The English Teacher’s Companion
SECOND EDITION
The English Teacher's Companion
A Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession
SECOND EDITION

JIM BURKE

HEINEMANN
Portsmouth, NH
For my father

For my essential companions:
    my wife, Susan,
    and our children, Evan, Whitman,
    and Nora

And for all English teachers—past,
    present, and future
It appears to me natural that you should tell me, as a companion, what you decide, in order that I may not be caught unprepared, for I also have to travel.

—Father Fablo Font to Juan Bautista de Anza, while visiting California in 1776

Without companions, the world is a sea of stories with no one to listen.

—Kelsey Parker, student, Burlingame High School
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Our work is hard but enthralling. Teaching demands constant energy, imagination, and an ability to juggle a vast array of responsibilities. I know of no better way to keep heart and continue to grow in my role as a teacher than to collect companions with whom I journey. I am most alive and creative as a teacher when I am connected to others who affirm me, share my passion for this work, and provide a stream of ideas and questions that challenge me to continue learning about what it means to be a better teacher.

Pulled apart, the word “companion” derives from *com* for “with” and *pan* for “bread.” Etymologically, a companion is the person with whom you share bread on a journey; a companion is a messmate, a comrade, and a fellow sojourner. In my own journey as a teacher, I cherish those people and resources that help me do my best and most inspired work. Their presence in my life helps beat back those forces that would exhaust me, deplete me, or leave me feeling too lonely to be fully present for my students. In my own journey, I know of no more stalwart and genuine companion than Jim Burke. He is a “messmate” and cherished companion and this book, the second edition of *The English Teacher’s Companion*, represents an essential resource for a teacher’s journey.

In envisioning teaching as a journey, I imagine trekking through terrain that is at times breathtakingly sublime, at other times hardscrabble desert, and at others rolling vista. As I traipse through these varied settings, I want Jim Burke’s book in my rucksack. It’s an indispensable and eminently utilitarian resource: part Boy Scout Handbook chock full with common sense and practical suggestions, part Audubon Field Handbook providing vivid illustrations and a complete catalogue of what is essential to know about the teaching of English, and part meditation in that it provokes us to think about the serious questions and grander purposes of our work. It is an essential companion for all of us who care about bringing young people into relationship with reading, writing, and ideas. This book is my messmate, my companion because . . .

*Companions share their own lives with us:* Companions don’t preach, they don’t proselytize—they know better than to offer glib and simplistic advice because they trudge in the world with you. This is a book written by a teacher for his colleagues and companions. What makes this book such a compelling and useful resource is that to read it is to be invited into Jim Burke’s classroom and to be given access to his teacher’s planning book and his students’ work, and
into his teacher’s heart. He shares the triumphs and challenges of his work and does so in a way that both affirms our experiences and provides new ways of thinking about what is familiar. Jim’s grounded, practical sense of the classroom permeates these pages. He hefts chalk for a living and the wisdom he shares, the lessons he describes, the challenges he faces, and the student work he showcases represent the yield of his own journey. The sharing of his life and work represents an act of special generosity.

Companions act as patient guides: From the conceptualization of curriculum, to the tending of relationships with students, to staying clued in to the legal and ethical responsibilities we have as professionals—we weave vast and expansive webs as teachers. There is much to miss and the value of a true companion is to be available to point out what we don’t know and to teach us carefully how to make our practice more complete. The organization of this book provides a road map for developing a full and comprehensive practice. From developing a writing program, to organizing a system for the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, to embracing the promise of digital literacy, Jim helps us understand core concepts and then provides us with examples, vignettes, and concrete suggestions for adopting new ideas and practices in our own teaching. The consummate guide, Jim deepens and broadens our understanding of what it means to teach by showing us the vast range of what is possible while simultaneously offering us detailed instructions on how to get there ourselves.

Companions give us what we need so we can become better at what we do: Chapter 24 of this book begins, “I was not born organized.” There is a bit of wisdom in this opening that evokes the essence of this book. We none of us are born English teachers. We grow and develop over time and become expert through association with mentors, models, colleagues, and companions. Our practice is an amalgam of ideas, lesson plans, methods, techniques, and philosophies we pick up on our travels. I’m reminded of Woodrow Wilson’s comment, “I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow.” As a teacher, I’m always borrowing and scavenging in an effort to become better at what I do.

Walk with Jim Burke through his classroom, hear his students, read their writing, sit with him as he plans his lessons, and listen in as he thinks through the issues vital to the profession. This is the gift of a companion: a desire and willingness to open and share their life and wisdom with you. That is the gift of this book.

Sam M. Intrator
Smith College
Acknowledgments

If it is difficult to know a man, find out with whom he associates. You will then know him.

—YUGOSLAVIAN PROVERB

This book would not exist if it were not for my editor and friend Lois Bridges. She is the ultimate companion to any writer. Along with Lois, Lisa Leudeke at Heinemann suggested it was time for a new edition of Companion. I’m grateful for their invitation and continued support of my work.

Sam Intrator, then a doctoral candidate from Stanford, walked into my room in October 2001 and stayed the rest of the year to talk with me about teaching and learning. His relentless efforts on behalf of this book, my fourth-period class, and my own learning are blessings for which I will always be grateful. I’m also grateful to him for agreeing to write the new foreword to this edition.

My students have always been and will always be my most important teachers and the source of my deepest joy as a teacher.

I would like to thank the following people, who read and, through their comments, improved the book in those ways or areas indicated:

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At the end of the year during which I first wrote this book, three of my most important mentors—Bill Robinson of San Francisco State University, Pat Hanlon of Lowell High School, and Bill Clawson of Santa Monica High School—retired after a combined career of more than one hundred years of teaching English. I thank them for all they taught me.

Without my essential companions—my wife, Susan, and our three children, Evan, Whitman, and Nora—I would never have had the strength to write this book. They give me the energy not only to teach but to live and learn. Their continued support for my work as a teacher and a writer makes everything possible.
Introduction

Every time we consult a source, we join, and by joining, sustain a conversation that may be decades, even centuries old.

—WAYNE BOOTH, GREGORY COLOMB, AND JOSEPH WILLIAMS, THE CRAFT OF RESEARCH

This book is predicated on the assumption that you have:

- Thirty-five students with different abilities, attitudes, and inclinations, some of whom do not intend to go to college and most of whom come from different backgrounds than the person sitting next to them
- One computer in your classroom that is connected to the Internet and, like mine, sometimes does not work well or at all
- Pressure coming at you from all sides to improve students’ writing and reading performance in measurable ways
- Students who can, though do not always choose to, learn
- A personal life that includes family and friends with whom you want and need to spend time doing things you love
- A desire to be not only a teacher of English but a mentor, a coach, and a master of your subject area through ongoing efforts to learn and improve your own knowledge in this subject area

We do a lot; in truth, more than most. Several years back a company asked me to write a job description of what a high school English teacher does. I no longer have it, but the job the company described was worse than dull; it was meaningless, lacking all the meat of our work. I’ve thought often about what I do as an English teacher now that I am also the school’s reading teacher. I frequently find myself wanting to have my reading students do something, only to realize that their English teacher is or will be doing that. So I’ve had to reflect on what my job entails. The following documents provide a useful comparison:


1. Instruction—The reading specialist supports, supplements, and extends classroom teaching, and works collaboratively to implement a quality reading program that is research-based and meets the needs of students.
INTRODUCTION

2. **Assessment**—The reading specialist has specialized knowledge of assessment and diagnosis that is vital for developing, implementing, and evaluating the literacy program in general, and in designing instruction for individual students. He or she can assess the reading strengths and needs of students and provide that information to classroom teachers, parents, and specialized personnel such as psychologists, special educators, or speech teachers, in order to provide an effective reading program.

3. **Leadership**—The reading specialist provides leadership as a resource to other educators, parents, and the community.

NATIONAL BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS
“EARLY ADOLESCENCE/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS” (2002)

### Preparing the Way for Productive Student Learning

1. **Knowledge of Students**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers systematically acquire specific knowledge of their students as individuals and use that knowledge to help develop students’ literacy.

2. **Knowledge of the Field**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers know the field of English language arts and how to teach it to their students.

3. **Engagement**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers engage students in language arts learning and elicit a concerted academic effort from each of their students.

4. **Learning Environment**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers create a caring and challenging environment in which all students actively learn.

5. **Equity, Fairness, and Diversity**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers are committed to the celebration of diversity, practice equity and fairness, and use a variety of texts to promote opportunities to learn acceptance and appreciation of others.

6. **Instructional Resources**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers select, adapt, and use instructional resources to develop student literacy and further curriculum goals.

7. **Instructional Decision Making**—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers set attainable and worthwhile learning goals for students and develop meaningful learning opportunities while extending to students an increasing mea-

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sure of control over setting goals and choosing how those goals are pursued.

Advancing Student Learning in the Classroom

8. Reading—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers promote reading development by ensuring that their students read a wide variety of texts and develop strategies for comprehending, interpreting, evaluating, and appreciating those texts.

9. Writing—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers provide instruction in the skills, processes, and knowledge needed for writing to ensure that their students write effectively across many genres and for a variety of purposes and audiences.

10. Listening, Speaking, and Viewing—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers develop students’ skills in listening, speaking, and viewing in many ways and for many purposes.

11. Language Study—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers teach students to gain proficiency in language use and strengthen student sensitivity to appropriate uses of language.

12. Integrated Instruction—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers integrate learning and learning activities within the English language arts classroom and across the disciplines.

13. Assessment—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers use a range of formal and informal assessment methods to monitor and evaluate student progress, encourage student self-assessment, plan instruction, and report to various audiences.

Supporting Student Learning Through Long-Range Initiatives

14. Self-Reflection—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers constantly analyze and strengthen the effectiveness and quality of their teaching.

15. Professional Community—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers contribute to the improvement of instructional programs, advancement of knowledge, and practice of colleagues.

16. Family Outreach—Accomplished Early Adolescence/English Language Arts teachers work with families to serve the best interests of their children.
INTRODUCTION

I continue to teach full time and have no plans to leave the classroom. I’ve taught English for thirteen years and teenagers for sixteen, having begun my career teaching students with special needs. My teaching assignment, as with many teachers, changes each year, an experience that allows me to work with and learn from kids at all grade and ability levels. When I wrote Reading Reminders I had five sections of college prep sophomores (170 students). While I wrote the first edition of Companion, I taught three sections of junior college prep English and two sections of freshman honors English. The last two years I have balanced my load between several sections of reading classes (for whom I created a program called ACCESS) and freshman honors English. As with many others in my district, I have had to take a SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) course, an experience that helped me better meet the needs of my English language learners through my teaching and my books. Finally, over the last few years I have had ongoing conversations with teacher educators and student teachers who use this book; I have made an effort to include in this edition those suggestions that seemed most useful.

Books like this too often imply that perfection is only a page away if you just do what the author says. The truth of the classroom tells us otherwise: improvement, even excellence, is more of a process than a promise. You don’t just “do literature circles” and have it all come out just right; you teach a draft of it, make a bunch of mistakes, and learn from those mistakes by reflecting on what you did, asking the students how you could improve it, and talking to colleagues about how they use such techniques. In other words, you are always traveling toward better, having begun where you are. My role, one I’m honored to play, is to help you make that journey from the teacher you are to the one we are all trying to be. Your role is to do the same for your students, beginning where they are and moving them toward that place just ahead, a little way up the road, where they will turn, see all you did, and say, “Thank you.” Let the conversation continue.

Jim Burke
2003
Introduction to the First Edition
Learning to Embrace the Complexity

I teach high school English. Every day I leave my house in San Francisco and drive down to a lovely school in a small town named Burlingame, where I’ve made my home with the hundreds of kids I’ve taught. Room 82 is a special place; I am reminded of this each morning as I enter the hall and see the different students squatting around my door, books cradled on their knees while they munch bagels and drink coffee, something I would never have thought to drink at that age. Then again, these kids work harder in a week than I did in all four years of high school combined.

Of course, not all my students arrive at school at seven o’clock to study and help each other. In fact, most of my students are just waking up at that hour. Mine is a school made up of many communities, because it draws from the whole peninsula south of San Francisco. This means that my American literature class, for example, has kids whose parents could buy the school and others who clean the houses of their classmates. It also means that I have students who could read *The Color Purple* in a weekend, and others who won’t even try, who will watch the video, search the Web, consult their trusted friend Cliffs Notes.

This is why I love English, though. Just like poets charge our senses by taking different words and rubbing them together to see what fires they can make, so do I like to watch what happens in my classes, where one student writes about his friends in prison and the girl next to him writes about her daddy the judge who put them there. When we add stories to the mix, when we start talking about “‘Mericans,” as Sandra Cisneros calls us, and what such words mean, kids’ heads start shaking and nodding, and pretty soon we have an actual conversation going on in the classroom, a conversation that might carry out into the halls and follow them through the day and continue when they get home and keep talking—to their parents, friends online, or to me through their writing.

*The English Teacher’s Companion* strives to help you create such a community in your classroom by offering you ways to organize your curriculum around such essential conversations; it also provides practical methods to create the necessary intellectual and emotional environments in your class that will allow such important discussions to take place. Sometimes English asks us to juggle so much so fast that new teachers wonder how they can possibly do it all, let alone do it well.

These organizational and instructional challenges have fascinated me from the beginning of my career. The solutions I outline in this book
INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

grew out of my own classroom experience and personal reflection. I'd love to say you can plug-n-play them, just open this book and go to a particular page and solve whatever problem drove you to seek guidance. This book does offer concrete advice. Scanning through, you will see many pictures and bulleted lists that offer examples and activities to help you teach better tomorrow.

However, this book is based on the fact that we only improve if we embrace and reflect on our errors. To this end you will find, at each chapter's end, "Reflections," which are meant to be used for your own personal writing, or as class assignments for a college course. In addition to these topics, each chapter ends with an activity and a recommended text or texts that I hope will provide further insight into the chapter's main idea.

This book, anchored in standards as it is, aspires to achieve the same level of thoughtfulness that I reach for every day in my classes. The table of contents for this book reads like a syllabus for a course we never graduate from, because our work never stands still: we teach in the midst of complexity and uncertainty every day. When my sixth period convenes, and I find all the wonderful lessons that worked so well in third and fourth period disintegrating in my hands, I find it exciting, rather like live theater: What will happen? Will we rise above our fatigue and frustration today and walk out of class as interested as did those in a previous class period?

This book recognizes, in fact it embraces, the inherent complexity of our enterprise. What else can I do when the poem that elicited immediate deep discussion in fourth period puts students to sleep in fifth—that is, until Frank asks whether it's true that you can cut your nose off and still smell things. Then he continues, actually linking his observations about the poem (Marge Piercy's "Barbie Doll," in which a girl commits suicide because she is not beautiful in the eyes of her peers) to how he was treated when he first came to the United States. It's an opening and we take it, writing and talking, listening and thinking as we go.

When the bell rings and they stumble out of class, homework assigned, I measure my success—and theirs—by Tony's conclusion that the poem was "hella sick," by which he means very good and interesting. It's not the measure of success I learned when I was in college, but then again the theories I heard in college didn't always take into consideration the practice of the real class. The English Teacher's Companion offers a solid bridge between those worlds of theory and practice, built as it is on the foundations of what works to help teachers develop in their students those literacies essential to success in life.

My love of literature lives alongside my commitment to the world of work our students must enter. To deny the importance of either of these
would ignore what my own experiences have taught me. My father dropped out of high school when he was seventeen but prospered in the printing business because he developed the skills and literacies he needed to succeed. My involvement with educational reform has further convinced me that these different worlds can live alongside each other, even complement each other. Finally, my experiences teaching special education, learning to speak Arabic and live in a culture different from my own, working with students in advanced and remedial classes, have convinced me that there are ways to reach and succeed with all our students.

I feel as though I have spent the past twenty years preparing to write this book. I hope that it will help you succeed with the type of student I was (very bad) and the type of student I have since become (as evidenced by this book). Every article I have written now seems a draft that led me deeper into these issues and trends, the practice and problems of teaching English in high school. Every opportunity I’ve enjoyed reminds me now of Rilke’s notion that everything is a preparation for that one love we will come to accept as our true blessing. My students are and have always been my greatest blessing in this work; what they, as well as my colleagues, have taught me fills this book. They have been my companions these many years, teaching me what they need as writers, how they read, what matters to them most as people. It is now my turn to be your companion, to help you as I am able by sharing with you what I know about teaching English.

Welcome to the conversation.

Jim Burke
San Francisco
1998
Teaching Reading in High School

The Continuum of Possibilities

In every literate society, learning to read is something of an initiation, a ritualized passage out of a state of dependency and rudimentary communication. The child learning to read is admitted into the communal memory by way of books, and thereby becomes acquainted with a common past which he or she renews, to a greater or lesser degree, in every reading.

—ALBERTO MANGUEL, A HISTORY OF READING

Our world changed with the advent of the personal computer, with the Internet, with television, with the expansion of corporate culture and its training manuals filled with standardization procedures. The world demands that we read more: contracts, directions, rules, applications, and other informational documents. This change became startlingly apparent to me one day while I sat in Starbucks having a cup of coffee. I noticed two young women in Starbucks aprons, each of whom had two three-inch-thick binders, complete with laser-printed tabs and indexes. They were navigating their way between the two complicated texts, the pages of which contained a combination of marginal information, graphs, diagrams, and words. When I asked them if they had to read all that just to make me a latte and serve me a scone, they both rolled their eyes and sighed yes.

How prepared are our students to do such reading? Our society and the workplace demand more reading than ever; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores and findings by Jeff McQuillan (1998) suggest students overall are reading at least as well as they did in the past. Yet our own experience in the classroom tells us that students need to read much better if they are to prosper. And a Public Agenda study (2002) found that professors and employers were overwhelmingly dissatisfied with students’ basic skills. In an era of film adaptations, Cliffs Notes, and the Internet, I worry that students will learn how not to read a book better than they learn how to read one. We sort through a growing number of documents that fill our mailboxes every day—complicated prospectuses of investment programs, retirement programs, health insurance systems, contracts, manuals, service agreements,
and newsletters. Kids need specific reading skills if they are to move through both the world and these texts with the confidence and skill we know they need. The profile of adult literacy given in Chapter 3 clearly illustrates how sophisticated the demands are and what our students must be ready to do.

**EVOLVING NOTIONS OF LITERACY**

Our notions of literacy have evolved dramatically, as reflected in the last few pages. The traditional literacies of my father’s era—the ability to read and write—have been replaced by notions of literacy that recognize the complexity of today’s world and anticipate the changes the future will necessarily bring. Judith Langer (1991) has suggested that we understand literacies as “the ability to think and reason like a literate person, within a particular society.” Langer’s crucial point is that our definition of literate changes as our culture does. This chapter examines some of these changes and discusses their implications for our students and our teaching so that all our students can have “a larger collection of tools to which they can distribute intellectual problems” (Myers 1996). In *Changing Our Minds: Negotiating English and Literacy*, Myers recognizes a powerful set of literacy tools that we must provide our students through our English curriculum, the most basic skill of all being interpretation. Myers elaborates on the four key literacies, saying “the ‘skills’ or ‘habits of mind’—things which contemporary schools are being asked to teach—are [the following]”:

- **Embodied knowledge**: Self-fashioning in which the self is fashioned as an active learner, alternatively believing and disbelieving, and a manager of thinking and time
- **Situated knowledge**: The ability to translate among modes (say, from narrative to exposition), speech events (say, from presentation to conversational), signs (say, from numbers to visuals), and stance (say, from the poetic to the transactional)
- **Distributed knowledge**: The ability to use information technology, including various networking strategies
- **Negotiated knowledge**: The capacity to translate from one worldview or point of view to another. Each of these four areas could be said to be different methods of interpretation (Hull 1998)

Myers affirms that our students must be able to interpret in order to cope with and master “the increased information diversity in [our] civic life.” This is all too true in California, for example, where the ballot initiative process can require voters to decide on dozens of crucial civic policies and projects. Students will arrive at these interpretations through different types of negotiations with ideas, people, tools, and traditions to produce a
functional understanding of the text at hand. Myers’ ideas might alternatively be called textual intelligence, which I describe as:

referring to our knowledge about how texts—literary and informational, on a page or a screen, spoken or written—work. Textual intelligence (TI) also applies to how texts are made, and how different structures create meaning for or affect the reader. I tend to think of it as an intellectual tool belt. When I prepare to make or fix something—e.g., a bookcase or a water-damaged wall—I have to decide which tools I need, how the structure works, what materials will work best on this job. TI demands that readers and writers do the same thing with the texts they read (and write) by asking questions like these:

- Why did they write this as an essay instead of a poem, short story, or dramatic monologue?
- What type of sentences—e.g., short, staccato ones, or long, rolling ones—are most appropriate for the effect I want to create in the reader?
- How do you create a dark (or anxious, or somber) tone in a story?
- Why did the writer use bullets instead of paragraphs here; and why does each bullet begin with a verb?
- What words will make the reader feel that this character (e.g., the Giver) was wise (or, in the case of other books: dangerous, evil, good)?
- How would it change the story if I changed the point of view from the past to the present? (Burke 2001)

In short, I want students to be able to understand how language shapes meaning in and affects readers. This insight into how texts work will, I hope, give them some sense of power in a world where language is often used to coerce and confuse instead of clarify and communicate. As writers and readers, I want my students to have a tool belt sagging with the intelligence they need to read and write different kinds of texts in different media for different audiences and purposes. But these tools, as Robert Scholes points out, “must be acquired, through practice” for, “as with any craft, reading depends on the use of certain tools, handled with skill. But the tools of reading are not simply there, like a hammer and a chisel; they must be acquired, through practice” (2001, xiv).

**CONTENT STANDARDS: SAMPLES FROM CALIFORNIA, THE NCTE, AND THE IRA**

Standards offer us a starting place to consider what, for example, the goals of an effective reading program are and what readers should be
able to do. As with any standard, however, they also imply what teachers should know and be doing in the classroom to develop students’ capacities. Carol Jago, in her book *Beyond Standards* (2001), sums up what we all feel when it comes to standards: “The kind of work I want from my students goes beyond any list of standards, skills to be mastered, or even books to be read. It has to do with habits of mind, thoughtfulness, and personal integrity toward intellectual pursuits that I find hard to prescribe but have, on occasion, been able to inspire” (xvi).

The following examples of reading content standards come from California’s Academic Standards Commission, on the Web at <www.cde.gov/standards>. They are representative standards, drawing as most of them do on such documents as the NCTE/IRA English Language Arts Standards and the New Standards Project’s standards. Content standards identify what students should learn, whereas performance standards describe what they must do to demonstrate their mastery of the content standards. Here are California’s high school reading content standards:

**READING STANDARDS (Ninth and Tenth Graders)**  
1.0 *Word analysis, fluency, and systematic vocabulary development*: Students apply their knowledge of word origins both to determine the meaning of new words encountered in reading materials and to use those words accurately.

**Vocabulary and Concept Development**

1.1 Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words, and understand word derivation.

1.2 Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, and interpret the connotative power of words.

1.3 Identify and use knowledge of the origins of Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology to understand the meaning of new words (e.g., the word *narcissistic* drawn from the myth of Narcissus and Echo).

2.0 *Reading comprehension (focus on informational materials)*: Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They analyze the organizational patterns, arguments, and positions advanced. The selections in *Recommended Literature, Grades Nine Through Twelve* (1990) illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, by grade twelve, students read two million words annually on their own, including a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, and online information. In grades nine and ten, students make substantial progress toward this goal.
Structural Features of Informational Materials

2.1 Analyze both (1) the structure and format of functional workplace documents, including format, graphics, and headers and (2) how authors use the features to achieve their purposes.

2.2 Prepare a bibliography of reference materials for a report using a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

2.3 Generate relevant questions about readings that can be researched.

2.4 Synthesize the content and ideas from several sources dealing with a single issue or written by a single author, and paraphrase the ideas and connect them to other sources and related topics to demonstrate comprehension.

2.5 Extend ideas presented in primary or secondary sources through original analysis, evaluation, and elaboration.

2.6 Demonstrate use of sophisticated learning tools by following technical directions (e.g., graphic calculators, specialized software programs, access guides to Internet worldwide websites).

Expository Critique

2.7 Critique the logic of functional documents by examining the sequence of information and procedures and the anticipation of possible reader misunderstandings.

2.8 Evaluate the credibility of an author’s argument or defense of a claim by critiquing the relationship between generalizations and evidence, the comprehensiveness of evidence, and how the author’s intent affects the text’s structure and tone (e.g., professional journals, editorials, political speeches, primary source material).

3.0 Literary response and analysis: Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They conduct in-depth analyses of recurrent patterns and themes. The selections in Recommended Literature, Grades Nine Through Twelve illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

Structural Features of Literature

3.1 Articulate the relationship between the expressed purposes and the characteristics of different forms of dramatic literature (comedy, tragedy, drama, dramatic monologue).
3.2 Compare and contrast the presentation of a similar theme or topic across genres to explain how the selection of genre shapes the theme or topic.

*Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text*

3.3 Analyze interactions between main and subordinate characters in literary text (e.g., internal and external conflicts, motivations, relationships, and influences) and how they affect the plot.

3.4 Determine characters’ traits by what they say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, soliloquy.

3.5 Compare works that express a universal theme, and provide evidence to support the ideas expressed in each work.

3.6 Analyze and trace an author’s development of time and sequence, including the use of complex literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks).

3.7 Recognize and understand the significance of a wide range of literary elements and techniques, including figurative language, imagery, allegory, and symbolism, and explain their appeal.

3.8 Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in text.

3.9 Explain how voice, persona, and narrator affect tone, characterization, plot, and credibility.

3.10 Identify and describe the function of dialogue, scene design, soliloquies, and asides and character foils in dramatic literature.

*Literary Criticism*

3.11 Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact that diction and figurative language have on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism (Aesthetic Approach).

3.12 Analyze how a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its historical period (Historical Approach). (California Academic Standards Commission 1998, 56)

The NCTE/IRA standards complement these governmental standards by demonstrating what the teaching profession thinks that educators need to accomplish in the area of reading:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace;
and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (NCTE/IRA 1996)
Standards give us a range of objectives and issues to consider, but they don’t easily translate into what we should do in our classes. Most of us read these documents and see the value in them. We reflexively translate them into our own experience to determine what we already do that would satisfy a particular standard. I don’t think I would have found them helpful as a new teacher, however. They remind me too much of the district curriculum binder they gave me at my first teaching assignment; it told me all the books I had to teach and all the skills I was to develop in students. But I fell asleep wondering how to do it and woke up wondering the same, until more experienced teachers in my department agreed to meet with me and show me what they did.

Nearly all of these standards documents talk about the need for students to be able to read a range of texts, not just literary texts. They do not advocate that we rip up the current curriculum; they are, however, suggesting that the curriculum be more balanced to reflect the types of reading we encounter. Financial thinkers like Peter Lynch often express their frustration that students know how to read a poem but not a prospectus or other financial documents.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, I have organized these different text types into four categories:

- Functional/expository
- Narrative
- Dramatic
- Poetic

A curriculum consisting of these different texts necessitates significant changes in other areas, most notably writing, since the study of how texts work invites the study of how they are made. If, for example, we are to teach students how to read functional documents, we must teach those elements that shape the form and function of such documents (see Figure 4.1). As mentioned earlier, learning can be deep and sustained only when it is constructed, linked through manipulations of and interactions with the material itself. Thus, teachers wanting their students to fully grasp the ideas and skills inherent in the reading task must integrate writing into the task, since these two abilities develop simultaneously, one supporting and extending the other (Smith 1982). We don’t always assign our students functional types of reading (or writing)—pamphlets, executive summaries, formal letters—which is odd, given that our own experience tells us that such documents are essential to our personal and professional lives. The era of standards into
FIGURE 4.1 Types of text. Originally appeared in Illuminating Texts (Burke 2001). Used by permission.

which we are now moving demands that we find ways to make room for them.

I don’t mean to privilege one genre over any other; in fact, they should grow out of one another, since each text—functional, narrative, dramatic, and poetic—offers a different route through the terrain the class is exploring. Arthur Applebee’s emphasis on conversation provides the most compelling argument for the use of a range of texts. The junior English class having a sustained discussion about the American character and how it was developed, for example, must include in its readings journals, letters, essays, poems, and, of course, novels if their study is to be complete. Each text offers information in a different way and serves a different purpose. Nor is there any set order to their use so long as an underlying logic determines the sequence and the teacher explains how these different texts work as they are introduced. Such opportunities provide the best occasion to teach what, for example, a letter is and how it works, to address what the letter can accomplish that other forms of writing cannot. Here is the chance for students to use writing not only to improve their general skills but to become what Robert Scholes calls “crafty readers” (2001). Scholes continues:

One becomes a crafty reader by learning the craft of reading. I believe that it is in our interest as individuals to become crafty readers, and in the interest of the nation to educate citizens in the craft of reading. The craft, not the art. Art is high, craft is low. Art is unique; it can’t be taught. Craft is common; it can be learned. There are virtuoso readers, who produce readings that are breathtakingly original, but the more original these readers become, the less they remain readers. Their readings become like new works, writings if you will, for which the originals were only pretexts, and those who create them become authors. I am not interested in producing such readings myself, nor do I believe that anyone can teach others to produce them. What can be studied, learned, and taught is the craft of reading. (xiv)
look like a Web page. But textbooks are not the only functional documents I have in mind here, as Figure 4.1 shows.

In addition to these documents, there are the more traditional expository forms:

Expository writing is far and away the most common mode of expression. We write exposition not only in college; most writing [and reading] required in professional life is expository—in business, in teaching, in technology and science, in law and medicine. When social workers deliver papers, when geologists make reports, when hospital officials release information on new diagnostic equipment, when marketing managers report on the activities of their competition, they write expository prose. Newspapers, brochures, and guidebooks are all exposition. (Hall and Birkerts 1994)

If you’ve read a typical contract or looked closely at an issue of *Time* magazine lately, you know how much attention they can require of the reader. What’s more, some of these documents are often among the most consequential reading we do: nothing happens if I can’t understand a Joseph Conrad short story, but I can suffer financial penalties if I sign a contract that I shouldn’t have.

This isn’t the place to go into depth about how to teach students to read official documents. I will, however, offer an example from my junior class to show one way of doing it. As part of a larger unit on California’s culture, during which time our class studied the state’s history and literature, I asked student teams to develop an informational pamphlet on California. To teach them how such documents worked, I brought in dozens of examples from different businesses. The workers at Noah’s Bagels and Starbucks must have thought I really liked their products when they saw me walking out with handfuls of their slick pamphlets. The school nurse and Career Center director gave me equally curious looks as I pilfered brochures on colleges and sexually transmitted diseases from their pamphlet racks. I asked each group to deconstruct the components of these documents, analyzing the function, for example, of certain design components. We talked about how companies want the customer to read their pamphlets: as an enticement to buy their products. We talked about how such documents were designed to be read: in the time it takes to stand in line and get a cup of coffee. We talked about word choice, voice, ideas, and organization; we also discussed how these affect the way we read and respond to persuasive commercial texts.

Since students best understand how different texts work by creating them—ideally by using computers—the students made their own brochures. Figure 4.2 shows an example, which also nicely demonstrates
one of the project's integrated objectives: to improve students' ability to use computers to create different types of documents.

When appropriate, I bring in other types of expository documents that my students learn to read by studying how they function. In Chapter 15, for example, you will find a one-page grant my students wrote. To write their grant, they studied examples of other grants. We looked at how such a document is read by the audience that receives it. Chapter 13 details other types of functional reading that our class does when, for example, we use the Internet. Certain design and textual features, if not properly read, can mean the difference between believing the Holocaust did and did not happen (see the example of Arthur Butz’s Web page in Chapter 13). Finally, students who must write a formal letter to an official as part of my freshman United Nations Project are given sample letters to study.

FIGURE 4.2 A sample page from a brochure students created during the California culture unit
as exemplars. We discuss how to read for voice, ideas, and organization; these conversations prepare students to incorporate such components into their own letters. Here are some other functional and expository texts we read:

- **Teen Driving Law legislative bill:** As part of a sustained conversation about independence, we read and examined the language of legislation that would change the laws for teenage drivers. We also read various articles and editorials about the bill.

- **Magazine articles:** During our reading of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, we read a three-part series in a local newsmagazine about homeless teenagers. The *New Yorker* had, the previous year, put out a special issue on race in America that represented various perspectives.

- **Expository essays as exemplars:** While studying the traditional rhetorical modes of writing—argumentative, informative, reflective, analytical—we read a range of examples from professional writers. I tend to use short (two- to three-page) essays so we can put them on overheads or make copies to annotate for closer, more analytical reading. We read these to study the traits of effective writing outlined in Figure 7.5. We also read to determine the main idea and the effectiveness of the argument and its supporting examples. We do this kind of reading throughout the year as part of larger units (see the Dictionary of the American Mind assignment on pages 263–266 as an example) but also to prepare for district and state tests.

- **Newspaper articles:** Newspaper articles offer timely supplements to the primary reading curriculum. I bring them in as I find them. For example, while reading *Lord of the Flies*, I can always count on reading about some current, beastly incident that involves kids. I bring these articles in and use them for discussions or journal topics. Since all major newspapers are now on the World Wide Web, teachers and students can often search a paper’s archives for articles on a wide range of related topics. These online texts also allow for easy special formatting to teach specific strategies or otherwise help students with special needs. Also, you can find old newspaper articles online, thus enabling you to complement your study of World War One with articles from that era as well primary source documents from the time.

We have discussed what you as the teacher do when using informational or nonfiction texts in the classroom; what about the students? The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) studied effective readers of infotexts and identified the traits shown in Figures 4.3 and 4.4.
The Traits of an Effective Reader Reading an Informational Text Scoring Guide

**Developing Interpretations**
- Identify problems, gaps, ambiguities, conflicts, symbols, and/or metaphors in the text
- Analyze the text to pose explanations that bridge gaps, clarify ambiguity, and resolve textual problems
- Use the context to connect analytical explanations to a "bigger picture"

**Integrating for Synthesis**
- Put information in order to explain the text's process or chronology
- Compare and contrast examples, facts, or events in order to make defensible judgments and interpretations
- Recognize and describe cause-and-effect relations
- Integrate personal experience, background knowledge, and/or content knowledge with the text to create a "synthesis" of text plus knowledge

**Critiquing for Evaluation**
- Experiment with ideas in the text
- Express opinions about the text
- Raise questions about the text
- Make good judgments about the text using a synthesis of material derived from multiple sources
- Challenge the ideas of the author by noting bias, distortion, and/or lack of coherence
- Contrast the accuracy of textual information with other sources and form solid, defensible critiques

5 The advanced response interprets to analyze and think critically about informational texts.
- Directly answers the question by employing problem-solving techniques—using specific evidence, cues, and "on target" information
- Examples, quotes, and events are cited from the text and connected strongly to the analysis
- Responds beyond the question to engage the bigger picture by creating framework of historical significance, cultural importance, or universal theme

3 Interprets to expand the text, but still developing connections to a larger worldview.
- Uses some language that indicates an initial layer of interpretation and understanding
- A safe response citing very obvious examples. Connections between the examples and the analysis are not always evident
- Does not yet move beyond the question—engaging the "bigger picture" is still a developing skill

1 The emerging response sees interpretation as "talking about a book." Reading and interpreting are still separate processes. Little evidence exists that the student understands the concept of interpretation.
- Does not adequately address the question
- Does not cite examples, quotes, or evidence from the text to use as a basis of interpretation
- Sometimes restates the question words
### The Traits of an Effective Reader Reading an Informational Text Scoring Guide

#### Decoding Conventions
- Decode the writing conventions of grammar, punctuation, word recognition, and sentence structure
- Recognize the organizational conventions of the author, the title, the characters, the theme, the conflict, and the resolution of stories and plays
- Identify the genre conventions (newspaper, magazine, textbook, brochure, instructions) of the types of modes appropriate to each informational genre (cause and effect, comparison, sequential, etc.)

#### Establishing Comprehension
- Identify and explain the vocabulary key to the main thesis of the text
- Identify the main idea, major and minor examples, facts, expert authority, and turning moments
- Distinguish between significant and supporting details that elaborate the main idea
- Summarize and paraphrase with purpose to move toward making inferences and interpretations

#### Realizing Context
- Identify the time period and its accompanying social realities in the text
- Identify the perspective—point of view—of the text and its relationship to social factors
- Identify the vocabulary reflective of the context
- Recognize the writing mode, tone, and voice of the author or source selected with respect to the context
- Recognize the subject matter’s context and its applications to many aspects of the text

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**FIGURE 4.4** The Traits of an Effective Reader Reading an Informational Text Scoring Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 The advanced response uses conventions information to form a confident “thinking frame” of a text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly answers the question using text structure language in specific and precise ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects well-chosen and well-supported examples to illustrate understanding of conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds “beyond” the question by enlarging the initial thinking frame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 The developing response uses conventions information to form an initial “thinking frame” of the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses some basic text structure language to indicate general understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects “safe” and obvious examples to illustrate the conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response is fairly safe and stays definitely within the confines of the question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 The emerging response is beginning to decode conventions and the challenge of decoding gets in the way of a “thinking frame” for the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not adequately answer the question but may use some text structure language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on more general information rather than providing examples from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response can be characterized as sketchy and incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 The advanced response demonstrates a purposeful, expansive, and knowledgeable comprehension of the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly answers the question using comprehension terms to indicate precise understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects well-chosen examples to illustrate in-depth comprehension. Examples are well-developed using clear, specific language and terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds “beyond” the question by increasing comprehension of the text into inferential and interpretative levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 The developing response demonstrates an adequate comprehension of the text. Purposeful comprehension is still evolving.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses some comprehension terms to indicate general understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects “safe” and obvious examples to illustrate literal comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not venture information beyond the initial question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 The emerging response is searching to establish a basic comprehension of the text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not provide examples for evidence but sometimes restates the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little evidence that a basic comprehension of the text has been achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response can be characterized as sketchy and incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 The advanced response realizes context and sees inferential meanings and intended purposes, both implicit and explicit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly and specifically answers the question to demonstrate understanding of inferential meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects well-chosen examples to illustrate understandings of contextual issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goes beyond the question’s limits and extends into in-depth understandings of contextual relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 The developing response realizes the context of the text to some degree and recognizes obvious types of inference. The idea of contextual relationships between many factors and issues is still in development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses some context terminology to show a basic level of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects “safe” and obvious examples that stay close to the surface of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stays within the safe confines of the question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 The emerging response guesses at context but has difficulty accessing inferential knowledge.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not use examples from the text to illustrate inferential understandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough evidence to demonstrate an understanding of contextual layers of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates little effectiveness at “reading between the lines”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEACHING NARRATIVE TEXTS: A STUDY IN THE NOVEL’S COMPLEXITY

We don't read a novel the same way that we read a menu or a newspaper. But how does our reading differ across genre or from author to author? What about a memoir or a novel like Willa Cather’s My Antonia: Do we read these differently than we do a novel like Fitzgerald’s Great Gatsby? And if we don't read them the same way, how do we read them? Narratives, along with all other texts, conform to a Continuum of Complexity (see Figure 4.5) that depends on both the features of the particular text and the capacities of the reader. This notion of complexity is crucial when we consider not just what our students read but the order in which they read. We must carefully scaffold and sequence their reading so that we develop their ability to successfully read a series of increasingly challenging stories. If we begin with Amy Tan’s Joy Luck Club, a novel that offers few stylistic or vocabulary difficulties, we might hope that our students would, by the end of the unit, be able to read Maxine Hong Kingston’s Woman Warrior, a memoir that dramatically stretches the boundaries of that genre, offering a complicated story made up of folk-

CONTINUUM OF COMPLEXITY
(applied to texts we are reading)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISORIENTED</th>
<th>FLUENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Disoriented by aspects of text:</td>
<td>- Navigates all aspects of the text with no confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language</td>
<td>- Understands authorial intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Graphics</td>
<td>- Simultaneously processes multiple layers and different meanings of text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Format/layout</td>
<td>- Extra attention allows reader to attend to finer distinctions or larger context of the work (e.g., relation of this text to other writers or different eras)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information</td>
<td>- Knows what to do to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cannot process multiple aspects simultaneously</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overfocuses on one aspect of the text (e.g., vocabulary) at exclusion of all others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attends to surface elements but cannot see other layers of meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 4.5 The Continuum of Complexity. The teacher helps students master the complexities inherent in different texts as they move toward fluency.
tales, personal narrative, and reflection and written in a dense, powerful prose style that swings between real and imagined worlds.

It is no easy task to teach students to move along this continuum from simple understanding to confident interpretation of multiple texts. I am reminded of a junior who came into class one day with a long note from his girlfriend. He kept taking it out to reread it. When the class divided into groups, his team went across the hall, where I later found him conferring with different members in his group about this “text” from his girlfriend. I overheard him several times asking both boys and girls, “What do you think she really means by that word, though? And what about the way she says things, her whole tone!?” I don’t think I’ve ever seen a text so scrutinized on so many levels. I like to think that he figured out, if not what the note meant, then at least how to respond to it properly, since I saw him and his girlfriend walking hand-in-hand down the hall the next day.

The continuum invites one more comment as regards student progress. I occasionally hear teachers complain that students can’t read a certain text. Certainly this is sometimes the case; too often, however, we forget that this text is different, more challenging than others they have read. We should remember that they come to us needing to learn how to do what we will ask of them. We must, using various techniques and strategies, develop their skill and capacity to do the work we assign.

Narrative texts include both nonfiction (e.g., memoirs, personal essays, biographies) and fiction (e.g., novels and short stories). There are many objectives appropriate to the reading of any narrative, but right now I am concerned with improving students’ ability to read these texts, since they dominate the English curriculum as it is currently conceived. Most state and district English language arts frameworks, as well as the different standards documents, focus on two primary objectives in the area of reading literature: appreciation (of specific works, our cultural heritage, “fine literature,” and different genres of fiction) and formal understanding of how such texts work. Robert Scholes (1998) challenges these two established views, offering the following description of what the “English curriculum must do”:

[It must] lead students to a position of justified confidence in their own competence as textual consumers and their own eloquence as producers of texts. This also means, of course, that, along the way, we must be assigning the right texts and responding to the work of our students with an informed and rigorous sense of the rhetorical skills that they need to develop. (66)

Before we consider reading for appreciation, let’s consider what Scholes’ ideas would look like by examining a piece from the College
Board’s Pacesetter Project, a course and set of standards Scholes helped create:

The common features of the course as it is taught in different schools should not be a particular set of works to be “covered,” but a set of certain kinds of works to be studied and responded to in certain ways. That is, the emphasis must be on students’ ability to situate and comprehend a range of texts in different genres and media, from different times and places, and to produce new texts of their own in response to what they have read and considered. In order to make the intent of the course concrete, it will be described here in terms of specific works and projects, but we will also offer for every unit a set of criteria that should enable substitutions to suit local conditions.

In any case, all the texts considered in the course, from the past and the present, from far away and from close to home, should be studied in such a way as to connect them to the issues and concerns of this country and its people at the present time. For example, a play by Shakespeare chosen for this course should be studied both as a voice from another culture, another time, and because it addresses human concerns that are still important and alive for us. That will become clearer as we make a brief tour through the seven units that constitute Pacesetter English.

UNIT 1: MANY SELVES, MANY VOICES: INTRODUCTION TO "VOICES OF MODERN CULTURES"

At the center of this unit is the student—and that student’s relation to language. Students will be asked to consider their own position as cultured speakers, with voices shaped by their heritages, their experiences, and their schooling. If this were “Sesame Street,” we might say that this unit is brought to its audience by the pronouns “I,” “you,” and “we.” Each student will be asked to investigate how she or he is “situated” as an individual who belongs to certain groups and addresses insiders and outsiders in different voices. Students will be asked to consider their present command of language and voices, invited to take pride in what they know, and encouraged to strive to increase their linguistic range and depth.

At the same time, they will be investigating the voices of a range of writers addressing the questions: “Who am I?” and “Who are we?” For this purpose lyric poems and essays will provide the most useful examples of linguistic grace and power in the service of personal expression and self-examination. The whole purpose of Pacesetter English and its relation to traditional English courses can be found here in Unit 1. Like traditional courses, it will present poems and essays to be read by students. But it will present these texts as
examples of textual power for students to emulate. The goal will be for students to see themselves as users of language, with voices of their own that are similar to those of the writers they are reading. Confronting the same kinds of questions and concerns as those writers, students can see themselves as active partners in the writing process. In this mode, they should read not only to understand but also to emulate the text they are reading. “What can I learn from this text, this writer about how to express myself?” is a question that energizes the relationship of the student as reader to the text being read. It is that energy that should drive this whole course. (2002)

READING FOR APPRECIATION

Kids come to school appreciating stories. It’s what some of us, despite our best intentions, do to these stories that causes so much trouble for kids. Film critic Pauline Kael allegedly told a convention of English teachers that if they planned to do to film what they had done to literature, then please leave it alone. This is a troubling comment to hear, since I believe, as Kael’s columns prove, that deep appreciation of any artistic work comes through critically viewing or reading it. Perhaps what she meant is that we sometimes diminish the sheer power of the stories by taking them apart, as if that were the reason we read them in the first place. I like what one of my juniors, Rana Kishek, wrote, because it captures what we appreciate about stories:

There is a story line behind everything and everyone. When you ask your great grandmother what it was like growing up, she tells you about her childhood first, then her teenage years, and on to when she got married, etc., all in a story line. Nothing is out of order. She tells it like an author would write a story, from beginning to end, not all jumbled up. It’s just the same when we read about the past of Burlingame; they began to tell you about the man who founded it, who he was, what he did, etc. As we kept on reading, the story kept itself in chronological order. The way we’re raised, we’re taught how to relate everything to a story. When we watch movies, you never just focus on one time frame of someone or something’s life, but instead, you focus on a wide span of time, so it’s better understood by the people. Since we’re so used to relating everything to stories, it’s hard for most people just to sit there and read about a specific time in history in a history book instead of reading a short story of how it was from beginning to end. But that’s not all that helps most of us to concentrate when we read; the fact that we’re interested in it or that it relates to modern times or us personally, also plays a big part in our attention span. Undoubtedly, if you like it or you can relate to it, you’ll just as easily understand it.
Sandra Mallia, a junior in the same class, wrote, “Usually I don’t like to read but if it’s a book on something I can relate to I usually have a better interest in the book. When I read, I usually put myself in the story. I make up characters’ faces and the setting. I can’t read something I don’t understand or don’t have any interest in. Stories that are true (life stories) are the books that I enjoy.”

Stories—whether fiction or nonfiction—have the power to change us in ways that information cannot. They challenge, they demand, they inspire, they threaten. That’s why Alice Walker’s stories—“Blue” and “Roselilly”—sparked the public debate they did when they and a few other stories considered dangerous appeared on the California Learning Assessment System’s English test in the mid-1990s. If stories didn’t have power, Jesus Christ would have amounted to little more than a man with a few good tricks in his carpenter’s belt; instead, stories about him inspired people to change their lives.

I include Jesus specifically—without meaning to exclude any other culture’s stories—because the idea of stories raises what for many is also a significant dilemma in our society: the role of morals, ethics, and values in the class (see Chapter 19 for further discussion). In The Book of Virtues for Young People, William Bennett (1996) writes that “we need to spend some time thinking about the truly important questions, too, the ones that lead to better living.” In The Discipline of Hope: Learning from a Lifetime of Teaching, Herbert Kohl (1998) reflected on the role that stories play in our classrooms:

A few years ago, during a visit to a high school, I sat in on a class discussion on violence in the school. The discussion was loud and animated. Every student had a story to tell and there was a lot of competition for attention. The teacher, in order to focus the discussion, silenced the class and made a plea for the students to tell their stories briefly and “get to the point.” He did it in order to be able to fit the discussion into the fifty-minute period they had together and to be able to come to some conclusion before the bell. However, instead of focusing the class discussion, the students fell silent. The stories they had to tell were their point. They wanted a moment to share their distress in a personal and intimate way. They wanted to be heard, not to summarize. And they and their teacher knew that the only sensible conclusion to the discussion would have been to continue it to the next time and let it take up the space in the curriculum that the seriousness of the issue demanded.

How, then, do we develop in our students this appreciation of stories? We provide substantial opportunities for students to read books of their choosing. How else will they read the twenty-five books a year required by the New Standards Project if we don’t turn them loose to read
what they want? Many things can be done to foster an environment of appreciation.

• Create a strong in-class library that includes different kinds of books. (See Chapter 25 for suggestions about how to set up and manage a classroom library.)

• Allow students choice in what they read. During a unit on California culture, for example, my students read at least two books of their choosing by California authors or about California. On other occasions, I ask them to read the autobiography or biography of someone who made what they feel is an important contribution to society.

• Use literature circles. These groups discuss what kind of book they want to read, perhaps soliciting the guidance of the teacher or librarian, then check it out or buy it. When the lit circles meet during designated class time, the teacher monitors the discussions, asking questions that grow out of the students’ search for personal meaning and comprehension.

• Talk about the stories instead of the writing. Discussions about what Esperanza does and what she is like invite students to eventually consider the structure of Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street*, for example. Maxine Hong Kingston talks about the Chinese tradition of “talking story,” a tradition that is similar to the Native American tradition of sitting in a circle and telling a story. Connecting texts to our own lives means being able to say things like, “When Esperanza goes into that old antique shop, it reminded me of this place in my neighborhood when I was growing up.” Such opportunities help students appreciate what the stories accomplish: we read these stories for the conversations they let us have. When I surveyed kids about our reading of *Huckleberry Finn*, some said they didn’t like the book at all but loved the discussions the book enabled us to have. Langer and Close (2001) emphasize the value of such discussions in their report *Improving Literary Understanding Through Classroom Discussion*. Specifically, they identify four “stances” readers use to build “envisionments” (7):
  • Being out and stepping into an envisionment
  • Being in and moving through an envisionment
  • Stepping back and rethinking what one knows
  • Stepping back and objectifying the experience

The discussions these different stances inspire benefit all students, but especially those from other cultures who can enter into the discussion through their own experience, connecting this text to their own culture or previous experiences.
• Translate the stories into dramatic or artistic events, for example, monologues, plays, collages, the Neighborhood or Life Graphs (see Chapter 9). These activities draw the students into the story and, through the constant sharing in groups, at home, or with the full class, allow them to enjoy it. Stories, after all, create communities within the classroom and help us appreciate not only each other but ourselves.

Though it frustrates us, we must accept that not all our students will love the books we require them to read. Some students dismiss books just because they don’t want to be told what to read. So we must provide them room for their own reading in our classes. I sometimes forget how powerful an opportunity this can be for students. Last year one of my students was so excited about Jess Mowry's novel Way Past Cool that he barged into the English office at lunch to tell me that he had read the first one hundred pages the night before. Of course I was excited, but I don’t think it showed enough. Ken said, “No, you don’t understand, Mr. B., I haven’t actually read a book in school since [Jerry Spinelli’s] Maniac McGee years ago! This book is awesome!” Reactions like this are powerful because Ken will infect others with his enthusiasm. Other students will think, “If Ken liked it, I’m sure I will, since he hates books more than I do!”

It’s worth noting, however, that I was able to recommend Mowry’s book to Ken only because I knew him well enough to suspect he would like it. I sensed Rachel Zangrillo would love Jeffrey Masson’s book When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals because she always told me about her different pets. I told Vance to read Cormac McCarthy’s All the Pretty Horses, which, because he had reading difficulties, I found for him on tape. Vance appreciated the story so much that, while listening to it on the way to school in his car, he decided to follow the main character John Grady Cole’s example of leaving home, and kept right on driving until he got to Los Angeles eight hours later. Though I was glad he enjoyed the story, I appreciated the fact that he didn’t tell his parents that it was because of me that he went on this sudden adventure.

CASE STUDY: TEACHING THE NOVEL LORD OF THE FLIES

Novels intimidated me when I began teaching. I wasn’t sure what I was supposed to accomplish with one, nor did I know how long to spend reading it. The following sequence provides a sense of what is involved in teaching a novel; it is one way, not the way. I don’t do the same things each year; this represents, however, a good sequence that incorporates a variety of methods, texts, and conversations, all of which are related to one novel.
BEFORE

1. Establish a context for reading this book in the first place. Ask yourself, "What is the conversation I am using this book to support?" and "What do I want students to know and be able to do by the time they finish reading this book?"

2. Have students set a purpose for reading; in this case, we read the novel to study human nature and our human needs.

3. Read some background material on human needs, including excerpts from Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Human Needs.”

4. Brainstorm the title; use this process to facilitate discussion and develop your students’ ability to read titles and generate ideas. (See Figure 4.6.)

5. Introduce and show exemplars of the Character Journal; evaluate exemplars and model how to do the assignment. Here is the assignment, followed by a sample entry:

**LORD OF THE FLIES CHARACTER JOURNAL**

*Directions:* For this assignment, you will become one of the characters in the novel. The catch is that you must choose a character in the novel and keep your journal as though you were that character. In other words, if I chose to “be” Ralph, I might begin my journal something like this:

*Dear Auntie:*

*There was an explosion today on the island. The twins, Sam and Eric, were supposed to be tending to the fire when it suddenly exploded. The boys were*
lucky they weren’t hurt. They claimed to be only fifteen yards away from the mass explosion. I think that the boys thought that the beast was what exploded in their faces. Ralph and I were sleeping when Sam and Eric came running toward us. “We saw the beast,” the two were yelling. “There were eyes, teeth, and claws.” I don’t know what to think. One of the boys, Simon, doesn’t believe in the beast. Then again, maybe there really is a beast that roams the island with us . . . Our main problem is that no one seems to understand the importance of getting rescued. It wouldn’t be that difficult to keep a fire going, yet it never gets done. It’s not a one-man job, either. We are a group, but we can’t seem to get along together.

Yes, you will be keeping this throughout the whole book, but whereas the past logs/journals have asked you to write chapter by chapter, this assignment allows for—indeed, demands—much more creativity, for it will be assessed not only on its thoroughness but, more important, on the degree to which it sounds like your character; I would also encourage people to make it look like a journal that survived such an island experience so that it has that authentic air about it. In other words, do not do it in our regular journal. Be fun and original about it. And pick someone you can really enjoy becoming.

Evaluation: Journals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- How successfully you evoke the character (through attitudes, tone, insights)
- Voice: extent to which the writing here sounds like your character
- Consistency: extent to which your journal sustains the voice and style throughout the work
- Insight: if you just summarize what happened in the character’s voice, you will receive a C, as you show no insight into the character or the story or the other characters
- Thoroughness: extent to which you delve into the character and follow him through the entire story. If you do Simon, you must find a way to follow him throughout the entire story—same goes for the one lost to the fire.

DURING

6. Study vocabulary from or related to Lord of the Flies throughout the reading of the novel. Use various techniques, but primarily Vocabulary Squares (see Figure 5.5 in Chapter 5).

7. Read the opening pages aloud in class, interrupting yourself to think aloud about anything that seems interesting or important. Ask them what they notice. Tell them to reread those pages and
count the number of times Golding referred to Piggy as “the fat boy,” and Ralph as “the fair boy.” Then discuss writer’s intent and initial impressions of the characters. Make predictions and discuss. Also, take time to point out such textual features as the use of asterisks and white space to indicate breaks or the potentially confusing, repeated use of such conspicuous words like scar and creepers.

8. Introduce (if first time) and model use of Interactive Notes to develop readers’ capacity to focus on and discuss aspects of the text (see Figure 4.7). Use their Interactive Notes as basis for discussion and initial informal assessment of comprehension.

9. Read first couple of chapters and complete Synthesis Notes to ensure they have all the necessary information about the plot, setting, characters, and so on to read the book successfully. (See Figure 4.8.)

**Interactive Notes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE: Prepare to Read</th>
<th>DURING: Question &amp; Comment</th>
<th>AFTER: Summarize &amp; Synthesize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>I wonder why . . .</td>
<td>Three important points/ideas are . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title(s)</td>
<td>What causes . . .</td>
<td>These are important because . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headers</td>
<td>I think . . .</td>
<td>What comes next . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subheaders</td>
<td>This is similar to . . .</td>
<td>The author wants us to think . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captions</td>
<td>This is important because . .</td>
<td>At this point the article/story is about . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>What do they mean by . . .</td>
<td>I still don’t understand . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>What I find confusing is . .</td>
<td>What interested me most was . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words to know</td>
<td>What will happen next is . .</td>
<td>The author’s purpose here is to . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask questions</td>
<td>I can relate to this because . .</td>
<td>A good word to describe this character/this story’s tone is . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make predictions</td>
<td></td>
<td>because . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.7** Interactive Notes. This tool develops students’ academic language and reading comprehension.
### Synthesis Notes

**Name:** Cassie Zagorszynski  
**Date:** 2/6

**Directions:** Use this page to gather and organize the crucial information about the story. Use the right hand column to identify one aspect or character that seems vital to the story. You might determine what is most crucial by asking, “Which of all these (e.g., characters) makes the biggest difference in the story?” Some sections might be empty when you finish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Title (and possible meanings)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord of the Flies: Leader of the Boys book revolves around &quot;Lord.&quot;</td>
<td>Boys → many, insignificant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters (name, description, roles)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ralph: chief of group.</td>
<td>Piggy sees problem in leadership, chance of rebelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack: leader of choir boys/hunters.</td>
<td>Reason for no reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger: intelligent, faithful, wants respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting (where, when, atmosphere)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deserted island, unknown time.</td>
<td>Piggy: boys are on their own, have to take care of themselves, find a way to survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle, tropical, mountainous (pink rocks)</td>
<td>Rawn gets respect from others, Rahn gets respect from each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes (idea(s) central to the story; include examples)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power: Ralph symbolizes power; Jack is in control</td>
<td>Power: one who holds it, has control, determines boys' future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect: Piggy deserves respect from others, Ralph gets respect from each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unison: boys are on their own, have to take care of themselves, find a way to survive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plot (what happens)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plane crashes on island</td>
<td>Boys forced to survive on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph calls meeting, uses chief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style (use of language, imagery, symbolism, dialogue)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters are described based on comparison with power</td>
<td>Appearances → what character will act like later in story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearances → Piggy (fat boy), Ralph (hair boy), Jack (adventurous, red-haired boy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of View (tense, reliability, focus, narrator, in time)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrator = author</td>
<td>That focus is culture; main point is developing new culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense = present</td>
<td>Focus = culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design (linear, episodic; use of special form—e.g., letter, journal)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear: starts → continues in order of events</td>
<td>Linear: you don't know future results as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary: → as an observer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone (what the story sounds like)</th>
<th>Most Important Aspect (Explain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| An observer noting on culture, surroundings, characters’ actions | }

**FIGURE 4.8** Cassie completed these Synthesis Notes while reading *Lord of the Flies.*
10. Watch the Stanford Prison video (go to <www.zimbardo.com> for more info.) Have students take T Notes in which they describe what happens and then compare and apply these events to Golding’s novel.

11. In groups, students discuss the What Is Evil? discussion guide, arriving at consensus about each item (see Figure 4.9). Students then use their discussion to help them write their own summary response to the question, “What is evil?” incorporating examples from the book, the discussion guide, and the group conversation. Use the individual written responses and group notes to facilitate class discussion.

12. Narrow focus and complete character study and integrate writing unit on comparison and description. Have them prepare for the assignment by reading essays comparing Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley, Eisenhower and Patton. When they are ready, take Venn Notes about Ralph and Jack and use these notes to write comparison. (See Figure 4.10, p. 56.) Use character study for discussion.

13. Integrate quizzes (on three-by-five-inch cards or quarter sheets of recycled paper) and various other means of assessment throughout the reading of the book to measure comprehension and keep students accountable. Avoid questions the Cliffs Notes reader could answer.

14. Revisit the human needs assignment and apply ideas about human needs to Golding’s novel—what they are, how they affect the characters, how they change over the course of the novel. (See Figure 4.11, p. 57.)

15. Create the Continuum of Change on butcher paper first, then on the whiteboard when the class reconvenes to synthesize through reporting and discussion as a whole class. The Continuum of Change asks students to identify what the kids were like when they arrived; what they were like halfway through, and what they think the characters will be like at the book’s end. They must be specific and explain why they think the character does or will change in the novel, providing textual examples to support their assertions. (See Figure 4.12, pp. 58 and 59.)

16. Periodically have students take Discussion Director Notes (from Literature Circle packet) to prepare them to use the technique in a subsequent novel and to provide structure for class discussions. (See Figure 4.13, p. 60.)
What Is Evil?

Directions: Decide which actions you feel are evil and why you feel that way. Your entire group must agree on each one (i.e., your decision must be unanimous). First, your group must define evil and establish criteria before you begin; or, if you prefer, you can come up with a definition and criteria after you pass judgment on the actions, but make sure that it accords with your decisions about the dilemmas.

1. The pilot dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
2. The scientist designed the atomic bomb.
3. The president ordered the man to design the bomb and told the pilot to drop it.
4. A man kills his friend in a fit of blind rage.
5. An oppressed man leads a savage revolt to kill as many of his oppressors as he can for revenge.
6. An oppressed man kills his oppressor to achieve freedom.
7. A woman who has been repeatedly abused by her husband kills him while he sleeps.
8. You tell a friend a deep secret but say nothing about keeping it a secret; the friend then tells others.
9. A major league pitcher in a World Series game throws a wild pitch at the other team's best hitter, hitting him intentionally in order to take him out of the game.
10. A professional boxer in a boxing match hits his opponent, killing him.
11. A man uses his computer to access highly confidential personal information that includes both medical and financial information and then disseminates it on the Internet.
12. A person who has AIDS has sex with many different people.
13. One person confides in another who is HIV-positive; the confidante tells another person who tells another; eventually the infected person’s boss hears of it and fires the HIV-infected individual because they are HIV-positive.
14. A pro-life activist murders a doctor who performs abortions as he is leaving for home.
15. A politician promises he will not cut funding to a certain group of constituents and then, upon entering office, finds he can solve the problem no other way and cuts the funding to these people.

FIGURE 4.9  What Is Evil? Sample anticipation guide related to themes students will discuss while reading Lord of the Flies
FIGURE 4.10 Venn diagrams
Whadaya Need to Be Happy and Succeed?

Standards: Evaluating • Organizing • Prioritizing • Synthesizing • Analyzing

Overview: The following activity asks you to evaluate the different needs people in general have, as well as your own specific needs. This activity asks you to:

1. Identify and reflect on your own needs at this point in the semester and in your life
2. Evaluate and rank those needs from most to least important
3. Elaborate on your thinking by explaining your ranking (e.g., why do you think comfort is the most important need?)
4. Categorize the different needs into groups (e.g., emotional need) and sort the different needs into those categories
5. Compare your needs now (at this age) with your needs at a later age and reflect on whether decisions now will prepare you to meet those needs later
6. Apply your categories and needs to people in general (using the second pyramid)
7. Synthesize all your thinking by writing a summary of your thinking about needs today

Directions: Please do each of the following steps in the order listed. Keep and turn in all notes when done.

1. Get the dictionary. Find and write down the definition of the words priority and hierarchy.
2. Brainstorm all the different types of needs you can think of (e.g., food would be an obvious need). Come up with as many different ones as you can; try to go beyond the obvious. Keep in mind that some of these needs might be more appropriate for later in life.
3. Create categories (e.g., “Basic Needs” or “Physical Needs”) into which you can sort your different needs (e.g., food = “Physical Need” or “Basic Need”).
4. Sort all the items on your chart into the categories.
5. Using the Pyramid Notes (two-sided), rank your needs from most essential to the least essential. What is most important should be on the bottom to indicate that it is part of the foundation. For example, food is essential; if you don’t have food you die and don’t need entertainment. Include your explanation in the space on the pyramid. Try to fill the space provided.
6. Do a second pyramid (back side) for people in general. Pay attention to the similarities and differences.
7. Using the Pyramid Notes for ideas, write a paragraph at the bottom of the page (in the space provided) to summarize your work. The questions you are trying to answer are:
   - What do you need?
   - Why do you need it?
   - Will these needs change?
   - When—and why—will these needs change?
   - Which needs of yours are not being met—and why?
   - What are you doing now to meet your most essential needs?

FIGURE 4.11 An examination of human needs as they relate to students and the characters they study. This also ties in with their studies of human culture in their social science class.
Note: If I am teaching this (or any other) novel to a class that has struggling readers, I spend more time developing their capacity to read it. We will, for example, focus on specific quotations that are essential to understanding the novel. We will use the Quotations Clarified assignment so they learn what questions to ask when writing about a quotation. (See Figure 4.14, p. 61.)

17. Watch opening (fifteen minutes) of the two film versions of *Lord of the Flies*. Use this occasion to teach them more note-taking skills and reinforce comparative writing lessons from previous weeks. Stop the video frequently to direct their attention to and discuss aspects of the film (e.g., use of music to create mood) and check that they are taking effective notes. (See Figure 4.15, p. 62.)
18. In their social studies class, which in this case is integrated with the English class, the students begin to prepare for the trial of William Golding for libel against humanity, based on remarks he makes in the book about human nature. This trial takes a total of three weeks, and most of it takes place in the social studies class under the guidance of that teacher.

19. Throughout the reading we read poems from a packet I assembled with about twenty poems in it. At some point, when we need to mix things up and get more active, I break the kids into groups and let them choose a poem. They must read it and explain in writing what the poem means and how it relates to *Lord of the Flies*. They must draw it and explain their drawing. Finally, they must present their poem to the class, reading it aloud and facilitating a discussion about it. (See Figure 4.16, p. 63.)
Literature Circle Notes: Discussion Director

Name _____________________ Date ____________________

**Discussion Director:** Your role demands that you identify the important aspects of your assigned text and develop questions your group will want to discuss. Focus on the major themes or “big ideas” in the text and your reaction to those ideas. What interests you will most likely interest those in your group. You are also responsible for facilitating your group’s discussion.

**Sample Questions**
- What were you thinking about as you read?
- What did the text make you think about?
- What do you think this text/passage was about?
- How might other people (of different backgrounds) think about this text/passage?
- What one question would you ask the writer if you got the chance? Why?
- What do you think will happen next—and why?
- What was the most important change in this section? How and why did it happen?

Write your discussion questions here; write your responses to them in the main note-taking area to the right. >>>>

**Assignment for Today:** page _______ — page _______

---

**Topic to be carried over to tomorrow:**

**Assignment for Tomorrow:** page _______ — page _______

Here you should review, retell, or reflect on what you read so far. (Use the back if necessary.)

---

**Figure 4.13** Sample Literature Circle form. From *Tools for Thought* (Burke 2002). Used by permission.

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Assignment for Tomorrow: page _______ — page _______
Quotations Clarified

Quotations Clarified

English/Burke

Writing about quotes from a text requires practice. When doing the following assignment, keep in mind the need to support your thinking with examples from the text. Please use the back when you run out of room on the front of this page. Find ONE quote from each chapter and explain that quote using the following examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities of a Good Quote</th>
<th>Quotations Clarified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- It is meaningful: to you, the author, or the characters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It is about something important: an event, person, idea.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- You know you can write about it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It invites/helps you make connections between the book and yourself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A quote is any word, sentence, or passage taken from a written text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The words can be but are not necessarily spoken.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Whatever appears between quotation marks should be exactly what the text/person wrote or said.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase One

**Quote**

Write down the quote here.

"I can change that. Can change it big. Better to put my time into that than moaning about the other all day. That little grammar-school girl showed me that." (page 16, "Wendell" from *Seedfolks*)

**Questions**

List 3–5 questions that will help you write well about the quote.

- What can’t he change—and why can’t he change it?
- Should he change it? If yes, what might happen?
- What does he “moan” about?
- How did Kim, the “grammar-school girl,” show him this?

**Response**

Use the questions to help you write about the quote here.

This is an important moment for Gonzalo: he begins to look at the glass as half-full instead of half-empty. By this I mean he begins to focus on what he CAN do instead of what he can’t do. I can’t change the attitude or mistakes others will make. Already we see what happens if you change things: Kim’s seeds started a chain reaction that is beginning to change the neighborhood and the people in it. She showed people—without meaning to or even realizing it—that anything is possible if you have courage.

Phase Two

**What It Says**

"I know what I don’t want to become." (page 5)

**What It Means**

Jasmine/Jyoti does not want to grow old and live small lives in her village. She has watched women grow old and live small lives in her village. She has watched them married to men they did not love. She has seen their lives played out at the river bend. There seems to be no room for surprise in her life, so she will make room. This line also means Jasmine is a strong woman, and Mukherjee probably writes this up front to establish Jasmine’s character as independent, strong, intelligent.

**Explanation**

She has watched women grow old and live small lives in her village. She has watched them married to men they did not love. She has seen their lives played out at the river bend. There seems to be no room for surprise in her life, so she will make room. This line also means Jasmine is a strong woman, and Mukherjee probably writes this up front to establish Jasmine’s character as independent, strong, intelligent.

**FIGURE 4.14** Quotations Clarified handout

*May be copied for classroom use. The English Teacher’s Companion, Second Edition, by Jim Burke (Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH); © 2003.*
20. Read, take notes on, and respond to various articles about or by William Golding and his book. Use to anchor discussion about book and crucial themes.

21. Make masks (not with plaster but drawing or cutout materials) that reflect either students’ own nature or that of a particular character. Provide written explanation of the masks. Read related poems such as Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask.”

22. As part of integrated study of Six Traits writing model (see Chapter 7), have students evaluate Golding’s word choice and voice in the novel using the Six Traits scoring guide. Students must provide specific examples to support their analysis.

23. Incorporate intermittent discussions of narrative design, language and style, elements of fiction (e.g., personification, symbols, rising action), and so on.
CASE STUDY: TEACHING THE NOVEL LORD OF THE FLIES

In this poem, "I stood upon a High Place," Steve Crane illustrates how the character of the poem "stood upon a high place," which may mean the progress they have made during their lifetime, when the devils call him "comrade!" and "brother!" It may mean that this is reminding him of how he was a bad person in his past, "crawling in sin." This person may be actually looking back on his life, seeing how the devil kept him down but his spirit pulled him up and is preventing him from falling back to a word of "sin."

FIGURE 4.16 Katy's drawing helps her visualize and, combined with her writing, understand the poem we read as part of the Lord of the Flies unit.

AFTER

24. Bring Character Journal to a close. Have students use this project as prewriting/preparation for an in-class essay about some aspect of the novel that relates to their journal or notes. Then, using notes and their in-class essay, they prepare to present their observations, defending their claim(s) with evidence from the book, their journal, and their paper.

25. Begin and carry out the Golding Trial in social studies classes for a week.

26. Assess their current needs as readers and thinkers before moving on to next book or unit. Let this information, which should be
based on their performance on recent assignments, inform what you choose to do next.

27. Keep exemplars of useful (e.g., high, medium, and low) student work for future classes to improve instruction.

28. Build a bridge from this book to the next so as to ensure the continuity or narrative line of your course and their learning. One way to do this is to provide a forum for final observations about the book you just finished and use that as an occasion to connect to the next unit or text you want to introduce so they see how one relates to the other.

The novel serves as a rite of passage into the careful study of literature as well as into students’ own society. It is the means by which students enter into their own or another’s culture, as well as their imagination. In fact, as school arts and humanities programs face increased cutbacks, literature becomes, in many schools, the last bastion of the imagination. In the previous pages I have outlined one example, one sequence by which I try to achieve these complex but worthy ends. Every novel differs, however, presenting its own challenges and possibilities.

When planning or teaching the novel (and other fictional narratives):

• Organize the book around “domains for conversations into which we want our students to enter, domains containing sets of issues within important traditions” (Applebee 1996), essential questions students must learn to ask and endeavor to answer (Sizer 1984), or “enduring understandings” they must generate and achieve through sustained encounters with the big ideas within the text (Wiggins and McTighe 1998).

• Develop their textual intelligence (Burke 2001), focusing not only on what the story is about but on how the author made it (Scholes 2001; Bell 1998) and how it achieves the effect it does on the reader.

• Incorporate into the study of literature a range of texts of different types and perspectives, in different media, so that through this breadth of material students may learn about and participate in the larger conversation about the literary tradition.

• Read the work from a variety of perspectives, for a range of purposes.

• Connect the novel to the unit of study that came before and the one that will follow in some meaningful, coherent way that ensures continuity in students’ learning.

• Connect the novel and its ideas to their personal lives as well as the society in which they live, while relating it also to the literary
tradition of which it is a part and the cultures of the students who are reading the novel.

- Explore, even require, a range of interpretations and responses, developing students’ abilities to generate and ask their own questions through discussions with each other, the author, characters, and even themselves that lead to a deeper understanding of the work, the world, and themselves.

- Engage in frequent discussions—in different settings, in different configurations, for different purposes—about the literary work.

- Integrate use and teaching of writing throughout the study of literary works, writing to improve but also to learn, to think, and to demonstrate their understanding.

- Address those issues of social justice and ethical complexity inherent in any serious work of literature so that students come to recognize the complexity of such issues and how to discuss those issues with intelligence and sensitivity.

- Use a variety of techniques and tools to help students explore and understand the text and develop their capacity to read such texts on their own at both the literal and the figurative levels.

- Assess students’ reading of such literary texts using a variety of means, so that they can demonstrate their understanding by those means most meaningful and appropriate to them.

- Move through the novel at a pace that sustains students’ interest without eclipsing the novel’s ideas or other crucial aspects.

- Teach the book in ways that cannot be undermined by Cliffs Notes, online resources, or other study aids. Moreover, do not use video versions of the novel in such ways that allow a student to not read it.

**TEACHING DRAMATIC TEXTS: SHAKESPEAREAN VIGNETTE**

When I was in graduate school, I took a Shakespeare course that made me love the plays but fear them more than a bit, too. My first paper, on *Hamlet*, came back with a giant “SO WHAT?!?” inked across the page. I wondered if the professor had gone out to buy a bigger red marker just for my paper, so huge was his “remark.” After a few initial flops with teaching Shakespeare, I learned that nothing scares students more nor gives them a greater sense of achievement than having successfully read—and, ideally, performed—a Shakespeare play. They know he is the top of the mark, the point of reference. What ultimately convinced me that anyone could do Shakespeare, however, was the documentary a friend of mine made about a fourth-grade class in Berkeley that put on a
full performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I figured that if these little kids could do it, so could my big kids. And so they have.

I happen to be blessed with a lovely park with massive oak trees right next to my school; when we put on plays, we get out and give ourselves room to act out and speak up. I focus here on Shakespeare because, though these ideas will help you teach other dramatic texts as well, it is Shakespeare that challenges us most as teachers and readers. Following are some of the most helpful strategies I use to teach my students how to read the plays.

**Prepare Them to Read Shakespeare**

What students need is a framework for the play; as my father-in-law used to say, “If you don’t read the *TV Guide* to find out what the movie’s about, how will you be able to follow it?” To help them create this foundation and further develop their capacity, I do the following:

- **Focus on character.** Plays are character-driven; thus, you cannot understand them if you do not understand the characters themselves. Consider having students draw the characters to help them see what they look like and how they act. Seeing what they look like only goes so far; using a technique like the Target Notes in Figure 4.17 develops their capacity to read for character by showing them what to look for. Such tools also teach students to read from multiple perspectives, to see a character and, we hope, other people from different angles and thereby better understand how complex we all are. Obviously watching movies, especially different versions of the same play, allows students to better understand character by seeing how different actors or directors interpret the character. Other assignments, such as the Iago character study shown in Figure 4.17 and character study vocabulary exercise shown in Figure 5.4, further improve students’ ability to read for character.

- **Focus on plot.** Certainly characters are key to any play; in short, we watch them to see what they will do. What the main characters want drives the action. Yet the action is the story, and so students must learn how the story works by studying its narrative design. Why, for example, does *Romeo and Juliet* begin with a prologue that tells the whole story? How does Shakespeare create such tension within the story (and within the reader)? Using a tool like Plot Notes (a blank Plot Notes organizer is included in my *Tools for Thought*, page 168) or asking students to provide a visual explanation of the action allows them to see how the story plays out. Also, creating a storyboard of an act or scene (see *Tools for Thought*, page 144) allows students to identify the main events, those they
FIGURE 4.17 Sample Character Target Notes for Shakespeare’s Othello.

Iago is a person who only thinks of himself and what revenge he wants to take on Othello as shown when he says, “I follow him to serve my turn upon him.” (1.1.43)

He is also a two-faced person because Othello could never really trust him. Iago is also a liar (cruel) when he says, “I know my place, I can work to please.” (1.1.42)

Iago is not known as the real person, but he is the one who has the real power. He is not really what he seems.

Iago says, “I am a man for myself; I will not wear my heart upon my sleeve.” (1.1.92)

Iago is also a person who cannot be trusted. He always has his own best interest in mind. (1.1.45)

Iago is looking out for his own best interest because he is risking his present life and Othello will get in trouble if he must leave.

Iago: “To be or not to be” (1.3.55)
think are crucial to the story; this helps them read for plot details but also for the details needed to visualize (so they can draw) the action. In the case of Shakespeare, each play neatly conforms to the traditional plot design of Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution.

- **Focus on language.** Plays are made of words, and no one makes greater use of words in all their connotations than Shakespeare. Focusing on language means learning to identify puns (as in the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet* when Gregory and Samson banter back and forth about “collar,” “choler,” and “collier”); it also means learning why Shakespeare (or any writer) might use such wordplay in that particular scene. Close reading of language also asks students to consider the different connotations of words; Shakespeare routinely challenges us to make sense of two words whose connotative (and denotative) meanings contradict each other, as in the case of the Capulets’ and Montagues’ “civil blood.” To prepare students to read Shakespeare’s English, I prefer to start with the sonnets, which provide self-contained texts about subjects the students are all thinking about anyway: love and beauty. See “Reading Literature: A Poetic Cycle” (Figure 4.19, p. 82) to see what we do at this point to prepare for Shakespeare.

- **Focus on themes.** Shakespeare’s plays are so rich in ideas that you cannot help but enter into discussion of the plays’ ideas. The previously mentioned assignment, “Reading Literature: A Poetic Cycle,” provides a useful example of how students can learn to read for themes.

**Dramatize the Plays**

Plays were written to be heard, spoken, and seen. There are two essential resources for getting students up and acting, for bringing Shakespeare alive. The first, Shakespeare Set Free, is a series of books created by the Teaching Shakespeare Institute at the Folger Library and published by Washington Square Press. The other, *Teaching Shakespeare*, is written by Rex Gibson (1998) and published by Cambridge University Press; the Cambridge School Shakespeare editions of the plays are also outstanding guides for the novice and the advanced teacher alike. You can use any number of the following techniques to have students enact the play:

- **Divide the play into parts.** I often have a group take one act and then, after they read it, create their own script for their performance. They can keep it Shakespearean or adapt it into other styles. Either option helps them better read the play, because they
have to understand it in order to revise it. Some go onto the Internet to download the text of their act or scene; this has the advantage of allowing them to adapt and revise their script into a format that works best for them. When the group is finished performing, they must write a critical analysis of their portion of the play, examining its importance to the larger story of the play. This last assignment is essential, as it asks students to keep the entire play in their heads instead of reducing it to just one piece.

• **Perform it as reader’s theater.** This approach focuses on dramatic reading. You can assign readings to individuals—for example, one of Hamlet’s soliloquies—then follow up the performance with interpretive discussions. You can also assign a reading to a group—for example, the fight scene between Romeo and Tybalt. You might keep the readers in front of the class after they are done and allow students to ask them questions about what they think Mercutio means, for example, when he says, “A plague on both your houses.”

• **Read aloud.** For those teachers who can read Shakespeare with the proper effect, it is very helpful for the students to hear how the language sounds, where the emphasis falls, and how the names and words are pronounced.

• **Keep a Director’s Notebook.** There is also a variation called a prompt book; these approaches ask students to adopt the role of the director who will stage the play or specific scenes, or the actor who must interpret and perform the scenes. This technique is ideal with Shakespeare, as he offers no stage direction or guidance in the area of costuming, staging, or characterization. Nearly all contemporary plays, on the other hand, provide specific instructions about lighting, dress, and characterization. A description of this activity appears on pages 96–97; it’s worth noting, however, that this technique works just as well when recasting a story or novel as a dramatic interpretation, as the group Word for Word does with many short stories. For a more complete discussion of these two methods, read *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (O’Brien 1993).

• **Connect the play to the students’ world.** Whether this means recasting *Hamlet* as a disgruntled teenager whose parents have divorced or setting *Romeo and Juliet* in modern-day America, with a Romeo and a Juliet of different cultures whose relationship their parents oppose, students must connect the play to their own world. They can do this through dramatic interpretation; they can also make such cultural and personal connections through discussions with classmates, parents, or others whom they interview or read about through letters, journals, or other primary source documents.
I have focused here on Shakespeare because he remains the primary challenge for most teachers, especially those new to the profession. Obviously most of these strategies would also work with any other play. I use the same techniques, for example, when teaching Arthur Miller’s *Crucible*. I have not done so, but I can envision how a powerful class adaptation of Miller’s play could be made about the McCarthy era, since Miller himself was using the Puritan past to comment on his Communist present. In fact, Miller has in recent years published new editions of his plays with outstanding essays in them in which he discusses the context in which he wrote them. New editions of the works we teach come out all the time, often with valuable new resources. McDougal-Littell, for instance, in its Literature Connections series, now publishes most of the books commonly taught with “related readings.” What is distinctive about these editions is that each includes a range of texts from different cultures and genres that expand the conversation the main work begins.

I always encourage students to dress up for their performances. Costumes create a dramatic space and get kids into character. I have photographs of girls putting lipstick and wigs on tough athletic boys decked out in dresses. As I said earlier, I also like to get outdoors if we can: the classroom is too familiar and too restrained for the volume and movement you hope students will bring to a dramatic performance. I have seen otherwise shy and troubled readers bring a sense of fun and passion to the dramatic reading of Shakespeare, which never fails to move me. The kids know Shakespeare is hard, and for that reason they consider it a formidable achievement if they are able to climb that mountain.

**TEACHING POETIC TEXTS: COURTING THE ELUSIVE MUSE**

*A poem is anything said in such a way or put on the page in such a way as to invite from the hearer or reader a certain kind of attention.*

—WILLIAM STAFFORD, *WRITING THE AUSTRALIAN CRAWL*

Poetry was my passport into the world of literature. Few other texts offer so much substance, such rich fare as poems; nor are there many other texts, Shakespeare included, that challenge teachers and, of course, students as much as poetry can. Who wants to teach something that they themselves sometimes find hard to grasp? Surely this just feeds those fires of insecurity in teachers, that fear that our students will one day rise up en masse and shout, “Admit it! You don’t even know what it means!” I tend to think of poetry less as a wall we must climb than as an invitation, a doorway into the conversation we are trying to have. Billy Collins, during his tenure as America’s poet laureat, created Poetry
180, at <www.loc.gov/poetry/180>, to change high school students’ attitudes toward poetry by bringing into the classroom a poem a day that was meant to be heard, enjoyed, perhaps even discussed—but not studied. Another former poet laureat, Robert Pinsky, established the Americans’ Favorite Poem project, at <www.favoritepoem.org>, and produced remarkable videos related to the poems to help explain what the poems meant in general but also to that person in particular.

But the elusive quality of poetry is exactly what intrigues us about it. The students that created the following poem from a selection of words supplied by the teacher, for example, were excited about what they created because they could feel something—some meaning—inside the poem that they could not quite name.

Somewhere waiting
trying to work at your refusal
failing to reason with your own feelings.
Maybe waiting is the obvious knowledge.
Forget your old lines
see the flooding
see the love ahead
know what you’re waiting for.
—Rhea, Lucas, Julia, and Anthony

The same is true of this found poem Juan Ruiz created while reading Elie Wiesel’s novel Night:

LOSS OF FAITH
I have ceased to pray.
I did not deny God’s existence,
But I doubted His absolute justice.
I was no longer capable of lamentation.
I demanded an explanation.
My dad passed away
There were no prayers
at his grave
“Blessed by the name of the Eternal”
But why should I bless him?
—Juan Ruiz

What these students felt was probably the passion that Irish writer Sean O’Casey refers to in his play, The Shadow of a Gunman:

If I was you I’d give that game up. It doesn’t pay a working man to write poetry. I don’t profess to know much about poetry—I don’t profess to know much about poetry—about poetry—I don’t know much about the pearly glint of the morning dew, or the damask sweetness of the rare wild rose, or the subtle greenness of the serpent’s eye—but I think a poet’s claim to greatness depends on his power to put passion in the common people. (1969)

Poetry offers the teacher one other benefit that is worth mentioning: the invitation to keep challenging ourselves as readers. Nothing complements a teacher’s demanding schedule better than poetry, which can be read while waiting to use the photocopy machine, while waiting for the faculty meeting to start, while waiting for a parent to show up for a 3:15 meeting.

Poems can be read many ways. The following is one approach, each step of which provides choices depending on what you want to accomplish with the poems you’re teaching.

First, look at the poem’s title for some clue as to what it might tell you. Sometimes a poem’s title won’t offer any insight until after you read the poem; nevertheless, treat the title as part of the poem, or its first line. If you get a title like Louise Glück’s “The Garden,” you should immediately ask yourself what place or idea this might allude to (e.g., Eden) as you begin reading.

Read the poem straight through without stopping to analyze it. When reading a poem through the first time, don’t be distracted by trying to find meaning—come back later to pick that flower. First read the poem for what it is: a performance, an event, an experience at once personal and musical, private and public.

Start with what you know. I give my students any poem so long as there is at least one phrase that can help them to climb into it. It might
be the last line or some other phrase embedded within the poem. It doesn’t matter, so long as there is some toehold within the poem for them to begin the climb toward their own understanding. Sometimes they grab onto an image or onto their own emotional reaction. If the poem makes the reader angry, the first question to be asked is: Why does the poem make you angry?

**Look for patterns.** Patterns in poems might be grammatical, sensory (e.g., a combination of sounds, colors, scents), or object-related, evolving and changing from the beginning to the end of the poem. Edward Hirsch, in his essay “How to Read a Poem,” illustrates this notion best with Elizabeth Bishop’s “One Art,” in which the theme of loss changes in scale as the poem unfolds: the car keys lost in the early part of the poem grow into larger objects or abstractions until, in the end, the narrator complains of having lost entire continents and her lover. Other patterns reveal themselves in the architecture of the poem. William Carlos Williams took great pains to arrange his words just so on the page (in part because he wrote many of his poems on the backs of prescription pads!). The reader’s charge is to understand the relationship between the different pieces of the pattern.

**Identify the narrator.** Too often we assume that poems are narrated by the poet, unless an alternate voice or persona is clearly established, as in John Berryman’s *Dream Songs*. We mistake Charlie Chaplin for the Tramp and Woody Allen for the fool. Louise Glück’s poem illustrates the idea well: in “The Garden” the narrator (the “I”) could be anyone from God to a neighbor or even a former spouse observing the couple in the garden planting peas. Test the different narrative voices out in a poem to see if the text supports your notion of multiple personae, and be willing to concede that it does not.

**Reflect in writing.** Periodically, stop and write in your journal to help you digest your thoughts. Reflective writing helps you make greater sense of disparate insights while taking you deeper into the poems (and other texts) you have read so many times. This is also an ideal time to model for students how to think through the reading process of a complicated text. The teacher can read aloud to the class from her own reflective writing, explaining her thought process to the class. Students do not know what thinking looks like sometimes, so teachers must show them.

**Read the poem again.** If you haven’t read the poem aloud yet, be sure to do that now. It is important to maintain a sense of the poem as a whole, as a complete performance. Too much analysis will cause the
poem to otherwise fall apart in your hands. If a student reads the text aloud but offers no dramatic emphasis, now is a good time to talk about where the moments of emphasis are and how it is possible to find them. Try giving them the poem’s entire text, retyped without line breaks. Have the students reconstruct the poem, putting the breaks where they think they should go; then ask them why they broke the lines where they did. (This obviously works a little better with free verse.) A variation: give them the poem without the title at first; then have them brainstorm possible titles and explain why they fit the poem.

Find the crucial moments. Often a poem, like a story, has moments when the action shifts, the direction changes, the meaning alters. Billy Collins calls these moments “voltas,” a word that derives from the Italian word meaning to jump: it is the moment where the poem (or other literary text) jumps in an unexpected direction. Here is a found poem—that is, a group of words lifted from another medium—I wrote using words from an article in Harper’s Magazine.

SARAJEVO

She apologized for the burnt skins on the peppers she made for lunch, but, she said, “that’s what happens when you fry peppers on a fire made from an encyclopedia.”

The poem has, arguably, two crucial moments—“but” in the third line and “made from an encyclopedia” in the last line. Both moments change the course of the poem, the final line providing the dramatic shift from the normal, expected, and common to the strange. I sometimes ask students to find the moments of heat or tension within the poem, then we write about what makes these aspects of the work so important.

Consider form and function. At certain points, some features of the poem become more apparent and seem more important than they at first did. There are, after all, no accidents in poems: every word is carefully chosen, each line is broken just where the poet decided it must be, all words are arranged in an order that struck the poet as perfect.

This is the point at which a knowledge of poetic elements is helpful and when the teacher should be prepared to introduce or review such terms. In this context, the terms will help explain the poem and, secondarily, illustrate the meaning of the terms themselves. Form and
function shape meaning in most poems and their discussion must not be avoided. Consider the following passage from *Romeo and Juliet* and how the sonnet form of the verse functions to underlie the passage’s meaning.

**ROMEO:** (to *Juliet*, touching her hand)
If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentler sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

**JULIET:** Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this.
For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss.

**ROMEO:** Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too?
**JULIET:** Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

**ROMEO:** O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

**JULIET:** Saints do not move, though grant for prayers’ sake.

**ROMEO:** Then move not while my prayer’s effect I take.
(He kisses her)

The student reading this poem must know the sonnet form if he is to appreciate the ballet going on between the two lovers. The alternating lines suggest the back-and-forth play of the young couple, the teasing. All of this culminates when they physically couple in the last two lines—the *couplet*—as they kiss. The poem warrants further discussion for its use of imagery and metaphor. If such elements are ignored, the reader cannot get much further with this or any other poem.

Two other elements that often contribute to the meaning of a poem are repetition and compression. Both are common to most poetry and sometimes play a significant role in shaping the poem’s message. *Compression* refers to the way words and images are juxtaposed against or woven into each other, often through the economical use of language (e.g., see how Shakespeare combines images of hands, pilgrims, lips, and prayer in the previous example). *Repetition* implies both rhythm and emphasis, each of which needs to be discussed for a full understanding of any poem.

One last comment about the poem’s form. Poet and biographer Paul Mariani, when discussing the work of William Carlos Williams, spoke of the white space surrounding the poem—what I had, until then, considered just the blank, unused part of the page—as part of the text, in the same sense that the empty space of an artist’s canvas is an element of a
painting. Sometimes extra space between words is used, as in some of the poems of Muriel Rukeyser, for example, or John Berryman’s *Dream Songs*, to convey meaning. The space between stanzas suggests presence—of time passing, scenes changing, and so on—more than absence. So, too, does the space that follows the last word on a line: sometimes that space is like the space between notes in a Miles Davis song—silence or, in this case, white space, a kind of negative moment or sound that may contribute to the poem’s meaning. Poets must make great use of their resources, some of which are not immediately apparent to us.

**Look at the language of the poem.** Language is everything in a poem. Words are the poets’ medium, their paint, and what they do with them merits serious scrutiny if you are going to understand a poem. It is interesting to note that, despite their resistance to immediate comprehension, poems do not tend to use difficult words; they use words with deep possibilities for meaning.

Many modern poems, written in free verse as they tend to be, depend on grammar and syntax to provide their structure. Here’s a poem that illustrates the point well enough; my son Evan dictated it to my wife when he was five.

```
Midnight Rider (noun)
ride, ride, ride (verbs)
through the forest (prepositional phrase)
over the mountains (prepositional phrase)
across the river (prepositional phrase)
Midnight Rider (noun)
ride, ride, ride. (verbs)
```

Some poets use verbs to do all the work; they begin each line with a verbal phrase that places the emphasis on what the subject is doing. Others might use adjectives to surround the main subject of the poem and provide perspective on it. Such structures also provide a rhythmic pattern to the poem, a pattern that sometimes conveys meaning, especially if the poet takes liberties with punctuation.

Punctuation and typography both demand consideration in the reading of a poem. Typographical considerations are rather straightforward: you might ask, for example, “Why did the poet capitalize or italicize that word or phrase?” Punctuation, on the other hand, often remains a nagging source of confusion in a poem: Why doesn’t the poet just put a period where there obviously should be one? Guided by the question, “How does it change the meaning of the poem?” try looking, for example, at how the poet runs words together, separating them only by a line break. What you often find, in such instances, is that the blend-
ing of the different lines offers an opportunity for not just different meanings but deeper ones as well. The words begin to rub up against each other, creating semantic possibilities the poet recognizes and chooses to use to convey a full range of meaning. As I said, there are no accidents in poems; therefore, we must, upon encountering patterns we do not immediately understand, consider them from other perspectives. This is another point at which pulling back and rereading a poem through, perhaps aloud, can help you hear what the eyes may not be able to see.

**Go deeper or call it quits?** By this time you have achieved a functional—if not solid—understanding of the poem. Depending on the poet and the particular poem, there may not be much more to learn from it, or you may just not have the time for an extensive inquiry. Some poems, especially those we use to supplement discussions of other literature, may not warrant further scrutiny. Other poems may lack emotional depth or thematic complexity.

Some poems, however, do invite further study. Consider, for example, Phyllis Wheatley’s “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773):

> 'Twas mercy brought me from my pagan land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there’s a God, that there’s a Savior too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view our sable race with scornful eye.
> “Their color is a diabolic dye.”
> Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
> May be refined, and join the angelic train.

This poem will only begin to reveal its full intelligence to the reader who recognizes Wheatley’s use of irony, who senses the wry grin on her face as the poet capitalizes on the different meanings of *benighted soul* (e.g., in the sense of *knight*, as in “regal” or “superior,” and *night*, as in “darkness” and “confusion”). Eva Heidemann, a German exchange student in my American lit class, wrote:

Phyllis Wheatley was a slave and sure experienced a lot of bad things in her life. In this poem she is talking about the fact that white people tried to force slaves to their religion, Christianity, and to adopt the white culture. They tried to assimilate them. Wheatley is talking about this whole process in the view of whites so it might sound ironic to black people. Whites taught her “benighted soul” to understand what it means that they tried to force her into their religion and culture. The
black or “sable” race was for the whites something that had to do with the devil. She expresses this by using the words “diabolic dye.” She always talks about redemption, meaning that she would be released and refined from her religion if she would join the whites’ religion. The angelic train in her poem is a symbol for the Anglican Church. Wheatley clearly understood that by using the word mercy that whites at her time thought the best thing that could happen to an African was to come to America where they could be cultivated and given the opportunity to “escape” from their “pagan land.”

Though discussion and examination of this poem may yield an understanding of its surface structure, the poem contains a whole range of other, more subtle meanings if you look at its deep structure, as Eva obviously did. This is the point at which it is helpful to turn to other sources to better grasp the source of such a poem’s complexity:

- A good dictionary (e.g., The Oxford English Dictionary)
- The Bible (usually the King James Version, the favored translation by poets and writers)
- Other works (literary or artistic) to which the poem may allude

Return to the title before going on. Just as we tell students not to finish an essay without revisiting the initial writing prompt, so the reader should go back to the title of the poem at this point to see what additional information it might offer. This is especially helpful and important if a poem’s title did not make sense to the students before they began reading the poem—as with a title, for example, like Robert Frost’s “Birches.” In such instances, the poet expects the reader to return to the title and consider it as a commentary on or complement to the poem’s meaning.

Remind yourself why you are having students read this poem in the first place. Sometimes we get so involved in the reading of a poem that we forget why we read it in the first place. I use lots of poems, for example, while reading William Golding’s Lord of the Flies. I typically have students do some focused writing in which they build a bridge between the two works and, through their writing, construct their own understanding of the relationship between the two (or more) texts.

Engage in other activities to help students move beyond particular poems. Depending on your objectives and the time available, you might want to consider some of the following activities for further study of poetry in general:

- Unmagnetic poetry: Photocopy the poem (ideally enlarging it and using a heavier stock of paper) and cut it up into its lines or words. Students then use these pieces to construct other poems as a
means of manipulating language to better understand what it can and cannot do. When they have finished a poem, have them write it down, and read it aloud or post it in class.

- **Revelation through revision:** In *Deep Revision*, Meredith Sue Willis (1993) shows how to understand a poem by revising it through additions, changes in point of view, or verb tense. Willis writes, “One theory of literature states that what is written is only fully realized when a reader fully receives it, that the reader is, in a way, the true creator of a text.” Her chapter, titled “Revising as a Response to Literature,” provides a wide range of activities and strategies for manipulating the text of a poem (or story) to better understand its content and structure.

- **Draw your own conclusions:** Fran Claggett and Joan Brown’s *Drawing Your Own Conclusions* (1992) shows all the different ways you can render a poetic text into images that help students understand the poem better but also inspire them to create new visual and verbal texts.

- **Perform the poem:** Recast a poem into a ten-minute play in which different parts of the poem are performed and, through these performances, interpreted. Follow up with a discussion of what went on in the performers’ minds as they inhabited those different roles, and why they chose to interpret certain lines the way they did.

- **BE the poem:** My colleague Diane McClain has her students pair up and choose different types of poems and poets from different cultures. She rotates this activity throughout the year, changing the demands (e.g., the study of form, then poems from different cultures, and so on). Each pair must perform, then explain, the poem; finally, one of them must be the poem and answer students’ questions about what it means. Some of the most successful poems are those that allow students from other cultures to translate the text into English and then perform it in both English and their native language. This honors their culture and gives them a moment to shine.

### Sample Sequences

Before moving on, let’s look at two different but representative approaches to working with poems in the class. I use both techniques at different times throughout the year. The Weekly Poem, along with the Weekly Paper (see page 165), gives me the chance to bring more poetry into the class on a regular basis while simultaneously focusing on specific aspects of reading, writing, or talking about literary texts. (See Figure 4.18, pp. 84–85.)
Weekly Poem

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________

Mr. Burke/English Period: _______________________

Overview: Read the poem first to enjoy it. Read it straight on through, preferably aloud. Then read it again (and again), looking for any of the following literary devices or features:

- **Language:** tone, style, diction (word choice)
- **Conventions:** punctuation, grammar, poetic forms
- **Devices:** imagery, metaphor, symbols, repetition, and more
- **Design:** structure, organization of content (e.g., stanzas, past to present)
- **Themes:** ideas that run throughout the poem
- **Connections:** How might this relate to the other works we are reading, conversations we are having in class lately?
- **Purpose:** Is the poet trying to explain? Define? Persuade? What, why, and how do they do this?

The front must show evidence of close reading—e.g., underlined words, comments, questions, connections, suspected patterns. Your written response (on the back or on a separate sheet of paper) should be **one perfectly written paragraph** (not a loosely written journal-type response) with a clear assertion, supporting details, and examples or quotations from the poem. Your paragraph must include quotations from the poem. These quotations must be **embedded**, not left to stand alone.

There is a wonderful video profile of this poem at <http://www.favoritepoem.org/archive/liang.html>

I’m Nobody! Who are you? (288)
by Emily Dickinson

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! they’d advertise— you know!
How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell one’s name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog!

FIGURE 4.18 Sample Weekly Poem assignment
Another, more involved approach asks students to read a variety of poems that are somehow related. This assignment develops their ability to read multiple texts for the purpose of comparing and writing about common themes. The assignment accomplishes much more, however, as you can see in Figures 4.19 and 4.20.

READING TEXTBOOKS: A SAMPLE SEQUENCE

Many teachers use textbooks (i.e., anthologies) as the core text for their course. Such books offer benefits if used effectively, but anthologies can make it easy to be a lazy teacher, allowing us to say, “Read ‘The Necklace’ on page 24 and do the study questions.” For what it’s worth, I work alternately with a few different anthologies, depending on what and whom I am teaching:

- *World Writers Today: Contemporary Literature from Around the World* (ScottForesman 1995)
- *Multicultural Voices: Literature from the United States* (ScottForesman 1995)
- *The Daybook of Critical Reading and Writing*, Fran Claggett, Louann Reid, and Ruth Vinz (Great Source 1998)
- *American Studies Album: Literature, Documents, and Visual Art* (ScottForesman 1995)

Figure 4.21 shows one way to work with anthologies to incorporate collaborative learning, literature circles, and reading strategies to help all students read challenging texts.

HOW WE READ: A BRIEF EXPLANATION

What goes on when we read, anyway? Let me illustrate with a few examples from my own experience or my classroom’s. First, we try to make sense of the textual information as it comes in through our eyes or, if we are listening, our ears. We try to impose order on this stream of words and images by predicting what it means, then checking all subsequent information against this theory or initial understanding. Only when we
Reading Literature: A Poetic Cycle

Overview: This unit asks you to study a collection of poems, focusing on one poem in depth as you teach it to us. The unit concentrates on the close study of literary texts in general and of poems in particular, culminating in a short (one typed page) paper in which you demonstrate your ability to write about themes, embed quotations from multiple texts, and organize your ideas into a coherent paper.

Standards Connection: This assignment asks you to learn about and demonstrate your ability to:

- Read poetic texts closely, annotating and responding to such elements as the poet's use of language, imagery, tone, and other devices
- Identify and compare common themes in multiple texts
- Identify and understand the elements of the specific type of poem (e.g., sonnet)
- Make a statement about your theme and support this claim with examples and quotations from the texts
- Identify and embed into your paper appropriate direct quotations
- Present and/or discuss the texts, using details to support your ideas
- Use various note-taking strategies to organize your ideas and quotations and prepare to write a literary essay
- Generate useful questions to help you read, write, and speak
- Write a literary essay

Guidelines: Follow these steps to complete this assignment:

1. Read through all and choose one of the poems in the packet.
2. Sign up for that poem; no groups may teach the same two poems.
3. Each group, guided by the list of standards above, should study and prepare to present their poem as follows:
   - Read it aloud (well!) two times
   - Present it using the overhead to show your thinking and annotations
   - Explicate the poem's meaning and the group's response to it by talking about it, acting it out, or visually representing it (i.e., drawing the action)
4. While each group presents, the others in the class should identify the different themes within the poems and set up the Target Notes tool.
5. Groups should work together to synthesize notes and ideas into a Target Notes tool with "Sonnet Themes" in the middle and a different theme in each strand of the target. Within each strand you must include direct quotations and line numbers (e.g., "18:2" = sonnet 18, line 2).
6. Use your Target Notes and annotated texts to write a one-page paper that:
   - Makes a clear, compelling statement about one of the themes
   - Develops this statement into several paragraphs, each one with its own main idea and supporting examples
   - Includes embedded direct quotations from at least three different poems
   - Uses transitions and other devices to compare what the different poems say about the theme
   - Demonstrates an understanding of and ability to use appropriate conventions (e.g., punctuation, citation, formatting of titles).

FIGURE 4.19  Reading Literature: A Poetic Cycle sample handout
encounter information in the text that does not agree with our assumptions do we stop to reevaluate our understanding. For instance, I was listening to an audio recording of South African writer Nadine Gordimer’s novel *None to Accompany Me* while driving to work. I grabbed the wrong tape from the box without realizing it and popped it in. I had been distracted while much of the book was being read to me, so it did not surprise me much when the new tape made no sense. But the more I listened to what I thought was Chapter 3 (it was actually Chapter 9!), the more confused I got: here were characters I had not met talking about events I had not heard of with people I clearly did not know. When, a day later, I changed the tape again—not having caught my sixty-mile-per-hour mistake—it turned out to be the tape I originally needed. Suddenly the text made sense!
Reading Literature Unit

Burke/Spring

Overview: This unit has several important goals, all of which are based on the state standards. Be sure that each student takes notes, as you will be graded individually, though you will also be evaluated for your group’s work. I expect this unit to take approximately three weeks. By the unit’s end, you should know and be able to:

- Read different types of literature organized around a unifying theme
- Write about this theme using details and quotes from the different texts you read to support your thesis
- Take useful notes that will help you understand and prepare you to write about what you read
- Discuss, in groups and with the entire class, your reading process and interpretations
- Write about literature using appropriate conventions (e.g., always write in present tense when writing about literature)
- Identify the essential components of each genre (e.g., plot, theme, character, etc.; but also style, tone, voice, devices)

Step One: Survey the textbook to familiarize yourself with it. Complete the Textbook Evaluation sheet. In order to expedite this portion, you can complete it as a group.

Step Two: Begin your note making with a list of comments and/or questions about the book and its contents. Look at the title and the contents.

Step Three: Read the foreword. Take notes on the following questions. Be sure to jot down examples in your notes

- What purpose does a foreword serve?
- How is a foreword different from a preface, introduction, and prologue?
- How is a foreword similar to a preface, introduction, and prologue?
- Be specific: What is the author of this foreword trying to accomplish? Why do you think that? What examples can you provide to support your assertion?

Step Four: Get into groups of four people. Once your group is set up, skim through the table of contents. Each unit in the book is organized around a theme. Decide which unit your group wants to focus on, then sign up for that unit on the whiteboard. Note: No two groups may study the same unit.

Step Five: Before you begin reading the poems and stories in the unit, have a discussion about the theme. All members should take notes during and after this discussion. If, for example, the unit is titled "The Need to Succeed," you should ask questions like these:

- What does it mean to “succeed”?
- Do we really “need” to succeed?
- Why do we feel this need?
- What do we need in order to succeed?
- How would the world be different if we did not feel this need?
- What does success cost us?
- If one succeeds, does the other necessarily “fail”?
- Is succeeding the same as winning?

FIGURE 4.21 Reading Literature Unit sample handout
**Step Six:** Follow these steps for all of the selections in your unit:

1. Choose the next selection (e.g., the story or poem you will all read next). Give the group an assignment (example: "Everyone needs to finish this poem and have your initial notes done by the end of the period," or "Get this done for homework tonight so we can do the next step tomorrow").

2. Brainstorm possible meanings and implications based on the title or any other clues you might have. (*Everyone should take notes throughout this process.*)

3. Read the assigned text.

4. As you read, make notes—ask questions, jot down examples, write observations—about patterns, themes, tone, style, point of view, or other aspects of the story that seem important. Consider using one of the following note-making methods we have studied:
   - Reporter's Notes
   - Cornell Notes
   - Episodic Notes
   - Sensory Notes
   - Interactive Notes

5. Write one perfect paragraph about each poem or story in the unit. In this paragraph, you must do the following:
   - Have a clear topic sentence that establishes a connection between this poem/story and the theme of the unit. *Example:* Success comes in many forms, however, as the story "Good Day for Banana Fish" proves.
   - Write in the present tense.
   - Include at least two examples or quotes from the story. These should support or develop the connection between this story and the unit theme.
   - Explain, in separate sentences, how these quotes relate to both the topic sentence and the theme of the unit.

**Step Seven:** Prepare to run a fishbowl discussion about your unit’s theme. A successful discussion will demonstrate your ability to:

- Understand and discuss what you read
- Develop and support an idea, using examples from different texts
- Explain your ideas to others to help them understand your interpretation of the story
- Make connections between what you read, the world around you, and your own or others’ lives

**Step Eight:** Write an essay about a theme in literature. Using the notes you’ve taken, write an essay that explores the theme of your unit (e.g., "the need to succeed"). This essay must:

- Be typed, double-spaced, and written in a 12-point serif font with 1.25-inch margins
- Be at least three typed pages
- Include a properly formatted bibliography page (does not count as one of the three pages!) citing all the different poems and stories in your unit, as well as the textbook itself
- Have a properly formatted cover page

**Deadlines:** This paper, complete with drafts and notes, will be due on Wednesday, February 21st. The discussions mentioned in Step Seven will take place the week of February 19th.

**Assessment:** You will receive two grades: one an individual grade based solely on the quality of your final written work; the second one determined by your contribution to the group.
The reading process requires that we use our own experiences and knowledge about the world to help us further understand the book. However, everything changes over time. We cannot read the same book twice, to adapt Heraclitus’ famous maxim. These personal biases or experiences tend to profoundly shape our interpretation of the text, blinding us sometimes to other, equally valid readings or important details. Perhaps my most personal reading experience came while teaching *Hamlet* to a class of seniors the year after my father died. During the time I taught the play, my mother began to date other men for the first time since my father’s death. This confused me and allowed me to identify closely with Hamlet throughout the reading of the play. My own feelings were so raw at the time that they interfered with other readings I might otherwise have come up with.

Students often react to books or elements of the books they read. We have so many students with personal “issues” in our classes these days. Others are simply going through phases of personal evolution that can either confuse or inspire them when they encounter the text. Tracy, a young woman in my junior class, had some trouble at home with her parents and, after reading the chapter of *Huckleberry Finn* in which Huck decides to run away from his dad, got in her car and took off for Santa Cruz for a weekend without telling her parents. She stayed at a friend’s house to talk things through. She was back at school Monday, I am thankful to say. Laurel, another student of mine, had a hard time focusing on any other aspect of the novel than Huck’s father’s cruelty, since the previous week her mother had thrown her out of the house for reasons that were not at all clear to Laurel.

Finally, while reading we often encounter passages that we simply cannot understand. My students often have trouble reading Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country* because it assumes a familiarity not only with South African customs and apartheid but with certain stories from the Bible. In addition, the book’s writing is idiosyncratic, offering typographic as well as stylistic variations they have not previously encountered. This point characterizes the trouble many of my students have with texts we read, some of which can be chalked up to the inability to “see” what is happening, and some of which is related to the cognitive disorientation they feel, caused by a lack of knowledge or information.

Let me illustrate the process in a more practical way by providing a sequence for reading a short story that emphasizes the three phases of the reading process: before, during, and after. (See Appendix C.)

**Profiles of Readers**

Having considered, however briefly, the reading process, let me offer a more concrete profile of three different types of readers before looking at
specific strategies to help all our students read better. Returning to the Continuum of Complexity (Figure 4.5), I find it helpful to measure students’ reading performance by their capacity to juggle simultaneously the various demands of reading. This idea of a continuum also suggests that the student who is a confident reader of even difficult nonfiction texts—perhaps because he just loves history—may not naturally transfer those strengths to the task of reading a novel like Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Certainly many strong readers of all ages react to poetry as if it asks things of them as a reader that they just cannot provide. So as teachers we must keep in mind that our students may be, at any particular time, each one of the following types of readers, depending on the text at hand.

**Powerful Readers**

Powerful readers have a variety of habits when they read, all of which make them confident navigators of texts. By “habits,” I mean they have skills they use reflexively, such as asking questions of the text, its author, or its characters; looking outside the text to consider the events in the larger context of the author’s other works, the historical period, or other books on the same subject; and reading using all their senses. For example, when I read Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things*, I taste the spicy foods she describes (because our Indian neighbor has fed us similar dishes), hear the sound of the river beside which the characters in the book work on their boat, and smell the different vats of pickles brewing in the factory that is one of the book’s settings. Powerful readers also bring a fierce and sustained attention to their reading, drawing on their previous experiences and knowledge to help them understand what they read. In short, they make *connections*. The powerful reader’s associative capacity will enable him or her to read Sandra Cisneros’ *House on Mango Street* and wonder if the author had Cinderella in mind when she wrote a particular chapter of the book, since the stories contain parallels. Powerful readers are also able to read for subtle aspects of a text such as style and nuance, since their ability affords them the extra attention needed to attend to these minutiae. Chances are that powerful readers enjoy reading on their own and would do so whether you asked them to or not, though this does not mean that they necessarily like to read required texts. Powerful readers are a picky lot and even quarrelsome, as you yourself probably know.

**Proficient Readers**

“Proficient” describes most of our students. They have mastered the requisite skills, but these readers have stumbling points that the powerful readers do not. For example, vocabulary or contextual information (e.g., about history) may be lacking, and so a solid understanding evades them. If they drift from comprehending a text, however, most of them can be
easily brought back into the fold by the teacher’s questions or guidance. This attention spent elsewhere keeps them from being able to easily focus on such smaller details as style and voice, however. In this respect, thinking again of the Continuum of Complexity, they have the skills and attention to handle several competing demands for their cognitive attention but not all. Thus, a proficient reader might be able to read Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima* with reasonable success but get distracted by the use of folktales and Spanish in the novel. The most important help we can offer this kind of reader is a challenging book about something they really love: this will push them past their current status and, using what is already familiar to them, allow them to read a more demanding text.

**Struggling Readers**

The struggling reader is typified, in my mind, by my friend’s wife, who is a college graduate but has a reading disability. When an English teacher casually remarked at dinner that he couldn’t understand how anyone could not like reading, she asked, “How would you feel if every time you picked up something to read, it made you feel stupid?” People struggle for different reasons and thus need different strategies to help them improve. English as a second language (ESL) students, for instance, are still learning the language and the American culture, so they have considerable trouble with some of the books we ask them to read. For students in this last category, such devices as summaries, Cliffs Notes, and even films can help ground them in the general plot of the story. For this is the primary challenge at this stage of reading: most kids in this category don’t have a basic understanding of what is happening in the story. They are overcome by the complexity of the text: too many things are going on within the writing and the story itself. Some struggling readers encounter difficulties here because of genuine reading disorders that affect how they process information. The expanded availability of books on tape offers real help for these kids. Finally, some have not learned to read well because they haven’t given reading the attention it requires. What unifies all these readers is the anxiety that their reading limitations will make them appear dumb or otherwise embarrass them in front of their peers.

**STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE READING SKILLS**

There are three types of reading that all students do regardless of their level of proficiency. First, there is the required reading of school, exemplified by Shakespeare, an author hardly any kid would voluntarily pick up and read. This is “have to read” reading. Second, assuming that you provide opportunities for students to read books of their own choice as
part of your class curriculum, there is personal reading, which I think of as “get to read” reading—it is anchored in students’ own interests, but it is still school reading. The last kind of reading is everyone’s favorite, and kids won’t let the other types keep them from it: “need to read” reading. This is reading that students are compelled to do because it is integral to who they are. I immediately think of the boys in my classes who carry a seemingly endless supply of car magazines, which, no matter how hard I try, I cannot keep them from reading in class. Also included in this category of “need to read” would be the Internet, sports pages, teen magazines, and computer manuals. Students may not like to read what we ask them to, but just about everyone needs to read something. That is the place to begin with your reluctant reader.

The following strategies to improve reading skills will help, but none of them will work with all students and none will work all the time, if for no other reason than they begin to feel redundant to the students who use them. In addition to all these specific methods, there are three contributing factors in creating a literate environment that helps students develop as readers. I discuss them more fully elsewhere, but I want to emphasize them here. First, the teacher is the model. If our students don’t see us reading, don’t hear us talking about what we are reading, then we run the risk of losing our credibility. Second, the classroom library is crucial to any literate environment: kids must walk into their English class and see books. These books should inspire their interest through student diversity of topics and range of difficulty. Finally, the class must become a community of readers, creating among themselves a culture that gives everyone permission to read, that says it’s cool to read. Now, let’s look at the nitty-gritty: What can you do tomorrow?

**Bookmarks**

Bookmarks such as the samples you see in Figure 4.22 put the tools for improved reading right in their hands and close by for easy reference. These are easy to run off, and you can create different ones for different types of texts or various phases of students’ development. You can even create specific bookmarks for books they are reading at the time. I am not talking about cute bookmarks that students make as art projects. While there may be some value to such projects, they do not develop readers’ capacity to read more difficult texts.

**Students as Teachers**

We always learn things better if we have to teach them to others. Throughout the course of a novel you can call on individuals or groups
Core Skills

**ASK QUESTIONS**
- Who is involved?
- What are they doing? (Why?)
- What do they want very badly? (Why?)
- What is the situation or problem?
- Who is telling the story? (Why?)
- How is the story designed? (Why?)
- What is the source of tension?
- Can you trust the narrator?

**MAKE CONNECTIONS**
- I wonder why . . .
- What caused . . .
- I think . . .
- This is similar to . . .
- This is important because . . .
- This reminds me of . . .
- What I find confusing is . . .
- What will happen next is . . .
- I can relate to this because . . .

**PREDICT**
- What will happen next?
- Why do you think that?
- What effect will that have on the story or the characters?

**SUMMARIZE**
- What happened?
- What is essential to tell?
- What was the outcome?
- Who was involved?
- Why did this happen?
- Is that a detail or essential information?

**STANDARDS/TEST CONNECTION**
- The best word to describe the tone is . . .
- What device does the author use to . . .
- The writer organizes information: sequentially, spatially, comparatively . . .
- The main character feels/thinks . . .

**SYNTHESIZE**
- Three important points/ideas are . . .
- These are important because . . .
- What comes next . . .
- The author wants us to think . . .
- At this point the article/story is about . . .
- I still don’t understand . . .
- What interested me most was . . .
- This means that . . .

**Useful Literary Terms**

- Allusion
- Analogy
- Antagonist
- Character
- Conflict
- Convention(s)
- Diction
- Exposition
- Imagery
- Irony

- Motif
- Narrator
- Persona
- Plot
- Point of view
- Protagonist
- Setting
- Theme(s)
- Tone
- Voice

**Reading: Think About It!**

When reading remember to:

- Ask questions of the text, yourself, and the author
- Make connections to yourself, other texts, the world
- Use different strategies to achieve and maintain focus while reading
- Determine ahead of time why you are reading this text and how it should be read
- Adjust your strategies as you read to help you understand and enjoy what you read

Evaluating how well you read

Evaluate and decide which of the following best describes your reading performance today. Explain why you gave yourself the score, also.

1. Excellent because I . . .
   - read the full 20 minutes
   - read actively (e.g., used different strategies and techniques)
   - understood most of what I read
   - Why does the character/author . . .
   - This reminds me of . . .
   - This was important because . . .
   - A good example of ____________ is . . .
   - I think ____________ because . . .
   - This means that . . .

2. Successful because I . . .
   - read almost the entire 20 minutes
   - mostly helped me read better
   - understood most of what I read
   - I wonder why . . .
   - This was important because . . .
   - I found the following quote interesting . . .
   - Develop your own question/idea. This reminded me of ______________
   - I think ____________ because . . .

3. Inconsistent because I . . .
   - read only about half the time
   - used some strategies but they didn’t help me much
   - understood some of what I read
   - I still don’t understand . . .
   - I wonder why . . .
   - I found the following quote interesting . . .
   - I ____________ this book because . . .

4. Unsuccessful because I . . .
   - read little or nothing
   - did not read actively
   - did not understand what I read
   - I didn’t understand because . . .
   - One theme that keeps coming up is . . .
   - I think ____________ because . . .
   - I still don’t understand . . .
   - This was important because . . .
   - This means that . . .
   - A good example of ____________ is . . .
   - The author is saying that . . .

Thinking about how you read

- I was distracted by . . .
- I started to think about . . .
- I got stuck when . . .
- One strategy I used to help me read better was . . .
- When I got distracted, I tried to refocus myself by . . .
- These word(s) or phrases were new/interesting to me . . .
- I think they mean . . .
- When reading I should . . .
- When I read today, I realized that . . .
- I had a hard time understanding . . .
- I’ll read better next time if I . . .

Thinking about what you read

- Why does the character/author . . .
- Why doesn’t the character/author . . .
- What surprised me most was . . .
- I predict that . . .
- This is similar to . . .
- This reminds me of . . .
- This is important because . . .
- The best word to describe the tone is . . .
- This means that . . .
- The writer organizes information: sequentially, spatially, comparatively . . .
- The main character feels/thinks . . .

Develop your own questions

Develop your own question(s) or prompt(s) that you find helpful when thinking about how or what you read.

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to lead discussions of previously assigned portions of the text. This can be done in different ways, varying from focused (e.g., be prepared to lead a discussion about why Holden Caulfield is obsessed with ducks) to open-ended (e.g., read a chapter in *Catcher in the Rye* and be prepared to lead a discussion about whatever you think is most important or interesting). At year’s end, students often remember these student-led classes as some of the most powerful. Students see that their peers—and thus themselves—are capable of thinking effectively and publicly about important ideas. Under such circumstances, students can start the honest, essential conversations that we might not know quite how to address. The most compelling example of such a conversation was a period-long spontaneous discussion of Twain’s use of the word *nigger* in *Huckleberry Finn*, during which I did little but ask occasional questions to push students’ thinking deeper on particular issues (e.g., “Okay, why might some black people think it’s okay if they use that word but entirely wrong for anyone else to?”).

**Reciprocal Teaching**

Working in pairs, students read an assigned portion of text during a specific period of time. The two students alternate reading aloud, switching off every few minutes or so, but pushing each other to work efficiently within the allotted time. The listener can interrupt the reader at any time to ask questions; in fact, that is one of the listener’s responsibilities: to challenge both himself and his partner to think critically about the text. When one reader concludes her portion of the text, the other summarizes
what was just read as a way of transitioning into the next section of the story and orienting the previous reader (since we don’t always follow stories as well when we read them aloud to others). Students ask two kinds of questions: surface and deep. Surface questions address literal aspects of the story—for example, “Where are they now?”—and basic details such as vocabulary. Deep questions help establish and reveal the depths of essential events. Such questions would examine not just that it is important that, in the *Odyssey*, Penelope remains loyal to Odysseus for so many years but also why she does. During such readings, it is absolutely necessary that both students give their full attention to the story and the discussion; they should not take notes or partake in any other activities that might distract from their talking, listening, and reading. It is possible to have the students read to answer some previously established question (e.g., “How might we compare the people in Arthur Miller’s *Crucible* to Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Red Scare of the 1950s?”). They might begin such discussions by predicting what they will find; this helps orient their reading and thinking. To bring the conversation to a close, ask the participants to draw some final conclusions.

**Read Aloud**

Although reading aloud can help us appreciate and enjoy a good story, I include it here because it helps many students learn to read better. This is particularly the case for ESL, special education, and struggling readers
who often don’t know what a text is supposed to sound like. Sometimes students just grow tired of not “getting it,” especially with poetry or Shakespeare. When someone who can read very well “performs” the text, giving careful attention to the need for emphasis and mood, students understand it better because they hear what the author wanted them to hear. This is another reason that dramatic activities that grow out of reading fiction can be so effective. I have to admit that I did not read very well when I began teaching; however, early on I realized the value of reading aloud and I worked on my technique, so that now students often say that they enjoy it when I read to them. No doubt reading all those bedtime stories to my children helped me in this area. For more detailed suggestions about how to read aloud, see Jim Trelease’s *Read-Aloud Handbook* (2002).

**Read for Patterns**

The “Hero’s Journey” is based on the work of Joseph Campbell (see Campbell’s *Hero with a Thousand Faces*) and, sometimes, Carol Pearson’s *Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By*. Using Campbell’s idea of the journey as both a metaphor and an archetypal pattern that exists in nearly any story, I created the diagram shown in Figure 4.23 to help my students better understand narrative action.

After introducing the heroic cycle and explaining that, for instance, “the call” refers to the invitation to do something, go somewhere, or become something, I ask students to use the diagram to describe a story. *Catcher in the Rye* conforms to this diagram very nicely, as do most of the stories we teach. The pattern allows them to create a holistic picture of the story and, since I often have them do this exercise at the book’s end, provides an ideal opportunity for them to write about their own journey or certain stages of it. The greatest benefit of this approach is that they begin to think about stories in terms of their shape or pattern, something that helps them better understand the architecture or “story grammar” of subsequent works they read.

**Use Study Questions**

Quality and sequencing are the crucial elements of good study questions. You can ask all the questions you want, but if they are not the right ones, asked with a clear and useful purpose in mind, they will not help the students, who will dismiss them as busywork, something they resent. Quality is, in important ways, linked to sequencing, since part of what makes a question good is that it builds on previous knowledge and inquiry. I use study questions when we are reading a particularly difficult text and I want to be sure my students know the “what”—that is, the
plot—of the story. Thus, I might ask initial questions about the *Odyssey* that focus on who Odysseus is, why he is absent, why the characters are so frustrated with Telemachus and Penelope. Once I have established that students understand the basics of the story—as evidenced by their answers to these initial questions—I know I can go deeper with such questions as, “Why does it matter that the suitors keep referring to Telemachus as ‘Odysseus’s son’ instead of by his own name?” and “What does it mean to ‘make a name for yourself?’” If the questions are carefully sequenced ahead of time, students will be prepared to write an effective literary analysis later on, since they can draw from their study questions those quotes and responses that support their ideas.

**Ask for Reader Response**

Students should be required to respond to texts in writing. Briefly, students improve their reading ability by looking closely at specific portions...
of the text to improve their interpretive or analytical skills. One method allows the teacher to take specific quotes he feels are essential to a full understanding of the story or a character—the obvious example from *Hamlet* would be the “to be or not to be” soliloquy—and have students explain them. Such analyses can be written out in a journal to be collected at the end of the unit or on separate sheets of paper for more ongoing accountability and assessment of students’ understanding of the text. Another option is the “notes and quotes” method, which typically asks students to divide a page in half and, while reading, jot down on the left side of the paper quotes or events that seem essential to the story. Later on, the student reflects on the meaning and importance of these quotes on the right side of the page. My own experience with this exercise is that students have a tendency to concentrate more on the left side of the page than on the right; they think they have completed the assignment because half of the page is full. The teacher should, therefore, stress the importance of the reflection aspect of the assignment. Students should also be asked to note the page number of the quote or, if it is a play, the appropriate act, scene, and line numbers. While I choose the quotes when it seems appropriate to the task, I prefer that students choose their own. This allows them to select those textual moments that mean the most to them and about which they will have the most to say.

**Annotate Texts**

While annotating a text is similar to responding to it, in this case I treat it as a specific strategy and skill. I teach students how to annotate or mark up a text by giving them a photocopied version with an extra-wide margin; sometimes I copy the text onto an overhead transparency so that we can all see a student’s work. I do this, for example, with the prose poem that opens Steinbeck’s *Cannery Row*, telling my students to make notes in the margins, writing down any of the following:

- Questions
- Quotes
- Ideas
- Statements
- Patterns
- Essential information
- Textual connections to other books or poems we have read

When students come in the next day with their annotations, we use them as the basis for comparison. I ask them to explain what they underlined and commented on and why. It is the *why* that helps me assess
their understanding of both the text and the skill and determines where we go next. It is also the why that makes them go beyond the obvious.

Create a Dramatic Interpretation

Students should be encouraged to go inside the text and manipulate it. The title of Jeffrey Wilhelm’s book says it all: *You Gotta BE the Book* (1995). The first year I taught American lit I had my students read Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter*. We found it predictably difficult, especially those with reading difficulties and those who were in the ESL transition program. We managed to have some fun with the book and increase our understanding of it through discussion and dramatic interpretation. Working in teams of two, students were assigned one chapter of the book and, using the actual dialogue in the chapter, asked to type up a script, adding an introduction and stage directions. Here is an example:

CHAPTER 2 ("THE MARKET PLACE")

Setting: The grass-plot before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston; all with their eyes intently fastened on the iron-clamped oaken door.

DAME: *(She addresses them in a fierce voice, charged with vengeance, her eyes wide.)* Goodwives, I’ll tell ye a piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute, should have the handling of such malefactors as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!

WOMAN #1: *(She speaks softly, apologetically to the others, looking about nervously.)* People say that the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor, takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation.

AUTUMNAL MATRON: *(She addresses the group with a wise tone, her arms crossed on her chest, her head tilted back in a smug attitude. She has the air of a judge.)* The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch—that is a truth. At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne’s forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she—the naughty baggage—little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a
brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!

YOUNG WIFE: (She seems scared, as though she were speaking to herself to warn herself.) Ah, but let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart.

These dramatic renditions take students inside the characters they are trying to learn “to read;” by becoming the characters, students understand them and the text better.

Conduct a Reading Workshop

In my class, “reading workshop” means that students can choose from a variety of strategies, some of which I have already discussed here and others of which I will consider elsewhere in the book (see Chapter 9). These and other reading strategies are summed up in Reading Reminders: Tools, Tips, and Techniques (Burke 2000). I include the table of contents in Figure 4.24 as a guideline for effective reading instruction.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER’S DILEMMA: HOW TO REINVENT READING FOR YOURSELF

After reading the same books again and again and again, boredom threatens the joy we initially felt when we first taught them. It would be nice if we could all mix things up whenever we felt like it: I envy private school teachers: They might be reading a book like Charles Frazier’s Cold Mountain, and will say “I just love it. I think I’ll have my kids read it.” Most of us are stuck with the books we have. For one reason or another, I have taught Lord of the Flies every year since I was a student teacher. How do I keep from reverting to automatic teaching?

Zen master Shunryu Suzuki (1988) describes the “beginner’s mind” as one of “many possibilities”; he goes on to say that “in the expert’s mind there are few.” According to Suzuki, “The goal of practice is always to keep our beginner’s mind. Suppose you recite the Prajna Paramita Sutra only once. It might be a very good recitation. But what would happen to you if you recited it twice, three times, four times, or more? You might easily lose your original attitude toward it. . . . [If] you continue to practice one, two, three years or more, although you may improve some, you are liable to lose the limitless meaning of original mind.” Aside from the endless flow of papers, nothing seems to threaten the English teacher’s lively practice like repetition. It was largely for this reason—the danger of falling asleep at the wheel of our
What Teachers Must Do

Establish a Reading Culture
1. Use Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)
2. Read Aloud
3. Help Students Write Their Reading Autobiography
4. Keep Reading Fresh
5. Create the Conditions for Effective Learning
6. Be a Model Reader
7. Use Literature Circles
8. Talk About Reading
9. Make Room for Essential Conversations

Teach and Support Students
10. Make Connections
11. Make Available the Necessary Reading Tools
12. Choose Texts Wisely
13. Provide Options for Student Response
14. Use the Dense Question Strategy
15. Prepare Students to Read (Prereading)
16. Use Video to Support, Not Replace, Reading
17. Use Graphic Organizers
18. Develop Guidelines for Group Discussion
19. Use Questions to Support Reading
20. Teach Vocabulary Strategies
21. Teach Students to Ask for Help
22. Challenge and Support Students While They Are Reading
23. Provide Good Directions
24. Create and Use Study Guides
25. Support Students with Special Needs
26. Support English-Language Learners
27. Support Students with Learning Difficulties

Evaluate Your Students
34. Use Reading Surveys
35. Develop Portfolio Guidelines
36. Compare Effective and Ineffective Readers
37. Have Them Use the Reading Scale
38. Troubleshoot Reading Difficulties
39. Check for Understanding and Growth

What Students Must Be Able to Do

Read a Variety of Types of Texts for Different Purposes
40. Textbooks
41. Poems
42. Web Pages
43. Narrative Texts
44. Expository Texts
45. Images
46. Tests
47. Primary Source Documents
48. Plays
49. Essays
50. Read in Different Ways: To Think, to Study, to Gather
51. Read for Style, Argument, Form, and Genre
52. Ask Different Types of Questions
53. Self-Select Books

Use Various Strategies
54. Question the Author (Q & A)
55. ReQuest (Reciprocal Questioning)
56. Concept Cards
57. Repeated Reading
58. PreReading Plan (PReP)
59. Directed Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA)
60. SQ3R
61. KUW
62. CRITICS Procedure
63. Anticipation Guides
64. Think-Alouds
65. Reciprocal Teaching
66. Ask Questions to Understand Stories

FIGURE 4.24  Table of contents for Reading Reminders (Burke 2000).
own reading, and thus our teaching—that Ron Padgett wrote *Creative Reading*. Padgett’s premise is important: we must each reinvent the reading experience for ourselves if we are to continue to find in it the satisfaction we did when we began. Poet Rainer Maria Rilke’s admonition that we are always a beginner each time we sit down to the task of writing is true, but it’s an ideal and requires a discipline we can’t always muster in the course of the daily grind.

Reading literary criticism has not satisfied my need to plumb the depths of the books I teach. For one, such reading helps only if you teach AP classes, since few American high school students are interested in such things as the literary and philosophical influences on J. D. Salinger’s writings. I like books such as David Denby’s *Great Books* and even Harold Bloom’s *Western Canon* because they invite you to participate in a serious conversation about a book’s worth and meaning. This kind of literary writing leads you back into the books you have taught so many times, in part demanding that you challenge them as to why they should have been taught all these years. My colleague Elaine Caret exemplifies for me this habit of reflecting on books she has taught again and again. Elaine keeps a journal in which she writes about the different stories or
poems she teaches, dating each entry. She can go back and check what
she thought the previous year about Hamlet after writing this year from
her new perspective. A more social variation is to have literary dinners, as
my former department chair, Doug Rogers, did. Doug thought we
should engage in regular conversations about the books we taught to ap-
preciate why we taught them. Each month we agreed on a different book
and met for a delicious dinner and conversation at his house.

Whether through conversations over gourmet meals or reflections in
a journal, we realize that we cannot step into the same text twice from
the very same vantage point. We are always reading a book as if for the
first time. As Suzuki writes, “The most difficult thing is always to keep
your beginner’s mind. There is no need to have a deep understanding of
Zen. Even though you read much Zen literature, you must read each sen-
tence with a fresh mind. You should not say, ‘I know what Zen is,’ or ‘I
have attained enlightenment.’ This is also the real secret of the arts: al-
ways be a beginner.”

ENDNOTE: EVOLUTION OF THE STORY

When I began this book, I felt far removed from the “reading wars”—the
professional discourse about how kids learn and thus should be taught
to read. Most of us have been taught that in the earliest grades our stu-
dents learn to read, and when they come to us in high school they read
to learn. Certainly we are always learning to read and reading to learn.
However, we must be better prepared to teach reading if we are to meet
the needs of all our students. Books like my own—Reading Reminders, Il-
uminating Texts, and especially The Reader’s Handbook—as well as those
by Janet Allen, Jeff Wilhelm, Chris Tovani, and Laura Robb help us teach
our students to read. We must also teach students how to read the wider
range of documents that exist today. For the diverse texts they will en-
counter, students need greater skills.

E-books are becoming more common. I’ve tried several out on my
Palm Pilot. It is hard not to wonder where this technology will lead us.
Might subsequent versions of such devices have the option of voice-
overs that can read the text aloud to you with the click of a button? Per-
haps others will have video options, allowing us to cut out of the book
and view, for example, a film version of the story—the scene we just read
in Hamlet could be accompanied by Kenneth Branagh’s film version of
the play. Maybe these books will someday be all our students carry, each
little device containing the text of all the books they need for the year,
which might allow schools to use a wider range of books than their bud-
gets currently allow. The future seems like a pretty wild story to me: I
can’t wait to see how it turns out. Whatever happens, we can count on
being able to read about it in one form or another, for we love no story so much as our own, which we never seem to tire of telling—or reading.

**REFLECTION**

Write your own reading autobiography. Describe your early childhood, if you can: Did your parents read to you? Do you remember a crucial moment when you suddenly became a reader? What book(s) most influenced you?

**ACTIVITY**

Conduct an informal survey of people, asking them what they read during the course of a week. Another way to do this, if you take public transportation, is to see what people read on the bus or train; this is often people’s “need to read” time and will give you some interesting insights into personal reading habits. One other possible activity might be to have your students write down the books they liked and hated the most in their school careers, following this up with their own reader’s autobiography. Such autobiographies can be revealing to both them and you, for they inevitably uncover a time when reading was fun.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The nature of this chapter calls for several different recommendations.

**Reading Theory**

There are a couple of books I especially like in this area:


*Illuminating Texts: How to Teach Students to Read the World*, Jim Burke (Heinemann 2001).

*Literature as Exploration*, Louise Rosenblatt (Modern Language Association of America 1995).


*Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader’s Workshop*, Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman (Heinemann 1997).
"You Gotta BE the Book": Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents, Jeffrey D. Wilhelm (Teachers College Press 1997).

Questioning the Author: An Approach for Enhancing Student Engagement with Text, Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, Rebecca L. Hamilton, and Linda Kucan (International Reading Association 1997).

It’s Never Too Late: Leading Adolescents to Lifelong Literacy, Janet Allen (Heinemann 1995).

**General (but Very Interesting)**


The Guttenburg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in the Electronic Age, Sven Birkerts (Fawcett 1994).

I Hear America Reading: Why We Read • What We Read, Jim Burke (Heinemann 1999).
Thank you for sampling this resource.

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