through the pages and into the
Voice involves a writer playing a role and the relationship this role has with an audience reading that particular writing (Sedlacek 48). A character in one of Philip Roth's novels (The Ghost Writer) defines voice as something that "begins at around the knees and comes through the top of the head" (Moore 7). Voice allows students to express themselves, i.e., to be understood by readers in the way that they want to be understood. Gary Sedlacek says that writers "properly using voice are simultaneously in control of and a part of their creations" (50).

Voice in writing also contributes to the coherence and consistency of the text (Comley and Scholes 102). Not only does presence of voice suggest that there is a real person behind the written words, but use of voice also helps writers keep a consistent attitude toward their work. Unvoiced prose is usually diffuse and dull (Comley and Scholes 102).

Problems in Teaching Voice

Voicelessness in writing is a special problem often faced by teachers of college freshman English because "students have undergone prior training designed to purge them of all impulses toward individuality" (Comley and Scholes 102). Part of the problem stems from the egocentricity of this age group, but part of the problem is also a result of classroom instruction from English teachers. Students encouraged by teachers in writing "free" compositions often confuse the quality of voice praised in one piece of writing as being valuable for another piece of writing for a different audience or purpose. Students
need to try out different voices and find ones appropriate for different writing situations (Comley and Scholes 102).

Booth says that if students aren't encouraged to try out different voices, and then receive criticism about whether or not the one they choose for a specific task is appropriate, they won't discover the various voices available to them for various audiences (68).

Some other hindrances to learning voice include teaching writing genres and stressing mechanical correctness too soon in the writing process. Kress believes that genre shouldn't be stressed in learning to write because eventually the genre comes to control the young writer (11). Students must also know that they can use syntactically complex language to express their honest voices rather than less complex language just to avoid making mistakes (mechanical errors) in their writing (Huff and Kline 11).

Adolescents cover up their voices for social situations where an honest voice might be too embarrassing, too revealing. Some teachers use private writing, journal writing, or other forms of expressive writing as ways to help students discover their own voices. "Experienced writers are always working to discover what they think, while student writers often seek conformity to an external idea of what someone else wants (Maimon 120). Huff and Kline stress that the rehearsal of "inner speech" is essential (30).

Murray suggests that voice comes out of silence--from the students themselves. He says it's time to stop telling students what they must write about, that giving up this control is the only way to help
students find a voice from within themselves ("Writing and the English Curriculum: Out of Silence a Voice" 13-19).

Adolescent Literature and Voice

Poet Diane Wakoski stresses the importance of reading before voice can be addressed as a writing concern: "I would rather work with a student who has read a million poems and isn't in touch with himself because it seems much easier in this society to help a person get in touch with himself than to get in touch with literature" (Bunge 134).

Peter Sears prefers literature as a catalyst for writing over personal experience or a familiar social issue because students know that literature is separate from them (8). They can discuss ideas and concepts that may concern them, due to the nature of the adolescent novels' themes, and still be talking about someone else.

Because students often find adolescent novels written in honest voices, these novels can work well in the classroom as model voices for students to emulate. Students can learn from the voices they hear authors and characters using in the novels. Voice helps internalize young writers' attitudes toward their subjects in their own papers.

Conclusion

Adolescent literature deals with significant issues and provides content for adolescents to write about. When writing about issues significant to them, adolescents tend to write in honest voices. These
voices will vary according to the purpose and audience, but a variety of writing encouraged in the classroom allows students to discover different voices within themselves. Writing not only allows students a means of finding their voices but a way of making their voices heard (Fulwiler and Young Introduction). This value-forming activity is perhaps the most personally and socially significant role writing plays in our education. Implementing the adolescent novel provides the content to promote compositions written in honest voices in the junior high.
CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Early adolescent students expect all questions to have answers. Teaching writing through literature teaches students that every question does not have an answer because literature imitates life, and life asks lots of unanswerable questions. Literature is as much a mystery as life itself. Searching for answers through writing in response to literature not only helps adolescents understand what they've read but also helps them understand themselves better. Poet Richard Wilbur says:

When one is dealing with young writers, ... you're hoping that the young writer will write a good story or a good poem ... and will be successful coming to terms with the world by way of the common means of language. (Bunge 181)

How to come to terms with the world might have been an appropriate title for this final chapter on adolescent writing, but since that sounds a bit philosophical, I've named it "Implications for Teaching."

In this final chapter I will introduce some suggestions for teaching the adolescent novel, for teaching writing in the junior high, for teaching voice, and for making the connection between reading and writing a reality in the classroom. I will close with a mention of hypermedia and its possible influence on the future of understanding the writing process of adolescents.
Implications for Teaching the Adolescent Novel

When introducing an adolescent novel, it is very important to discuss a concept important to that particular novel, and then "sensibly sequence" texts to develop depth rather than breadth of knowledge about literature genres (Smith and Hillocks 45). For example, a class reading contemporary realism novels dealing with father-son relationships might begin with *A Day No Pigs Would Die* (Peck) and then read something like *Football Dreams* (Guy) and compare the father-son relationships in the two adolescent novels. In comparing the relationship each son has with his father, students can discuss how each author presents the relationships to the readers. How are they the same? How are they different? It is important that young readers discover similarities between characterization and theme in different stories (Scriven 118).

Using *A Day No Pigs Would Die* as a further example, teachers can stress content knowledgeability by studying aspects of the Shaker religion (an important element in the novel) and relating the Shakers' general beliefs to the identity confusion Richard goes through from the beginning to the end of this novel. Geographical location of setting, time period, and other factors that students can learn through research or discussion, greatly add to the depth students can go into with an easy-to-read novel. In addition, the study of dialect (poor, rural, Eastern farm boy) can become a subject of an internal "grammar lesson" and lead to a discussion of formal and informal language and their places in composition.
In sequencing, teachers should also be aware of what content is being studied in other classes. For example, Hadley Irwin's *I Be Somebody* could be assigned as students are studying the post Civil War period in America. Students often are unable to make the connection while reading history that the people who shaped our history were real people. Often times literature studied in conjunction with history can help students understand how laws, wars, and other major factors influenced real people's lives.

Sears suggests building up reading skills and reader's confidence first with what he calls "easy" books (4). Easy books are well within the range of the early adolescent's reading skills yet are interesting and challenge the early adolescent to think. Even remedial readers are able to make connections between reading and writing when reading adolescent novels. Marie Dionisio recalls one of her remedial readers calling *Rumble Fish* (S.E. Hinton) an "addiction to action" in his response to that particular novel (37). A teacher building on this response can find other novels filled with action to interest a reader drawn in by that kind of novel.

**Keeping Up with the Students**

In order to sequence novels for individual students, for the novels not read by the entire class, teachers need access to information about the kinds of novels available for all the diversified readers in any classroom. Ideally the teacher should read every novel her students are reading for class. Depending on the teaching load, however, that may be very difficult. Luckily, there are several companies publishing guides
for popular adolescent novels for teachers who don't have time to read 25 or 30 adolescent novels a week. Candles and Mirrors: Response 
Guides for Teaching Novels and Plays in Grades Six through Twelve, by 
Albert Somers and Janet Worthington, is one such book. Even if the 
teacher has found time to read the individual novel, a book like Candles 
and Mirrors gives suggestions for reading and writing for several novels 
and plays as do other guides for teachers on the market.

Besides books about adolescent novels, monthly journals can greatly 
benefit the busy teacher. The School Library Journal, a monthly 
publication familiar to many secondary school librarians, is an 
excellent source for the language arts teacher in keeping abreast of 
adolescent books. Also, the English Journal has a section in its 
monthly publication called "Books for the Teenage Reader" that can help 
the teacher keep current on what's available for adolescent readers.

Eliminates Busywork

Reading the adolescent novel as a literary text helps teachers get 
away from the workbook type of approach students may have been subjected 
to in elementary school (Comley and Schoes 106). Atwell in her book In 
the Middle discusses how she taught reading and writing together in a 
workshop atmosphere. Of this approach, Atwell says, "I'm certain it's 
more appropriate than what typically happens in junior high English 
classes" (18).

Secondary teachers responding to Atwell's book comment on how this 
approach has worked in their own classrooms. One woman teaching in a 
middle school in New Mexico writes, "Responding to students about
literature is so much more rewarding than correcting workbooks or book reports" ("Teachers in the Middle: Can Nancie Atwell Be Cloned?" 49). Another teacher responding from California comments on the increasing volume of reading and writing done by her students when using Atwell's approach. "Never in our wildest dreams as junior high English teachers did we assign so much work and in turn receive such a positive response" ("Teachers in the Middle: Can Nancie Atwell Be Cloned?" 50).

Students See Relevance

Much of what is relevant in teaching lexical and grammatical features of the language is so only when it is seen in context (Harris and Wilkinson 188). To help students better comprehend what they have read and then to transfer that learning into their own writing, Michael Kennedy suggests creating plays from adolescent novels. His high school class made Cormier's *The Chocolate War* into a one-hour production. Students see the necessity of identifying theme, character, plot, and dialogue relevant to their production. Sitting down with a class and reading through the student-created script can be an incredible learning experience. Lines that aren't clear or written in the wrong voice are immediately identifiable to the students. Students rehearsing as the characters for several weeks have clearer insights into the individual characters' qualities and ways of thinking that they can share with the group. It's a good opportunity to work on basic English skills and at the same time end up with a product students can take pride in (63-65).
Beginning the year with high-interest, easy-to-read novels with less complicated characters and plots, the teacher can begin to develop a base for a reading and writing program.

**Implications for Teaching Writing**

More experienced writers, like English teachers, sometimes forget how complicated writing can be for the early adolescent. Even the genre students choose or are assigned to write in makes a difference as to their ability to generate texts. Letter writing and story writing are genres that adolescent students can excel in (Bereiter and Scardamalia 65), making them choice areas for the writing teacher to "sneak in" grammar, spelling, and punctuation lessons. Hipple gives other suggestions for writing assignments: letters to authors and characters, diary entries, sample dialogues between characters, sketches of scenes the author could have included but did not, alternate endings, obituaries for characters who die, and advertisements for the book (27).

Some other suggestions are making minor characters into major characters, making the plot begin where the original ended, adding a new character, highlighting a different theme, going from a serious tone to a funny tone or vice versa, writing the theme or plot as a poem, and changing the setting.

"Engaged students write better essays," claims Sears (8). If they have read the story, they can easily generate more material, but they can still get bogged down with using "proper" essay form. Young writers are contending with form and content constantly while composing an
essay. His suggestion is to have form follow substance. Sears goes on to say, "Students don't like the essay because they are taught what it is supposed to be before they have any idea what it can be" (8). If they don't even realize that putting words together in certain ways can change people's opinions, then an essay to them is possibly just a collection of words.

Getting early adolescent students to switch from their elementary writing style of mere text generation to one where they begin seeing writing as a process can be frustrating for the teacher as well as the student. In order for students to think more consciously about the writing process itself and be aware of the goal of a given piece of writing, Bereiter and Scardamalia (71) suggest teachers might try two approaches in their teaching of composition:

1. Give the students the final sentence of an essay or story and have them write to that pre-given end.

2. Give some choices of abstract planning elements like reason, example, or conclusion, and have students generate texts with one of the planning elements in mind.

"The kind of thinking set in motion by an ending sentence is much closer to compositional planning than is the approach children carry over from conversation" (Bereiter and Scardamalia 75).

Since most adolescent readers and writers are familiar with the narrative element, this can be a starting point for further development. Students can reorganize the narrative element in a book or chapter they have finished reading. They might do such things as increase the number of episodes, withhold an episode to make more of a mystery, reorder the
action to discover the effects, or change the point of view of the narration (Harris and Wilkinson 190).

Another teaching suggestion is to use film terms to explain different writing techniques. All students have been exposed to film, whether on television, in the theaters, or even in the classroom. In going over a draft with a student, Huff and Kline suggest using terms like close up, rolling camera in, focus, establishing shot, etc., to explain things that might work as well in writing as they do in putting together an effective film (20). To carry the film analogy one step further, the teacher can be seen as the director rather than the editor—an important notion for students to understand. Students can "hire" peers as editors and occasionally the director may take on the role of editor for important technical (mechanical) points (23).

Teaching writing skills in conjunction with the study of selected adolescent novels can develop the familiar narrative discourse mode into the descriptive (expressive) mode, and eventually incorporate the higher-level skills necessary in argumentative writing, which depends on knowledgeability of content and use of formal reasoning. Once the narrative discourse mode is mastered through discussion of the text, or compositions written to simply retell the story (or chapter) in a writer's own words, or perhaps an original short written narrative, the class is ready to move on to another mode. This progression can also work for students reading novels of their choice and writing in unassigned modes.

Using the same novel (The Day No Pigs Would Die) as an example, students on the junior high level should have little trouble recounting
the action in the first chapter (narrative mode). In the descriptive mode, they could write an essay describing the injuries Richard (the main character) receives or compare and contrast the mother's treatment of the boy with the father's treatment of Richard after his accident. As the novel progresses, so can the level of writing skills introduced.

By the end of the novel, students might describe (expressive) what happens (narrative) after the father's death (funeral preparations, neighbors' activities, Richard's discovery in the barn), and then evaluate (argue) Richard's reaction to any of these happenings as compared to the readers' reactions. If they were in his place, would they do the same thing? Are these normal reactions for a boy his age?

Students begin to see the interrelationships of their skills. They feel successful having read an entire novel and then being able to communicate about it through writing. These feelings can be very beneficial to their sense of self-confidence—a very important factor at this age. In addition, students need to understand why reading and writing should be interrelated.

\textbf{Implications for Understanding the Reading/Writing Connection}

Students are often left "in the dark" when it comes to the business of writing. The purposes of writing often remain unexplained (Tamburrini et al. 199). Bereiter and Scardamalia believe that knowing why students do some things while writing is not only essential for the teacher but also can greatly help the students in improving their writing processes when they, too, are aware of things researchers study.
In empirical studies using writing protocols, often researchers gain insight into student processes, but if young writers were also given a chance to discuss this research conducted on them, they might have a clearer understanding of how their own minds function during writing. (322).

Many students don't have a sense of purpose in their writing processes. For example, often teachers do not make it clear why the material generated in planning prior to composing does not become part of the final composition. If students are told why they are asked to do things and get a chance to examine their own writing protocols, they often show improvement in reading comprehension and writing competence (Bereiter and Scardamalia 322). "Children learn more when they construct their own knowledge than when they listen to us construct ours" (Hansen 80).

Enlisting student help in gaining understanding of student texts is what Bereiter and Scardamalia refer to as "coinvestigation" (327). Asking questions of student writing like "Did I miss something?" or "Did you mean to say this here?" can show students how readers read their texts and allow the young writers to become more assertive in responding to such questions (327). Involving students in the writing process is a less manipulative approach to teaching writing. Coinvestigation is holistic learning. "Every new detail is a potential challenge to our understanding of the whole" (Bereiter and Scardamalia 335). Students only imitating are superficial writers (Bereiter and Scardamalia 363). The result of this superficial writing is voicelessness.
Implications for Teaching Voice

James Marshall, doing research with secondary students in the San Francisco Bay area, found that the process of writing essays was at times for students an exercise in fulfilling their teacher's expectations rather than an occasion for thinking through the literature they had read. One student Marshall interviewed says that to get a good grade on an essay, "know the teacher's favorite topic from the list and pick it" (58). This kind of approach definitely leads to voiceless writing.

Voice, an abstract quality, is important to all effective writing and needs special attention in junior high. Moore and Reynolds, in their article, "The Letter: A Practical Way to Teach Voice in Writing," suggest the letter format as one of the best ways to teach voice (7). Using personal letter writing as a way for students to discover voice is a most "comfortable and natural" way to get this concept across to students (7).

To help students to begin to understand voice, they might write a letter to a character they have met in an adolescent novel while role-playing another character writing that letter. In that way, students not only must have a good understanding of two characters in their reading but also may begin to understand that the things they chose to write about depend on the character written to and the character they pretend to be. They could change their voices and become characters applying for jobs. While doing this, they can not only learn the format of the business letter but also must know the character well
enough to know what kind of job he or she would apply for. Characters might write to other characters explaining an action or change in mood or attitude. The result of this letter would show the teacher how well the students are understanding character motivation.

Harris and Wilkinson also recommend letter writing as a way to teach six particular dimensions of writing (201):

1. Audience awareness
2. Relevance of content
3. Sequencing of information
4. Degree of formality
5. Purpose of communication
6. Conventions of a particular type of writing

The letter is generally a short piece of writing easily handled by early adolescents. Because all six of the above-listed dimensions can change for any given assignment, students have the opportunity to vary any one or more dimension for any given effect. Not only could this lead to an understanding of voice, but using the letter also allows students to write to one audience in particular, the teacher.

Although teachers can capitalize on this opportunity in junior high to get to know students personally, unlike ungraded or uncorrected journal entries often assigned for the same purpose, a letter can be evaluated on material, organization, mechanics, and voice.

Although the letter isn't the only way to teach voice, the format of letter writing is one familiar to students in early adolescence and is a good place to begin bringing their attention to the importance of voice in writing.
Implications for Teaching the Reading/Writing Connection

"Literature and composition should not have to compete in the same classroom" (Corbett 183). They are "fidgety rivals" and are really more taxing on the energy of those attempting to separate the two as they are on those who see they "can and do complement one another" (Corbett 183). Collaboratively student and teacher can investigate goals.

John Harris and Jeff Wilkinson found in their research that a typical classroom discussion is controlled by the teacher asking the questions, the students answering the questions, and the teacher confirming or rejecting the responses (Initiation-Response-Feedback). These researchers blame this sequence for much of the failure in relating reading to writing. Since writers need to learn to ask their own questions in order to generate material for an essay, the Initiation-Response-Feedback pattern doesn't allow students any practice in doing this (194).

One type of writing that can aid teaching writing through literature is descriptive writing and the recall of detail. As students recall details of given characters in a novel, they can note how details used for descriptions were developed and use them as models for writing character descriptions of a classmate or to develop characters in a short story or novel they are creating. They might draw on the developed details to originate an ending to the novel different from that of the author (Smith and Dahl 101).

Students can write comparisons of their own town, home, or school setting with those detailed in the novel they are reading. They could
use the material generated in this assignment to begin their own short stories. In paying close attention to detail, faster readers who think reading is a "speed contest" can be slowed down (Smith and Dahl 104). For many students, knowing why detail is important, knowing why they should read different kinds of reading material at different speeds is not only unclear but something some teachers rarely try to explain to the students.

In order to successfully teach the reading/writing connection, teachers, as well as students, must see the interrelation of the two and understand that separating them into different units is detrimental to learning how to read or write effectively.

**Implications for the Future**

Discovering how students learn may be aided in the near future with the help of hypermedia. Hypermedia works from a "stacking" approach. The user can get below the surface of any text by calling up relevant material at any given time. For example, when reading a poem set in the Civil War, immediately information about the Civil War can be at the researcher's fingertips by calling this information to the screen. If the poem mentions an Irish tune, within seconds, the researcher can have this tune played through her computer using hypermedia.

This newly developed computer-controlled approach is being developed through existing student approaches to reading and writing and will be available in the classroom to help students research.

"Hypermedia offers heretofore unheard of opportunities to gain insight
into the ways young people perceive, process, and use information" (Vandergrift 35).

However, students can use the concepts behind hypermedia in the classroom without a computer by using their own reasoning and learning processes. If each student responds to the same passage or chapter in writing and then brings this to a small group to share, the students can discover their own processes involved in getting from the text to the understanding of that passage or chapter.

Conclusion

Although things that work for one teacher in the classroom may not work for another teacher, there are several generalizations concerning teaching writing through the adolescent novel. First of all, students learn better in a student-centered atmosphere where they feel they have some input into the learning. Giving the students some choice in reading selections and freedom to write about topics that are meaningful for them can be very beneficial in improving the kind of writing these early adolescents are capable of writing.

Second, giving students choices in their own reading and writing encourages more of both. Students who are good readers are good writers. Students who enjoy reading and writing will do more of both. Students who read and write will encourage their own children to do the same, and thus, this knowledge can benefit generations to come.

Third, making reading and writing relevant to adolescents is important in helping them find out who they are and how they fit into
this world, and the adolescent novel has proven its relevance in this respect. The adolescent novel gets non-readers reading and keeps them reading through the junior high years and hopefully on through life. The adolescent novel deals with themes that are truly relevant to early adolescents. Novels have been written on almost every subject meaningful for this age group.

And fourth, a secure classroom environment and a trust in the teacher is inducive to an honest writing voice. Teachers can begin to build trust by getting to know their students through interest inventories (Appendix C 108, Appendix D 109). Showing a genuine interest in students can often be reflected in written responses on essays, journals, and letter exchanges. Allowing students to make choices in the language arts classroom also helps build trust.

It's time to look seriously at the junior high years as a time of transition in the stages of writing development.

Not many students entering college have had the experience of having their writing seen as a subject, of having taken it very seriously themselves or of having had it taken very seriously by anyone else. (Coles 114)

Keeping in mind that the subject rated "interesting" by the fewest number of students at the junior high level was English (Goodlad 120), it's time to revamp the way we look at writing in the junior high.

If we stop looking at junior high as just a transition from elementary to high school, and stop looking at the adolescent novel as just a bridge to something better, and start looking at the reading/writing connection as a positive approach to teaching writing in
the junior high, perhaps students will begin writing in the honest voices they once used in elementary school—all by themselves.


### APPENDIX A


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<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>Newton</td>
<td>I Will Call It Georgie's Blues (1983)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ghosts I Have Been (1977)</td>
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<td>Plath</td>
<td>The Bell Jar (1971)</td>
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<td>Potok</td>
<td>The Chosen (1967)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richards</td>
<td>Under 18 and Pregnant: What to Do If You or Someone You Know Is</td>
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<td>Segal</td>
<td>Love Story (1970)</td>
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<td>Silverberg</td>
<td>Lord Valentine's Castle (1980)</td>
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<td>Sleator</td>
<td>House of Stairs (1974)</td>
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<td>Interstellar Pig (1984)</td>
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<td>Strasser</td>
<td>Friends Till the End (1981)</td>
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<td>Swarthout</td>
<td>Bless the Beasts and Children (1970)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vinge</td>
<td>Psion (1982)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voigt</td>
<td>The Homecoming (1981)</td>
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<td>Issy, Willy-Nilly (1986)</td>
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<td>The Runner (1985)</td>
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<td>A Solitary Blue (1983)</td>
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<td>Walker</td>
<td>In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (1983)</td>
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<td>Webb</td>
<td>Selma, Lord, Selma (1980)</td>
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<td>Wersba</td>
<td>Run Softly, Go Fast (1970)</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Deathwatch (1972)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Pigman (1968)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Wilson Library Bulletin, November 1988
APPENDIX B

FAVORITE ADOLESCENT FICTION

The following booklist was compiled by Nancie Atwell's students during their eighth grade years. On a scale of 1-10, the books listed below all received a rating of 9 or 10 from at least three students. She suggests this list for an in-class library (In the Middle 273-275).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Books</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Douglas Adams</td>
<td>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louis L'Amour</td>
<td>The Daybreakers; The Sackets; Shadow Riders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran Arrick</td>
<td>Steffie Can't Come Out to Play; Tunnel Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean M. Auel</td>
<td>Clan of the Cave Bear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie Babbitt</td>
<td>Tuck Everlasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice Bach</td>
<td>The Meat in the Sandwich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Betty Bates</td>
<td>Love is like Peanuts; Picking Up the Pieces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter S. Beagle</td>
<td>The Last Unicorn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jay Bennett</td>
<td>The Birthday Murderer; The Dangling Witnesss; The Executioner; The Long Black Coat; The Pigeon; Say Hello to the Hitman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judy Blume</td>
<td>Deenie; It's Not the End of the World; Then Again, Maybe I Won't; Tiger Eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lori Boatright</td>
<td>Out of Bounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Bonham</td>
<td>Cool Cat; Durango Street; The Nitty Gritty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mari Brady</td>
<td>Please Remember Me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sue Ellen Bridgers</td>
<td>Home Before Dark; Notes for Another Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terry Brooks</td>
<td>Sword of Shannara; Elfstones of Shannara; Wishsong of Shannara</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Buchanan</td>
<td>A Shining Season</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia Clapp</td>
<td>Jane Emily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beverly Cleary</td>
<td>Jean and Johnny; Fifteen; The Luckiest Girl; Sister of the Bride</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hila Colman</td>
<td>Accident; Boy Meets Girl; Claudia, Where Are You?; Diary of a Frantic Kid Sister</td>
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<td>Ellen Conford</td>
<td>Hail, Hail Camp Timberwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbara Conklin</td>
<td>P.S., I Love You; Falling in Love Again</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Cormier</td>
<td>After the First Death; I Am the Cheese; The Chocolate War</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maureen Daly</td>
<td>Seventeenth Summer</td>
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<td>Milton Dank</td>
<td>Game's End</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paula Danziger</td>
<td>Can You Sue Your Parents for Malpractice?; The Cat Ate My Gymsuit; Divorce Express; The Pistachio Prescription; There's a Bat in Bunk Five</td>
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<td>Lew Diatz</td>
<td>The Jeff White Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lois Duncan</td>
<td>A Gift of Magic; Down a Dark Hall; Chapters; Killing Mr. Griffin; Ransom; Stranger with My Face; Summer of Fear; They Never Came Home;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Eddings</td>
<td>The Third Eye</td>
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<td>Pawn of Prophecy; Queen of Sorcery; Magician's Gambit; Castle of Wizardry; Enchanter's End Game</td>
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<td>June Foley</td>
<td>Love by Any Other Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Frank</td>
<td>Diary of a Young Girl</td>
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<td>The Freedmans</td>
<td>Mrs. Mike</td>
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<td>Paul Gallico</td>
<td>The Snow Goose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean George</td>
<td>My Side of the Mountain</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Goldman</td>
<td>The Princess Bride</td>
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<td>Bette Greene</td>
<td>The Summer of My German Soldier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruce and Carol Hart</td>
<td>Sooner or Later; Waiting Games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Hautzig</td>
<td>Second Star to the Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann Head</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nat Hentoff</td>
<td>Does This School Have Capital Punishment?; Jazz Country; This School Is Driving Me Crazy</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Hersey</td>
<td>Hiroshima</td>
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<tr>
<td>S.E. Hinton</td>
<td>The Outsiders; Rumble Fish; Tex; That Was</td>
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<td>Then, This Is Now</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isabelle Holland</td>
<td>Hitchhike</td>
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<td>Irene Hunt</td>
<td>The Lottery Rose; No Promises in the Wind; William</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.E. Kerr</td>
<td>Gentlehands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen King</td>
<td>Christine; Cujo; Pet Sematary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Kjelgaard</td>
<td>Lion Hound; Savage Sam; Big Red; Irish Red; Outlaw Red; A Nose for Trouble</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harper Lee</td>
<td>To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madeleine L'Engle</td>
<td>The Arm of the Starfish; Meet the Austins; The Moon by Night; A Ring of Endless Light; A Swiftly Tilting Planet; The Young Unicorns; A Wind at the Door; A Wrinkle in Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ursula K. LeGuin</td>
<td>A Wizard of Earth See; The Tombs of Atvan; The Farthest Shore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Lipsyte</td>
<td>The Contender; One Fat Summer; Summer Rules; Summer Boy</td>
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<td>Jack London</td>
<td>Call of the Wild; White Fang; Sea-Wolf and Other Stories</td>
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<td>Lois Lowry</td>
<td>Autumn Street; Find a Stranger, Say Good-bye; A Summer to Die</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doris Lund</td>
<td>Eric</td>
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<td>Mary MacCracken</td>
<td>Lovey; A Circle of Children</td>
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<td>Kevin Major</td>
<td>Hold Fast</td>
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<td>Harry Mazer and Norma Fox Mazer</td>
<td>The Last Mission; The Island Keeper; Snowbound; The Solid Gold Kid; Taking Terri Mueller</td>
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<td>Farley Mowat</td>
<td>Never Cry Wolf; The Dog Who Wouldn't Be</td>
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<td>Barbara Murphy and Judie Wolkoff</td>
<td>Ace Hits the Big Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walter Dean Myers</td>
<td>Fat Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff; Hoops</td>
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<td>Won't Know Till I Get There</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Nathan</td>
<td>Portrait of Jenny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joan Lowery Nixon</td>
<td>The Kidnapping of Christina Lattimore; The Seance</td>
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<td>Sterling North</td>
<td>Rascal; The Wolfing</td>
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<td>Robert C. O'Brien</td>
<td>Z for Zachariah</td>
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<td>Scott O'Dell</td>
<td>Kathleen, Please Come Home; Zia</td>
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<td>Zippy Oneal</td>
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<td>Fancine Pascal</td>
<td>Hanging Out with CiCi; My First Love and Other Disasters</td>
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<td>Katherine Paterson</td>
<td>Bridge to Terabithia</td>
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<td>Ira Peck</td>
<td>Midway</td>
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<td>Richard Peck</td>
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<td>Stella Pevsner</td>
<td>And You Give Me A Pain, Elaine</td>
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<td>Susan Beth Pfeffer</td>
<td>About David; The Beauty Queen; Marty the Kid; A Matter of Principle; Starring Peter and Leigh</td>
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<td>Wilcox Davis Roberts</td>
<td>Summer of the Monkeys; Where the Red Fern Grows</td>
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<td>Arthur Roth</td>
<td>Don't Hurt Laurie!</td>
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<td>Marilyn Sachs</td>
<td>Against Incredible Odds; The Castaways; The Iceberg Hermit; Trapped; Two for Survival</td>
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<tr>
<td>J.D. Salinger</td>
<td>The Catcher in the Rye</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judith St. George</td>
<td>Haunted</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Sleator</td>
<td>Blackbriar; House of Stairs; Into the Dream</td>
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<td>Robert Specht</td>
<td>Tisha</td>
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<td>Todd Strasser</td>
<td>Friends Till the End; Rock 'n' Roll Nights</td>
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<td>J.R.R. Tolkien</td>
<td>The Hobbit; The Lord of the Rings; The Silmarillion</td>
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<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>Huckleberry Finn; A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court; Tom Sawyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Tyler</td>
<td>Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant; Searching for Caleb</td>
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<td>Cynthia Voigt</td>
<td>Building Blocks; Dicey's Song; Homecoming; Tell Me if the Lovers are Losers; Solitary Blue</td>
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<td>Jean Webster</td>
<td>Daddy-Long-Legs; Dear Enemy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbara Werbsa</td>
<td>Tunes for a Small Harmonica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob White</td>
<td>Deathwatch; Frogmen; The Survivor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Zindel</td>
<td>Pardon Me, You're Stepping on My Eyeball; The Pigman; The Pigman's Legacy; The Undertaker's Gone Bananas</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

INVENTORY OF READING AND WRITING INTERESTS

Complete the following sentences. Please respond freely.

Reading is ____________________________________________

Writing is ____________________________________________

I could read more often if ____________________________________________

I would write more often if ____________________________________________

I enjoyed reading ____________________________________________

I enjoyed writing ____________________________________________

I like to read when ____________________________________________

I like to write when ____________________________________________

I'd rather read than ____________________________________________

I'd rather write than ____________________________________________

Smith and Dahl, Teaching Reading and Writing Together: The Classroom Connection. (32-33)
APPENDIX D

INVENTORY OF READING AND WRITING HABITS AND INTERESTS

Please answer the following questions.

1. Do you have books of your own? How many?

2. Do you read to or with someone at home?

3. What do you like to read about?

4. What is the title of your favorite book?

5. What do you read besides books?

6. What would make you want to read more often?

7. What would encourage you to write more often?

8. Do you have a place where you can go to write or to read?

9. What kind of writing do you like to do?

10. If you were to write your own book what would you write about?

Smith and Dahl, Teaching Reading and Writing Together: The Classroom Connection. (33)