

WRITING WHAT YOU READ: NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING EVENT

SHELBY A. WOLF AND
MARYL GEARHART

This article gives readers an in-depth look at the design and development of a portfolio-based writing assessment tool intended for use on a daily basis in the classroom.

Ms. Stevens moves around the room as her students write their stories, stopping often to conference with individual children, answering questions and asking several of her own. She stops at Anna's desk and asks Anna to read her story aloud. As she listens, Ms. Stevens' thoughts turn to assessment. What has Anna accomplished in her creation? Does her story fall within a certain genre, and if so, does it follow or transform genre expectations? What helpful comments can she offer Anna to commend her work as well as recommend needed revisions? Will this narrative be an appropriate piece for Anna's portfolio? What, in other words, does it represent in terms of Anna's growth as a writer?

Later in the week, Ms. Stevens settles into her armchair at home, papers on her lap. She reads through several of the fairy tales her students have been composing over the past few days. As she reads, she reflects on what the writing shows about her students' understandings of this genre. What patterns from professional writing have they utilized in their own original writing? What have they learned from her instruction? And

The work reported herein was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program cooperative agreement number R117G10027 and CFDA catalog number 84.117G as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed in this report do not reflect the position or policies of the office of Educational Research and Improvement or the U.S. Department of Education. Our thanks to the teachers and students for their collaboration, to Edys Quellmalz and Andrea Whittaker for their initial assistance with rubric design, and to Joan Herman for assessment expertise. Special thanks go to Kathy Davinroy, Freddie Hiebert, Dennie Palmer Wolf, Lorrie Shepard, and Kenneth Wolf who responded in helpful ways to earlier drafts of this paper.

most importantly, how can she assess their present understandings and guide their future growth as young writers?

As Ms. Stevens considers each of her students' growth as a writer, she asks herself, Where has this child been? Where is she now? and Where can I advise him to go next? Like many teachers committed to implementing writing process in a whole language classroom, Ms. Stevens orchestrates her new methods of writing assessment around students' portfolios. She is well aware that portfolio assessment has the potential to provide an effective match between what children can accomplish in their writing and how teachers assess their work (Camp, 1990, 1992; Freedman, 1991; Hiebert & Calfee, 1992; Valencia & Calfee, 1991). But Ms. Stevens is engaged with her students in a process that is far more challenging than simply placing children's writing in folders (Gearhart, Herman, Wolf, & Baker, 1992; D.P. Wolf, 1989). She resists assessing the portfolio as a whole, thereby chunking all kinds of writing (for example, stories, reports, letters, poems) together because she knows that effective writing is highly dependent on author purpose, selected genre, and intended audience. In our examples, Ms. Stevens has chosen to focus her assessment questions on the genres of narrative.

This article is designed to help teachers think about the important role of assessment in guiding students' narrative writing, with particular emphasis on the close connections among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Like Resnick and Resnick (1992), we believe that it is important to "build assessments toward which you want educators to teach" (p. 59). We think that educators should *teach* narrative, not as an ever-shifting set of lovely stories to be lauded, but as a foundation for analysis, reflection, and criti-

Language Arts, Vol. 71, October 1994

Language Arts

cism, which can, in turn, be used as a resource for children's original writing.

Our work on narrative assessment stems from a long-term collaboration between the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) and the teachers of one elementary school to develop methods of portfolio assessment that are informative to teachers and students. In prior reports, we documented some of the difficulties of

We think that educators should teach narrative, not as an ever-shifting set of lovely stories to be lauded, but as a foundation for analysis, reflection, and criticism, which can, in turn, be used as a resource for children's original writing.

implementing portfolio assessments and teachers' limited evaluations in the absence of a supportive curriculum and assessment framework (Gearhart, Wolf, Burkey, & Whittaker, 1994). As Koretz, McCaffrey, Klein, Bell, and Stecher (1993) have shown in their technical studies of portfolio assessment in Vermont, we found that teachers' assessments of genre-mixed collections of writing were superficial at best. In a context of trying to compare "apples and oranges," teachers focused more on convention than communication, organization rather than originality, and generalizations rather than genre-appropriate comments. Thus, while Dyson and Freedman (1991) suggest that "as teachers work together to analyze portfolios, they may develop analytic tools that could prove useful in their teaching" (p. 759), our findings from teachers' portfolio assessments made evident that some teachers need additional support in designing genre-specific assessment tools that will inform their instruction.

To enhance teachers' capacities to engage their students in analytic conversations about their writing, we worked with teachers to design portfolio-based methods of assessment that were integrated with curriculum and instruction. Our choice was to focus on analytic criticism, treating text as a prob-

lem to be solved through interpretive dialogue. We began our work with the genres of narrative because narrative was more familiar and accessible to the teachers and their students. We recognize the issues surrounding our choice. Some propose that narrative is a "primary act of mind" (Hardy, 1978) and therefore an important beginning place for young writers. Others contest the central role of narrative as over-emphasized (Pappas, 1993), falsely highlighting familiar experiences while avoiding and limiting experiences in genres such as exposition or lyric (D. Palmer Wolf, personal communication). However, because our teachers were invested in narrative writing across grade levels, our focus permitted us collaborative exploration of a schoolwide framework. The resulting Writing What You Read (WWYR) program emphasized the analytic and integrated nature of narrative reading, writing, and assessment.

This article is largely theoretical in nature—a presentation of the outcomes of our collaborative effort to develop workable and helpful assessment tools based on extended workshop conversations about narrative. We illustrate how two teachers used these tools in their classrooms, but readers may be interested in more detailed findings regarding classroom implementation (Gearhart & Wolf, in press; Gearhart, Wolf, Burkey, & Whittaker, 1994) or our guidebook to classroom use (Wolf & Gearhart, 1993). Our article begins with the background on our work—the theoretical framework of WWYR and its components of narrative. Our analysis of narrative was the basis for our initial conversations with teachers as we worked together to analyze tradebooks and to reflect on ways that our interpretations could be shared with children. Next, we apply our framework to the design of specific methods for classroom assessment: a narrative feedback form for teacher-student and peer conferences and a narrative rubric that supports dialogic assessments of students' writing. We created, piloted, and revised these methods of assessment in workshops over 2 years—asking teachers to score samples of their children's writing, as well as provide hypothetical commentary. We then provide two illustrative examples of individual children's writing and explore how WWYR conversations between teachers and children as well as children and their peers influenced the actual writing that took place in classrooms. We conclude with some reflection on the implications of our work.

Background

Writing What You Read Framework

The focus of the Writing What You Read framework is on the crucial role of teachers' interpretive assessments in guiding the growth of young writers. Supported by teachers' sound understandings of writing development and knowledge of literacy, a teacher's assessments of a child's compositions reveal the response of at least one person—a person with potentially valuable insights by virtue of her expertise. The teacher serves as reader and responder, providing commendations and recommendations for further growth. But the teacher is not the only expert. Today's classrooms are moving toward distributed expertise (Wertsch, 1991), encouraging children to be creators as well as critics of their own work and that of others.

[A]ssessment is—or could be—an occasion when a participant learns something about the nature of assessment itself. It is a moment when she suddenly, painfully, or with delight, sees her work as someone else might, either because she can no longer dodge their commentary or because she, herself, steps outside and becomes an onlooker. . . . The frontier in assessment . . . has to do with seizing that . . . unrecognized aspect of assessment . . . an occasion for learning. (D.P. Wolf, 1993, p. 214)

In this scenario, assessment dialogues, whether oral or written, are learning events that support reflection, analysis, and growth.

In WWYR, we suggest that writing "assessment" should be understood as an "analytic response to text"—proposing that when teachers and their children take on the roles of professional critics, readers, and writers, the writing will profit. But these roles are not easily undertaken. Although many elementary teachers are adept at connecting children, text, and topic, they often stop short of analysis. They experience literature with their students without critiquing it; they assign narrative writing without analytically responding to their students' narratives. However, Sloan (1991) asserts that, "Good teachers of literature help children to make sense out of each literary experience and to go on to discover patterns and make significant connections among all of their literary experiences" (pp. 39–40). While we understand that constraints of time often necessitate fairly rapid judgments and brief comments on children's writing, a teacher's assessments need not be limited to convention or global reaction. Although it may seem efficient to write, "Good job!"—or even accurate to write, "Remember your capitals!"—such feed-

back does not provide the kinds of substantive assistance students need to guide their growth in writing. The comments that teachers make need to be linked to specific instructional issues, explicit examples from published stories, and/or the particular context of an individual child's writing accomplishments.

The importance of criticism and connections may be underemphasized in the current trend toward proc-

"Write what you know" is the advice often given to novice writers, encouraging them to take what they know about life and put it on paper. Yet, Annie Dillard (1989) and other professional writers, including numerous children's authors, seem to suggest alternative advice: "Write what you read," implying that writers are often inspired by what they know about literature.

ess writing (for example, Atwell, 1987; Graves, 1983). Young authors are encouraged to write about life experiences and the life of their individual imaginations and then analyze the effectiveness of their written interpretations. "Write what you know" is the advice often given to novice writers, encouraging them to take what they know about *life* and put it on paper. Yet, Annie Dillard (1989) and other professional writers, including numerous children's authors, seem to suggest alternative advice: "Write what you read," implying that writers are often inspired by what they know about *literature*.

The writer studies literature, not the world. He lives in the world; he cannot miss it. If he has ever bought a hamburger, or taken a commercial airplane flight, he spares his readers a report of his experience. He is careful of what he reads, for that is what he will write. He is careful of what he learns, because that is what he will know. (p. 68)

Although "Write what you know" centers reflective powers on personal writing, "Write what you read" focuses analysis on the writing of others, its possible translation into personal authorship, and the role of critical response to one's own writing. How-

ever, as Freedman (1993) explains, “The difference between a Tolstoy and you or me is not the amount of fiction we have read” (p. 238). Good writers have important things they want to say, and many of these things stem from their own life experience and creative imagination. Still, we argue that they are better equipped to say these things if they are given multiple opportunities to read and talk extensively and analytically about text.

In designing a framework that integrates what we read with what we write—and thus what we assess with what we teach—we have drawn on theories of reader response and literary criticism (for example, Rosen, 1985; Rosenblatt, 1978); writing development (Dyson, 1989, 1991; Sperling, 1994); and the social construction of meaning (Heath, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). Our work suggests that, through literary analysis, teachers and their young writers can develop abilities to construct the kinds of substantive assessments of texts—whether a published author’s, their own, or a peer’s—that can inform and guide their own growth in narrative criticism and composition.

The Narrative Components

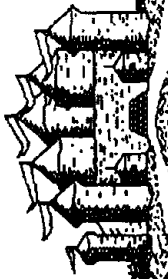
A succinct way of looking at the analysis of narrative is “actors and arenas for action,” but a stripped-down version does not a story make (Wolf & Heath, 1992). Writers craft characters by revealing their intentions, motivations, and emotional responses through careful choices of style, tone, and point of view. They move characters through time, space, and situation by means of choices in genre, setting, and plot. And all of the elements work together to deliver particular themes.

Developing teachers’ understandings of the components of narrative enables them to develop a common language, explore multiple texts, and design units that integrate the reading of literature with literary analysis and the writing of stories with interpretive assessment. The Components of Narrative chart (see Figure 1) was designed to provide teachers with a framework for literary analysis. It is not comprehensive, for a key theme in our discussions was the enormous complexity of narrative. Yet, the chart served to condense and provide quick reference to hours of analytical talk about literary text—the definition of terms, the technical vocabulary associated with certain components, and ways of talking about the components with children. Appendix A, at the end of this article, extends the very brief outline of-

fered in Figure 1 by providing specific examples from literature.

Of course, the separation of the components is an artificial choice, risking a traditional interpretation of narrative instruction so familiar to some that it appears clichéd and constraining. Yet, our emphasis is not on the textbookish breakup of narrative into component bits, but on the *orchestration* of the components. A strong character may fall flat in an underdeveloped plot. Exquisite writing style may not carry a themeless set of episodes. Just as children must learn to orchestrate the processes of reading (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, & Klausner, 1985), young writers must explore how the components of narrative work in sync to develop a story. We also viewed our anchor in the “familiar” as critical to teachers’ development. Like Nodelman (1992), we argue that “our pleasure in the unfamiliar depends on our knowledge of the familiar” (p. 64). Indeed, in our initial workshops, we found that teachers were not familiar with the fundamental language of narrative. Before we could begin a discussion of genre-breaking writing—new combinations and forms—we felt that sufficient time must be spent on well-known and relatively well-understood literary elements.

In supporting teachers’ emerging critiques of the craft of published authors, we stressed an analytic stance toward literature. We also emphasized a developmental perspective in two substantive areas. First, we explored the *genre-specific nature of story development* (Lukens, 1990; Nodelman, 1992). For example, moving from a flat character to a fully developed dynamic personality is not a linear progression but is tied to specific genres. In a fable we do not need to know any more about the lion and the mouse; their physical descriptions, relationships to family and friends, and extended thought processes are not necessary to the story. But if we tried to write a piece of realistic fiction with such a limited character description, the story could fail. Second, we tried to focus on the *development of children’s writing*. While we avoided casting a “template” that all children follow (Dyson, 1991), we did try to provide some general understanding of how children grow in the writing process, offering continua of possibilities that were dependent on genre as well as on individual children’s communicative abilities. Once the teachers were familiar with some of the common features of narrative, we turned our workshop focus to assessment. We wanted to use the knowledge we had built together to create helpful assessment tools for the children in their classrooms.



Components of Narrative

	Genre	Theme	Character	Setting	Plot	Point of View	Style	Tone
Define the Terms	Traditionally, genre is a classification system for organizing literature. It chunks stories with common elements together, although the categories are the subject of much debate. More recently, genre is seen as social action used to accomplish particular purposes.	Theme is the message of the story—an idea or comment about life. Theme illuminates the emotional content of the human condition.	Characters are actors in the story whose actions, intentions, and motivations interact with what others do, say, think, and feel. Characters can be people, animals, objects, or creatures.	The basic elements of setting are the place, time, and situation of the story. The setting can be simple or effect the characters, plot, and mood either directly or symbolically.	The plot is a series of events which occur in a specific order. Not necessarily linear, the sequence represents the author's decisions for moving the story along.	Point of view is the view of the action the reader follows. It is often signaled by insights into the thoughts and feelings of particular characters.	Style is the use of language that reflects the spirit and personality of the writer through specific literary devices. Authors make purposeful stylistic choices to create images, set mood, and reveal character.	Tone is the manner of expression which conveys (through stylistic choices) the author's attitude toward his or her subject.
Develop a Common Language	Fantasy: Traditional Folk, Myth, Fable High Fantasy Science Fiction Reality: Problem Realism Historical fiction Animal Realism	Universal Moral Implicit & Explicit Primary & Secondary	• Major/Minor • Protagonist/Antagonist • Features: emotional, physical, intellectual • Character development, revelation, intention	Time Place Situation Historical context Mood	• Story Graph • Episode Analysis: Problem Emotional Response Action Outcome • Flashback, Conflict, Suspense, Foreshadowing, Climax	First person (often the protagonist) Omniscient (spread across characters) Focused (usually on one character) Objective (actions reveal motivation)	Imagery Allusion Puns Hyperbole Figurative Language Personification Metaphor Sound Devices Alliteration Assonance Rhythm.	Humorous Affectionate Angry Condescending Didactic Ironic
Explore the Text	• Identify characteristics of certain genres. For example, fairy tales tend to have stock characters. Historic fiction relies heavily on the development of setting. Fables offer specific rules to live by. • Identify the genre you prefer and analyze why you like it. • Discuss the author's choice of genre for delivering the theme of the story. • Debate how you could stretch or fracture the genre to accomplish different purposes.	• Identify the theme(s) in the text. • Describe the relationship of the theme(s) to your life. • Compare/contrast other pieces of literature with similar theme(s). • Describe how your understandings of character, setting, & plot enhance your understanding of the theme(s). • Decide on the universality or uniqueness of the theme(s): Who is most affected by the message(s)?	• Identify the major and minor characters in the story. • Compare and/or contrast the story characters to you or people you know. • Trace the development of a character through the story. Analyze the intentions behind the actions. • Trace the relationships between characters. • Analyze how the character is revealed through other characters' eyes.	• Explain the relationship of the setting to the story. • Relate the time, place, & situation to your own. • Explore the historical and cultural significance of the setting. • Describe how the setting reflects the characters. • Compare/contrast two or more settings in the story (e.g., How do the different settings affect the characters or mood of the piece?).	• Compare the plot to events that have occurred in your own life. • Identify an episode in terms of response, emotional and outcome. • Outline several episodes relating the outcome of one episode to the problem of the next episode. • Explain the effect of characters' intentions and motivations on the plot or vice versa.	• Identify who's telling the story. • Analyze how the point of view reveals the characters' motivations and intentions. • Justify the effectiveness of the point of view. • Criticize the author's choice of point of view. Would the story have been better served by an alternative? What might that look like?	• Describe the stylistic choices of the author and how they enhance the story. • Describe how the author's style reveals character, setting, and plot. • Which words create vivid images? How? • Compare/contrast stylistic choices within one author's work or between authors. • Reflect on the stylistic choices you will incorporate in your own speech and writing.	• Evaluate the tone(s) of the narrative voice. • Describe the influence of tone in relation to the characters (e.g., affectionate, condescending). • Analyze how stylistic choices reflect the tone. • Compare/contrast choices in tone within one author's work or between authors. • Discuss how tone will vary depending on the author's purposes.

Wolf & Heisinger, 1988 • Revised by Wolf, 1994

Figure 1. Components of Narrative

Assessment—Responding to Students’
Narrative Writing

Mosenthal (1989) suggests that teachers placed in charge of children’s learning often find themselves caught between an innovative literacy curriculum (with goals of empowerment and critical thinking) and traditional literacy assessment (with standardized testing and report card grades). Caught in this dichotomy, even teachers who are knowledgeable about the components of narrative might continue to assign single-score letter grades to students’ compositions, leaving the reasoning behind the assessments unarticulated. Without the articulation, assessment cannot become a learning event (D.P. Wolf, 1993). Our goal is to help teachers assess children’s narrative writing in the same way that they critically respond to literature. Equipped with the “tools of the literary trade”—an understanding of genre influences, the technical vocabulary, and so forth—teachers can reflect on students’ writing and offer their students explicit guidance built upon the same methods for interpreting literature. We have developed

Teachers’ strategies for assessing students’ writing often result in either generic and vague commentary, whether positive (“Neat story!”) or negative (“More detail”), or a focus on conventions (“Put a period at the end of your sentences!”) rather than content.

two forms to aid teachers in their assessment endeavors: a *narrative feedback form* to support teacher-student conferences and a *narrative rubric* to help teachers evaluate students’ present understandings and future possibilities.

Feedback Form

Teachers’ strategies for assessing students’ writing often result in either generic and vague commentary, whether positive (“Neat story!”) or negative (“More detail”), or a focus on conventions (“Put a period at the end of your sentences!”) rather than content. To encourage teachers to be more specific in their analysis and advice to children, we developed a narrative feedback form (see Figure 2).

The form is designed to provide space for constructive and critical comments in the narrative areas of Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication, as well as two issues generic to all writing—Convention and Writing Process. These categories differ somewhat from the narrative components in Figure 1 above because, in an effort to make the feedback form as useful as possible, we have consolidated several components. Thus, response to point of view, for example, can be made in the Character space because an author’s selection of viewpoint is integrally tied to character development (“Choosing the first-person point of view makes me feel like I know your protagonist. You have been especially good at describing her feelings.”). Style and Tone are merged under Communication, which has less to do with *what* an author says than *how* and *why* he or she says it. (“Your use of alliteration—‘greasy, gum-smacking ghoul’—added humor and relieved some of the tension in your Halloween tale.”) The Communication space also provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on how effectively the writer is reaching his or her audience. Genre criticism can be made in almost any slot. (“I think your setting description is too complicated. In fables, the setting is usually in the background. What are the advantages and disadvantages of your choice?”) The category for Convention gives teachers the necessary opportunity to clarify points of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Finally, the category on Writing Process provides teachers with a forum for reflecting on where a child might get editing help or encouraging a child to work through yet another draft.

In using the form, teachers limit themselves to only two comments—a commendation and a recommendation which they can place in any of the seven categories. The object of the form is not to fill all seven categories with lengthy advice, but instead to choose specific points of criticism to be applied to the child’s next draft or piece. Researchers working with Arts Propel (Camp, 1992) came to the same conclusion—urging teachers to comment on “one thing that is done well in the writing, and one thing to focus on in future writing” (p. 66). The choice of category for reflection can be derived from an instructional unit that focuses on a particular narrative component, or it can be advice aligned with an individual child’s writing needs. We have encouraged our teachers to discuss the points orally with the children during brief writing conferences, as well as staple the feedback forms to the writing. The forms then serve as reference points for both child and

Narrative Feedback Form

Name: _____

Title: _____

Genre: _____

Date: _____

Theme

Setting

Audience awareness

Style

Tone

Communication

Character

Plot

Convention:

Writing Process:

Wolf & Gearhart, 1992

Figure 2. Narrative Feedback Form.

teacher to see how writing changes over time, in terms of the evolution of a single narrative as well as the student's general development in writing.

Narrative Rubric

In designing a rubric (see Figure 3), our goal was to create a classroom tool that could feature the Writing What You Read analysis of the multileveled dimensions of narrative elements and represent children's growing competencies in narrative writing. Thus, we have faced two major challenges to rubric design: (a) capturing the orchestration of narrative elements designed to serve a narrative's social purpose and (b) highlighting the iterative nature of children's developing writing as they revise and recycle earlier writing approaches into next steps for writing growth. In the context of these challenges, it is not surprising that, over the course of our efforts, the

rubric has undergone several revisions as we have responded to teacher and researcher input and piloted various versions of the rubric with children's writing.

We have designed five evaluative scales that match the narrative categories found on the feedback form: Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication. Each category is headed by horizontal *dual dimensions* designed to address our first challenge by emphasizing the dependence of writing on its purpose and the genre selected to achieve that purpose. Miller (1984) suggests that genres are "typified rhetorical actions based on recurrent situations" (p. 159), but these actions are highly flexible as genres evolve, shift, and sometimes fade. The second challenge is confronted in the vertical *evaluative scales*, which center on children's development in writing.

Assessment—Responding to Students’ Narrative Writing

Mosenthal (1989) suggests that teachers placed in charge of children’s learning often find themselves caught between an innovative literacy curriculum (with goals of empowerment and critical thinking) and traditional literacy assessment (with standardized testing and report card grades). Caught in this dichotomy, even teachers who are knowledgeable about the components of narrative might continue to assign single-score letter grades to students’ compositions, leaving the reasoning behind the assessments unarticulated. Without the articulation, assessment cannot become a learning event (D.P. Wolf, 1993). Our goal is to help teachers assess children’s narrative writing in the same way that they critically respond to literature. Equipped with the “tools of the literary trade”—an understanding of genre influences, the technical vocabulary, and so forth—teachers can reflect on students’ writing and offer their students explicit guidance built upon the same methods for interpreting literature. We have developed

Teachers’ strategies for assessing students’ writing often result in either generic and vague commentary, whether positive (“Neat story!”) or negative (“More detail”), or a focus on conventions (“Put a period at the end of your sentences!”) rather than content.

two forms to aid teachers in their assessment endeavors: a *narrative feedback form* to support teacher-student conferences and a *narrative rubric* to help teachers evaluate students’ present understandings and future possibilities.

Feedback Form

Teachers’ strategies for assessing students’ writing often result in either generic and vague commentary, whether positive (“Neat story!”) or negative (“More detail”), or a focus on conventions (“Put a period at the end of your sentences!”) rather than content. To encourage teachers to be more specific in their analysis and advice to children, we developed a narrative feedback form (see Figure 2).

The form is designed to provide space for constructive and critical comments in the narrative areas of Theme, Character, Setting, Plot, and Communication, as well as two issues generic to all writing—Convention and Writing Process. These categories differ somewhat from the narrative components in Figure 1 above because, in an effort to make the feedback form as useful as possible, we have consolidated several components. Thus, response to point of view, for example, can be made in the Character space because an author’s selection of viewpoint is integrally tied to character development (“Choosing the first-person point of view makes me feel like I know your protagonist. You have been especially good at describing her feelings.”). Style and Tone are merged under Communication, which has less to do with *what* an author says than *how* and *why* he or she says it. (“Your use of alliteration—‘greasy, gum-smacking ghoul’—added humor and relieved some of the tension in your Halloween tale.”) The Communication space also provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on how effectively the writer is reaching his or her audience. Genre criticism can be made in almost any slot. (“I think your setting description is too complicated. In fables, the setting is usually in the background. What are the advantages and disadvantages of your choice?”) The category for Convention gives teachers the necessary opportunity to clarify points of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Finally, the category on Writing Process provides teachers with a forum for reflecting on where a child might get editing help or encouraging a child to work through yet another draft.

In using the form, teachers limit themselves to only two comments—a commendation and a recommendation which they can place in any of the seven categories. The object of the form is not to fill all seven categories with lengthy advice, but instead to choose specific points of criticism to be applied to the child’s next draft or piece. Researchers working with Arts Propel (Camp, 1992) came to the same conclusion—urging teachers to comment on “one thing that is done well in the writing, and one thing to focus on in future writing” (p. 66). The choice of category for reflection can be derived from an instructional unit that focuses on a particular narrative component, or it can be advice aligned with an individual child’s writing needs. We have encouraged our teachers to discuss the points orally with the children during brief writing conferences, as well as staple the feedback forms to the writing. The forms then serve as reference points for both child and

Narrative Rubric

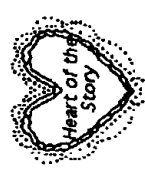

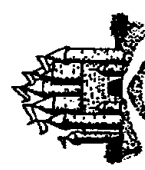

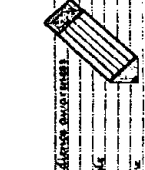
 <h3>Theme</h3> <p>explicit ← → implicit didactic ← → revealing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not present or not developed through other narrative elements • Meaning centered in a series of list-like statements ("I like my mom. And I like my dad. And I like my...") or in the coherence of the action itself ("He blew up the plane. Pow!") • Beginning statement of theme—often explicit and didactic ("The mean witch chased the children and she shouldn't have done that."); occasionally the theme, though well stated, does not fit the story • Beginning revelation of theme on both explicit and implicit levels through the more subtle things characters say and do ("He put his arm around the dog and held him close. 'You're my best pal,' he whispered.") • Beginning use of secondary themes, often tied to overarching theme, but sometimes tangential; main theme increasingly revealed through discovery rather than delivery, though explicit thematic statements still predominate • Overarching theme multi-layered and complex; secondary themes integrally related to primary theme or themes; both explicit and implicit revelations of theme work in harmony ("You can't do that to my sister!"; Lou cried, moving to shield Tasha with her body.") 	 <h3>Character</h3> <p>flat ← → round static ← → dynamic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or two flat, static characters with little relationship between characters; either objective (action speaks for itself) or first person (author as 'I') point of view • Some rounding, usually in physical description; relationship between characters is action-driven; objective point of view is common • Continued rounding in physical description, particularly stereotypical features ("wart on the end of her nose"); beginning rounding in feeling, often through straightforward vocabulary ("She was sad, glad, mad.") • Beginning insights into the motivation and intention that drives the feeling and the action of main characters often through limited omniscient point of view; beginning dynamic features (of change and growth) • Further rounding (in feeling and motivation); dynamic features appear in the central characters and in the relationships between characters; move to omniscient point of view (getting into the minds of characters) • Round, dynamic major characters through rich description of affect, intention, and motivation; growth occurs as a result of complex interactions between characters; most characters contribute to the development of the narrative; purposeful choice of point of view 	 <h3>Setting</h3> <p>background ← → essential simple ← → multi-functional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backdrop setting with little or no indication of time and place ("There was a little girl. She liked candy.") • Skeletal indication of time and place often held in past time ("Once there was..."; little relationship to other narrative elements) • Beginning relationship between setting and other narrative elements (futuristic setting to accommodate aliens and spaceships); beginning symbolic functions of setting (often stereotypical images—forest as scary place) • Setting becomes more essential to the development of the story in explicit ways; characters may remark on the setting or the time and place may be integral to the plot • Setting may serve more than one function and the relationship between functions is more implicit and symbolic—for example, setting may be linked symbolically to character mood ("She hid in the grass, clutching the sharp, dry spikes, waiting.") • Setting fully integrated with the characters, action, and theme of the story; role of setting is multifunctional—setting mood, revealing character and conflict, serving as metaphor 	 <h3>Plot</h3> <p>simple ← → complex static ← → conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or two events with little or no conflict ("Once there was a cat. The cat liked milk.") • Beginning sequence of events, but occasional out-of-sync occurrences; events without problem, problem without resolution, or little emotional response • Single, linear episode with clear beginning, middle, and end; the episode contains four critical elements of problem, emotional response, action, and outcome • Plot increases in complexity with more than one episode; each episode contains problem, emotional response, action, outcome; beginning relationship between episodes • Stronger relationship between episodes (with the resolution in one leading to a problem in the next); beginning manipulation of the sequence through foreshadowing, and subplots • Overarching problem and resolution supported by multiple episodes; rich variety of techniques (building suspense, foreshadowing, flashbacks, denouement) to manipulate sequence 	 <h3>Communication</h3> <p>context-bound ← → reader-conscious literal ← → symbolic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing bound to context (You have to be there) and often dependent on drawing and talk to clarify the meaning; minimal style and tone • Beginning awareness of reader considerations; straightforward style and tone focused on getting the information out; first attempts at dialogue begin • Writer begins to make use of explanations and transitions ("because" and "so"); literal style centers on description ("sunny day"); tone explicit • Increased information and explanation for the reader (linking ideas as well as episodes); words more carefully selected to suit the narrative's purpose (particularly through increased use of detail in imagery) • Some experimentation with symbolism (particularly figurative language) which show reader considerations on both explicit and implicit levels; style shows increasing variety (alliteration, word play, rhythm, etc.) and tone is more implicit • Careful crafting of choices in story structure as well as vocabulary demonstrate considerate demonstration of all the available resources; judicious experimentation with variety of stylistic forms which are often symbolic in nature and illuminate the other narrative elements
--	---	--	--	--

Figure 3. Narrative Rubric

The Dual Dimensions

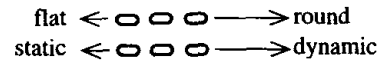
Because of the complexity of the subgenres of narrative, with varied purposes and processes associated with each, the overarching dual dimensions are designed to summarize some of the critical and distinguishing features of particular genres (see Figure 4).

The dual dimensions are not linear sequences, with the left hand of each dimension being less effective than the right. Instead they are continua, the definitions of which depend on subgenre choice. The dimensions provide a reminder of the complexity of narrative and, as we show next, a means for teachers to represent the characteristics of the selected subgenre. Students' writing can then be assessed according to how well the child was able to develop and communicate a story within that subgenre.

Thus, depending on the subgenre and purpose, *themes* move between explicit and sometime didactic statements to implicit revelations. *Characters* can be flat personalities who remain static and unchanging in a story, or they can come equipped with more rounded physical and emotional descriptions and change over time. The *setting* can be a simple cardboard backdrop, or it can take on a more essential, multifunctional role. The *plot* can also be simple and without tension, or it can evolve in conflict and complexity. Narrative *communication* can move between literal and symbolic meanings in style and tone. In addition, narrative communication (as well as poetry, exposition, and other genres) can be bound to context or be more aware of audience considerations. Our rubric is generic to narrative and protean in design. It is sufficiently malleable to adjust to individual subgenres of narrative (for example, folktale, science fiction), for certain scale points are more applicable to particular subgenres than others.

In using the rubric, teachers shade or mark off a band on the dimensions to indicate the range of typical features of an assigned subgenre and thus represent their expectations for children's writing within that genre. For example, in a fable the band placed on the double arrows would favor the left side of each dimension; and, indeed, development of the nar-

rative to the right of the shaded band would be inappropriate to the fable subgenre. Thus the marks for character in a fable might look like this:



Although we may believe that the lion saved by the mouse will change his attitude toward rodents, we have no textual confirmation in a fable that this will be the case. The character of the lion is quite appropriately reserved to physical description—he is “big” and “strong” with “great paws,” while the mouse has the opposite attributes. In some tradebook versions of the tale, however, we may have beginning insights into the mouse's motivation (for she is clever and motivated by survival instincts), as well as into the lion's (for he may smile or chuckle as he listens to the mouse's offer). But detailed description would take the narrative beyond the conventions of a fable. An author of fables usually stays within the simpler range of scale points because a fable is often contained within a single, linear episode. It also has an explicit and often didactic theme with little indication of time and place. Although the fable as a whole is emblematic of rules for behavior, the language within the short text is more literal than symbolic.

As the teacher provides instruction in fables, she or he would discuss the typicality of flat and static characters within the subgenre but also indicate the range of possibilities within that general tendency. Depending on their purposes, children could position their writing within that range; although one writer might lean toward very flat, static characters, focusing instead on the action between the characters, another author might move—within the conventions of fables—toward more round and dynamic features, addressing the motivations and intentions behind the actions.

The Evaluative Scales

Within each category we developed a six-level evaluative scale designed to match generalized understandings of children's writing development (Dyson & Freedman, 1991) with what the teachers knew

Theme:	explicit↔implicit	didactic↔revealing
Character:	flat↔round	static↔dynamic
Setting:	backdrop↔essential	simple↔multi-functional
Plot:	simple↔complex	static↔conflict
Communication:	context-bound↔reader-considerate	literal↔symbolic

Figure 4.

about their own students' writing. Choosing the number of levels and the descriptors for those levels was difficult, but like Hiebert (1991) we believed that "for classroom purposes, schemes that focus on specific dimensions are more helpful" (p. 514). We opted for six because writing development is complex enough to merit a sufficiently differentiated portrait. We eliminated numerical scores at each level to discourage unproductive focus on the meaning of a "4" or a "2" or a "5." We wanted to avoid placing more emphasis on a child's rank than on his or her achievement within a particular context.

The six-level scales work in tandem with the dimensions. For students' written fables, for example, analytic scale points in *character* could shift between the second and fourth points, depending on the direct or more subtle hints the writer offers about character. The evaluative scales allow for much movement between levels, depending on the child, his or her purpose in writing, and the genre selected to meet that purpose. As Dyson (1989) suggests, "The key to writing development thus is not what is written on the page but what the child is trying to accomplish in the world beyond the page" (p. 265). Children's writing grows more complex as they learn to weave interpretive instruction, peer discussion, and literary and life experiences into words in black and white. What is perhaps a serendipitous experiment (such as play with stylistic possibilities) may later become an artful choice (Daiute, 1993). As children learn to orchestrate developing competencies across elements, they will move up and down the scales, returning to earlier understandings and extending and building upon these experiences to grow as young authors.

Thus, although our analytic rubric contains scales for differentiated narrative elements, the *use* of the rubric is designed to highlight the critical nature of *orchestration* in the writing process. Successful writing is not dependent on pre-cast criteria or the simplicity or complexity of individual components; the components must work together within the genre frame and the writer's individual choices. If we say that all stories should involve complex character development, then the boy who cried wolf would once again defy the status quo. If we intimate that every story should tie setting to symbol, then we must disregard the effectiveness of *William's Doll* (Zolotow, 1972). And if we suggest that all themes should only be stated implicitly, then we must discount Charlotte's final words to Wilbur about friendship (White, 1952). It is in the orchestration of narrative

components and in the interplay of authorial choices designated for an intended audience that a text succeeds, not in isolated rules and regulations.

Illustrative Uses of WWYR Assessments in the Classroom

To illustrate the ways that WWYR assessments can support a teacher's analysis and feedback, we next share samples of children's narrative writing. For our first example, we explore how WWYR components can reveal areas of strength and weakness in the phases of composing a piece of realistic fiction, emphasizing genre-making as well as genre-breaking possibilities. Our second example, a friendship tale, reveals the ways that a first-grade teacher chose to utilize the WWYR rubric and feedback form to integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

A Sixth Grader's Realistic Fiction

Over the course of the WWYR workshops, one of the sixth-grade teachers, Ms. Carnoy, grew to emphasize the importance of genre in learning how to shape a story. As she explained:

I look at it like kids need to know the tools of their craft by seeing people doing it and reading it and looking at it. . . . Just say, "Write a [certain genre]." That's mean [laughter]. "Write it and then critique it." It's not right. They need to know what it is.

She prepared her students for realistic fiction by placing strong emphasis on plot development, asking her students to think of a problem that might take multiple solution attempts before coming to final resolution. Ms. Carnoy transformed the WWYR feedback form to large, full-page handouts on character and plot to aid her students' planning; provided a number of examples of character and plot development from the varied tradebooks her children had been reading; and focused on the ways character and plot work together to carry a character through meaningful change over time. The following example demonstrates the ways that Elena, one of Ms. Carnoy's students, utilized these resources in her composing.

When Elena began her story with a character web of her protagonist "Veronica Stapelton," she provided notes on Veronica's carefree life on a ranch, riding horses in her spare time, "baking goodies," and dreaming about "winning the country dance contest for \$1,000" and the heart of the "handsome Gary Richards" to boot. But the section in her web subtitled "Problem" was left blank. With the support of a peer's comment on the omission, as well as class discussion about how main characters change with

events and interactions with other characters, Elena determined to use the country dance prize as a partial resolution to a character problem. She decided that Veronica's lighthearted life was about to come to an end—her father was \$2,500 in debt and was going to lose the ranch to the landlord if he didn't pay up within 2 weeks. Elena thus provided her protagonist with more altruistic motivation for winning the dance contest—helping her father and family—rather than striving for personal glorification or romance. Elena's planned choices were revealed in the opening of her final draft: Instead of focusing on Veronica's beauty, popularity, or deft dance steps, Elena foreshadowed her story's final resolution by providing a character description that emphasized Veronica's generous spirit. The introduction to her story's final draft follows:

Veronica loves where she lives. She lives in a beautiful ranch home in Ranch Valley, California. Everyone compliments her on her warm kindness to everybody. Veronica also is gentle and caring to any animal, especially her horse, Chestnut.

On a bright sunny day, when the whole Stapelton family was having breakfast, Mr. Canaby came by, knocking on the front door. Mr. Canaby is a western kind of guy with knee-high boots, cowboy hat, and bandanna. He's also tall and tough. He's been bugging Daddy about him not paying the bills for 6 months. Daddy keeps on telling him that his job was paying 40% less than what he is normally paid because of the recession. Mr. Canaby always bugs us about the same thing over and over again. But today was different. Mr. Canaby explained that if Daddy doesn't pay \$2,500 by next week, he'll take the entire house away from us. My family just sat there, stunned. We couldn't possibly come up with \$2,500 in one week! Mr. Canaby didn't say a word and he left. I was thinking of how terrible it would be if we lost the ranch.

Oh! I just thought of something that could save the ranch! I remembered about a poster posted on the tree in front of Ms. Jane's house. It was a poster about a country dance contest awarding \$2,000 for the 1st place winner. . . . (May, 1992)

Elena's story falls within the genre of formula fiction (for example, the Nancy Drew series), where stereotypically beautiful heroines, known for their "warm kindness" and clever abilities, consistently save the day. Though times may be hard for a while and the antagonist "tall and tough," the protagonist will dance her way to a positive resolution.

In our own assessment, which we shared with Ms. Carnoy, we encouraged her growing emphasis on genre, for Elena's story is a relatively successful instantiation of formula fiction. Although some critics decry these series books as the work of "fiction

factories" (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987, p. 124), many readers (particularly those of Elena's age) find comfort in the romantic characters and predictable plots (Brown, 1993).

Across the WWYR elements, Elena's story is consistent with the fourth level. Her *theme* was still relatively explicit, though there was some beginning experimentation with implicit revelations. For example, in her notes she stated that she wanted Veronica to learn "that she can't win all the time, but she can practice more and more to get better," but in the conclusion of the piece she developed this theme through intimation rather than direct statement. Through the use of the first-person point of view, Elena provided us with some beginning insights into her main *character's* motivation ("I was thinking of how terrible it would be . . ."). Although the character of Veronica underwent changes and growth from notes to final draft, her consistency within the final draft is typical of the genre. The western *setting* and the imminent loss of the ranch are integral to the *plot* of the story, which contained several sequential episodes. With regard to *communication*, Elena provided us with sufficient information to follow the storyline, as well as increased detail in imagery.

When Elena reflected on her own writing, she wrote of her fascination with her protagonist: "I would love to be her. I like everything she likes." She also commented on the "fun" of developing solution attempts and an outcome—a far cry from her first notes that left the area blank. If we chose to confine our commendation and recommendation to character and plot, we could certainly congratulate Elena on her effective translation of the formula fiction genre. But we could also ask Elena to incorporate more of her own development of the character into her final draft. For example, Veronica might be a more interesting character if she moved from self-interest to concern for others within the story itself. We also might explain that the abrupt shift in point of view between the first and second paragraphs ("she" to "I") causes some confusion for the reader. In terms of plot, Elena ended her story with Veronica coming in second place; the prize accorded was \$1,500, not enough to fully repay the landlord. But, Elena's story explains that "in the meantime" her mother had managed to save the other \$1000 necessary to make the payment. Although this kind of *deus ex machina* is prominent in formula fiction, it seems a bit contrived, and Elena's story would benefit from a more probable ending. Thus, in both character development and plot resolution, we would

Language Arts

encourage her to move beyond easy solutions to create a more realistic piece.

A First Grader's Friendship Story

Ms. Leda, a first-grade teacher, designed a literacy unit around the stories of *Frog and Toad* by Arnold Lobel (1971, 1979), engaging her students in a quest for patterns in plot and theme. Their discussions were a big step; early in the workshops, Ms. Leda tended to underestimate the importance and value of assessment dialogues with children. Although from the beginning she had expressed concern about her students' tendencies to write adventure after adventure with no resolution, she feared that critique would discourage her young writers, explaining that *anything* the children wrote should be "praised verbally or on paper." She also questioned whether her students could understand her critique, particularly any points regarding theme, which she felt was too complex for such young children. However, using the workshop conversations and WWYR rubric to "educate herself" about children's capabilities, Ms. Leda changed her instructional practices from reading a story with little discussion to explicit conversations about what authors were trying to accomplish and how the children might apply these understandings to their own work. She asked the children to write an original tale "where Toad would get into a sticky situation and Frog would bail him out," encouraging her students to include "some sort of resolution" (Personal communication, March 30, 1992). She also asked her students to concentrate on the unit's theme of friendship. She used the feedback form on a number of occasions, not as written communication to individual children, but as an overhead to analyze a number of Lobel's stories. She also provided a simplified copy of the form (eliminating communication, convention, and writing process) to her children to help them plan their stories.

One student, Ted, wrote the following in his first draft: "Frog and Toad and snake there in a foroost. They get bit by a snake friendship." Ted's first attempt contained many elements of a story with characters, setting, and some conflict in plot, though still no resolution. He reduced the theme of friendship to either a one-word appendage or to the name of a snake whose appellation did not prevent him from some fairly vicious activity. On the rubric, Ted's story would be matched with the first-level of all the categories, with the possible exception of *plot* which could be given a second-level rating. Although Ms. Leda did not directly score Ted's writing, she used it

to help her decide how to engage Ted in a dialogue that would evaluate his piece. When she conferenced with him about his draft, she emphasized plot development, explaining that, after one is bitten by a snake, something's bound to happen. She was concerned about Frog's and Toad's recovery and asked Ted to provide a resolution. She also returned to her original instructional emphasis on "how [the children] were able to convey the theme of friendship." She asked Ted to think about the message of his story—what was he trying to say about friendship?

When Ted went back to the drawing board, he wrote a more substantial text, fleshing out the plot to add more coherence, the outward sign of an emotional response, and a resolution. Ms. Leda then edited it for spelling and punctuation, and he rewrote it to achieve the following final draft:

Once upon a time Frog and Toad went to the zoo. Toad went to see the snakes and got bit by a snake. Toad cried, and Frog came over, and Frog got bit by a snake, too. They both went to the hospital. Then they got better, and they never went to the zoo again.

Ms. Leda did not share her interpretation of this final draft with us, but we can use the draft as a context to illustrate the kinds of collegial discussions that were typical when we assessed children's narratives in our workshops. Our workshop analyses of children's narratives were typically more substantial than those a teacher could routinely undertake in her classroom. In the workshops, we used the rubric to score pieces of writing and wrote hypothetical commendations and recommendations on the feedback form. In the classroom, teachers like Ms. Leda rarely had the luxury of time to pour over an individual student's work. But the lengthy workshop discussions of key narratives enlightened and expanded what teachers felt they understood and could do with students on their own. As Ms. Leda's "Frog and Toad" unit illustrates, teachers used the structure of the feedback form and the content of the rubric to inform their dialogues with children.

After his final draft, Ted's explicit and didactic focus placed his story between the second and third levels of the rubric's scale for *theme*. Although Toad and Frog went from zoo to hospital to recuperation together, there was little indication in the story that they were good buddies, other than the fact that they never strayed apart. Still, Lobel himself establishes the theme of friendship between Frog and Toad through the buildup of multiple stories, not a single isolated experience, so Ted's piece could contribute to that set of friendly adventures. In lieu of friend-

ship, Ted's thematic emphasis seemed to be on the dangers of snakes and the lesson learned by the two characters who "never went to the zoo again."

Ted's *character* development was at the second level. The relationship between the characters was action driven (for when Toad cried, Frog responded, though we don't know whether friendship or curiosity was behind his response), and it was told from an objective point of view. The *setting* is now at the third level—although there is no beginning symbolism, the zoo provided the snakes necessary to carry the story. Ted's *plot* was also at the third level—substantially improved from his first draft. He had a single, clear episode with a problem, emotional response, action, and outcome. Finally, Ted's *communication* was at the second level. Although his text had no dialogue, his straightforward style and tone focused on getting the information out. In Ted's story "things happened" to Frog and Toad over which they had little control or even emotional response beyond a few tears. But the organization made the episode clear and showed Ted's increasing understanding of what he must do as a writer to communicate his story.

Conclusions

Portfolio assessment can be construed as the comprehensive evaluation of a student's completed work, the context for reflective analyses of growth over time, or a set of practices that engage students and teachers in frequent cycles of reflection and response. This article has focused on our efforts to design portfolio-based assessments that teachers can use on a daily basis to guide the growth of young writers. Viewing writing assessment as a reader's interpretive response to a child's communicative efforts, we have highlighted the dialogic nature of criticism. Viewing writing assessment as analytic response to text, we have explored relationships between analysis of literature and assessment of children's writing. Thus, we are working within a framework that integrates reading with writing, teaching with assessing.

We believe that assessment dialogues play critical roles in children's growing understandings of text and in children's growing competencies with the composing of text. In a recent talk to teachers and teacher educators, Lisa Delpit (1993) suggested that "Teaching means taking a proactive role and not just accepting children for what they are." In our program, we have tried to emphasize the *proactive* nature of teaching and the earnest engagement of teachers *with* children, not only in the careful assess-

ment of where children are now in their writing but also in the explicit advice on where they can go next. It is not helpful to "grade" a child and then give her no opportunity either to understand her achievement or to rework her writing toward further communication. It is not enough to praise a child, even if praise is an essential means of giving chil-

. . . we have tried to emphasize the proactive nature of teaching and the earnest engagement of teachers with children, not only in the careful assessment of where children are now in their writing but also in the explicit advice on where they can go next.

dren the self-confidence to continue in their writing. Our purposes are to help teachers become knowledgeable critics of what they read and write.

Although we began with methods for the assessment of narrative, we do not see our approach as restricted to narrative or confined to traditional notions of genre. We agree with McGinley and Kamberelis (1992) that, "The activity of 'making meaning' through written language offers powerful possibilities for personal, social, and political understanding and transformation" (p. 410). Children must make their individual meanings through a diversity of genres, but they will be better served if they are provided with explicit and informative guidance in how to make their meaning clearer and more engaging to the reader. Inclusion of—but not restriction to—a focus on the components of genre will be helpful.

We do worry that our readers will miss our concern for meaning making in the analytic nature of our work, with its charts, forms, and rubrics. We wonder as well if our concern for the child's role in her own composing will be missed in our emphasis on teachers and staff development. Although we share the goal of distributed expertise, of engaging children in productive and helpful criticism of their work, we believe the emergence of such classroom communities depends on the content knowledge of teachers (Shulman, 1986). Thus, we must address first what teachers need to know. Knowledge of the nature of narrative and approaches to literacy instruction cannot be captured with charts and forms, ours

or any others, but concise representations can be helpful. The trick is to emphasize their limitations. Our own analytic interpretations, for example, are highly dependent on mainstream Euro-American narrative structure, with its emphasis on action in a sequence (McCabe, 1992). Therefore, whether in our workshops with teachers or in our presentations to professional audiences, we have presented our assessment artifacts not as “answers” but as possibilities for interpreting and responding to students’ writing.

Within this realm of possibilities for narrative response, composing helpful feedback to children’s writing in the busy classroom context is a challenge. The rubric and the feedback form can provide productive supports for the *content* of a response, but we have learned that teachers’ assessments may not reflect new understandings of narrative until teachers are comfortable with the *practices* of assessment. Our teachers appreciated explicit guidance and repeated practice with an analytic stance toward text and how this could translate into written responses to drafts and miniconferences with children. As we summarize in the guidebook that emerged from this work (Wolf & Gearhart, 1993), we emphasized the importance of focusing commentary on specific instructional issues, explicit examples from tradebook texts, or the particular context of a child’s writing accomplishments. But there is further work to be done in the design of principles for truly helpful assessment. Although our teachers moved quickly beyond generic comments like “Good job!,” we were surprised at how difficult it was to demonstrate ways of turning such nebulous comments into coherent and clear critique. This is particularly true when we consider how our “readings of and responses to student writing can vary from student to student and text to text” (Sperling, 1994, p. 201).

We also need to focus our attention on ways that *students* can become productively engaged in assessing their own and their peers’ work. Students at our development site did engage in assessment activities, but, like their teachers, their comments often focused on mechanics (“I remembered my periods”) or on very general characteristics of writing that did not help the child much with her current writing project (“I used lots of descriptive words”). Like their teachers, children can benefit from thoughtful reflection on reading and writing as they advise their peers (“Member that witch in *Hansel and Gretel*? Maybe you should tell more about *your* witch. You just say she’s ugly, but does she have red eyes and a wart on

her chin or what?”) and as they plan revisions (“Now that I’ve got the basic story, I’m going to go back and put in some clues and hints that will foreshadow the ending.”)

In her Newbery acceptance speech for *Jacob Have I Loved*, Katherine Paterson (1986a) explained, “Those who know me best will testify that I am far more of a reader than I am a writer” (pp. 76–77). These are odd words for a prolific writer who has produced some of the most highly acclaimed children’s literature of our time. Yet, her testimony matches that of many authors, who claim to be readers first and foremost. In reflecting on her own writing, Natalie Babbit (1987) acknowledged her debt to Joseph Campbell. Virginia Hamilton (1987) was influenced by the sociological writings of W.E.B. DuBois and Shirley Graham. E.B. White (1977) tipped his hat to Thoreau, while Katherine Paterson (1986b) gave more than a substantial nod to Frances Hodgson Burnett. Professional writers often pay tribute to exemplars of the craft, both as fonts of inspiration and as sources of critical analysis. Authors read widely and analyze what they read, allowing these reflections to help shape their own portfolios of writing. So it is, or at least can be, with children; in this article, we have tried to follow the admonitions and advice of illustrious authors, assuming that the careful analysis of literary text can lead to better writing. As teachers and children learn to write what they read through analytic dialogue, assessment becomes a learning event—an opportunity to examine current understandings and make decisions for future growth.

References

- Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Babbit, N. (1987). Fantasy and the classic hero. In B. Harrison & G. Maguire (Eds.), *Innocence and experience: Essays and conversations on children’s literature* (pp. 148–155). New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Brown, P. L. (1993, April 19). Nancy Drew: 30’s sleuth, 90’s role model. *The New York Times*, pp. 1, 9.
- Bussis, A. M., Chittenden, E. A., Amarel, M., & Klausner, E. (1985). *Inquiry into meaning: An investigation of learning to read*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Camp, R. (1990). Thinking about portfolios. *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project and The Center for the Study of Writing*, 12, 8–14, 27.
- Camp, R. (1992). Changing the model for the direct assessment of writing. In M. Williamson & B. Huot (Eds.), *Holistic scoring: New theoretical foundations and validation research* (pp. 45–78). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Daiute, C. (1993). Youth genres and literacy: Links between sociocultural and developmental theories. *Language Arts*, 70, 402-416.
- Delpit, Lisa. (1993, February). Presentation given to the students and faculty of the School of Education, University of Colorado at Boulder.
- Dillard, A. (1989). *The writing life*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Dyson, A. H. (1989). *Multiple worlds of child writers: Friends learning to write*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dyson, A. H. (1991). The word and the world: Reconceptualizing written language development. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 25, 97-123.
- Dyson, A. H., & Freedman, S. W. (1991). Writing. In J. Flood, J. M. Jensen, D. Lapp, & J. R. Squire (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 754-774). New York: Macmillan.
- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fowler, A. (1982). *Kinds of literature: An introduction to the theory of genres and modes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Freedman, A. (1993). Show and tell? The role of explicit teaching in the learning of new genres. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 27, 222-251.
- Freedman, S. W. (1991). *Evaluating writing: Linking large-scale testing and classroom assessment* (Occasional Paper No. 27). Berkeley, CA: University of California, Center for the Study of Writing.
- Gearhart, M., Herman, J. L., Wolf, S. A., & Baker, E. L. (1992, April). *Writing portfolios at the elementary level: A study of methods for writing assessment*. Paper presented for the symposium "Perspectives on the assessment value of portfolios: How robust are they?" at the 1992 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.
- Gearhart, M., & Wolf, S. A. (In press). Engaging teachers in assessment of their students' narrative writing: The role of subject matter knowledge. *Assessing Writing*.
- Gearhart, M., Wolf, S. A., Burkey, B., & Whittaker, A. (1994). *Engaging teachers in assessment of their students' narrative writing: Impact on teachers' knowledge and practice*. (CSE Tech. Rep. 377). Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.
- Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hamilton, V. (1987). Ah, sweet rememory! In B. Harrison & G. Maguire (Eds.), *Innocence and experience: Essays and conversations on children's literature* (pp. 6-12). New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Hardy, B. (1978). Narrative as a primary act of mind. In M. Meek, A. Warlow, & G. Barton (Eds.), *The cool web: The pattern of children's reading* (pp. 12-23). New York: Atheneum.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hiebert, E. H. (1991). Teacher-based assessment of literacy learning. In J. Flood, J. M. Jensen, D. Lapp, & J. R. Squire (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 510-520). New York: Macmillan.
- Hiebert, E., & Calfee, R. C. (1992). Assessment of literacy: From standardized tests to performances and portfolios. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research says about reading instruction* (pp. 70-100). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Huck, C., Hepler, S., & Hickman, J. (1987). *Children's literature in the elementary school*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Koretz, D., McCaffrey, D., Klein, S., Bell, R., & Stecher, B. (1993). *The reliability of scores from the 1992 Vermont Portfolio Assessment Program* (CSE Tech. Rep. 355). Los Angeles: University of California, Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing.
- Lukens, R. (1990). *A critical handbook of children's literature* (3rd ed.). New York: HarperCollins.
- McCabe, A. (1992, December). *Chameleon readers: What multicultural literacy programs might do with cultural differences in narrative structure*. Paper presented at the 42nd annual National Reading Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- McGinley, W., & Kamberelis, G. (1992). Personal, social, and political functions of children's reading and writing. In C. K. Kinzer & D. J. Leu (Eds.), *Literacy research, theory, and practice: Views from many perspectives* (pp. 403-413). Chicago, IL: National Reading Conference.
- Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151-167.
- Mosenthal, P. B. (1989). The whole language approach: Teachers between a rock and a hard place. *The Reading Teacher*, 42, 628-629.
- Nodelman, P. (1992). *The pleasures of children's literature*. New York: Longman.
- Pappas, C. C. (1993). Is narrative "primary"? Some insights from kindergartners' pretend readings of stories and information books. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 25, 97-129.
- Paterson, K. (1986a). *Jacob have I loved* medal acceptance. In L. Kingman (Ed.), *Newbery and Caldecott Medal books 1976-1985* (pp. 76-85). Boston: The Horn Book.
- Paterson, K. (1986b). The secret life of Katherine Clements Womeldorf. In *Once upon a time . . . : Celebrating the magic of children's books in honor of the twentieth anniversary of Reading is Fundamental* (pp. 18-19). New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Rawson, H., & Miner, M. (1986). *The new international dictionary of quotations*. New York: New American Library.
- Resnick, L. B., & Resnick, D. P. (1992). Assessing the thinking curriculum: New tools for educational reform. In B. R. Gifford & M. C. O'Connor (Eds.), *Changing assessments: Alternative views of aptitude, achievement and instruction* (pp. 37-75). Boston: Kluwer.

Language Arts

- Rosen, H. (1985). *Stories and meanings*. Sheffield, England: National Association for the Teaching of English.
- Rosenblatt, R. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Shulman, L. (1986). Paradigms and research programs in the study of teaching: A contemporary perspective. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 3–36). New York: Macmillan.
- Sloan, G. D. (1991). *The child as critic: Teaching literature in elementary and middle schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sperling, M. (1994). Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A framework for studying response to student writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 28, 175–203.
- Taylor, M. D. (1986). Newbery acceptance speech (1977) for *Roll of thunder, hear my cry*. In L. Kingman (Ed.), *Newbery and Caldecott Medal books 1976–1985* (pp. 21–30). Boston: Horn Book.
- Valencia, S., & Calfee, R. C. (1991). The development and use of literacy portfolios for students, classes, and teachers. *Applied Educational Measurement*, 4, 333–345.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- White, E. B. (1977). A slight sound at evening. In E. B. White (Ed.), *Essays of E.B. White* (pp. 234–242). New York: Harper Colophon Books.
- Wolf, D. P. (1989). Portfolio assessment: Sampling student work. *Educational Leadership*, 46, 4–10.
- Wolf, D. P. (1993). Assessment as an episode of learning. In R. Bennett & W. Ward (Eds.), *Construction versus choice in cognitive measurement* (pp. 213–240). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Wolf, S. A., & Gearhart, M. (1993). *Writing what you read: A guidebook for the assessment of children's narratives*. (CSE Resource Paper No. 10). Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.
- Wolf, S. A., & Heath, S. B. (1992). *The braid of literature: Children's worlds of reading*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Zipes, J. (1991). *Spells of enchantment: The wondrous fairy tales of Western culture*. New York: Viking.
- L'Engle, M. (1962). *A wrinkle in time*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Lobel, A. (1971). *Frog and Toad together*. New York: Scholastic.
- Lobel, A. (1979). *Days with Frog and Toad*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Miles, M. (1971). *Annie and the old one*. Illustrated by P. Parnall. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Paterson, K. (1977). *Bridge to Terabithia*. Illustrated by D. Diamond. New York: Harper & Row.
- Paterson, K. (1980). *Jacob have I loved*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Spinelli, J. (1990). *Maniac Magee*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Steig, W. (1976). *Abel's island*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Steig, W. (1985). *Solomon the rusty nail*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Steig, W. (1986). *Brave Irene*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Stephens, J. (1987). *Mufaro's beautiful daughters, an African tale*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Taylor, M. D. (1976). *Roll of thunder, hear my cry*. New York: Dial.
- White, E. B. (1952). *Charlotte's web*. Illustrated by G. Williams. New York: Harper & Row.
- Yolen, J. (1992). *Encounter*. Illustrated by D. Shannon. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Zolotow, C. (1972). *William's doll*. Illustrated by W. Péné Du Bois. New York: Harper & Row.

Shelby Wolf is an assistant professor of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder, with teaching and research interests in literacy, children's literature, and drama. Maryl Gearhart is Project Director at the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research addresses the role of assessment in reform of classroom practice.

Appendix A

The Narrative Components

In this appendix, we briefly outline each of the narrative components by offering a definition, suggesting some key questions that teachers and children can explore, and providing illustrative examples from literature. The necessary orchestration across elements will build as we progress through the individual components. Our developmental focus here will be on differences in complexity that are based in genre, and how children can apply their understanding of these differences to their own writing.

Genre

Genre provides the frame for the story. It typecasts the tale, sending signals to prepare the reader for what lies ahead. The rounding of character, functions of setting, predictability of plot, and explicitness of theme are often deter-

Children's Books

- Alexander, L. (1964). *The book of three*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Avi. (1988). *Something upstairs*. New York: Orchard.
- Burnford, S. (1961). *The incredible journey*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Dahl, R. (1988). *Matilda*. Illustrated by Q. Blake. New York: Viking Kestrel.
- Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. Illustrated by C. Binch. New York: Dial.

mined by genre. Traditionally, genre has provided a classification system for organizing literature, although the characteristics of certain "categories" are not set in stone. Indeed, the boundaries appear to be more porous than solid, as stories float between specific categories. More recently, genre has been seen as social action used to accomplish particular purposes. In thinking about genre, there are several important questions that teachers and children can consider: What features and patterns of the story connect it to a specific genre? Can the story be cast in more than one category? Does the selected genre place certain constraints on the story? What social purposes does the author strive to accomplish in using, stretching, or breaking a particular genre?

Very general lines separate fantasy from reality. Realistic tales include those that center on personal and social problems, historical fiction, or tales that follow real animals in authentic situations. Historical fiction places great emphasis on the authenticity of setting; personal problem novels center on character development. For example, in Katherine Paterson's (1980) *Jacob Have I Loved*, young Sara Louise struggles to let her own identity shine out from the shadow cast by her twin, and her transformation from a jealous and often rage-filled adolescent to a more reflective and accepting adult is key to her character development.

Fantasy opens the door to the rich world of make-believe. Although the problems may be as "real" as those portrayed in realistic fiction, the vehicle is as different as a royal coach is from a solitary garden pumpkin. Subgenres of fantasy include folk and fairy tales, fables, myths, legends, science fiction, and high fantasy. Folk and fairy tales are well known for their predictability—they are stories painted in black and white. There is little gray in the world of the folktale: Characters are either good or evil; the setting, a dark forest or a shining castle; the hero, victorious; and the nemesis, defeated. Quite often the plot cycles around the number three: There are three brothers, three questions to be answered, and three nights to be spent spinning straw into gold.

Setting is critical in science fiction, which relies on a vision of the future. The miracles of technology and the world of scientific invention hold center stage, and characters use out-of-this-world vehicles to transport themselves through space and time. High fantasy has much in common with science fiction in that it creates another world, though it does not usually dwell in "another galaxy, far far away." Instead, the land of high fantasy is accessible in our own time, if we can only find the entrance. Falling down a rabbit's hole to Wonderland, stepping through a wardrobe into Narnia, or even standing defiantly in your own bedroom while the walls become the world all around creates a connection between the real world and the land of high fantasy.

Over the years literary critics have cast and recast the genre lines—what Fowler (1982) suggests are "not permanent classes but . . . families subject to change" (p. v). Some like to separate the modern tale from the folk and fairy tale, even though the two may follow similar patterns. Some believe that legends are more closely linked with the myth than the epic. Even a single story can cause confusion, as *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962) is designated for both high fantasy and science fiction. Amidst the seemingly

arbitrary categories, however, there is an important notion for the teacher to communicate to students: Stories follow patterns, and an understanding of genre aids the student's ability to analyze stories and to write fresh tales that follow or veer from traditional patterns.

Theme

Theme is the heart of a story. Its meaning brings life to all parts of the tale, moving its message throughout the author's choice of character, setting, and plot. The connection of the theme to the reader's personal world is primary. Literary critics (Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978) suggest that each reader's interpretation of theme is highly individual—there is no single "correct" interpretation. Therefore, questions that children and teachers might ask are: What are the themes of this narrative, and what relationship do they have to my life? Are the themes explicitly stated or implicit in the affect and actions of the characters? What connections do the themes of this tale have with other texts, experiences, and times?

Simple stories have straightforward and often didactic themes. For example, golden rules and aphorisms abound in the world of the fable, though this is appropriate to the genre. In fairy tales the themes are not so outspoken, but they still come through loud and clear: "Intelligence is more important than strength" and "Good conquers evil." Even though themes are often explicitly stated, more complex stories develop themes on an implicit level, through the affect and actions of their characters. In some stories, the themes are revealed on both planes. In *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952), for example, the theme of the power of friendship to uplift one's life is directly stated, but it is the spider's constant attention and caring actions throughout the story that support the statement.

While simple stories suggest singular themes, more complex stories develop multiple ideas with both primary and secondary themes. The themes are layered and interconnected. In the story of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976) the overarching theme of the dynamic growth of young Cassie from naiveté to a mature understanding of her social world is supported by themes that emphasize the strength of a unified family, a strong love of the land, and the belief that persistence and dignity can effectively confront racism. Taylor's personal history adds another thematic layer, for in her own youth she found few books that described the lives of African Americans in authentic and positive prose. Motivated by a strong desire to tell the stories she knew, Taylor's work centers on the strength of the African American family, and the power of the oral tale (Taylor, 1986). Children, too, are motivated to write their personal messages, and an analysis of theme offers them opportunities to explore how to communicate what Faulkner calls "the human heart in conflict with itself."

Character

Characters are animate beings with emotions, motivations, and intentions. They move in the time and space of a story, interacting with friends and foes, reflecting and taking action. At times, characters' thoughts are made explicit for the reader, but often we observe only the action and must infer the drive behind it. Questions that teachers and chil-

Language Arts

dren can consider are: What are characters? Are they flat and unchanging or round and dynamic? How do characters move, think, and feel? Do they take on primary roles, or do they stand in the background? How do they change during the course of the story?

In the world of children's literature, characters may be human or not. The critical characteristic is that they be animate. Talking, thinking, and feeling animals abound—elephant kings, frogs and toads, runaway bunnies, and velveteen rabbits. Human characteristics are also given to plants, resulting in flowers that talk and trees that give friendship as well as apples. Animate characteristics are ascribed to objects as well. There are engines that climb over mountains, bringing toys to good girls and boys, and nutcrackers that come to life under the Christmas tree. Although one might assume that these animal and object characters are strictly found in primary texts, they move into intermediate levels as well. No one could doubt the evil intentions of the "It" in *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle, 1962); the emotional distress of Hen Wen the oracular pig in *The Book of Three* (Alexander, 1964); or the motivation of a gentleman mouse to get off *Abel's Island* (Steig, 1976) and find his way home.

Because characters are "real," they experience emotion, they are motivated by life's circumstances, and they have purposes and intentions for accomplishing their goals, whether they be reaching the top of a mountain ("I think I can!") or finding the Emerald City. The more sophisticated the character, the richer the description—the author rounds the character through physical as well as affective insights and details. Some characters remain unchanging, but others are dynamic—maturing through both the action of the story and self-reflection. When two characters meet, their emotions, motivations, and intentions intertwine. Charlotte and Wilbur (White, 1952) present a classic example. They are motivated by the same desire to save Wilbur's life, but their emotions and intentions differ. Wilbur is a frightened child who weeps and whines at the very mention of bacon. Charlotte, on the other hand, is teacher and mother wrapped into one; she is calm, commanding, and consistent. When she devises an intricate and clever plan for tricking the humans, Wilbur is content to follow her directions; but he matures in the story from being "some pig" to being increasingly terrific, humble, and radiant. Through the security of constant support and friendship, he learns what it means to be a friend.

In the analysis of character, which is highly dependent on genre, children learn to make decisions about how much or how little to reveal of their protagonists and the characters who help or hinder them. Whether their characters are flat, round, static, or dynamic, the decisions children make support the themes they wish to communicate. They explore what kind of characters will get their message across, how much detail will be necessary for character description, and what point of view will best serve the revelation of character.

Setting

Setting includes the main features of time, place, and situation. These features are not to be memorized and recited (Kansas, early 1900s, cyclone coming); they are to be explored for the features and possible shifts in setting that re-

flect the general mood of the story and feelings of the characters. Questions teachers and children can explore include: Is the setting integral to the story or merely a backdrop, where the actual time and place are less important than the situation? How does the setting influence character mood or highlight the conflict? What is the function of shifts in setting?

The simplest settings often serve as a backdrop to the tale. In fables, for example, time and place are unimportant, for the boy who cried wolf could play his joke and receive his comeuppance almost anywhere at any time. Fairy tale settings are often stereotypical—"Once upon a time a long time ago"—but they retain their power just the same and provide beginning insights into the power of setting as symbol. The "forest" conjures up immediate images of trees that reach out to grab escaping heroines, with wolves and witches hiding therein. A "castle" needs little explanation—the word itself sparks flickering candles that shed light on stone walls and sumptuous banquets attended by fairies, kings, and queens.

William Steig uses setting shifts to dramatize his many characters' predicaments. In *Abel's Island* (1976), Abel moves from the soft and spoiled life of a gentleman mouse to survival of the fittest on a lonely island. *Brave Irene* (1986) must leave the comfort of her mother's arms to battle the forces of nature. And *Solomon the Rusty Nail* (1985) leaves a life of ordinary rabbithood to become a nail hammered into the home of his jailer, Ambrose the cat. Although the time in these stories changes slowly, the shifts in place and situation are sudden and dramatic.

The setting shifts in *Bridge to Terabithia* (Paterson, 1977) are vital to the growing friendship of Jess and Leslie. In this story there are two main settings: the real one of home and school and the fantasy setting of Terabithia. Each differs in its general description, accessibility, inhabitants, and attraction. At home and school, Jess and Leslie have to face the day-to-day disappointments and challenges of races lost and getting back at rivals. But in Terabithia, they are in control. In more complex stories, such as Paterson's tale, setting has several functions—it sets the mood, reveals character and conflict, and serves as metaphor.

Plot

Plot is a sequence of events that moves the narrative from beginning to end. Quite often, the plot begins with a problem for a major character to solve, shows the difficulties of the problem in the middle of the story, and ends with a resolution of that problem. Plot reveals the movement of characters through time, space, and adversity. Questions teachers and children might explore include: How is the plot structured? How does the resolution of one event lead to the next episode? What clues does the author offer through foreshadowing? What is the use of time—does it move unerringly forward, or are there flashbacks and dream sequences which bend or suspend time?

The simplest view of plot shows us that stories have beginnings, middles, and endings. In the beginning of *Cinderella*, a young girl is faced with a lifetime of drudgery and derision. Her fairy godmother arrives in the middle of the tale to offer her some sparkling alternatives. Ultimately, Cinderella discovers the old adage "If the shoe fits, wear it" and lives happily ever after with her prince. More

sophisticated views of plot show the sequence of time in related episodes. In the African story of *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987), for example, the polarity of the actions and reactions of two sisters leads them into very different futures. The gentle and generous Nyasha meets and marries her king, while the bad-tempered Manyara is left to be a servant in her sister's household. Steptoe foreshadows the ultimate events through Manyara's dire, though misguided, predictions and the early appearance of the young king in a variety of symbolic guises.

Even more sophisticated are stories within stories, fitting neatly within each other like nesting boxes. Avi's (1988) haunting historical slave tale *Something Upstairs* fits within a modern frame. The young protagonist, Kenny, goes back and forth in time to help change the events of the past. But the complexity of the plot structure is revealed in the opening author's explanation when we learn that Kenny has come directly to Avi to tell his strange tale and that Avi eventually becomes his scribe. Thus, Avi's translation surrounds Kenny's modern-day life, which in turn surrounds his step back in time—a story within story within story. As children learn to create their own stories, they can lean on their analysis of literature to develop their own plots, foreshadow events to come, and link episodes toward conflict and final resolution.

Point of View

Through choices in point of view, the author decides what the reader will see and know. The view can be limited to the actions of characters or spread to their innermost thoughts and feelings. The view can offer insight into a single character or expand to everyone involved in the story. Point of view is the vision of the action that the reader will follow. Questions for teachers and children include: What is the chosen point of view? Does the choice provide us with adequate information? How does the point of view work to reveal character? Is the choice genre-appropriate?

In the objective point of view, the action speaks for itself. Although this choice is typical of drama and of young children's stories, it is rare in the world of children's literature. Exceptions seem to be restricted to realistic stories of animals like Burnford's (1961) story of *The Incredible Journey*, in which the realism is preserved by the author's inability to translate the thoughts of the feline and canine characters except through their actions. Much more common is the first-person point of view, where the "I" is both character and narrator. In Jane Yolen's (1992) *Encounter*, the "discovery" of America by Columbus is told from a San Salvadorean boy's point of view, in which he describes the Spaniards as strangers and serpents, telling of his fears and futile attempts to warn his people of the coming danger. In the focused point of view, the actions and affect of a specific character or characters are laid out by the author who serves as narrator. For example, in *Annie and the Old One*, Miles (1971) shows us the Navaho world of life and death through Annie's eyes.

In more complex narratives, authors often provide an omniscient point of view, allowing us to hear and understand the thoughts and feelings of multiple characters. In Spinelli's (1990) *Maniac Magee*, for example, the focus is on the protagonist; but through the author's omniscient stance, we are also given insights into the neighborhood's

response to and relationship with Maniac. The connection between point of view and character is particularly strong because the viewpoint focuses our attention, and often our sympathy and empathy, toward particular characters and away from others.

Style

Mark Twain wrote that "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning" (cited in Rawson & Miner, 1986, p. 34). When we talk about word choice and pairing and piling words into prose, we are talking about style. Authors make stylistic choices to set the mood of their tales, reveal character, and give voice to their individual personalities. With regard to style, teachers and children could ask: What are some of the stylistic choices made by the author? How do specific choices expand or diminish the tale? Does the author make use of a wide variety of stylistic devices or limit the selection to only a few?

In simple stories, style is often more subdued. Fables lay out the scene in short, succinct sentences. Folk and fairy tales make generous use of simile—"hair as beautiful as beaten gold" or a stepmother so jealous that "rage grew like weeds in her heart." Tall tales are known for their hyperbole. As tales increase in complexity, the range of stylistic devices expands. Consonance (the clicking of common consonants) and assonance (elaborate extensions and elongations of vowels) help to establish rhythm as well as set mood. Metaphor is used extensively. For example, in Avi's (1988) ghost story *Something Upstairs*, the windows are shaped like coffins rather than simple rectangles. Mildred Taylor (1976) makes extensive use of a variety of stylistic devices in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*—rhythm, rhyme, and the overarching metaphor of the African American spiritual from which the book's name is derived; the use of dialect to reflect the lives of Southerners both black and white; and personification, as the school bus careening down the road takes on a life of its own. Through the analysis of style, with explicit attention to the craft of writing, children's original compositions can also come to life as they experiment with and expand upon the styles they see in literature.

Tone

Tone is an expression of the author's attitude toward his or her subject. Integrally linked to style, tone not only reveals character but also unveils the author's feelings toward those characters. Tone can be humorous, serious, affectionate, warm, cool, condescending, or even sarcastic. When teachers and children discuss tone, they might ask: What is the tone used in this particular passage or about this particular character? What does the tone reveal about both the tale and the author? Is a similar tone maintained throughout the story, or does it shift, depending on the scene or the character?

Simple stories often have a uniform and straightforward tone. Fables call for consistency. Tall tales thrive on the humor of exaggeration. Known as *Zaubermärchen* in Germany and the *contes merveilleux* in France, folk and fairy tales are marked by an overarching tone of wonder (Zipes, 1991). Still, these oral wonder tales shift underlying tone

Language Arts

for different characters—no one can doubt the author's alternating attitudes toward the wicked stepmother and the beautiful Snow White. As stories become increasingly complex, shifts in tone are common. In *Amazing Grace*, for example, Hoffman (1991) describes the imaginative play of the protagonist in affectionate and literary terms; but when Grace's classmates try to deny her the role of Peter Pan in a school play because she is both African American and a girl, the tone shifts, like a candle being snuffed out. In

Matilda, Roald Dahl (1988) provides a dramatic shift in tone as he moves from character to character—innocent, intelligent Matilda; the caring Miss Honey; and the towering inferno of the headmistress Miss Trunchbull. Even the character names hint at the tone to come, and anyone familiar with Dahl's own experiences with boarding school knows his intense dislike of the many adults placed in charge of children's minds.

READING AND YOUR ADOLESCENT

A new brochure from the Center for the Study of Reading, *Reading and Your Adolescent*, offers parents research-based suggestions for improving and encouraging their children's wide reading. An excellent hand-out for parent-teacher conferences.

To obtain a free copy and information about ordering bulk copies, send a legal-size SASE to:

Dissemination Director
Center for the Study of Reading
Room 173 CRC
51 Gerty Drive
Champaign, IL 61820
