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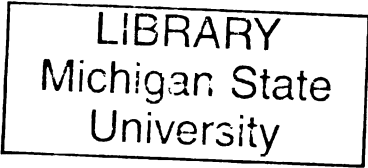
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**“BUT I’M NOT GOOD AT ART”: PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING
OF ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO CHILDREN’S AND ADOLESCENT LITERATURE**

By

Suzanne M. Knezek

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

“BUT I’M NOT GOOD AT ART”: PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO CHILDREN’S AND ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

By

Suzanne M. Knezek

Many preservice and practicing teachers equate artistic response to children’s and adolescent literature to craft-like activities that are only loosely tied to literature read. In the tradition of literature response theory, however, artistic response involves readers using artistic forms to work through their questions, feelings, and thoughts about texts – a perspective that is unfamiliar to most students and teachers. This study originated out of a related problem of practice – the challenge preservice teachers and their instructor faced as they struggled to reach a common conception of artistic response to children’s and adolescent literature. The central question guiding the study was: How do preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding?

Using historical definitions of art as a lens to view data presented in a telling case format, three major levels of preservice teachers’ understanding of artistic response are identified in this study. The first level, *Artistic Response as Object*, consists primarily of responses that either reproduced the story or used the text as a teaching tool. These responses focused on the art objects preservice teachers created and moved the discussion away from the literature. The second level, *Artistic Response as Process*, features responses that represented particular events from text for specific reasons, but the end products again did little more than retell the story. At this level the focus again included the art object, but placed a greater emphasis on the artist and the artist’s creative process.

At the third level, *Artistic Response as Social Experience*, preservice teachers created responses that invited others to critically explore characters, themes, and situations. The focus at this level of artistic response included not only the art object and the artist and the artist's process, it also considered the social aspects of artistic response to children's literature, including the impact the art (process or product) has on others' understanding of the book.

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Dedicated with deep love and respect to my parents, Mary and Bernie Knezek,
and to my brothers and sisters, Pat Marie, Dan, Katy, and T.J.

In loving memory of my grandparents,
Hertha and Julius Heim and Marie and Ernest Knezek.
I miss you.

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TYPOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

- /// Indicates pauses within the speaker's turn. Each note (/) indicates about one second.
- [Indicates overlapping talk.
- ... Indicates the speaker's thoughts were interrupted by talk, but the other speaker might have begun during a slight pause in the first speaker's turn.
- Indicates when portions of text have been removed between sentences.
- italic* Indicates author/transcriber comments, including interpretations of how someone stated something, or what other group members were doing at the same time.
- " " Indicates the speaker was reading from a paper or book.
- , Indicates a slight pause in speech.
- (?) Indicates the speaker said something that was not distinguishable on the tape.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

In the fall of 2003 I was a doctoral student in a teacher education program and had just been hired to teach an introductory children's literature course in that same program. I was truly excited about the opportunity, as children's literature had always been one of my major interests. As the first semester progressed I felt things were going unusually well: I loved the books, I thought the preservice teachers I was instructing were thoughtful and hard-working, and I was collaborating with a supportive and knowledgeable team of colleagues. There were, however, some aspects of the work I found troubling.

Teacher candidates in the education program I was part of were likely to have a range of experiences with children's and adolescent literature. Most received instruction in other classes about how to teach using children's texts as instructional tools. When they arrived in my class some were aware, for example, that predictable books could help children learn the concept of rhyming words. Others could see literature as a means to get their future students excited about subject matter areas like history or science. These recognitions of possible literature usages were commendable, but they really didn't give teacher candidates the opportunity to engage with and respond to children's and adolescent literature as *literature*. The class I taught, TE 348 – *Reading and Responding to Children's Literature*, was specifically designed to address preservice teachers' limited exposure to the literary side of children's books.

TE 348 provided numerous opportunities for teacher candidates to engage with and react to children's texts. They were asked to talk and write about how the texts linked to their own lives, how and why particular words or passages were important in the texts, who had power in the texts, plus various other observations. Along with these discussions and writing assignments, the students in the class were also asked to respond to the books through art. A major reason why this option was offered was because recent research had indicated that, "scholars are acknowledging that the use of art forms has the potential to broaden our teaching and understanding of the ways students make and share meaning in response to literature" (Rascon-Briones, 1997, p. 15). The teacher candidates were to have the opportunity to know they didn't always have to write reports to clarify their understandings or confusions concerning a particular text. Instead, they could work through and represent these ideas through painting, writing poetry, sculpting, or other art forms.

The Problem

The opportunity to create art in response to literature, which I will refer to throughout the rest of this dissertation as "artistic response," was often received quite negatively by the teacher candidates. They usually made it clear very quickly that they weren't at all comfortable with the idea. "But I can't draw," some would say. Others would simply comment, "I don't do art." That initial resistance to creating art was disturbing, especially when considering the likelihood that these future teachers would one day share something they found so off-putting with their own students. Even more distressing, however, was the nature of what they actually created when they made attempts to respond to literature in artistic ways.

The kinds of artistic responses teacher candidates created – or asked others to create – in connection with children’s and adolescent literature often had little to do with the texts they read. Instead, they would engage in “craft-like” activities that had more to do with the “fun” they had while creating them than with the book itself. One student, for example, who read a book about a princess, made crowns out of sparkly pipe cleaners so that everyone in the class could “have fun looking like princesses, too!” Another, who read a book about a child who took a trip, had the other teacher candidates in class, “draw maps of journeys they would like to take themselves.” These were not, in themselves, “bad” activities. It was important that the students have a chance to enjoy creating art in connection with literature. However, I was concerned with how much these activities seemed to function as ends in themselves, and how loosely these creations were tied to texts or the understandings of texts. When I asked teacher candidates how the art they created connected back to the books they read, they often spoke about how they had tried to make something “fun” that represented someone or something in the text. They rarely spoke about how those creations helped broaden their understanding of the literature.

When I asked students to write or talk in response to texts in TE 348 I did so with the intent of having them deepen or in some way extend their thinking about a story. I had the same intention when I asked teacher candidates to create artistic responses, but I noticed again and again that the “craft-like” activities they tended to create did not reflect greater or more involved understandings of the text. While the “crafts” created were often quite impressive (I once received a full-sized quilt), most continued to be detached from the texts read. Every so often, however, one student or a small number of students created artistic responses that did deepen and forever change the ways books were read

and understood by both themselves and other members of the class. Colleagues teaching other sections of TE 348 noticed the same thing, but none of us understood exactly what was going on. We just knew that when “artistic response” really happened both we, the instructors, and the students recognized it. We could not figure out, however, what caused the differences in the ways students understood the concept of artistic response and what it was supposed to entail, and, no matter how often we discussed the problem and tried to address it, little seemed to change. Because we all found artistic response to be both problematic and beneficial, we decided to investigate what was happening with it in systematic and scholarly ways. This group of people, including TE 348 instructors and researchers, worked together in many aspects of this endeavor and I will refer to them from now on as either the “Children’s Literature Team” or the “Team.”

The research from that larger investigation involving the Team informs but is not the focus of this work. Instead, this dissertation tells the story of how the teacher candidates in one section of TE 348 and I, their instructor, came to understand artistic response over the course of the 2005 spring semester. It also identifies and clarifies elements of artistic response that were particularly relevant to that developing understanding. As the story unfolds, readers will be introduced to many of the 30 students I taught in that one class section, but will primarily follow the progress of one particular student, Lari. Lari’s journey highlights how discussing, creating, and writing about artistic responses afford teacher candidates multilayered ways to experience and work through text – ways that have the potential to impact the nature of the candidates’ own teaching and learning and the learning of their future students as well. By describing this journey, I will show how Lari and other TE 348 students struggled to learn what

artistic responses to children's and adolescent literature were and what they entailed. My goal for this work is to inspire greater discussion about artistic response in the literacy education and language arts communities so that teachers and scholars will question "craft-like" activities and move toward investigating texts through artistic responses in more meaningful ways.

The Research Questions

As a researcher, I continually find that the work I do is strongly influenced by my teaching. This dissertation, for example, was a direct result of the problems I was experiencing with artistic response as part of my practice. Therefore, when I first began investigating artistic response within the context of TE 348 I asked myself,

- How do preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding?

As the semester progressed I kept this as the main question guiding the study. Over time, however, I realized that, if I was going to be able to identify the factors that influenced teacher candidates' developing understanding of artistic response, then I needed to be able to identify characteristics or patterns in the ways teacher candidates were writing and talking about artistic response. I also realized that I, as the instructor, was likely to be one of those factors influencing candidates' developing understanding of artistic response, so further clarification of the roles the teacher candidates and I played throughout the semester was essential. In an effort to address these complexities, I added two sub questions that would help bring to light the factors necessary for addressing the overarching research question:

- Are there patterns to the characteristics/elements of oral or written language used by students when describing artistic response that I, as the TE 348 instructor, and the teacher candidates in some way (written acknowledgement, oral reinforcement, extension, etc.) recognize as comprising genuine artistic response – one that leads to deeper understanding/new perspectives?
- What roles did the teacher candidates and I play in facilitating the development of this deeper/new understanding?

Guiding Theoretical Concepts

Why Reader Response Theory?

In the past, “literature became almost a spectator sport for many readers satisfied to passively watch the critics at their elite literary games” (Rosenblatt, 1978/1995). For example, in a skills-based approach to teaching literature, an instructor in a class would typically initiate in explicit ways an interaction with a student about a book and then assess the student’s response:

Teacher: Who is the main character in the story?

Student: The main character is Max.

Teacher: (evaluating the student’s response) Correct, Max is the main character. (Mehan, 1979)

While this form of interaction still often happens with readers, teachers, and texts, many literary critics and theorists now believe that readers play an *active* role in the reading process (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1938/1976, 1978/1995).

Reading as a Transaction

Complex interpretations of the relationship between reader and text have varied throughout history, with debates questioning where the meaning of a story resides (Eagleton, 1986; McMahon & Raphael, 1997). Many have believed that meaning was to be found or created within the mind of the reader. Others thought that it resided in the text itself. Refusing to see meaning as residing in either the text or the reader, Louise Rosenblatt (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976) was one of the first scholars to present a view that articulated an interactive relationship between the two. Her writings, along with those of scholars whose work aligned with the notion of mutually-constructed meaning, provided part of the foundation for this dissertation and the basis for insights into the reader-text relationships that emerged, the types of response in which readers engaged, and the process of student response that occurred in this study (McMahon & Raphael, 1997).

Reader and text.

The concept of reading for meaning used in both this dissertation and TE 348 is largely grounded in Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978/1995, 1994). In that theory Rosenblatt postulates that the act of reading is a transaction between the text and reader.

The transactional phrasing of the reading process underlines the essential importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event. A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks on a page, becomes the text of a poem or of a scientific formula by virtue of its relationship

with the reader who can thus interpret it and reach through it to the world of the work. (Rosenblatt, 1978/1995, pp. 18-19)

Along with her conviction that reader and text had to interact before meaning could emerge, Rosenblatt also argued that a reader's initial reaction to the text was the essential beginning of instruction. She noted that children often responded to literature in connection with their own experiences and posited that instruction should begin with the reader's initial reactions and then return the focus of readers back to the text for further reflection. Others have observed that, at the most basic level, what happens when the reader and text come together can be described as similar in form to a dialogue, with the reader and text mutually dependent on one another (Davis, 1988).

The instructional possibilities associated with interaction between reader and text did not, however, exist free of social context. Rosenblatt also noted that teachers can enable readers to consider the perspectives of others by indicating that individual reactions could be elaborated through a communal exchange of ideas.

Why Socially Situated Reading?

There is a long history of scholarship on the social nature of reading. Though reading is often conceptualized as a solitary pursuit, Manguel (1996) noted in his book, *A History of Reading*, that even in the past when most people were illiterate, they still were *read to* – a very basic example of the social nature of reading. He further discussed how, after the orally-based stories of cultural groups were recorded in print following the invention of moveable type in the mid-15th century, these same stories were then often read in solitude. However, they still tied people together by virtue of the common values and norms the texts reflected. Meanwhile, Brenner (1999) asserted that this social

context goes beyond the reading of the text to include response to the text as well when she wrote, “the sharing of responses to readings can support and change readers’ interpretations of their own readings in powerful ways” (p. 87). In addition, in her modern-day exploration of how women use reading in their everyday lives, Long (2003) argued that reading occurs within the boundaries of a social infrastructure, where readers mediate their interpretations with each other, their cultures, and their society.

The established socially-situated nature of classroom settings supports the second major theoretical concept girding the framework of this study – that the reading and responding to literature and learning that occurred in TE 348 were inherently social acts. As Rosenblatt (1978/1995) wrote,

As we exchange experiences, we point to those elements of the text that best illustrate or support our interpretations. We may help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes that have been overlooked or slighted. We may be led to reread the text and revise our own interpretation. Sometimes we may be strengthened in our own sense of having “done justice to” the text, without denying its potentialities for other interpretations. Sometimes, the give-and-take may lead to a general increase in insight and even to a consensus. Sometimes, of course, interchange reveals that we belong to different subcultures, whether social or literary. (pp. 146-147)

The Social Nature of Reading, Responding, and Learning in TE 348

Because I, along with other members of the Children’s Literature Team, believed in the importance of both the transactional and socially situated aspects of reading, one aspect of TE 348 was designed to explicitly foreground many kinds of response within a

classroom setting: book discussion groups. Five times during each semester teacher candidates spent approximately thirty minutes participating in small discussion groups. Each of those sessions was followed by a large group, instructor-led discussion, where students shared what they had discussed with the whole class. Many times these “debriefing” gatherings were the places where teacher candidates made public the most interesting or challenging ideas their groups had encountered. The large group sessions averaged anywhere from fifteen to twenty minutes in length.

Book Discussion Groups: The Social Nature of Learning

In the same way that reader response theorists like Rosenblatt focused on the interaction between reader and text, social constructivist theorists “emphasize the role that transactions among individuals, in dialogue, play in the learning that is constructed in any experience” (Brenner, 1999, p. 54). In order to provide the teacher candidates in TE 348 opportunities to engage in such dialogue, the Team, as mentioned above, designed book discussion opportunities that occurred within a community setting. While engaged in these groups and in talk about what happened during these sessions, teacher candidates learned to reflect, discuss, and form opinions while in dialogue with others. The discussions provided the social interactions the candidates needed to consider varied perspectives, including alternate interpretations of literature (Brown, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1986).

According to Vygotsky (1978), individuals are guided by their own mental processes as they participate in social acts. However, these social acts are also influenced by social experiences. He argued that mental functions begin on a social, interpsychological plane and then move to an inner, intrapsychological plane (McMahon

& Raphael, 1997). This process, which Vygotsky termed “internalization”, can be thought of as an individual’s way of making meaning. The learning associated with this meaning-making, however, occurs in a social context, and any revisions in that learning come about as individuals interact with one another.

Several scholars (Brock & Gavelek, 1998; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996) have built upon the work of Vygotsky and Harré (1984) in order to reformulate a “rich heuristic for conceptualizing how individuals appropriate and transform that which they experience in the public/social realm” (Brock & Gavelek, p. 83). Harré’s original model, which he called the Vygotsky Space, was a representation of the inter- to intrapsychological processes by which learning occurs. Gavelek and Raphael’s updated version shows two dimensions – the public-private and the social-individual. The public-private dimension pertains to the ways in which what is known is displayed or made observable to varying degrees. What is known, as reflected in this dimension, can be made public as it is shared with a community, or it can remain private, locked away in the mind of the knower. The social-individual dimension refers to the location of knowledge. Knowledge may be social, for example, in that all members of a community may share a way of thinking (Brenner, 1999). “These two planes are a continuum that, when crossed, form four quadrants depicting different ways in which language is used in the learning process” (McMahon & Raphael, 1997): appropriation, transformation, publication, and conventionalization. Figure 1.1 depicts the intersection of the two dimensions and the four quadrants.

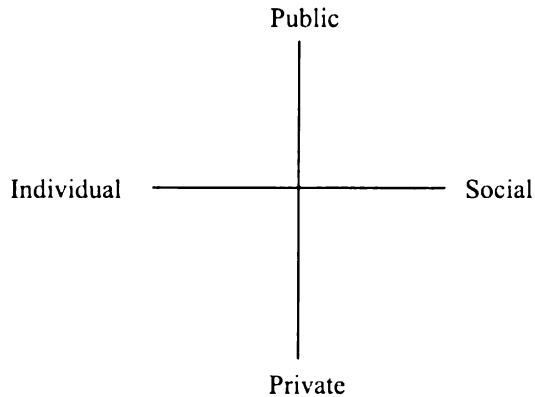


Figure 1.1: The dimensions of the Vygotsky Space as featured in Brenner (1999). This figure represents Gavelek and Raphael's (1996) modified version of Harré's (1984) original.

Individuals *appropriate* ways of thinking as they take part in public, social transactions with others. Appropriation is the process by which students adopt concepts, strategies, ideas, and language that have been introduced and shared in the public-social quadrant. In TE 348, for example, teacher candidates, while in discussion groups, listened to and talked about the ideas of others. At times they may have adopted concepts shared by other group members, but those concepts would not have been changed in any way if the teacher candidates in TE 348 simply stopped at this point.

In order for learners to *transform* ways of thinking, they must first privately connect them with prior knowledge, which changes both the individual's knowledge and the ideas and concepts originally appropriated. One of the concepts outlined by this aspect of the theoretical framework is that the teacher candidates in TE 348 would need to modify and adapt what they learned about literature response to achieve higher levels of text comprehension. Thus, in order to move further along in their learning, the teacher

candidates cannot hold on to private, individualized knowledge. They must again make the transformed knowledge public by sharing it with others.

Learners conventionalize new knowledge when transformed ways of thinking made public by individuals are adopted by the community. In TE 348 this would mean that a teacher candidate's transformed knowledge of literature would be made public and then taken up by others in the class. The discussion groups provide the public contexts fundamental to students' individual and cognitive development, the means by which learning about literature can continue to develop and build upon past histories of the culture, the community, and the individual.

Book Discussion Groups: Reader Response Roles

Reader response theory advances the idea that, depending on life experiences and purposes for reading, there are many ways that readers can respond to text. This concept is important because it implies that, if given the chance, the teacher candidates participating in book discussion groups in TE 348 would likely respond in a range of complex ways. Therefore, members of the Children's Literature Team wanted to understand, anticipate, and then institutionalize – in the form of class assignments and activities – some of the more common reader responses to literature. To accomplish these goals they began by researching the types of reader responses that have been identified in recent literary history.

Types of reader response.

According to McMahon and Raphael (1997), Odell and Cooper (1976) and Purves and Beach (1972) examined the array of responses by categorizing the final oral or written comments made after readers completed their reading. In their text, Purves and

Beach (1972) noted that readers' interest in text was connected to their understanding of text. Furthermore, they found that readers were influenced in emotional, intellectual, and attitudinal ways by what they read. Their findings indicated five types of responses: (1) the personal statement, (2) descriptive responses, (3) interpretive responses, (4) evaluative responses, and (5) miscellaneous responses. These categories were later amended by Odell and Cooper (1976) who added subcategories which specified that personal statements could be about the text or the reader, descriptive responses might be narrative or could focus on particular aspects of the text referenced, and interpretive statements could allude to parts of the text or the whole text. Odell and Cooper also indicated that evaluative statements could refer to the meaningfulness, evocativeness, and/or to the construction of the text.

The identification of these types of responses to literature provided groundwork for researchers and practitioners who advocated discussion groups as an instructional strategy in literature study for a wide range of grade levels (kindergarten-college) (Daniels, 1994; McMahon, Raphael, Goatley, & Pardo, 1997; Samway & Whang, 1996; Smith, 1996). Some of the researchers and practitioners who established literature-based curriculum that included discussion groups (also called literature circles or book clubs) were torn, however, because, while they wanted these groups to be valuable, learner-centered activities, they were also concerned about off-task behavior or wasted time in student-run groups (Grisham, 1997). Therefore, response roles were often established *for* the readers rather than letting readers respond in completely spontaneous ways. For example, Daniels (1994) provided role sheets to act as an organizer that gave purpose and

focus for reading. These roles and elements of their associated descriptions, which laid some of the groundwork for roles established in TE 348, appear in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 – Harvey Daniels (1994) Literature Circle Role Descriptions

Role	Role Description
Discussion Director	Acts as facilitator and keeps the discussion going
Illustrator	Draws some kind of picture related to the reading
Summarizer	Gives a brief but complete summary of the plot
Word Master	Does a close reading of the text and focuses on single words or short phrases
Connector	Finds connections between the text and real world
Passage Person	Does a close reading and locates well written or key passages

Reader response roles in TE 348.

There was an essential difference between the literature discussion roles that were developed by Daniels (1994) and those created for TE 348. While Daniels' roles focused on the task associated with a response, the Children's Literature Team made the responses themselves the foundation of each role. In this way the Team hoped to have teacher candidates not only experience what it was like to respond to literature in multiple ways, but also to have them reflect upon and have a deep understanding of the response roles, including the perspectives those roles help develop and why reading from multiple perspectives might be important. By requiring teacher candidates to discuss the response roles in a public forum, the Team hoped that students would make public any role-induced private transformations in their understandings of literature so that others might have access to the transformed knowledge as well.

Discussion group assignment.¹

The book discussion groups are comprised of five students and meet five times during the semester. Each student in a discussion group is expected to be responsible for responding in one of five ways at the individual meetings. See Table 2 for descriptions of the TE348 response roles based on the rubric for the book discussion assignment.

Table 1.2 – Descriptions of TE 348 response roles

Role	Role Description
Group Facilitator/Personal Response Person – 10 points	<p>The facilitator for the discussion does not write a one-page paper ahead of time. Instead, on the day of the discussion she/he:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• prepares a list of questions or prompts to guide the group around important issues of the book• begins the discussion and keeps it moving throughout the group meeting. The facilitator does not need to <i>do</i> all the discussing, but merely makes sure the discussion begins and continues in a strong and relevant way• brings personal response into the conversation, making relevant connections to prior experience (i.e. life) and articulating relevant emotional reactions to text (and their basis)• monitors whether everyone gets a chance to talk, whether all voices in the group are heard and keeps track of the time to make certain that all the responses get covered in the allotted time period• takes notes during the discussion <p>After the discussion, the facilitator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• collects the other papers in the group on the day the discussion groups meet (there should be four papers: textual, critical, intertextual, and artistic)• reads the 1-page papers from the other group members• completes a 2-page write-up summarizing what was discussed (and whether there were significant differences between the group members writing and the discussion), as well as what went well and what might have gone better in the group, noting the individual members' participation. A list of questions and discussion prompts should be included explaining why the facilitator felt they were relevant to the conversation• hands in to the instructor <i>as a packet</i> the following: the four response papers from the discussion meeting, the summary of the group's conversation, and the discussion questions or prompts• This summary is usually due the week <i>following</i> the conversation and is worth 10 points.

¹ The assignment description provided here has been taken almost verbatim from my TE 348 course syllabus for the spring of 2005. For a more detailed look at the syllabus and associated discussion group assignment description, readers can see Appendices A and B.

Table 1.2 – cont’d

Textual Response Person – 5 points	<p>The person responsible for textual response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• finds and shares significant literary passages, explaining their significance• talks about the genre of the book• brings literary elements into the conversation (e.g., setting, plot, characters, theme, style)
Critical Response – 5 points	<p>The person responsible for critical response explores questions about issues of power surrounding race, class and gender (who has power in this book and who does not) and voice (who is heard in this book and who is not)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• talks about the book’s expressed and implied beliefs• talks about what the author might want readers to believe, how the author works to make that happen and what the author seems to assume about readers and about the subject
Intertextual Response – 5 points	<p>The person responsible for intertextual response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reads and connects one or two other works by the author or another author (picture books, novels, poems, biographies, non-fiction, etc.)• finds and discusses articles, reviews, or interviews• may find and discuss other media forms of the text (movies, CDs, etc.)
Artistic Response – 5 points	<p>The person responsible for artistic response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• creates a creative, artistic response to the book <i>that has the text at its center</i> and that promotes understanding and conversation (for example, a collage of literary passages, a choral reading, a poem, a poster, a song, a drama). This is meant to be more thoughtful and text-centered than a simple craft or activity that is loosely tied to the book (No “busy work.”).• presents this response to the group or guides the group in creating it, requiring no more than a fifth of the allotted discussion group time• includes (in a write-up) a rationale and explanation for the chosen artistic response and hands in the artistic product created

Each student in a group is expected to take the lead on each of the five roles by the end of the semester. Four of the five responses (literary, critical, intertextual, and artistic) are written up before class and turned in to the group facilitator on the day of the discussion. When students take on the group facilitator/personal response role, however, they provided their response the week *after* the group met.

For the students and this instructor, one of these roles – artistic response – was particularly challenging, and it was the difficulty associated with that response role that led to the research reported on in this dissertation.

Plan of Dissertation

This first chapter provided an introduction to the study and its guiding theoretical concepts. In *Chapter Two: A Literature Review* I will examine how children, and some adult readers, respond to literature using artistic art forms, including drawing, dance, drama, and other sign system forms. In *Chapter Three: A Methodology* I will describe my work as a researcher through all stages of this study, including my approach as a teacher-researcher, my data collection, and the analysis techniques I used.

My data analysis comprises chapters four through seven. *Chapter Four, A General Introduction to Literary Response* describes the way I introduced, very early in the semester, the teacher candidates in TE 348 to the terms and definitions related to reader response theory and how the TE 348 students responded to those introductions. *Chapter Five, Artistic Response as Object* is the first of the three case-based chapters. It tells the story of what happened with artistic response in one small group of teacher candidates (Group D), including Lari, the student introduced earlier in this chapter, when we discussed Maurice Sendak's (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are*. *Chapter Six, Artistic Response as Process* focuses on Lari (and Group D) as she tries to grasp the meaning of artistic response. *Chapter Seven, Artistic Response as Social Experience* explores further the case of Lari (and Group D) -- and how artistic reactions to literature can change and expand.

The two concluding chapters point to the significance of this overall study. In *Chapter Eight: Conclusions* I will express how I saw artistic response taking shape across the data. I will describe the progression (including the struggles of both the students and myself as instructor/researcher), what I now make of the development of sense-making

around artistic response, and how I understand this development. In doing this, I will also describe how I used art history as a lens to help clarify my thoughts on the various stages of artistic response. Finally, I will reflect upon what undermines and complicates the use of that lens in my effort to describe how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response to children's and adolescent literature.

Chapter Nine: Implications will revisit and clarify the differences between post-reading "activities" and artistic response. It will also explain how the findings in this study are relevant to TE 348 students and instructors, elementary teachers, and teacher educators. I will close this chapter by discussing possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

A Literature Review

Introduction: Expanding Upon the Problematic Nature of Artistic Response

In our work with preservice teachers, members of the Children's Literature Team were often dismayed at the enthusiasm with which these teachers in training embraced "craft" activities that seemed only loosely—or not at all—linked to the literature they sought to understand (Apol, Rop, & Harris, 2001). We wanted to encourage preservice teachers to develop ways of evaluating what they saw as the relationship between the artistic response activities they designed and the text they had read. Ultimately, the Team wanted to help these future teachers discover ways to direct their attention "toward" rather than "away from" texts so that artistic responses to books could enrich their experiences with literature *as literature* (Apol, Knezek, LaRose, & Crisp, 2005).

Although TE 348 instructors and other members of the Team designed the course assignments together and met regularly to talk about ways to understand and research teaching practice, we found that, even after several semesters, we were still grappling with what was meant by "artistic response" to literature and with how Team members recognized artistic response in students' work. Sometimes the "art object" or "product" included in an artistic response seemed to clearly indicate deepened engagement with and understanding of literature; the same "product" at another time seemed mechanical and superfluous to the literature or to any thoughtful literature response. Instructor discussions often focused on the ways students described their activities (through papers and small group conversations), as we asked each other persistent questions about what

we were doing and not doing – accomplishing and not accomplishing -- with artistic response (Apol et al., 2005).

Those questions -- about craft versus art, responses that “faced the text” compared with responses that “looked away from the text,” process versus product, intention, engagement, and the search for a common language – led to my desire to explore how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response in my TE 348 class, and what role they and I played in facilitating that understanding. In order to carry out this inquiry in an informed manner, however, I first needed to investigate how other scholars had studied artistic response to literature and what they had found as a result of their efforts. What I learned from my research into the literature base comprises the bulk of this chapter. Before I report my findings, however, I must first discuss why, even though it was so problematic, the Children’s Literature Team chose to keep artistic response as a part of the curriculum in TE 348.

Reasons for Including Artistic Response

Many elementary classrooms now include literature circles and book clubs as a regular part of their literacy instruction. Grossman (Grossman, 1991a, 1991b) and Wedman, Smith, and Jared (1994) have shown that asking teacher candidates to participate in a particular pedagogical strategy and then asking them to analyze the activity from an instructional perspective is a more effective means of facilitating candidate learning than direct instruction. Based on this finding, the Team created experiences, including discussion groups, in which preservice teachers would participate in various kinds of literature responses—including artistic response—in order to better

understand, critically analyze, and later design such experiences for their own students (Apol et al., 2005).

Along with learning how to implement literacy teaching strategies, preservice teachers must also become aware of national and state standards for English Language Arts and ways in which those standards might be addressed as part of their practice. The current national standards (NCTE, 1999) state that there are five major areas that must be included in literacy teaching and learning: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and visually representing. While the book discussion groups in TE 348 address all five of these areas, visual representation is the one area that would be left out if artistic response were not included in the TE 348 curriculum. As with the national standards, most states also require work in the area of visual representation within their English Language Arts programs. The *Michigan English Language Arts Grade Level Expectations* (Education, 2006), for example, require students to “respond to individual and multiple texts by finding evidence, discussing, *illustrating* [italics added], and/or writing to reflect, make connections, take a position, and/or show understanding” (p. 5). The artistic response role gives teacher candidates an opportunity to represent their understanding of text in a visual way and to meet the standards by engaging their own students in creating and interpreting through visual representations. It must be noted, however, that artistic response is not limited to visual representations, so respondents who choose to sing, dance, or sculpt, for example, would not meet visual representation standards.

Until recently there have not been many studies that have examined students and teachers working through their thoughts and questions concerning literature using artistic forms. Some scholars have conjectured this might be because teachers and theorists have

tended to focus on speech and writing as the tools people are most likely to use to make sense of, participate in, and negotiate the world around them – especially within the context of schools (Rascon-Briones, 1997; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994a, 1994b; Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky (1987), for example, is well known for focusing on speech as the primary tool people use to create meaning, and Emig (1977) claimed that writing is a unique mode of knowing with an inherent capacity for promoting learning. Others, however, have argued against the privileged status of speech and writing in education and have instead advocated acceptance of broader means through which students mediate thought or activity within school settings (Gardner, 1983a, 1983b; Wilhelm, 1995).

In summary, the Children’s Literature Team decided to keep artistic response as part of the curriculum because it gave teacher candidates the chance to experience learning with a strategy they might one day use in their own classrooms, and it provided them with a possible way to address the visual representation expectations of national and state standards. More important, however, is the fact that, if the Team had discontinued artistic response as an appropriate and acceptable mode of responding to text, we would be concentrating on writing and speaking, while failing to consider “the *diversity* [italics added] of mediational means available to human beings” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 11). In doing so the Team would favor those preservice teachers most capable of responding to literature in written and verbal ways and would miss opportunities for greater understanding of that literature from preservice teachers who respond best through art.

The Review

Background

The past two decades have seen an increase in the number of studies written that describe students using artistic forms as a part of their literacy development (Rascon-Briones, 1997). While it is likely that many teachers may view art as a subject matter area separate from literacy and may not feel qualified to include art because of their own inexperience teaching and learning with artistic forms, an increased number of studies linking literature and artistic response show that more researchers and teachers are considering this link to be a potentially powerful way for students to explore and share texts. This chapter contains a review of the literature explicating the ways artistic response has been researched in the recent past as guided by the following questions:

1. What forms of art were used in the studies?
2. Who were the participants?
3. What were the findings?

Along with these guiding questions, I made a decision to limit the articles and books reported here to those that contained references to artistic response in connection with literature. While some very interesting and provocative studies have examined the ways people of all ages respond to music, nature, mathematics, and science through art, this dissertation is specifically focused on art as a response to literature.

The Literature

Artistic response in elementary school.

The majority of literature that focuses on artistic response in elementary schools featured students producing visual art forms. Often these studies looked at students who either could not write or were just beginning to write. Berghoff's (1994) study, *Multiple Dimensions Of Literacy: A Semiotic Case Study Of A First-Grade Nonreader*, analyzed a male first grader, David, who was not reading or writing within the normal range of other children. The author described the time David spent at reflection centers where he did not engage in standard written language practices. Instead, he often created three-dimensional artifacts that demonstrated connections he had to prior experiences, including the stories he had heard. David was not able to retell or engage with predictable texts, but through dramatic reenactments and the creation of his art pieces David's skills improved. The author also noted that David engaged in sign system forms other than traditional written and spoken language in many other literacy events throughout his first grade year, suggesting that literacy is more complex than acknowledged in schools and that the incorporation of non-traditional sign systems into the curriculum might allow for a more complex view of literacy and what it means to know and participate in the world.

In another description of first graders who used the visual arts in response to literature, Harste, Short, and Burke (1988) found that the children created dramas, dioramas, murals, and other art work in response to fairy tales. These children read, listened to, and discussed the fairy tales during a one-month period. Based on their observations, the authors concluded that language learning was a multimodal event.

Along with using the visual arts (drawing, painting), the authors of this study also saw first graders gesture, act out, and use movement when requested to “write.” Art forms arose spontaneously during the literacy events. The authors noted that the children constructed meanings by engaging in dialogue, created and shared art work with others, reflected upon their meaning-making, and, by doing so, saw learning as an on-going process.

Hubbard’s (1989) ethnography, *Authors Of Pictures, Draughtsmen Of Words*, also addressed first graders’ usage of visual and verbal sign systems in the process of reading and writing. The author analyzed literacy acquisition strategies that children used as they created meaning through art objects. Hubbard concluded that the children used both visual forms and words to communicate their inner thoughts. She found that not only were those inner thoughts tempered by the task at hand and the cognitive bias of the child, but also that the role of the teacher (including her values), literacy behaviors, and the classroom environment significantly influenced the literacy behaviors of the children. Hubbard’s study is one the few that addresses how the role of the teacher and the classroom environment impacted children’s artistic responses to literature.

Like Hubbard (1989), Rascon-Briones (1997) sought to understand how teachers structured and influenced artistic response events. In her dissertation, *Artistic Responses From A Semiotic Perspective*, she examined how children in multiaged classrooms (grades three-five) used artistic forms to work through their ideas, questions, and thoughts about literature they had read. She found that teachers controlled and narrowed children’s artistic responses to literature by using directives, and that the teachers’ ways of talking about literacy events were adopted into the speech behaviors of children. She

also noted that, as children worked with artistic forms, form and thought engaged each other and children participated in reflective and generative behaviors. Artistic responses in this study involved music, painting, drawing, sculpture, and song.

In Ernst's (1994) book, *Picturing Learning: Artists and Writers in the Classroom*, the focus was solely on elementary children who used literature, writing, and drawing in an artists' workshop. As a part of the workshop, children learned about and created art by examining the work of artists and of their peers. Ernst describes how published picture books became the inspiration for the children to create their own pictures, while their conversations brought connections to their reading, writing, and picture-making.

In their book, *New Entries, Learning by Writing and Drawing*, Hubbard and Ernst (1996) extended upon Ernst's (1994) earlier work when they invited other authors to share their classroom experiences involving art forms, reading, and writing. These contributing authors proposed that drawing and image making should be seen as tools for exploring literature and the world, and their investigations showed that the potential of literacy as communication and expression was broadened when art forms were connected to literature experiences. Children of various ages were able to expand upon their ideas and generate new meaning as a result of thinking about literature, talking about ideas, and interacting with artistic forms.

In case studies written by these different authors, children were involved in art, reading, and writing and the ways that these art forms worked together to expand the children's understanding of the topics was studied. Fountas and Olsen (R. Hubbard & Ernst, 1996), for example, gave an account of a fourth grade classroom where children explored topics by reading, talking, writing, painting, drawing, dancing, predicting, and

hypothesizing. The authors found that children were able to translate detailed ideas from a visual form to a verbal product and vice versa. As a result, the children's responses to literature were broadened.

In the same text Ernst portrayed second graders during an artists' workshop using art and literature. The children read to get artistic ideas and responded to literature through pictures and words. Ernst discovered that reading literature can enable children to develop images in their minds that in turn influence their artistic creations.

Most of the studies described thus far have captured work done in classrooms which included practicing teachers. In her study, *"Wax On/Wax Off": Helping Preservice Teachers "Read" Themselves, Children, And Literature*, Wolf (2001) explored strategies teacher educators can use to help preservice teachers open themselves emotionally and intellectually to diverse students. She tells about a preservice teacher who encouraged a fourth grade bilingual child to sketch responses to texts written in both Spanish and English. Wolf wrote that, "The combinations of using bilingual books and literary response through the visual arts continued throughout Crystal's remaining sessions with Elisa. Ultimately, Crystal felt that bilingual books combined with opportunities for the visual expression gave Elisa a stronger voice" (p. 210). Though this was just one piece of her larger study, Wolf argued that this case provided a glimpse into the potential of developing visual response to literature.

Artistic response in middle school.

While much of the research examining artistic response to literature focused on children in elementary school, there are several investigations that have taken place in middle school settings. In a year long study of suburban middle school seventh graders,

Whitin (1996a) investigated how children used visual representations in the form of pie graphs to generate and represent interpretations of literature. By employing students as co-investigators, Whitin found that pie charts were used by several of the students to signify ideas such as exploring the feelings of the characters and empathizing with those characters. The students used colors within the pie charts to represent feelings and character traits. The inquiry examined the ways the researcher and the children talked about the pie charts; findings indicated that examination and discussion of the charts generated new insights into the literature. The author concluded that discussions based on interpretive differences of how pie graphs were used provided opportunities for critical thinking and reflection, along with chances for the students to establish links between the literature and their graphs.

In her book, *Sketching Minds, Stretching Stories*, Whitin (1996b) continued to follow the work of seventh graders who responded artistically to literature. In this study students used sketches and/or response journals to reflect on their readings. They participated in small groups in which they prepared collaborative projects (created by using the communication form of their choice) and produced reaction papers (in either essay, sketch, or commentary form) that indicated their individual insights. Whitin's findings suggested that when students explained their sketches to their instructor or peers, the sketches helped the students reconsider the story in new ways. Whole class reflections on the art work led to further mental revisions of the students' sketches. The sketches were not viewed as final products but instead as ways to enhance students' meaning-making experiences.

In his text, *You Gotta Be the Book*, Wilhelm (1997) focused on both the visual arts (including illustrations of impressions of texts, actual texts, picture mapping and collages) and dramatic arts to engage eighth grade “submissive readers” who expected to read meaning passively from texts. Through the use of story-related drama and various forms of visual art, the “submissive” readers began, for the first time, to exert control over the strategies and processes of meaning-construction with text. By asking students to respond to literature through art, Wilhelm helped them experience the stories and “see the various ways in which one text could be evoked and the various possibilities that it held to be read in different and potentially richer ways” (p. 137).

In their study of twelve-year-old middle school students who read and discussed *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993), Whitelaw and Wolf (2001) analyzed how the visual arts (including collage, drawing, and graphing) served to strengthen students’ capacities to “see beyond,” to consider alternatives to their own lives, and to view both text and life in new and different ways (p. 58). The authors focused on how students interpreted their own artwork as well as the artwork of other students in the class. The authors noted students followed through three distinct processes of reader response through the visual arts:

1. envisioning
2. composing
3. interpreting

While the middle school students in this study did engage in these three processes, the authors noted that they did not always do so in a linear fashion, but tended, instead, to cycle back and forth between these processes. Ultimately the inclusion of these processes

and this cycling motion resulted in powerful discussion and a depth of literary response the students had not previously revealed. One of the goals of this study was for the authors to find a way to slow the students down in their reading so they would be more reflective and thorough. By having the students create and discuss art in response to literature the authors accomplished this objective.

Artistic response in high school.

Like Whitelaw and Wolf (2001), Smagorinsky and Coppock (1994c) also had a process orientation in mind when they focused on the thoughts two high school-aged girls went through when they responded to literature through their own choreographed dance. By using stimulated recall to elicit a retrospective account of the central relationship between two characters in a short story, the authors explored how the dance form acted as a mediational tool that enabled the students to create meaning. The authors also noted how social context, including the communication genres of the classroom, their own interaction, the teacher's intervention, and the stimulated recall interview itself, influenced the manner in which the dance was used to create meaning.

The findings revealed that there were three thought processes central to the girls' descriptions of working through their choreographed dance:

1. They used the dance form to work through the empathy they felt for the characters.
2. They represented the characters' relationship through spatial images and configurations.
3. They used dance as a psychological tool to both represent and mediate their thinking about the story.

In another similar study, Smagorinsky and Coppock (1993; 1994a) set out to investigate the potential of nontraditional sign systems for enabling students to construct meaning in school settings. They devised a case study of a student who represented his response to a short story by drawing a picture. In doing so, they found that the subject of their study, a sixteen year old white male who had a hearing deficit and had experienced many failures in school, was able to both represent and develop his construction of meaning in response to a story by drawing a picture. In summarizing their findings, they noted:

1. The sixteen year old drew on his personal experiences to empathize with one of the characters.
2. He represented action symbolically.
3. He created an intertextual link between his creation and a form he had seen earlier.
4. He produced a drawing that acted as a mediational tool that both shaped and was shaped by his thinking. (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1993, 1994a)

Siegel (1995) examined secondary students supporting their interpretations of articles related to mathematical issues by reading, talking, and drawing. Working in pairs, the students first read, then discussed the articles. They next produced a sketch of their combined ideas, thereby translating their understandings of the story into another sign system. The author found that the dialogue students engaged in around the creation of the sketches sometimes helped them to further develop and generate ideas about their interpretations of the articles. Siegel's findings suggested that the images students

created used metaphors and contained cultural conventions, both of which extended their understandings of the texts and classroom experiences.

The use of drama was mentioned earlier in connection with literature response activities with middle school-aged learners. Smagorinsky and Coppock (1995), however, studied accounts of dramatizations in response to a short story by four high school-aged students. Rather than focusing on the linear unfolding of cognitive processes in response to literature, the researchers were interested in finding the “range of processes recalled by students” (p. 377). Thus, they again used stimulated recall techniques to elicit what the students had to say about their experiences dramatizing the short story. As a result of this study, they found the following:

1. The students’ personal experiences often connected to characters and events in the story, causing them to respond with empathy toward the characters.
2. The students made intertextual connections between the story, books read, and films previously viewed.
3. The students used symbols, such as props that represented character traits, to portray their interpretation of the story.
4. The students resolved conflicts with varying degrees of cooperation.
5. The students’ experiences involved mediational processes that produced a text that was both shaped and was shaped by their thinking.

Artistic response in higher education.

Like research done in middle school settings, Purves, Rogers, and Soter’s (1995) book, *How Porcupines Make Love III* contains support for the visual and dramatic arts in

response to literature in work done at the college level. The authors report having been intrigued with nonverbal or visual responses because they found that high numbers of their college students showed preferences for nonverbal symbolic action in response to literature. Their book outlines both pedagogical experiences and theoretical support for using the arts in response-based literature classrooms at all educational levels.

Wolf and Enciso (1994) also used drama as a medium for interpretation of a short story with participants in an inquiry session at a National Reading Conference meeting. The participants read a short story and were asked to engage in “drama conversations” in which they acted out individual and group interpretations of the characters or scenes from the story. These same participants were also asked to create sketches as a response to a character or scene in the story. Finally, they were asked to reflect and write a response based on the previous interactions. Findings indicated that participants assumed various perspectives of characters as a result of acting out drama conversations with each other, and that these conversations offered the actors an awareness of which perspectives they used to discover the actions and feelings of the characters. The authors suggested that the sketches and drama conversations afforded participants the opportunities to reflect upon private experiences with literature in a public context.

Looking Across the Literature

The review of studies here demonstrates that work done thus far on artistic response to children’s and adolescent literature has several points in common. In the majority of the pieces featuring elementary school students, various art forms and media existed and were made available to participants within specified contexts as means for them to explore and reflect upon literature. These artistic forms were seen as potential

meaning-making systems and the visual arts used included drawing, painting, sketching, collage. Some researchers who worked in elementary settings also saw music, movement, drama, and dance used in ways that helped children make meaning with texts.

Middle school settings, like those in the elementary school studies, featured the visual arts as one way in which students could respond to literature through art. While many of the same artistic forms were emphasized in both settings (e.g., sketching and drawing), middle school students were also seen using graphs and charts as artistic responses to literature. Both the visual and dramatic arts were utilized to help students become active readers who could exert control over the strategies and processes involved with making meaning with text. This movement toward more structured types of artistic response appeared as researchers at this level began to see more of a focus on a process orientation to artistic response.

Studies set at the high school level continued to have the more process-oriented perspective on artistic response. Artistic forms seen at this level included dance, drama, and drawing. Many of those conducting research at the high school level spent a good deal of time trying to ascertain the thinking behind students' responses. They found that many students created art that reflected empathy for the characters in a story and made connections between their lives and the lives of the characters. They also found that some students who responded to literature through art used that art to both represent and mediate their thinking about the story. Work done at the college level and beyond, while scarce, showed similar results.

Art was used at all grade levels in combination with other communication forms, such as speaking and writing, which enabled learners to expand and develop their ideas in

creative ways. The few studies that included a focus on teachers found that teachers who structured learning environments so that those environments included art as a response form made it possible for their students to explore the ideas of others and to understand that there can be many perspectives on any given piece of literature. In these limited number of studies it was determined that teachers and curriculum design play a large role in the ways in which students respond to texts through art.

While several of the pieces reported here found the role of the teacher to be important in providing environments that supported explorations and inquiries through artistic forms, very few gave any indication as to how either teachers or students developed understanding of artistic response. Neither did many of these studies indicate factors that might influence the evolution of that understanding. There were little data reported that demonstrated how the actions of teachers and students were interpreted by those attempting to create and explain an artistic response.

Contributions

With a richly described account of a teacher candidate, her peers, and her instructor enacting artistic response, this dissertation makes several key contributions to educational research, with implications for classroom practice. First, it highlights how a group of preservice teachers and their instructor responded to children's literature texts and to each other as they cultivated an understanding for how art can help make meaning with texts. Utilizing the voices and ideas of the preservice teachers themselves, I consider how they learned to use art to work through their questions, negotiate meanings, construct new understandings, and take action to make their learning public. Drawing upon transcriptions of their discussion group conversations about artistic response and

their artistic response papers, I also explore how they made sense of their experiences during the semester. These findings can serve to inform teacher educators about the ways preservice teachers view art as a mediational means for understanding text.

This dissertation also contributes insights into how an experienced instructor grapples with the challenges of defining, planning for, and enacting an artistic response approach to literature. Throughout the dissertation I weave analyses of written and spoken interactions between the teacher candidates and myself. This provides readers with a window into an unexplored area and helps me surface key misunderstandings, confusions, and questions. What exactly is artistic response? How is it different from an activity that is loosely tied to the text? How do we know it when we see or hear it? What are some of the challenges in supporting students as they learn to create artistic responses? What are some of the factors that contribute to the students' learning about artistic response? What is the instructor's role in all of this? This study thoughtfully considers these questions by offering nuanced interpretations of what happened with preservice teachers in one children's literature classroom.

Finally, this study investigates how the social nature of the classroom environment impacts teacher candidates' understanding of artistic response. This work has the capability of initiating dialogue at all grade levels about what it means to engage in artistic response that is educative and meaningful within classroom settings. It also has the potential to invite comments about the larger question of the place of art in schools and what might be lost when art no longer has a valued place in the curriculum. Ultimately, my study will attempt to examine not only the social contexts in which

artistic response was used to create meaning, but also to detail how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response in those contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods of Operation

Introduction

The primary goal of this dissertation is to explore how preservice teachers develop an understanding of artistic response to children's and adolescent literature. In order to investigate that developing understanding, the study closely examines the ways teacher candidates in one section of a children's literature course created artistic responses, wrote about them, and then discussed them with their peers and instructor. In this chapter I describe the methodology used to collect and analyze the research data. The first part of this chapter provides a more thorough description of the setting in which the study took place, including the university, the classroom, and the course. In the second section I detail the participants and their roles, the tradition of teacher research and how it informs this work, and various aspects of the "telling case" (Mitchell, 1983, 1984) and how it is used to explicate the data in chapters four through seven.. In the third portion of the chapter, I delineate the data sets and how I used the guiding principles of grounded theory to analyze the data.

Setting

The work of this dissertation has been done in the qualitative tradition, where data are made up of "well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable contexts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While the data used in this study did not necessarily originate in only one particular setting, the majority of it was gathered within the context of one university classroom. That is the setting that will be described here.

The University

The educational institution featured in this study is a large public university in a Midwestern suburban community with a student body of approximately 33,000 undergraduate students. The College of Education has about 2,300 students in its teacher preparation program. This program, which includes a fifth-year internship, requires undergraduates to apply during their sophomore year for junior status admittance. Students are primarily from the Midwest, though there are some from other regions throughout the United States. There is also a large international student population, but most of those students enroll in graduate programs rather than undergraduate teacher preparation programs.

The Classroom

Teacher candidates enrolled in the TE 348 class featured in this research met on campus once a week for class sessions that lasted two hours and fifty minutes. The sessions took place in a spacious, carpeted, first floor classroom with three interior walls and one wall of windows. The room contained twelve large mobile tables that were generally pushed together into six groupings of two tables each, with an average of four to five students sitting at each grouping. Normally there were no designated seating arrangements, but, on the days discussion groups met, students moved locations mid-way through the class session to meet with the rest of their group members at an assigned table grouping. The classroom contained a large chalkboard which was rarely used. It also featured a technology cart which contained a computer, VCR, DVD player, wireless Internet access, along with a sound system. A projector and screen were also permanently affixed in the classroom, as was an overhead projector. The overall

atmosphere was pleasant and there was room to move freely. However, noise levels were sometimes problematic when all discussion groups were meeting at the same time.

The Course

TE 348 – *Reading and Responding to Children's Literature* -- is a teacher preparation class. It is an open enrollment course, but since it is required for elementary education majors, juniors and seniors who have been admitted to the education program comprise the majority of the course participants. The sections offered per semester are limited and, historically, the number of students who need to take the class exceeds the available openings. Increasingly, however, sophomores intending to apply for admittance into the education program are being enrolled in TE 348 and occasionally there are freshmen who appear on the class rosters. On even rarer occasions non-traditional students are registered, including those who have already received degrees and those who are considering a late change to a major in education.

The instructors of the course are typically graduate students enrolled in a doctoral program at the university where this study is set. Though experience levels vary, course instructors generally have taken children's literature courses as a part of their doctoral program, taught at both the elementary and university levels, and been members of the Children's Literature Team for at least one semester before they teach TE348.

Course goals.

TE 348 focuses on literary understanding and genres in reading and teaching children's literature. Students discuss critical and theoretical perspectives in evaluating children's literature. They also concentrate on the literary, social, and pedagogical issues

encountered in the study of children's literature. The course readings, activities and projects are designed to provide them with opportunities to:

- read widely and identify, appreciate, and evaluate genre elements – including picture books, folklore, fantasy and science fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, biography, and poetry
- make meaning with children's literature by participating in book discussion groups -- so that they will be capable of not only selecting quality materials but also looking at, evaluating, and talking about children's literature with their future students
- take a literary stance – to learn the differences between literary and curricular uses of children's literature

Course readings.

TE 348 is primarily a discussion-based course and was planned to encourage dialogue and an exchange of views. This sharing process necessitates that teacher candidates read, purchase, and/or bring in a variety of books that they use to demonstrate and support their developing knowledge. At the time of the study they were required to purchase both course text and discussion literature (which could be found at local college bookstores), along with eight children's and adolescent books that comprised a text set.

The course text was *Literature and the Child* (Galda & Cullinan, 2002), selected by CLT members because it covered the genres of children's literature (e.g., picture books, folklore, etc.) in a thorough manner, presenting evaluation criteria with each one. It was illustrated with numerous plates taken directly from children's books. Though

expensive, the Team felt its extensive booklists would provide the teacher candidates many years of use as an ongoing resource.

Throughout the course students were to be participating in discussion groups. Similar to the literature discussion circles found in many elementary classrooms, these groups discussed the same four books (*Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), *City of Ember* (DuPrau, 2003)), along with one book each individual discussion group selected.

Selecting texts is just one of many factors that instructors must reflect on when implementing literature discussion groups in a classroom setting. While the Team members agreed that all preservice teachers in TE 348 would likely be able to read well enough to comprehend most children's and adolescent literature, the team did not randomly select titles, but specifically chose the books that were assigned, along with the order in which they were to be read. I will provide a brief rationale for each of the pieces of literature picked for in-class discussion, but the first three books are featured again in chapters five through seven and plot summaries are available for them in those chapters.

The books selected for TE 348 were chosen based on four factors: (1) overall excellence of the text, based upon its textual and genre characteristics, the reputation of the authors and illustrators, and the quality of any illustrations; (2) genre variability (the team tried to make certain that genres like science fiction and fantasy, often underrepresented in classrooms, were very visible); (3) representations of diversity (Children's Literature Team members wanted to be sure that the texts reflected accurate and diverse perspectives); gender of the main character (there needed to be a relatively equal mix of male and female protagonists); and (4) complexity (Team members wanted

books that would challenge our preservice teachers as they advanced in their knowledge of reading and responding to children's and adolescent literature).

Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963), was chosen to be the first book discussed because it is deceptively simple. Though it has minimal text, the messages to be found are quite profound; likewise, the illustrations are layered with meaning. The book presented a great discussion opportunity for those newly invested in children's and adolescent literature.

Voices in the Park (Browne, 1998), a fantasy like *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), is also a picture book. The illustrations and text are laden with imagery and it is filled with social commentary. By the time the teacher candidates read *Voices in the Park* they are ready to encounter a book that allows them to test out the critical perspective, which is new to many of them.

Esperanza Rising (Ryan, 2000) is a novel-length piece of historical fiction that, like *Voices in the Park*, contains a great deal of social commentary. It is also unique in that it presents a little-known piece of American history and does so through characters dealing with prejudice, gender issues, and familial relationships.

City of Ember (DuPrau, 2003) was selected for only one semester. It was chosen to replace the science fiction novel, *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993), when that book was followed by a sequel that made it less appropriate for discussion. While *City of Ember* seemed a logical replacement at the time, student conversations surrounding the book were quite bland and it did not have the complexity *The Giver* had offered previous classes. Therefore, the book was not included in this study and it was dropped from the TE 348 book list the following summer.

Participants

Because my inquiry was conducted within the context of a larger study of artistic response in TE 348, there were certain guidelines that impacted the collection and analysis of data. Permission for participation in the larger study, for example, was required from teacher candidates in every section of TE 348. Members of the Children's Literature Team and the university research board wanted to be certain that all students and instructors involved were protected in as many ways as possible from any potentially negative consequences that might be associated with the study.

One such possible negative consequence was that the grades of students enrolled in the class, or the ways instructors viewed those students, might be impacted in some way by the decision of whether or not to participate. Because all of the TE 348 instructors were invested in the study as both teachers and researchers, measures were taken to make certain that we as instructors did not know which students had agreed to be part of the study, and that we as instructors would not be the ones requesting that students participate in the investigations, a situation which might have caused students to feel undue pressure to participate.

In order to guard against the possible ramifications of the TE 348 instructors being seen as recruiters for the study or having knowledge of who had agreed to participate in the study, the Children's Literature Team created letters of consent that explained the study in detail and provided a way for students to sign up if they wished to participate. Before any data was gathered, these letters were brought to sections of the course and team members (who were not teaching the sections of the course being addressed) introduced the study, read the permission letters aloud, explained why

students were being asked to agree to be part of the study, and answered any questions. After listening to the Team members, the students were given time to read through the permission letter -- a copy of which each student had received beforehand -- and indicate whether or not they wanted to participate. The non-teaching members of the Team then had the students place the letters into sealed envelopes. These envelopes were kept locked in a file cabinet until the end of the semester when courses were completed and grades had been submitted; at that time the instructors were allowed to view which students had agreed to participate in the study and which had not.

The Participant Instructor: Teacher and Researcher

As the instructor of the TE 348 section featured in this study and as a member of the Children's Literature Team, I was aware of all aspects of the larger artistic response study and agreed to participate fully. During the semester in which the data were gathered, I was an advanced doctoral student in the university's education program, concentrating on children's literature, early literacy, and preservice teacher education. Before I enrolled in the doctoral program, I had been an early elementary school teacher in the Southwestern part of the United States for seven years. As part of my graduate program, I taught several literacy methods courses that were offered to both undergraduates and teacher interns. I joined the Team in the spring of 2003 and had taught eight sections of TE 348 before the spring of 2005. I am a female of European American descent and at the time of the study I was 40 years old.

Teacher research.

I chose to conduct this qualitative study within the tradition of teacher research, which Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) define as "a systematic and intentional inquiry

carried out by teachers” (p. 3). The gathering and recording of information, the documentation of experiences inside and outside the classroom, and the creation of written records are all done within the “systematic” ways of this tradition. Teacher research is “intentional” in that it typically results from questions generated by teachers trying to make sense of their classroom experience in disciplined ways. It is not spontaneous or rash in nature, but is, instead, the planned, reflective, and analytical study of questions that matter in the lives of teachers, such as those that rise out of problems of practice or the curious minds of learners. This study follows in the teacher research tradition in several ways. It evolved out of a recurring problem of practice; the intent of the study and its guiding question were established ahead of time; and, at the appropriate time, data were gathered in systematic ways.

Though teacher research is recognized by many scholars as valid so long as the tenets of systematic and intentional study are maintained, there have been several major criticisms leveled against teachers researching their own practice. In order to strengthen the validity of the teacher research I have done for this dissertation, I will address several of those criticisms here, including concerns about whether or not teachers can properly conduct research, can conduct research and still successfully attend to the work of teaching, and can conduct research that can be generalized to populations outside of their own classrooms (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001).

I agree that teachers need training in order to carry on research and approached my study with scholarly rigor. I had been trained in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, so I knew when I conducted this research that I would need to triangulate my data. I did so by collecting three different data sets and, during my data analysis,

constantly contrasted and compared what those data sets indicated. When I noted patterns appearing in one data set, I looked to the others to see if the findings were consistent across sources. If they were not, I asked questions about why this disruption in patterns might be occurring, made notes, and checked and rechecked my findings. I asked other scholars familiar with my study for input on the patterns I was seeing and the associated codes I was creating (the code creation process is detailed later in the *Analysis* section of this chapter). I also asked another doctoral student, who taught TE 348 during the same semester I did, to code clean copies of all of the artistic response papers I had already coded, with both of us using the codes I had created. In doing so I established an inter-rater reliability of 94%, and we were able to come to an agreement when we discussed our slight differences of opinion.

The very nature of my role as instructor of the course meant that I would be present and involved during most of what occurred throughout the gathering of this study's data. Though I did not feel that my teaching was being negatively impacted by the addition of my research perspective, I did have concerns that, despite the regulations put into place by the Team to guarantee participation anonymity to students, my role as teacher would cause students to feel undue pressure to take part in the study. The unequal authority distribution between teachers and students has always been a concern of mine, and I try to be conscious at all times that it contributes to the nature of my relationship with my students (Tom, 1984). Even in the most democratic of classrooms teachers have the final say over parameters for acceptable behavior and over grades, activities, and schedules. I recognized that my role as teacher/researcher undoubtedly impacted what students and I said, did, created, and wrote about in connection with

artistic response. That is why I asked about my own role and its impact on the preservice teachers' artistic responses in one of my research questions. It is also the reason why I triangulated my data and established inter-rater reliability for the coding done on artistic response papers. I made every effort to conduct the class sessions as I would have whether the tape recorders, or any other research constructs, had been present or not, but the triangulation of data was my best check for the possibility of undue instructor influence in interpreting data.

Instead of feeling that my teaching was negatively affected by the study, I felt quite the opposite. Like Massey and Duffy (2003/2004), I found teacher research to have many positive influences for both me – as the TE 348 teacher -- and for my students. As Massey and Duffy reported:

These influences include helping teachers to: (a) learn about research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Lampert, 2000; Shulman & Brandt, 1992), (b) improve instruction (Henson, 1996); (c) connect with other teachers and colleagues (Burnaford, FischerJ., & Hobson, 1996; R. S. Hubbard & Power, 1993), (d) bring about change in classrooms, schools, and educators' thinking (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Grisham, 2000), and (e) gain new understandings of students (R. S. Hubbard & Power, 1993). (Massey & Duffy, 2003/2004, p. 1019)

Each day I was involved in this study I found myself becoming more reflective as a practitioner, asking questions of my students, myself, and my practice. The collaborative work I did with my students and colleagues in the Children's Literature Team for this research challenged me to change dramatically the way I was thinking about artistic response. I quickly came to realize that I did not know as much about it as I thought and

that I wasn't even certain of a clear definition for artistic response. I found myself eager to learn, right along with the teacher candidates, what artistic response really was. As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) noted, self-study became research for me when it achieved the balance between the way in which private experience can provide insight and solution for public issues and troubles and the way in which public theory can provide insight and solution for private trial ..." (p. 15)

When conducting my research I felt empowered by the notion that I was addressing a problem that my colleagues and I had experienced in our teaching practice. I felt that if I could describe how my students came to understand artistic response and how it was different from a craft-type activity that had little to do with the text, then I could provide enough information to other educators who teach children's and adolescent literature (including TE 348 instructors, elementary educators, and teacher educators) so that they might better understand what artistic response can be, why it is important, and how it can increase engagement and expand thinking in connection with literature. At the same time, I recognized that, because it had been in a qualitative, teacher research tradition, my study would automatically need to address issues of generalizability. In order to discuss this topic more fully, however, I must first clarify who were the student participants in TE 348.

The Student Participants and the Establishment of a Telling Case

The student participants included in this dissertation were undergraduates enrolled in one of my sessions of TE 348 during the spring of 2005. There were twenty-seven students enrolled in the class. After I had turned in grades and was allowed to open the envelope containing permission letters, I found that twenty-two of the twenty-seven

students in my class agreed to participate fully in the study, granting access to all of their audio-taped comments, art objects, and artistic response papers. Three other students granted permission for analysis of their written work, but did not want their audio-taped comments used. As a result, all of their comments were deleted from the transcriptions of large and small group discussions. Two students did not agree to participate in the study at all, so copies of their written work were destroyed and their comments were also removed from the audio tape transcriptions. Thus, twenty-five out of the twenty-seven students in the class agreed to be featured in the study at some level.

Of the twenty-five teacher candidates who agreed to participate in the study there were two freshman, ten sophomores, six juniors, and seven seniors; there were twenty-two females and three males. The majority was European American, but there were also a small number of African American and Asian American students. Most of the students were between the ages of 19 and 23, but there were also several who were 24 to 27 years old. Eighteen participants were education majors, three were English majors seeking teacher certification, and four were enrolled in other programs (either hoping to transfer into education or thinking about making that move).

While several students will be featured in this dissertation, and the coursework and discussion contributions of all who agreed to participate have been considered, one student will be the focus of the data analysis chapters. At the time data were gathered, Lari, a European American female, was twenty-six years old. She was a non-traditional undergraduate student who worked at least twenty hours a week and did not live on campus. She had received training of various kinds in the medical field but had come to

the university to obtain a bachelor's degree in education and was a sophomore applying for admission into the program.

I chose to concentrate on Lari for several reasons. She was an animated discussant, quite verbal, and interacted with me several times over the course of the semester about her confusions concerning artistic response. Her strong desire to find out what she was "supposed to do" for this response, and her conviction that she didn't have the skills necessary to create an acceptable art object were typical reactions shared by her TE 348 classmates. Lari's willingness to verbalize her confusions and concerns to me, however, made her unique. I watched with particular interest how Lari's conceptualization of artistic response developed as I analyzed the data gathered over the course of the semester. It wasn't until after data analysis had been completed and I began to attempt to describe my findings, however, that Lari emerged as the central figure of the dissertation.

While I knew, after I had analyzed all the data, that I would share anecdotes and quotes that featured Lari's contributions, I initially pictured the structure of the analysis sections of this dissertation as unfolding from a larger picture perspective down to the more particular aspects and participation -- much like one might see in a movie. I thought I would begin by establishing a "wide-angle" shot, looking at the class as a whole, then "pan the room" so that readers could see what had happened with artistic response in three discussion groups and, finally, "zoom in" on Lari. As I described the factors that influenced students' understanding of artistic response, however, I kept finding that Lari played a large role in every "scene." Other students from the class, including members of Lari's discussion group, Group D, also played important roles in

the data analysis chapters. However, as I was writing about them I found that I most often portrayed their roles within the context of their interactions with Lari.

I had already developed cases of the other groups I originally intended to foreground in the “panning” scene of my data analysis chapters when I began to realize that the focus of my description might need to be primarily on Lari. I was deeply concerned, however, that by describing Lari’s development and “dropping” the other cases, I would be portraying Lari as representative of all members of her class, or worse, as representative of all preservice teachers who were learning about artistic response. Based on my analyses, I knew that her experiences did *not* directly map onto those of her classmates. At the same time, however, I found that, by describing what I had observed about Lari’s understanding of artistic response (including descriptions of the context and other people with whom she interacted), I could most clearly portray the factors that I had found contributed more widely to the broader set of preservice teachers’ understandings of artistic response in TE 348.

The telling case.

Unsettled by my concerns over making Lari’s the only case in this dissertation, I remembered having read Wolf’s (2001) article, *Wax on/Wax Off: Helping Preservice Teachers “Read” Themselves, Children, and Literature*, in which the author details how she explored one preservice teacher’s evolving understandings of diversity and literary interpretation through a “telling case.” Wolf cited Putney, Green, Dixon, Durdin and Yeager (2000) as having described a telling case as, “not a representative case, but one that allows in-depth exploration of theoretical issues not previously visible” (p. 87). Because I had found that writing about what I had learned from my data analysis meant

writing about *Lari*, it made sense to me that a detailed description of her changing understandings of artistic response, and the factors that influenced her understandings, could surface the “theoretical issues not previously visible” concerning how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response.

The concept of the telling case can be traced to the work of Mitchell (1984), who argues that case studies in general can be rigorous, reliable, and generalizable, but that they do not have to be representational. In a chapter he wrote outlining the various forms of case studies and situational analyses, Mitchell (1983) said,

The case study, because of the observer’s intimate knowledge of the connections linking the complex set of circumstances surrounding the events in the case and because of the observer’s knowledge of the linkages among the events in the case, provides the optimum conditions in which the general principles may be shown to manifest themselves even when obscured by confounding side effects. (p. 206)

He also argues that there is no advantage in going to the trouble of finding a “typical” case, when there is already a theory “sufficiently well developed to enable the analyst to identify within [those] events the operation of the general principles incorporated in the theory” (p. 204).

While Mitchell (1983) saw no benefits in choosing a representative case when the theory behind the case was well defined, he saw tremendous advantages in “choosing particular sets of events” (p. 204) to explicate that theory. This type of case he later called a “telling case” (Mitchell, 1984). Initially I had not planned to use a telling case in this work, but after completing my data analysis, and developing theory from that analysis, I had found a “particular set of events” I needed to elucidate in order to describe

how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response. Lari's "telling case" provided me with a way to do that. It also offered me a means for investigating the data at a deeper level and further identifying and explicating related theory as it emerged. Thus, Lari serves as the main subject in this dissertation.

Data Sources

Qualitative research usually involves field observations and artifacts, along with reflective and interpretive work done in connection with the field work (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this dissertation, the data collected included artifacts and transcripts of audio tapes from the seven class sessions (out of fifteen in total) in which artistic response was explicitly discussed. I also kept an instructor's journal, which featured my field notes and summaries of what had happened inside and outside of class, reflections on the nature of artistic response, and any other notes I had taken about related conversations, interactions, and readings.

Data Source One: Artifacts

The first data source analyzed for this inquiry were the artifacts teacher candidates had produced in connection with the artistic response role, including the art objects they had created and the artistic response papers they had written to accompany those art objects. The assignment description for the artistic response role was detailed in Chapter One but I will again briefly describe it here. When taking on the role of artistic response, the teacher candidates were required to prepare both their art object and artistic response paper ahead of time. The art object was supposed to be something the student created that had the text at its center and promoted understanding of and conversation about that text. The teacher candidates were invited to create the art object using any medium or

form they chose, including something that required their group members to help in its creation, as long as it was not “busy work” or a craft activity that led members “away from the text.” The artistic response paper that went along with the art object was supposed to contain a rationale for the chosen artistic response activity or product. I provided students with other details concerning the art object and artistic response paper in class, and particulars on these assignment clarifications and additions can be found in Chapters Four through Seven.

Art objects were collected from “artistic response people” on the day they were discussed in class. The objects were then photographed with a digital camera, copied, or scanned so that a permanent record of them remained for analysis. Any special features or thoughts about the art objects that might not have been observable in the images or recordings were noted in the instructor’s journal. For example, one teacher candidate created an art object that featured a string with a padded ball at one end in response to the book *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000). When the string was pulled, the ball rose several inches above the base of the art object. When the string was released the ball landed in a bed of coffee grounds and made a muffled sound similar to that of a heartbeat. The sound of the heartbeat is an important symbol in *Esperanza Rising*, and the student who created this object wanted to draw attention to that sound. Because the purpose or operational qualities of the string and ball were not apparent in the digital photo I took of the art object, I also recorded notes describing it in my instructor journal so that these details would not be lost.

The artistic response papers were collected by each group facilitator on a weekly basis, along with all the other papers for that week written in connection to the response

roles. The facilitator was supposed to read the papers and then include references to them in the report she or he created, noting details of the group's discussion. If done completely, the facilitator's report would contain references to every response role, including artistic response, and would indicate how each role was received as a part of the group discussion. Any disparities between the papers and what was discussed by the groups during class time were also to be included in the facilitator's notes. The facilitators turned all response papers over to me the week after the discussion groups had met. At that time, I read and graded each paper, including handwritten comments, and then made copies for later analysis.

It would have been helpful in the determination of factors that influenced preservice teachers' understanding of artistic response if facilitators' papers had also been collected for this study, but a decision was made at the beginning of the larger project to retain and analyze only artistic response papers. This decision was based on the knowledge that the larger study covered nearly 180 preservice teachers and that analysis of facilitator responses, along with those of artistic response papers from each student, was not feasible, given time constraints. Also, at the time data were actually being gathered I had not yet determined which teacher candidates I would focus on, so I followed the original decision and did not retain facilitator responses. I did gather from reading the facilitator papers from my own class that there was minimal discussion about artistic response or artistic response people's responses, but this perception does not negate the fact that important data was likely lost as a result of not including facilitator reports.

Data Source Two: Audio Tapes and Transcriptions

As noted earlier, audio tapes were made during seven out of the fifteen class sessions. Single tapes of whole group sessions were made on the day I introduced the concept of reader response theory and the discussion assignment, the day I returned the first response papers, and on the five days when, after having discussed literature in small groups, the students came back together for a teacher-led conversation about what had transpired in the small groups. Tapes were also recorded of the small group discussions on those same five days. Each group had a recorder placed in the center of their table, and group members were in charge of turning the tapes recorders on at the beginning and off at the end of each discussion. These small group discussions began with group members stating their names and the response roles they were assigned for that particular week, thus providing greater opportunity for accuracy in identification of participants during transcription. Because of background noise (particularly from other group discussions) and mediocre microphone quality, determining who was making comments on the tapes proved challenging. However, since I personally transcribed the majority of the tapes, I believe the voices of individual teacher candidates are correctly recognized most of the time. When I was in doubt about who had made a comment I made a note in the transcription. Comments from unknown contributors were eliminated because permission for their usage could not be obtained.

Audio tapes do not record gestures, facial expressions, body movements, or other non-verbal cues that might have provided insights beneficial to this work, so accompanying videotaped records would have been ideal. They were not possible, however, because of the size of the larger study. In order for the groups to be video

recorded properly, six video cameras would have been required in the classrooms during each discussion – with operators needed to guide each lens. Also, as stated earlier, I did not know until the summer following the study which groups I wanted to focus on, nor did I know who had agreed to participate in the study while I was gathering data. So the use of videotapes would not really have been feasible even though they could have provided additional useful information.

Data Source Three: Instructor Journal

As an elementary teacher I always carried a notebook with me to record what I noticed about teaching and learning in my classrooms. I have continued that tradition in the college setting and, on the first day of class, I tell my students that I will be jotting notes as the class progresses. Sometimes I record insightful comments students have made, sometimes I write questions that I have, and sometimes I make notes about things I need to remember to do the following week.

During the time that I spent developing this study, teaching the class, and reading, reflecting, and writing about what I was seeing and thinking in connection with the inquiry, I always had what I called an “instructor’s journal” in my hands. The journal contained many kinds of information, some of which were entered consistently and others that were not. During each of the fifteen class sessions, I collected field notes. These notes included information on course topics, a chronology of events, student observations, my thoughts about what was happening during class, who seemed on-task, who needed to be brought into discussions more often, and related comments. In some ways these field notes were no different than the ones that I take every time I teach a class. One difference, however, which was planned and apparent from the time I began

the journal, was that I made a concerted effort to record in great detail any instances related to artistic response.

After taking field notes during each class session, I wrote reflections about what had happened before, during, and after class time and my thoughts about the sessions' events. I was usually in the classroom about thirty minutes ahead of the scheduled start of class and students often spoke with me and with each other as I set up for the day. Students also tended to stay for about twenty to thirty minutes after class, sometimes needing more information about assignments or to tell me about upcoming absences, but at other times they wanted to talk more about what had been discussed in class. Because I wanted to reflect and record as soon as possible about all of these interactions, while the information was still fresh in my mind, I tried to do so within two hours after the class ended. There were some summaries, however, that were not written until the following day.

Field notes and summaries were the only truly consistent entries in my instructor's journal. Because I was keeping the journal for teaching *and* research purposes, I sometimes entered research-related descriptions of art objects – like the one described earlier that was created in response to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000). At other times I wrote notes to myself about teacher-related issues, such as remembering to bring a particular book to share with a student in class. I made a conscious decision to keep all of this information in the same place because of my belief that the socially situated nature of the classroom setting, and all that it involved, needed to be considered when I was later culling through data trying to understand what factors influenced the ways the preservice teachers in TE 348 came to understand artistic response. While the audio tapes provided

some insights into these issues – especially the types of verbal interactions that occurred during group literature discussions -- my instructor's journal was really the only other source I could later analyze for insights about the context and social interactions in connection with artistic response.

Analysis

Background: Grounded Theory

The teacher candidates' artistic response papers, the transcriptions of their discussions, and the instructor's journal were analyzed using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). One of the reasons I chose to work with grounded theory is because grounded theory is built on the premise that, as a researcher reads through and codes his or her data, theoretical concepts will emerge out of the data. This approach was particularly appealing to me because of its emergent nature. Researchers who use grounded theory generally ask questions like, "What is the situation?" and "What's going on in this data?" Because I was in a situation where I was truly mystified as to why the teacher candidates in my class, semester after semester, continued to conflate artistic response with crafts loosely tied to a book, I wanted to approach my data without preconceived theoretical notions about what I would find. I wanted to be open to ideas about this phenomenon that would emerge from my study of the data.

Coding Using The Constant Comparison Method

In the tradition of grounded theory, data (which often includes field notes and interviews) is analyzed using what is called the constant comparison method. This method involves reading one data source, then reading the next data source with the first in mind, and continuing on through all data sources. As researchers read they make notes

in the margins of their data indicating any theoretical notions that occur to them. These notes should include the names of categories or patterns that seem apparent after repeated readings and comparisons between data sources, links between those categories, or indications when a category appears to be central to the study (Glaser, 1992). While the overarching question guiding this dissertation was about how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response and what factors influenced that understanding, both of the sub-questions required that the data analysis method I used recognize developing patterns and connections. As I considered methods for data analysis, I felt the constant comparison method, with its emphasis on the search for emerging repeated categories and links, could help me identify those patterns, if any existed.

According to the constant comparison tradition, I began the analysis process by reading and re-reading the first source of data -- the artistic response papers -- several times. As I read, I compared what I noticed in the artistic response papers to my other data sources, including transcripts of the audio tapes, the instructor's journal, and the artifacts themselves, searching for repeated patterns, common themes, and connections which either the teacher candidates or I had made. I kept notes on the results of these constant comparisons and after several readings I began to code in the margins of the papers, transcripts, and journal.

Before I continue further, it should be noted that there are criticisms leveled at researchers using grounded theory, which include a lack of adherence to the method as described by its creators and a paucity of details explicating how scholars code and analyze their data (Bulger, 2003; Eaves, 2001). In an effort to address these concerns, this section of the dissertation details the grounded theory procedures used in this study,

including descriptions of the five steps used to code and analyze the transcripts of small and large group discussions, artistic response rationale papers, and the instructor's journal. These steps, adapted from the work of Chesler (1987) and developed by Bulger (2003), illustrate how methods of contextual coding and constant comparison can be described in detail.

Step 1: Highlight Key Passages In The Text

Step 2: Restate Key Phrases

The first step in the coding process was to recognize passages in the data that reflected the research questions – identifying factors influencing preservice teachers' understanding of artistic response to children's and adolescent literature (Bulger, 2003, p. 68). Each passage that addressed the research was highlighted and major ideas were restated in the margins using language as close as possible to the original language in the passage. Following the example set forth by Bulger (2003), I highlighted and restated phrases concurrently, thus conducting procedures one and two at the same time. This allowed me to return to the original text and to recheck the logic of the restatement. It also provided a means by which other researchers and reviewers could duplicate this initial data reduction technique.

One example demonstrating the utilization of these first two steps is taken from a paper that accompanied an artistic response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963):

Original Text: "For my artistic project I decided to use the descriptive words of the text to enlighten the students of the certain characteristics that the monsters

should have” (Erin, 2/8/05) was restated as “artistic project used descriptive words to enlighten students.”

A second example of a restatement of the original text comes from an artistic response paper written in connection to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000).

Original Text: “Through symbols this poster shows how Esperanza changed from a pampered, stuck-up, rich girl to an understanding young woman” (Nicole, 3/22/05) became “symbols on the poster show how Esperanza changed.”

A third example of the restated text comes from a transcription of a whole class discussion of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998).

Original Text: “Okay, here’s what I thought the book was about. I thought that with each voice the background and the environment and the colors and the symbols informed the reader of the feelings for that voice. And obviously there are repetitive symbols within it, and I think those symbols really speak loudly to issues of control and power. Like, for instance, um, for my artistic response I, I compiled like a thing of like, um, I made a little collage of symbols of power....And, um, each of the symbols represents something I think, so...a repetitive symbol that I keep finding is the uh, the hat....in Charlie’s...little world....You keep seeing the mom’s hat over and over, again....I think of the hat as a symbol of the control the mom has over him” (Jill, 3/1/05) became “artistic response displays repetitive symbols of power and control.”

In this manner, key phrases were identified in each data source.

Step 3: Create Code Clusters

After identifying and restating key phrases, I combined those phrases into conceptually similar categories. In this step I created initial code clusters – hereafter referred to as *initial clusters* -- by grouping similar phrases together and giving them titles. For example, the phrase “make the story a folksong by using the words from the story almost verbatim” was combined with the phrases “represent the book three-dimensionally by creating a sculpture” and “the collage represents the story” to form the cluster “retell/represent the story.”

According to the constant comparison tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) I read through and compared one phrase to another as I categorized like phrases. While I alone grouped and labeled these initial clusters, I did discuss some of their titles and characteristics with other members of the Children’s Literature Team. These discussions forced me to articulate my interpretations of the data and provided an informal check for the authenticity of those interpretations. Step three, including the constant comparison of the coded phrases and the discussions, resulted in the eleven initial clusters, which can be seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 -- Initial code clusters and example phrases

Initial Cluster Title	Example Phrases from the Initial Clusters
Instructor Comment	explain why you chose to represent the elements you did
Preservice Teacher Comment	I drew a similar thing because I also thought he was upset
Artistic Media	the coffee grounds are the earth itself
Text Characteristics	many characters in the story took a journey and had dreams
Text as Tool	use of adjectives to describe the monsters
Text Centered	contains a quote from a similar part in the story seen differently through the eyes of different characters

Table 3.1 – cont’d

Initial Cluster Title	Example Phrases from the Initial Clusters
Retell/Represent the Story	keep the story accurate
Document Specific Story Events	seven different literary passages symbolize a hopeful attitude
Character Experience	express abstract thinking of the character’s thoughts and feelings beyond the words in the book
Literary Response Connections	the symbolic artistic elements are provocative and explanatory of the author’s intent
Transformed Perspective	it changed the way I read the story
Deeper Understanding	interpretation of text depends on previous exposure

Step 4: Create Meta-Clusters

After coding the initial clusters, I created meta-clusters using the initial cluster categories. According to Bulger (2003) “A meta-cluster is a cluster comprised of code clusters and has a title that involves a general level of abstraction that is distinct from the context-based underlined phrases in Step One (Miles & Huberman, 1994)” (p. 70).

According to the constant comparison method, researchers should write short documents throughout the coding process. These documents often include summaries of the ideas researchers have about the codes that have emerged and, later, about how those codes link together. Called “memos” in the grounded theory tradition, these notes are tools that help researchers refine and keep track of ideas as they compare data sources and identify themes (categories) that help them figure out what is going on in their data.

In Step Four, I coded for meta-clusters by returning to the data (including discussion transcripts, artistic response papers, and field notes) and looking at passages marked as belonging to particular initial clusters. I then closely examined those clusters for commonalties and differences in order to identify themes that directly addressed the

research questions concerning how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and the factors that influence that understanding. New meta-clusters began to emerge within some of the initial clusters at this point, and other initial clusters fell away. I color coded the passages that characterized emergent themes and wrote memos detailing the creation of the meta-clusters, noting the identifying elements of the themes.

The first major theme to arise had to do with attention to text. In identifying and labeling *Attention to Text* as a meta-cluster I highlighted passages in the initial clusters where there was language that indicated whether or not the participants' comments about artistic response were associated with the text being discussed (one of the criteria established for artistic response in class discussions and in the description of the discussion assignment). This process was further explicated in *Meta-Cluster Memo One*, where, for example, I wrote:

If the teacher candidates or I were writing, creating, or discussing in response to literature in ways that took attention away from the book and onto other things (e.g., conversations about what we'd done over the weekend), then I highlighted the passage in red and coded for that with the letters *AT*. If we were responding in ways that brought our attention to the literature, I highlighted the passage in orange and I coded it with the letters *TT*. (Knezek, 6/10/05)

See Table 3.2 for examples of how *attention to text* was coded using grounded theory, along with quotes from the associated passages that exemplify the code.

Table 3.2: Codes and example quotes for the *Attention to Text* meta-cluster

Attention	Code	Example Quote
Away from text	AT	I saw Jenny at the library and she was gathering up other fantasy books. Did you find any you liked, Jenny (Alison, 3/1/05)?
Toward the text	TT	And I took, like, some of the important things throughout it, like the ones that are repeated, like, “And he sailed off through night and day and in an out of weeks, and over a year” and then, where “they roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws.” It says that in there twice, too. So I kind of took some of the important parts. (Becca, 2/8/05)

I labeled the second major theme that emerged from the initial clusters *Preservice Teacher Engagement With Discussion of Artistic Response*. Passages among the initial clusters that connected with this theme included comments that either encouraged or discouraged the discussion of the artistic response to the text. A portion of the process I followed when identifying these passages is included in this selection from *Meta-Cluster Memo Two*:

Included in this meta-cluster were passages – highlighted in lavender – that provided artistic response people with opportunities to introduce discussion (*ID*) of artistic response in connection with the text (including questions about the artistic response, invitations to share the artistic response, conversations about topics that could be linked to those addressed by the artistic response person, etc.). Passages highlighted in gray incorporated comments or questions participants made that contributed to maintaining the ongoing nature of the discussion (*MD*)

concerning the artistic response. If passages contributed to the termination of discussion (*TD*) about artistic response, they were highlighted in pink. (Knezek, 6/12/05)

See Table 3.3 for examples of how *preservice teachers' engagements with discussion of artistic response* was coded for inclusion in this meta-cluster, along with quotes from the related passages that illustrate the code.

Table 3.3 – Codes and example quotes for the *Preservice Teacher Engagement With Discussion of Artistic Response* meta-cluster

Discussion Engagement Role	Code	Example Quote
Introduction of Artistic Response Discussion	ID	You guys just wanna take a break from talking / for a minute? Do you guys want to see the artistic thing? (Steven, 2/8/05)
Maintenance of Artistic Response Discussion	MD	Other similarities, differences in opinion about the symbolism in the book? (Cathy 3/1/05)
Termination of Artistic Response Discussion	TD	Having my group create pictures will give them the opportunity to artistically and uniquely express how Max was feeling throughout the book. (Elizabeth, 2/8/05)

The third major theme resulting from close examination of the initial clusters involved characteristics of artistic response and the discourse surrounding it. I labeled this meta-cluster *Patterns in Artistic Response Discourse* and highlighted passages associated with all of the initial clusters where written or oral language indicated characteristics of artistic response. In *Meta-Cluster Memo Three*, I described the way I went about coding highlighting and coding this meta cluster:

There seem to be three broad categories of discourse that characterize artistic response. I highlighted passages associated with the first category, which I coded as “Tool Discourse”, or *TD*, in blue. Tool Discourse:

- uses the book and the response to “teach something”
- moves away from the text and is only loosely connected to the text
- consists primarily of retellings (talk and writing accompanying the artistic response basically equates to plot summary)
- focuses on the art object itself, not on the artist or the artist’s thinking in association with the creation of this response

The second category, “Documentary Discourse,” coded as *DD*, was highlighted in green and had the following characteristics:

- represents specific events for specific reasons, but still does not provide a new perspective or deeper perspective on the text
- features themes or a sense of cohesiveness in relation to the text, but is not too far removed from the retellings found in tool talk
- focuses on the artist and his or her process, including comments about the choices the artist made and why he or she made those choices

I labeled the third category of discourse “Expanded Discourse” (*ED*) and highlighted passages associated with it in yellow. Expanded Discourse:

- invites readers to “enter” or “experience” the text (e.g., encourages the readers to better understand what characters might have felt)
- challenges assumptions that might be in the book/reflects a critical analysis of the book
- furthers exploration into the importance of characters, situations, themes, settings, etc.

- focuses on varied topics and includes the art objects and the artist (including his or her process and choices), but looks more toward the social – the impact the art (process or product) has on others’ responses to the book (Knezek, 6/15/06)

See Table 3.4 for codes used in connection with the *patterns in artistic response* discourse meta-cluster and quotes from passages that characterize the codes.

Table 3:4 – Codes and example quotes for the *Patterns in Artistic Response* Discourse meta-cluster

Discourse Type	Code	Example Quote
Tool Discourse	TD	The most common adjective used was terrible and I was interested to see how each person would draw the word terrible. (Erin, 2/8/05)
Documentary Discourse	DD	Because of my interest in the children and animals in the book and dislike for both of the parental figures, I chose to focus my artistic response on the two kids and the two dogs. (Peter, 3/1/05)
Expanded Discourse	ED	Having my group create pictures will give them the opportunity to artistically and uniquely express how Max was feeling throughout the book. (Elizabeth, 2/8/05)

The coding of multiple data sources and discussions I had with members of the Children’s Literature Team about these codes (and the coding process) not only helped to address my research questions, but also served as checks against the misinterpretation of data. As noted earlier, another way that I worked to establish validity in this study was by asking another doctoral student who had taught TE 348 to re-code clean copies of the artistic response, using the codes I had created in Step Four. The process resulted in an inter-rater reliability of 94%.

Step 5: Hypothesizing Linkages, Memo-Writing, And Generating Theory

According to Glaser (1992), once no new categories of code can be established, memos should be gathered up and sorting -- the step where the data is put back together in new ways -- should begin. At this stage, new ideas emerge and are recorded in more memos. It is in the sorting of these memos that the generation of connected theory is likely to occur. Theories can emerge from unsorted data, but might not be as clear or interconnected as those emerging from sorted data. As a final step, the theories are written up and then rewritten in final scholarly form, including relevant literature.

Bulger (2003) stated that these final, theoretical memos are written about the hypothesized linkages between the meta clusters and the codes that comprise them. By writing about these linkages, I could generate a theory of how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response to children's and adolescent literature. This was to be done by creating theoretical memos that discussed the similarities and differences in the initial clusters and the meta-clusters, followed by the hypothesizing of the linkages between the meta-clusters and the initial clusters. The theoretical memos written at this stage were supposed to discuss the complex relationships between one or more of the initial clusters and meta-clusters defined in Steps Three and Four. Instead of writing theoretical memos, however, I chose to describe the complexity of the meta-clusters that emerged in this study through a telling case format.

Across the telling case, which is detailed in the next four chapters, I will examine children's and adolescent literature, preservice teachers' artistic responses to that literature, and the different ways artistic response functions within the context of a children's literature class. In doing so, I will describe how preservice teachers come to

understand artistic response, and the factors that influence that understanding. In the next chapter (Chapter Four) for example, I will address the theme that emerged in the first meta-cluster (*Attention to Text*) in connection with the introduction of literature response roles in my TE 348 classroom. Before I begin the telling case, however, it is important to briefly note an important event that greatly impacted the way this dissertation unfolded – an event in which a lens for this work was discovered.

In May of 2005, after spending the previous four months listening to (and participating in) teacher candidates' discussions, reading their written rationales, and considering their artistic creations, I began to revisit this material once again in an effort to code for answers to the questions: How did preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influenced their understanding? What roles did the preservice teachers and I play in the development of this understanding? Were there patterns or repeated characteristics/elements of oral and written language used by these preservice teachers and their instructor when discussing artistic response, and did these patterns change over time? As I reread papers and transcribed tapes I often thought of the TE 348 Children's Literature Team members' struggle to find a way to keep artistic responses "text-centered." It was during this period that I first noted the meta-clusters of artistic response detailed here. Months followed and I struggled to frame the meta-clusters in a way that fully captured their most salient aspects. Fortunately, during the summer of 2006 I attended the dissertation defense of a colleague, Dr. Yonghee Suh. In her presentation on how secondary educators used art to teach history, Dr. Suh (2006a) briefly outlined changes in the historical definitions of art. During that presentation I found myself furiously scribbling notes as I recognized the parallels between the

definitions she delineated and the artistic response meta-clusters I had identified through the coding and re-coding of my data. A brief overview of the characteristics of these historical definitions of art can be found in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 – Historical definitions of art

Historical Label	Characteristics
Art as Object	The artwork, including its form and representational nature, is paramount The artwork is imitative of nature/real life
Art as Process	“(1) that a work of art is an interaction between an individual—the artist—and some means of production, intellectual or material; (2) that this interaction is the consummation of a specific history of activity on the artist’s part, funded by the qualitatively diverse experiences constituting that history; (3) that these qualities are expressed in the art product; and (4) that through the art product, a spectator or audience can have an experience that is, to a significant extent, a ‘reconstruction’ of the artist’s experience.” (Kelly, 1998, p. 24)
Art as Aesthetic Experience	Old Perspective: Art can be something that is not created by humans – something that was not created with any sort of artistic intent. Cognitive distance is necessary New Perspective: Art still involves attending to details that can be in abstract, but the cognitive aspect is being welcomed back in – intellectual thought is encouraged Recognition that the social and contextual nature of the viewers will impact the way they interpret and respond to art

The historical definitions of art outlined in Table 3.5 are incorporated into Chapters Five, Six, and Seven of this dissertation. In those chapters I will describe the themes that occurred in the second and third meta-clusters identified in data analysis -- *Preservice Teacher Engagement With Discussion of Artistic Response and Patterns in*

Artistic Response Discourse – and the associated elements of historical definitions of art – *Art as Object*, *Art as Process*, and *Art as Experience*. These historical labels associated with the definitions of art also serve as the titles of these chapters. In each of them I will portray how preservice teachers’ understanding of artistic response developed by detailing what happened with Lari, her peers, and my instruction as the semester progressed. In Chapter Eight I will further clarify the complexity of the relationships between the meta-clusters identified here and detailed in Chapters Four through Eight by theorizing a connection between the forms of artistic response identified in this study and historical definitions of art.

CHAPTER FOUR

A General Introduction to Literary Response

Introduction

As noted in Chapter Three, the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) required that, as I began my analysis, I do multiple readings of the artistic response papers, transcripts, and field notes collected for this dissertation. As I did so, I found an initial category emerged to the point of saturation from my coding. I called this category “Focus on Text,” because I noticed that the writing, creating, and talking people did about artistic response -- and other forms of response – sometimes had little to do with the text. As I coded for places where attention was focused toward text (which I referred to as “TT”) and for places where attention was focused away from text (which I labeled “AT”), I began to think back to the ways I had introduced my class to the concept of literature response and the associated types of response (including artistic response) researched and developed by the Children’s Literature Team. It had always been my intent to communicate that literature response of any kind needed to foreground text, but I didn’t know if I had effectively communicated that message in my initial presentation. I wondered if there was a connection between the way response had been introduced and the level of attention students later gave to the texts when responding to them.

Goals of the Chapter

The goal of this chapter is to indicate how the preservice teachers featured in this study were first introduced to the concept of literature response and the response types

featured in TE 348. In order to clarify the kinds of information students initially received, the first part of the chapter will include dialogue from transcripts of audio tapes and information from my field notes taken during the first two class meetings of early spring semester, 2005. In the next two sections of the chapter I will describe the way artistic response and the affiliated types of response were introduced during those two class sessions. In the last section I will discuss what I found, paying special attention to how the concept of artistic response was established. By closely examining the introductions of those topics in class, I hope to better understand why students were not always consistent in focusing their attention on texts when responding to literature.

Session One: Literary Versus Non-Literary Response

Because TE 348 is a response-based course, I introduced terms and definitions related to reader response theory very early in the semester. At the end of the first day of class, which took place on January 11, 2005, I focused on the role children's literature played in the lives of the teacher candidates, and the role that it might play in the lives of children today, by gathering the students in a group in front of me and having them take turns reading aloud with me from Chris Raschka's (1993) deceptively simplistic text, *Yo! Yes!* Through minimal use of large, bold, black and red font and paintings foregrounding the two boys featured in the story (with washes of varying pastel colors as the only background), Raschka's text tells the story of an outgoing young boy who invites a lonely boy to be his friend. After reading I asked the teacher candidates to share their thoughts about the book. Two of these initial comments were: "I think children would like this book because there are lots of bright colors," and "I could use this book to teach about friendship." Noting that these responses focused on how children would feel about the

book and how the book could be used as a teaching tool, I asked the teacher candidates to reconsider their comments so that they were focused both on the book itself (not on how it could be used to teach something else) and their own responses to the book (not the imagined reactions of their future students). “I want to know what you thought about this book,” I explained to them, “and I want you to think about why you responded in the way that you did. What about the book made you react this way? What about your own personal experiences? Did they impact on how you responded to the book?” I went on to clarify the reason for my request. I said:

Teachers in classrooms are often expected to know how to guide students in discussions that require them to respond to literature.

Researchers and instructors who have taught this class have found that preservice teachers don’t always know what literature response is, and other researchers have found that most practicing teachers aren’t very good at guiding response-based discussions. This is a class that focuses on children’s literature and it will give you first-hand experience responding to children’s literature and facilitating discussions. It is not a class that focuses on how to teach with books. There is value in using literature to teach other things, and you will learn more about that in your subject matter methods classes. We will touch on it in here, but our focus will be on the literature itself -- and how and why we read and respond to that literature in the ways we do. (1/11/05)

I continued this clarification to the class by labeling two general categories of responses as either “literary” or “non-literary.” Table 4.1 describes the

characteristics of these two very basic forms of response to literature as developed by the Children's Literature Team.

Table 4.1: Literary and non-literary response characteristics

Response type	Characteristics
Literary response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addresses the text• Centers on the text itself• Sees the text as valuable in itself• Uses the text as its primary reference point• Focuses on the text as a literary creation
Non-literary response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sees the text as a tool to accomplish other purposes• Uses the <u>content</u> of the text as a source of information or instruction (skills development, academic instruction, etc.)• Considers matters outside of the text itself• Focuses primarily on what the text can <u>do</u> to help further non-literary goals• Ignores or backgrounds the literary qualities of the text• Foregrounds the immediate, practical, or functional value of the text

After I finished explaining the course focus on text-centered, literary responses, I again asked for the teacher candidates to share their thoughts about the book. Peter quickly replied, "I can relate to this book because I've had many experiences like the main character." When I asked for more information, he responded, "I moved around a lot when I was a kid and I was really shy. It was hard to make friends; I didn't know what to do to make friends. The shy kid reminded me of myself because he doesn't start the conversation. The other kid starts it."

I thanked Peter for sharing his connection to the book and told him I appreciated the way he drew parallels between himself and the character in the book. “It’s like you’ve made a claim about the book and how it connects to your life,” I noted, “but you didn’t stop there. You gave us evidence for your claim by telling us what aspects of the character in the book reminded you of yourself. You made the connection explicit.”

Peter’s comments and my accompanying remarks were followed by observations from several other students who wanted to share how they had responded to the text and why they thought they had those responses. Lari, the teacher candidate who will be featured extensively throughout this study, noted that she really “liked the book” because of the illustrations, which she said were “hugely important in the way they told the story of emerging friendship between the two main characters.” She stated that she could tell the boys were becoming friends because “...their bodies moved closer together until they faced each other from just a few inches apart. Without the illustrations I wouldn’t have known that was happening.” Elizabeth said that the story left her feeling “happy” and that she thought that feeling came, at least in part, from the way Raschka had chosen to make changes in background colors as the story progressed “from blue, which is a cool, sad color, to yellow, which is a warm, happy color.”

As each of these students shared their thoughts, I thanked them, often repeated the connections they had made back to the book, and sometimes prompted them to expand what they had said. I purposely did not, however, share any labels or discuss terms that might have defined what they were doing beyond classifying connections as either “literary” or “non-literary” in nature. My main goal at that time was to have the teacher candidates walk out of our first class session having been introduced, through interactions

with the text, their peers, and me, to the notion that responses to literature in TE 348 were to be text-centered. Because I had taught TE 348 several times before, I was aware that these future teachers would not necessarily readily accept the importance of their own text-centered, individual responses. Instead, they were far more likely to value viewing new concepts through lenses that incorporated the anticipated or imagined responses of their future elementary students.

Course instructors and researchers have found that preservice teachers enrolled in courses similar to TE 348 are often resistant to reading and responding to children's and adolescent literature in critical ways, and that their own prior experiences with reading, discussing, and analyzing literature may contribute to that resistance (Apol, 1998; Apol et al., 2001; Apol, Sakuma, Reynolds, & Rop, 2002). Many teacher candidates come to TE 348 with preconceived notions of what it means to analyze literature (e.g., "writing a book report that covers essential literary elements like plot, theme, and characters" or "tearing a book apart line by line to search for symbolism") and what children can do when it comes to such activities. Elizabeth, for example, said (after listening to and sharing several text-centered comments about *Yo! Yes!*), "It's cool that we are noticing and talking about this stuff, but kids wouldn't read this much into such a simple story." Many other teacher candidates were likely unsure about the relevance of text-centered responses – both for themselves and for their future students – at the end of that first class session. However, I was quite purposeful in the direct way I introduced the concept of text-centered response. I led students away from non-literary responses toward literary responses, and I made that movement explicit by talking about what I was doing and why I was doing it. By making my intentions known, I intended to help the teacher candidates

begin to question their own interactions with and around *Yo! Yes!* Peter, Lari, and Elizabeth's comments indicated they were certainly capable of thinking about reading and responding in text-centered ways, but other candidates' initial reflections on the text as a teaching tool were not unfamiliar to me. In fact, preservice teachers' history of a lack of knowledge of or interest in literary response was one of the reasons why the Children's Literature Team designed TE 348 so that it placed emphasis on reader response (Apol, 1998; Apol & Rop, 2005; Apol et al., 2001; Apol et al., 2002).

Session Two: Types of Literary Response

During the next class session, which was held on January 18, 2005, I led the teacher candidates in a more focused dialogue about reader response theory, transactional reading, and their related course assignments. This discussion was similar to the first in two ways: 1) The conversation was primarily teacher-directed; 2) Students were asked to talk about their responses to a piece of literature I read aloud in ways that connected back to the text. This time, however, the teacher candidates did not participate in the read-aloud. Instead, I asked them to pay particular attention to (and jot down) any words, repeated phrases, or illustrations they were especially drawn to or found to be particularly important. As I read *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, (a poem by Maya Angelou (1993) that editor Sara Jane Boyers has put into picture book format with paintings by the late artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat), I watched students as they scribbled notes to themselves or looked intently at the illustrations. Their faces featured varied expressions as they listened to the lines I read detailing the many things in life the narrator of the poem recognizes as scary (e.g., shadowy figures, loud dogs, and unfamiliar noises) but asserts don't frighten her at all.

I selected *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* (Angelou, 1993) as our second read-aloud because it is a book of interesting contrasts. While it can be found in the children's sections of libraries and book stores, it features illustrations that contain images of skeletons, violence, and nudity, and a poem that draws attention to many things that might frighten children. At the same time, the narrator of the poem can be seen as having great courage in the face of adversity. Another of its interesting attributes is that the author and illustrator are both famous in their respective fields but did not work together in the creation of this book. Instead, the Basquiat paintings were paired with the Angelou poem after Basquiat's death. Thus, the book provided plenty of material for the class discussion, and I was able to remind the teacher candidates to focus on their own responses and to connect what they said back to the book. This allowed me to reinforce the importance of text-centered, literary responses and it also encouraged widely ranging reactions. I used the comments students made about *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* as examples of the five different literary response roles (as introduced in Chapter One, Table 2) highlighted and expanded upon in TE 348 class sessions and assignments: personal, textual, intertextual, critical, and artistic.

Each teacher candidate enrolled in TE 348 during spring semester, 2005, was required to assume responsibilities for each of the five response roles at least once during the semester. In the class section examined for this study, the roles were introduced and discussed in class on multiple occasions before students took them on. I, along with other members of the Children's Literature Team, helped to develop written descriptions of the response roles and their accompanying characteristics. Details about the response roles were provided to the students in an assignment description for literature discussion

groups (See Appendix B for assignment description) and on PowerPoint slides presented during the second class session (See Appendix C for slides).

The role responsibilities included in the assignment description for small group discussions were virtually identical in all TE 348 classrooms because the Children's Literature Team continuously worked together on all assignment guidelines to provide common information and experiences for teacher candidates. The response definitions used first emerged when the Team read, researched, and collaborated on the design of TE 348 during the spring and summer of 2003.

Both theoretical perspectives on reader response and transactional reading (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976, 1978/1995, 1994) and practical considerations for implementation of response-based discussions (Daniels, 1994; McMahon et al., 1997) were examined. We talked over what we wanted our teacher candidates to know about reader response, how response-based conversations were formatted and held in actual elementary and middle school classrooms at that time, and how we might provide our candidates with opportunities to experience carefully constructed book discussions so that, before they attempted to facilitate such interactions in the future as teachers, they might be better able to understand the purposes of those discussions and their own strengths and weaknesses as participants (e.g., as respondents, discussants, leaders). Our goal was to steer students away from talk and activities that were only loosely related to children's and adolescent literature or that focused primarily on methods for "using" this literature in classrooms and that moved, instead, towards rich discussions that promoted deeper understandings of and new perspectives on the texts they were reading.

Introducing Personal Response

As shown with the example of initial comments in response to *Yo! Yes!*, teacher candidates' first considerations after reading children's or adolescent literature are often based on their thinking about how children might connect with books and how they might use books to teach children. Once asked to focus on the literature itself and their responses to that literature, many of these same candidates responded in personal ways. As previously noted, after hearing about the differences between literary and non-literary response, Peter connected his memories of what it felt like to be a shy, new kid to the experiences of the lonely character in *Yo! Yes!* His connection to the book included links not only to the text itself, but also to his own life -- his memories and his feelings, essential elements of personal response (See Appendices A, B, and C for characteristics of personal response). Personal responses are often affective in nature; they tend to incorporate the first "feelings" students get from reading a new piece of literature.

In defining personal response for the teacher candidates in TE 348, I strove to provide them with relevant examples by tying some of the comments they made when discussing *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* to characteristics of personal response. Early in that discussion a student named Erin began to reflect upon her reaction to the book by discussing her feelings about the illustrations and the written text, and how her feelings incorporated not only what she saw in the text but also what she knew about how she herself reacts to similar situations (all of the dialogue featured below occurred on 1/18/06).

Erin: I liked the pictures, because, um, I think like the illustrator was painting, the "stranger in the dark" (Angelou, 1993), like, that's what you would imagine.

You would exaggerate what it would be and it would be ten times scarier than it really would be...

Suzy: Okay...

Erin: I mean, at least, that's what I do, with like, stuff like that, you know....you're out in the dark and you hear a dog barking, you're gonna imagine that it's this horrible, terrible thing and it's going to come after you, when really, you're not afraid of it. You know that's not what's going to happen....I like the pictures, because I think that's what you'd think of in your head, like the worst possible situation.

Suzy: So the, almost the exaggeration of the nature of the words...

Erin: Yes...

Suzy: ...to you, is a positive thing, as it's reflected in the paintings.

Erin: ...Yes, cause it's like even though they are that scary, you're not afraid of it.

Suzy: Okay. I wonder why you're saying that, why you're not afraid of it. Is it because it seems unreal? Is it because it's cartoon like?....Is it the paintings? Is it the words? What is it that's making you not afraid?

Erin: I don't know. Just, like, experience....if I heard a noise in the dark, I would imagine it would be something terrible when really it's most likely something small like a mouse, or something, which is still kind of creepy, but like, you know, you would imagine something terrible and you're, you know, realistically, that's not what it is.

In her dialogue with me Erin is comparing what she does when she is frightened by an unexplained noise or event to what she sees the author and illustrator doing in the text. She says that ultimately she knows not to be afraid in real life or while reading the book because of “experience” which tells her that what she imagines when she is afraid is likely to be far worse than what is real. I drew upon this example later in class when expanding upon the notion of response, and, specifically, when introducing the concept of personal response.

Suzy: I’m gonna stop with the conversation about this particular book, for now anyway, and just pass it around, um, and I’d like you to take what you’ve just done, and apply it to the ideas of response that I am going to talk with you about now. We talked about two major categories of response, literary and non-literary. What you’ve been doing here involves more than that....There are / five different categories of literary response that we’ll spend a lot of time talking about in class, in your discussion groups, and, again, in our large group discussions. The first is personal, and I’m gonna come back and pick on Erin for a minute. I hope this is okay. Tell me if I am remembering right. It was either Erin or Kim that were talking about, um, this idea of things being frightening in your dreams, or at night / but knowing that things are going to turn out okay is something that she, um, assumes....That was you, right?

Erin: Yes.

Suzy: Okay, thank you very much. Um / that would be considered a personal response. A personal response is ////when you talk about how a piece of literature

links to your life, your experiences, and how you think about things – that’s a personal response...

After this very brief introduction to personal response, I then moved on to discuss the other forms of response we would be studying in TE 348, connecting most of them to examples from our discussion of *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*. I returned to the topic later in the class session when introducing the requirements for the response roles people would play during class discussions. After asking students to look over the description (see Appendix B) for the personal response role, I further elaborated on the concept of personal response.

Suzy: ...If you are putting yourself in the response role of personal response /// (*voices in the background – footsteps – a door closes*), you’re going to be talking about / connections between your own lived experiences and the text. // Uh, was there something in this particular text that made you think of your own life? Were there illustrations that looked like paintings hung on a wall of a museum you visited, or maybe something you put on your own wall of your dorm room? Growing up, did you have those moments in the dark, when you were afraid and there were shadows that you were afraid of? Personal connections come into play with things like that. When you talk about, “This book made me feel...” We had some people who said, “You know, I didn’t like it ‘cause it was scary.” That’s a personal response. /// Um, most of the time, when people have that very first // emotional / response to whatever it is / it’s, it tends to be personal / Whether it’s to a piece of art, whether it’s to a piece of literature, to a song / There will usually be something personal at first, and then you might go somewhere else with it, but

initially / you tend to have a personal connection. It might be positive, it might be negative, but, in general, most people, if they're going to connect with a text, will do it in this way first.

The term “personal response” is often unfamiliar to teacher candidates at the beginning of TE 348, but I have found that most find that the actual act of responding in a personal manner to a piece of text – connecting that text to their own lived experiences – feels very familiar to them. After discussing personal response in connection to *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, reading about the characteristics of the response role on the PowerPoint slides and assignment description, and listening to my thoughts on the definition of this response, the teacher candidates indicated they had no questions about it. As indicated by the comments I made when introducing personal response, I, too, felt quite comfortable in explaining and demonstrating what personal response entails.

Introducing Textual Response

The level of familiarity both the preservice teachers and I felt with personal response was surpassed only by our preexisting knowledge of all that is involved with textual response (see Appendices A, B, and C for descriptions of textual response). When providing a textual response, most readers are doing what they have done with literature throughout their careers as students. They participate in the more traditional elements of literary analysis by closely examining literary elements of a text (including genre, setting, characterization, plot, theme, style, etc.), asking how the book works, and reflecting on what the author and illustrator did to make it work. The teacher candidates are also required to select important passages (e.g., repeated phrases that impact comprehension, important metaphors, etc.) and provide a rationale for having selected

those passages. While they have varying levels of ability to select such passages, discern theme, discuss the importance of plot, or detail the finer points of a well-rounded character, almost all the students have experience with identifying and working with these elements. After I first introduced personal response in connection with Erin's comments about *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, I continued our discussion by asking if others felt as Erin did – that the book was not really all that frightening. Two of the students who answered my question, Kris and Lari, responded textually.

Kris: I found the book, um, scary...

Suzy: [Okay.]

Kris: [...um, you know,] the drawings....I found them to be pretty scary and, like, I had this feeling that this poem was supposed to be uplifting, it was supposed to be some sort of you know, face for bravery, but in that book form. I didn't really feel very brave and actually towards the end when she was talking about being able to walk on the ocean floor and not being able to breathe and she had some secret, almost at that exact point, I was thinkin' in my head, "I wonder what makes her so brave?" So I thought that was going to be the key and she was going to tell us what made her so brave, but it never came out.

Suzy: So, so you feel like there's this theme, again, of bravery. We've had that come up several times, but it almost sounds like you're not quite sure if there's a real message of bravery here. At least, if there is one, we don't really have the key to what it is that might make you brave. So, the pictures are frightening, but the message seems uplifting / but not really. You see what I'm saying? It's that basically, I love that /////. (*There is laughter in the classroom as I stumble to find*

the right words.) It's a really interesting....way of looking at this, you know, and it's, um // Am I as sure as I think I am about what's happening here -- about what the poet is trying to tell me? What am I getting out of this and why am I getting it? Yes, Lari?

Lari: It kind of reminds me of, I don't know, I was thinking, when you first started reading it that, it was something that was real, because some of the comments are, like "Mother Goose" quotes about Mother Goose are real, but really "panthers in the park?" Those aren't really real, or like being able to breathe in the ocean underwater isn't necessarily real. Try it! I guess it just kind of thought, you know, that they were, that it was, something, that, that maybe they, um, were nightmares or dreams and that when they woke up, they wouldn't be there.

When Kris first spoke up about the contradictions she felt existed between what the text was saying (be brave) and what the illustrations portrayed (scary images), I thought she was going to reinforce Erin's earlier comments about courage and common sense overcoming all. However, Kris did not do that. Instead, she noted that she was questioning the text, looking for evidence of what made the narrator of *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* so brave. She didn't find that evidence, so she concluded that the book was "scary." Lari also looked closely at the written portion of the text for clues about whether the text was about a real experience or a nightmare. Unlike Erin, who said that her conclusions about the book's overall theme came not only out of what she saw in the book but also out of her own life experiences with such matters, Kris and Lari cited important passages from the text when determining what the book was saying, but neither

specifically related the text to her own life. Instead, they reported asking questions of the text and seeking answers in what was written there. When later detailing the characteristics of textual response, I drew upon Kris and Lari's comments to illuminate the importance of literary elements, important passages, and composition in textual responses.

Suzy: A textual response is a response that // really focuses much more on literary elements, things like....the overall theme of the poem, or the (?) main idea of the poem. Think about Kris and Lari's comments. Is it, is the main idea that you shouldn't be afraid of the things that are scaring you in life / that you should overcome them? Or is the, the main idea that there are a lot of scary things out there / and that you can try to manage those things, but they are still scary? That's more of a textual response / It goes back to the terms used / um, "Life doesn't frighten me at all." The number of times the author says that caused people to think, "You know, she said it so many times, 'Life doesn't frighten me at all, not at all, not at all.'" Remember how Kris tried to find out why she wasn't frightened, how she thought she'd know why when the narrator mentioned "the key," but she never really felt like she had her answer? And Lari compared passages from the book that seemed real to those that seemed unreal in order to decide if it was all just a dream....What is it within the actual text that's really important, that we are connecting to?....You look at how the book works. How do all of the pieces go together? Does the setting complement the theme? / Um, Kris talked about the "scary" nature of some of the illustrations in *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*. // That's kind of the setting of the text. Do they complement the

words? How does this book, all of it, go together? Does it work or doesn't it? We've had some folks going, "Yeah, I think it works really well" for *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* and others who are saying they see some really jarring disparities. We needed to talk about why that might happen, and we did. We explored some things, "Why do illustrations seem to contradict some of the terms? Why do they seem to complement each other at other times?" // Textual responses are analytical, evaluative. They tend to focus much more on the cognitive, thinking about things in established kinds of ways. / What makes a really solid character? What kind of, um, story structure is effective? // All of those are kind of predetermined by your years and years of scholarly work // instead of responding emotionally, you are responding in kind of set ways /// It's very different than personal response.

As was true with personal response, students indicated they understood the textual response role at the end of this introduction. In this particular case, most students had basic subject matter knowledge of literary elements and analysis and felt comfortable with the required elements of textual response. Just to make certain everyone was aware of the definitions of the most basic literary elements, I did provide the teacher candidates with a handout summarizing the characteristics of each (see Appendix B) and went over the handout in class.

Introducing Intertextual Response

One of the most surprisingly beneficial aspects of introducing textual response to teacher candidates is that they quickly begin to understand that deep comprehension of literature is dependent on knowledge of literary conventions and contexts. One of the

best ways for readers to increase their knowledge of those conventions is to study a particular work and then compare and contrast it to other texts (or other media forms of text, including movies, CDs, etc.). Those who do this are responding to literature intertextually (see Appendices A, B, and C for a detailed description of the intertextual role). They ask themselves what other books (or media forms of text) a certain text reminds them of. In doing this, they consider many factors, including genre characteristics, literary elements, artistic elements, and the type of response evoked. As with personal response, preservice teachers are likely to make intertextual connections without knowing there is a term for what they are doing. For example, Kim, one of the first teacher candidates to respond to the book, commented on its appropriateness for children, which prompted me to re-direct her focus back to her reaction to the book. This redirection then caused her to make an intertextual connection.

Kim: For me, it looked kind of scary, like, I didn't really enjoy the pictures at all, like, / I just thought they were kind of morbid, like, I mean, they're interesting to look at, but as far as a child goes, I don't know if, [it would necessarily connect to them, cause, well...

Suzy: [Turn back to the previous [comment...

Kim: [Oh, oh [okay...

Suzy: [Nope, you're doing great,] but instead of / one thing I want to kind of cut you guys off with is, "I think children might think this...." and I know that's a natural thing to do in TE classes, but instead to continue with, "I didn't like them" or "They seemed morbid to me." Why? What was it that made them seem that way to you?

Kim: They kind of reminded me of like the movie, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, when like, the, the plot was good, like it had a good message, like, everything, but the way it was composed, like threw me off a bit, like it threw me for a loop a little bit and there was, I don't know why, just the color choices and because it was scribbly and, like the dog pictures, red all around it, like it would have been blood or something. I don't know. It, it///

Suzy: So that, there are a lot of different things in there. The color choices, the, the scribbly nature. Um, let me try and find the dog picture. I think it's more towards the beginning of the book./// Yeah. There's red near the dog's mouth, so those kinds of things, just, just, didn't seem to you to match maybe the positive message, is that kind of what you're saying?

Kim: Like they went well with the words, but I don't think they went well with the message.

Suzy: Interesting. The comp-, composition matched the words, but not the overall message that you took away from the poem. What was the message that you took away?

Kim: Just that there are like scary things in the world and there are, things we should be afraid of, but just stand up and you, you don't have to be afraid of anything...

After I asked Kim to switch her focus from speculating on whether or not children could connect to *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* she clarified her own initial response to the illustrations, along with the disconnect she felt she saw between the illustrations and the message of the text. In an attempt to provide evidence for this disconnect, as Erin had

done by drawing on her personal experiences, and Kris and Lari had done by questioning and citing the text, Kim linked the Basquiat illustrations to the film, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. This connection provided an excellent opportunity to provide a student-constructed example later in the discussion when I was beginning to define intertextual response. After reviewing its major characteristics and explaining that when responding intertextually, “Readers study a book by comparing and contrasting it to other texts (or other media forms of the text),” I returned to Kim’s comments.

Suzy: An intertextual response is similar to the connection made earlier. Who is it that was talking about the connection between this and *Nightmare on Elm Street*? Was [that you Kim?

Kim: [*Nightmare Before Christmas*]

Suzy: I’m sorry, *Nightmare Before Christmas*, the Tim Burton film. Um, that is an intertextual response, a connection....from this particular text to something that she’s seen, read outside of this text that it reminds her of it. You talked about the color choices used and how, um, // there was / the juxtaposition that confused you in the film, // with it’s / kind of, the message, but then the images didn’t really seem to fit. And...that same thing happened to you here when you were looking at this book, or listening to this book. // That’s an intertextual response.

Students had questions about what specific types of media could be included in intertextual connections. They were confused because the guidelines for their intertextual roles specified that they needed to connect to alternative forms of the original printed piece only. I clarified my perspective on this question by stating they could connect to any other forms of media, as long as they had originally existed in print form. Thus, the

connection between *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* and *Nightmare Before Christmas* was legitimate because the film had existed in print before it was made into a film. This question did cause me to reflect upon the wording of the assignment description for the intertextual role. There are films that are created based on improvisational work. Would connections between these films and books be invalid because the movie was not created from a previously existing script? After all, improvisational films still feature plots, characters, settings, and themes. I decided to take my concerns to the Children's Literature Team for clarification on future assignment descriptions. Despite this concern, I felt I had a clear notion of what to expect from students making intertextual responses, and the example shared in class proved a valuable means for communicating my expectations.

Introducing Critical Response

When introducing each of the previous three forms of literary response, I was quickly able to connect examples from our in-class discussion of *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* to written and spoken descriptions of roles. When it came to introducing critical response, however, I did not feel I had a strong example to cite from our discussion. While I explained to students that critical responses (See Appendices A, B, and C for characteristics of critical response) asked readers to see texts and responses as historically, socially and politically situated, I was not certain that I could provide them with an example that looked not only at the reader and the text, but also at the sub-text and social context. I did remember, though, that one student, Jill, had not only identified the author and illustrator of the book (more of a textual response), she had also talked

about who they were as individuals, and about how what she knew about them influenced what she thought they were trying to communicate to readers through the book.

Jill: ...When I thought of Maya Angelou I thought of this strong, confident woman, and I...immediately I guess my brain was programmed to think that what she was going to say was going to be some sort of positive message, so / I did that unconsciously, but not, like, thinking that actually did, so that definitely affected knowing that it was her and knowing that this guy studied under Andy Warhol, who was like this abstract, crazy man, like, also, like influenced....how I initially perceived the book.

Suzy: I think this is a really important comment, also, because it gets at questions of, “Who is the author? Who is the illustrator? What are they trying to say?” And when you ask questions about those folks, and you already have some knowledge, it might influence your reading. Like, if you are familiar with Angelou’s work, then you know that...she tends to be quite forceful when she reads her poetry. She’s survived some incredibly difficult experiences ...She experienced things that were frightening and really horrible, so the reality of that...is certainly still present to think about, and to consider, and the same goes for Basquiat. Knowing about them can help you to consider who is represented in this text and in the illustrations both.

This example does not get at a great deal of the important elements of critical response. However, it did provide the teacher candidates with an introduction to the kind of thinking and questioning one needs to do when responding in a critical way. I was

able to build upon this example when I later detailed the characteristics of the critical response.

Suzy: ...The question you should be asking yourself when you're trying to respond critically is....“What's missing? Who's not being represented in this text; whose voice is not being heard?” You can ask questions about / race, about politics/, about gender // Many....topics that are considered to be pretty intense topics, controversial topics come into play in critical response....///// Critical response / the missing stuff? / This tends to be a piece that feels new to some folks. If you are a person who has experience with, um, social science course work, anthropology...anything that has to do with culture, you probably have read a lot and thought very carefully about these ideas....This is where you are talking, again, about political aspects of the book / controversial aspects. How is the book politically situated? Remember how Alice (?) talked about who the author and illustrator were. Oh, it wasn't you, then who was it? Oops, back to Jill. Sorry, Alice.

Alice: That's okay.

Suzy: Um, Jill asked, “Who is the author? Who is the illustrator? What are they trying to say with this book?” She said she knew Maya Angelou as a strong woman. Because of that, Jill thought her message would be positive. Jill knew Jean Michel Basquiat was mentored by Warhol. Was he a creative genius or was he a heroine addict who was artistically bankrupt? How can we talk about what he wanted to say when he didn't even know his paintings would be featured in this book? How might this knowledge impact your thinking about the book? //

Both author and illustrator are African American. Does race play a role in this book? We explore questions about things like this in critical response. This is a huge area for consideration of social issues: diversity, multiculturalism. / Those of you who talked about having interest in the area of (*Tape Side A finished – when listen to Side B the conversation has moved on*).

I was able to provide student-constructed examples of the forms of literary response that included textual, personal, intertextual, and critical by referring back to our discussion of *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*. Of these four student- and instructor-generated examples, the one provided for critical response is probably weakest. This makes sense, however, when noting students' familiarity with personal, textual, and intertextual roles and their lack of experience with critical response. While there is undoubtedly room for further investigation into this matter, I have far greater concerns about the way I introduced artistic response to the teacher candidates. When doing so, I had no references from our recently completed discussion that I could use as examples.

Introducing Artistic Response

At the time I first presented the concept of artistic response to the teacher candidates in TE 348 there were two factors at work that undoubtedly influenced the outcomes of this study. I had taught the course at least 6 times prior to this iteration, and, as a result, anticipated what I saw as possible “wrong turns” students might take or misunderstandings they might have when creating artistic responses as a part of the course requirements. I was also deeply aware that, though I was not certain of the focus my own research would take at the time, there was a good chance that I, or someone else from the Children's Literature Team, would carefully examine data gathered from the

classes I taught. While I attempted to keep my instruction and class environments as “normal” as possible during the time the data was gathered, these factors are certain to have influenced the ways I spoke about artistic response, the ways I wrote about it when reacting to student work, and the amount of time I devoted to the topic both in and out of class.

Another important aspect of this situation was that, because of my involvement in the artistic response study, I was highly aware of the factors influencing my practice in that area. This heightened awareness likely impacted my teaching and must be taken into account as a factor influencing the research. While this kind of meta-awareness was not necessarily typical and certainly had an impact, I, along with other members of the Children’s Literature team, had been questioning the role of artistic response to literature in TE 348. Because it had long been a problematic area for both preservice teachers and instructors alike, it was not unusual for me to be questioning and thinking about the impact of my role in teaching about artistic response, and how my students did or did not come to understand this form of literary response over the course of a semester.

While factors outside the norm were present when I first spoke about artistic response in TE 348, I purposefully introduced it in connection with other forms of response. When speaking about artistic response, I noted that “One of the things we can do with literature is that we can also respond in an artistic way. It doesn’t have to be a piece of writing. It doesn’t have to be a character analysis. Instead you might produce something, or create something, that helps you interpret the book / helps you respond to what it is that you’ve read.” Along with these brief comments, I also relied on a PowerPoint slide and the discussion assignment description to delineate the

characteristics of artistic response, just as I had with the other forms of literary response (See Appendices A, B, and C for characteristics of artistic response).

After listening to and transcribing tapes of that first discussion of literary response forms, however, I was struck by the fact that I introduced artistic response differently from the other forms. Because there was no art work created during or after our discussion of *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, I was unable to link the defining characteristics of artistic response to student comments. As a result, the examples I provided were based on books the students may or may not have read.

One of my students, um, in TE 849, which was a graduate class last semester, responded to a book called "Monster," um, have any of you guys read "Monster" at all?....No? Um, it's a book by Walter Dean Myers and the character in the novel is a boy named Steve and he's on trial for murder. He's in jail and the book, the novel is written in a screen-play format, so it has terms like, "fade-in, fade-out," it gives you a list of characters, things like that, but it doesn't have a continuous story-line in the same way that we might be familiar with otherwise. My 849 student read this book and was really captivated by it...What he did was call up a local jail and asked them...if he could come into jail and film what he saw, what he experienced on a Sunday afternoon. So, he went into a local prison. Um, the jailer there opened the doors for him in the holding area of the prison, so there were actual inmates there. And he filmed this experience in black and white. He filmed himself walking down the hallway, filmed himself having to take his shoes off, he filmed, uh, the door closing....He showed you every piece of what you would see if you were in that cell. (1/18/05)

As I listened to and transcribed the tape of this introduction, and as I read back through the transcript several times, I was struck by the fact that not only had I used an example based on a book the students didn't know, making this example less concrete than the others, I also spoke to them about work done by a graduate student who was a practicing teacher with several years of experience. Was it an appropriate thing to do? Looking back, it seems to make artistic response look overwhelming. I seemed to sense this at the time saying, "I'm not expecting you to get out there with a video camera. I mean, like I said, he really went to town with this, but do you see how he had a really deep connection to this character, what this character was feeling and experiencing?"

Why Artistic Response Falls Short

In hindsight I felt a deep sense of unease when I realized the disconnectedness that made my introduction to artistic response so different from the introductions to other forms of response. By telling students that I didn't expect them to create similar responses, I might have lowered expectations and thereby limited what they might create. Because of my feelings of unease, I went back to my notes for the original class to see why I had chosen to present this example. I didn't find any specific notes about my reasoning, but on reflection it strikes me that this example is rich in ways that many others are not. Even now it is difficult for me to think of "high quality" examples of artistic responses. What constitutes a "high quality" artistic response? (That was a question that neither I nor my colleagues could clearly answer at that time; thus the need for this study.) The film example enabled me to speak about many elements of artistic response I could identify as important. It allowed me to share comments about how the creator of the film had increased his and other class members' understanding of the main

character in the novel, while at the same time making explicit connections between his art work and the text.

...he brought the film to class and narrated it with what he was thinking about in class, and what he wanted the rest of us to think about, in connection with the book. He wanted us to think about how, the main character, Steve, had to live with the cell walls, day after day, hour upon hour...he wanted us to think about the smells in the air....showed us the toilet, talked about the stench of urine and feces....All of these kinds of things were things that he did just in connection with this little, ten, fifteen minute video that he put together for us. Can you see how that might help us to see more deeply into what Steve's experience had been like as a character?....And he brought that to life for the rest of us in the class through his response. That's the kind of thing that an artistic response should do. It should deepen your understanding or in some way help you to connect and comprehend the literature itself. (1/18/05)

The graduate student's film also provided me with a chance to talk about how artistic response could come in various forms. As I have mentioned before, I taught TE 348 many times before and I was experienced with students expressing their concern in class when artistic response was first discussed. "But I can't draw," many would say. Others would acknowledge their discomfort with the notion of creating art for a grade by laughing and saying things like, "You want me to paint? You don't know what you're asking for!" or, "I hope you don't expect me to dance!" No matter what they said, the message was clear: this was not a comfortable task. I tried to assuage their fears by

mentioning the film and other examples of artistic responses that did not require the teacher candidates to be great artists. I assured them they had alternatives.

I've had students write plays....I've had them write songs and actually perform them for their groups. Some people have actually come to class and have done lots of different kinds of activities at their tables, but, again, if they did activities....the 'activity' had to be something that helped the other folks in the discussion group, or....the class as a whole, uh, understand the book better // connect with the book in a deeper way. (1/18/06)

The film example allowed me to reinforce how important it was for artistic responses to be text-centered, not activities that were only loosely connected, if connected at all to the text. It provided a model alternative to stereotypical forms of fine art, and its creator, and those who viewed it, gained new insight into the experiences of the main character. It did expand upon many of the elements I had delineated as important in artistic response. Nonetheless, it did all of these things in abstract ways. There was no common story that my students and I shared as the basis for this example. There were no student-generated elements in this example. For all the passion I felt for it, I was still unsure of whether or not it was a "high quality" artistic response because, at the time, I was not even certain what an artistic response was – or what it was supposed to include.

In this chapter I described how I introduced the concept of literature response and the types of responses that were featured in TE 348. I also explained how I defined the multiple forms of response and how I communicated those definitions to my students. Looking back over the data, I noted several problematic aspects about my introduction of

artistic response, including the lack of a clear definition. The lack of clear definition and concrete examples in my introduction to artistic response reflected the general confusion and uncertainty I felt about that response form. Ultimately, my uncertainty led to confusion on the part of the students, and thus laid the groundwork for this study. In the next chapter, Chapter Five, I will begin to describe how these confusions played out in class and how the teacher candidates and I struggled to work through them.

CHAPTER FIVE

Artistic Response As Object

Introduction

Chapter 4 detailed how personal, textual, intertextual, and critical forms of literary response were first introduced in TE 348 and noted how those introductions, unlike the first presentation of artistic response, included clear definitions, lists of characteristics, and student-generated examples. The finding that artistic response was presented so differently from other forms provided evidence that, despite my awareness (as the course instructor) of the challenging nature of artistic response, I had not fully recognized the paucity of guidelines, definitions, and examples for this response type in my own knowledge base and teaching repertoire. Over several semesters I, along with other members of the Children's Literature Team, had developed and set parameters for the artistic response role (see Appendix B) in TE 348. However, after listening to and transcribing the ways in which this form of literature response was introduced in class, and after re-reading the way it was detailed in the assignment description the team created, I found the language used to depict artistic response to be problematic.

In the assignment description the Children's Literature Team members stated that we wanted people responsible for artistic response to produce

“a creative, artistic response to the book *that has the text at its center* and that promotes understanding and conversation (for example, a collage of literary passages, a choral reading, a poem, a poster, a song, a drama). This should be more thoughtful and text-centered than a simple craft or activity that is loosely tied to the book (No “busy work.”). (Appendix B, p. 227)

In my oral introduction to artistic response I told students artistic response should be “text-centered” and promote “deeper understanding of” or “new perspectives on” the literature read (1/18/05). But *was* there truly a difference between a thoughtful, artistic response with the “text at its center” and a simple craft or activity that was only “loosely tied” to the book? If so, what was that difference? Did artistic responses promote “deeper understandings of” or “new perspectives on” a text? If so, how could we tell when those endeavors were successful? Were these distinctions real and recognizable or were they illusory features that existed only in the minds of TE 348 instructors? As I said earlier in this dissertation, I, as an instructor, had a strong sense that I knew artistic response when I saw “it,” but, looking back at the data, I was not effectively communicating what “it” was – its definition, its characteristics, the way it differed from a craft or activity, or the kind of thinking it promoted. It is true that I was initially more aware of the challenges surrounding artistic response than were my students. However, after reviewing tapes and transcripts of the introductory examples I facilitated, the written guidelines I provided, and the lack of opportunities I offered for students to engage first-hand with this type of response before taking it on as a role for themselves, I noted that the teacher candidates were not the only ones struggling to understand artistic response. I definitely had questions about it, too.

Analysis of data gathered on how literature response was introduced in TE 348 helped address the main dissertation question, “How do preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding?” by determining that, as the course instructor, I likely played a role in the teacher candidates’ beginning understandings of artistic response. Based on the data, any of the initial

instruction, negotiation, or facilitation I provided students concerning the notion of artistic response must be seen as inconsistent with the instruction I supplied for the other forms of literary response discussed in TE 348. While I cannot state that this type of inconsistency is completely negative, I can say that it is troubling in that it set the stage for the preservice teachers to feel less connected to and familiar with artistic response – a response form most of them already found intimidating. Because of this early lack of connection to concrete examples of artistic response, and because of the questions raised earlier about the nature of artistic response itself, it is imperative that this chapter continues to address the main question guiding this study by examining how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding. Here I will begin to attend to this query by breaking it down into specific areas addressed by the secondary questions associated with the main dissertation question. They are:

- Are there patterns to the characteristics/elements of oral or written language used by students when describing artistic response that I, as the TE 348 instructor, and the teacher candidates in some way (written acknowledgement, oral reinforcement, extension, etc.) recognize as comprising genuine artistic response – one that leads to deeper understanding/new perspectives?
- What roles did the teacher candidates and I play in facilitating the development of this deeper/new understanding?

Patterns, characteristics, and recognition are important words in the secondary dissertation questions that helped guide this inquiry. *Characteristics*, as defined here,

include the distinguishing traits, qualities, or properties found in artistic response, while *patterns* establish which of those characteristics are repeatedly and predictably observable. *Recognition* entails the formal acknowledgement of those patterns and characteristics.

Goals of Chapter

In a continuing effort to see if my data revealed anything that might address the overarching research question and the secondary questions guiding this study, I continued to read, re-read, and code my data according to the constant comparison tradition (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) -- writing research memos of the codes to the point of saturation (where no new codes emerged) as I went along. After weeks of coding and writing memos, I identified two more theoretical categories (beyond the category of “Focus on Text” that I portrayed in Chapter Four): characteristics of artistic response and engagement with artistic response, details of which will be brought to the fore in this case-based chapter and the two which follow.

This chapter is to tell the story of what happened with artistic response in one of the six small groups of teacher candidates in my class when we discussed Maurice Sendak’s (1963) *Where the Wild Things Are*, the first text the whole class was required to read and respond to. As I present data from this group, I will meet one of the goals of the chapter by describing characteristics that emerge from the teacher candidates’ oral and written discourse involving artistic response. This telling case, which features the focus student, Lari, will primarily include the artistic response person’s work and dialogue from the small group setting.

The first group member responsible for preparing artistic response in Lari's discussion group – Group D -- was Erin. (For further information on the responsibilities of each of the other response people, please see Appendix B.) Though they were introduced earlier, I have outlined the steps taken for the response roles each week, especially those associated with artistic response, in an effort to clarify the discussion process that occurred with each of the pieces of literature featured in this dissertation:

1. The response people researched, created, and wrote about their roles outside of class.
2. The response people discussed the text (and their roles) in a small group.
3. I called members of the class back together and led a twenty to thirty minute large group debriefing session, during which the preservice teachers were asked to share what they had talked about in their groups and their individual comments about the book, and what they had learned.
4. Small group facilitators took their group members' responses home where they read and included aspects of them in a report they wrote. During class the following week small group facilitators gave me their reports, along with their group members' original written responses.
5. I gathered all the written responses and reports, read them, and wrote comments to each teacher candidate.
6. Two weeks after they shared their responses with group members each response person received written feedback from me.

In order to continue to examine my own role in the teacher candidates' developing understanding of artistic response, I will include quotes from and descriptions

of the feedback I provided as a part of each stage of the telling case, along with comments about my current perspective on that feedback. Finally, I will discuss any recognizable patterns to the characteristics found in the art objects, rationales, feedback, and oral discourse (including elements from both small group discussions and a large group session held after the first rationales had been graded and returned to the teacher candidates) as explicated by this initial case.

Introducing the Telling Case

In Group D, four of the five group members gave permission for both their written and oral coursework to be included in this study: Lari, a European American female in her mid twenties; Kris, a European American female in her mid- twenties; Erin, a European American female in her early twenties; and Sara, an African American female in her early twenties. A fifth group member chose not to participate in this study, so all comments and writings from that teacher candidate were removed from the data represented here.

During their first discussion Group D spent a good deal of their time focused on the illustrations featured in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). Where most other groups transitioned from discussion topic to discussion topic based on responses to their roles, Group D's members brought up their assigned role responses within the context of a larger discussion about Maurice Sendak's illustrations. Erin, the artistic respondent began the discussion about her creation by linking her comments to those another group member had just made. Lari, who had researched the history of the making of the book as a part of her role as the intertextual respondent, spoke about how Sendak (the author/illustrator) had first planned to feature horses in the story.

Dissatisfied with his drawings of horses, Lari shared, Sendak changed the illustrations of horses to illustrations of strange-looking monsters. Erin followed up on this comment by saying, “I think it’s funny you mentioned the drawings cause, um, in the artistic response, I used a couple quotes about them” (2/8/05).

What Was Created In Response To This Book: Examining Artistic Response Artifacts

The art object.

For her artistic response Erin created a group activity. As an example of the art objects to be created through of the group activity Erin included a black and white drawing of a monster (see Figure 5.1), similar to those seen in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), with an handwritten descriptive quote at the bottom of the page. In both her written response and her oral comments to her group, Erin expressed she was impressed with the adjectives used to described the monsters in the story. As a result, she decided to read some pieces she had previously selected from the book (including, “yellow eyes” and “The wild things roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws...” (Sendak, 1963)) and then have each person use those descriptions to draw their own version of the monster. After they had finished drawing their pictures, Erin planned to have the participants compare what they had drawn and discuss differences and similarities based on the descriptive terms and illustrations featured in the book.



"...yellow eyes..." "The wild things roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws..."

Figure 5.1: Erin's artistic response featuring a drawing of a monster created in response to the accompanying quotes from *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963).

The written rationale.

In the rationale she wrote about her artistic response Erin described her response as an activity she had created for "students," but she did not specify which students she meant. She wrote, "...I realized that any student could be given these descriptions and come up with relatively different monsters" (Erin, 2/8/05). Erin went on to note that, even though the monsters in the book were described the same way, they all looked quite

different. This realization, she specified, is what led her to decide to focus on adjectives in her artistic response: “The most common adjective used was terrible and I was interested to see how each person would draw the word terrible.”

Erin also indicated in her written rationale that her artistic response would be most effective if, “...no one has read this book and therefore are not already biased to what the monsters look like” (Erin, 2/8/05). Her focus seemed to not only be on having students recognize what adjectives and descriptive phrases are, but also on getting them to talk about adjectives by holding, “...a small discussion...about why people used certain colors or textures or features and why they thought each person had different or similar characteristics as the book” (Erin, 2/8/05).

Teacher response to the written rationale – then.

When writing in response to Erin’s rationale and adjective activity, I first noted that I appreciated the way she intended to have students think carefully about the language in the book, but I also immediately expressed my concern that she had forgotten the core reason for the artistic response assignment, which was, “to promote understanding and conversation about the text as a piece of literature” (Knezek, 2/15/05). Instead of focusing on how adjectives contributed to an increased understanding of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), my impression was that what Erin described in her written rationale sounded, “...more like a study of adjectives...than it does a study of the book itself” Knezek (2/15/05). What she had written made it sound like Erin intended to use the text as a tool to teach adjectives. This contradicted the role response assignment (see Appendix B), which specified that an artistic response to the book must have *the text at its center*.

Because I was concerned about the focus of Erin's assignment, I responded to her by writing some ideas about how she might change that focus to one that was more literature-centered:

We know the monsters are key in the story, and I think you are beginning to ask people to think about how we notice that. Talk more about...why the monsters are important. This will lead to a greater understanding of the text – or may present a new perspective. (Knezek, 2/22/05)

While Erin had created something that her discussion group and/or future students could do in response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), her efforts seemed too loosely tied to the book.

Teacher response to the written rationale – now.

Looking back at Erin's response with the benefit of time, I now believe that there was more to her piece than I gave her credit for. While I focused entirely on what I perceived to be her desire to "teach" adjectives, I missed that she had noted the word "terrible" was of particular importance to the text. She wanted to see the ways her group members envisioned the word "terrible" and then compare what they had created to what was featured in the text. I might still have considered this effort to get group members to "visualize" an important term as a "lesson in adjectives" if Erin had simply stopped after asking group members to illustrate the word. However, I later recognized that she went a step farther when she asked group members to connect her artistic response back to the text in a way that I missed the first time I analyzed this response.

What Happened During This Discussion?: Examining Group Reactions to Artistic Response

Considering the teacher candidates' ideas.

As mentioned earlier, Erin brought her artistic response to the attention of her group members by following up on comments Lari had made. Erin noticed that Lari was focused on Sendak's illustrations, and those same illustrations had been what had prompted Erin to think about how *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) could be used to teach and discuss adjectives. As she began to talk about her artistic piece and how it connected to Lari's remarks, Erin seemed unsure about whether she should get her discussion group members to do the activity she had planned or just tell them about it.

Erin: I think it's funny you mentioned the drawings cause, um, in the artistic response, I used a couple quotes about them, "They roared their terrible roars and gnashed their terrible teeth and rolled their terrible eyes and showed their terrible claws." And so I thought it would be interesting, I don't really know how much time we've got, but I like got, some, for like you guys to do it, but like, to have the quote on a piece of paper and then everyone draw their own monster and ideally you wouldn't have seen these monsters, but they'd all be different, because terrible, is kind of an interesting adjective anyway and I liked how all of his monsters were different but they were sort of the same because they did the same stuff and it's just funny that [like...

Lari: [Right...

Erin: ...he was bad at drawing horses and so he drew, he drew [these...

Lari: [I know...

As Erin continued to talk she moved away from attempting to get her group members to participate in her adjective activity and toward describing how she envisioned the activity would work with a class of students.

Erin: And I also put like yellow eyes, so I don't know. It would be fun to do with a class cause they'd all have like yellow eyes [and

Lari: [...so many different things....especially if you like read it to them and didn't show them.

Erin: I would probably not even read it to them first. I'd probably just give them that line, the line, and on the page would be that line for them and whatever and have them draw it and then compare it to the book and compare it to all the other kids and why they chose, like this as being terrible, you know, why did you think that this represented terrible, eyes or something, you know? I just thought it was interesting because everyone would draw terrible in a different way.

As Erin finished speaking about her desire to see the word "terrible" expressed in different ways, Lari once again entered the conversation and agreed that it would be interesting to see the different depictions of the word "terrible." The majority of her commentary, however, centered on the research she had done on Sendak for her intertextual response, and she switched from discussing Erin's response and adjectives to speaking about the consistency she had seen in Sendak's illustrations in the various texts she had examined. After her remarks, there were about four seconds of silence before Kris asked Sara what she had done for her critical response. There was no further discussion of Erin's artistic response after this.

Considering the ways the teacher candidates engaged in the process of dialogue.

As Group D discussed Erin's artistic response (as detailed above), two people, Erin and Lari, carried the conversation. Interestingly, Erin initiated the conversation around her response based on what Lari had been talking about. While she never really invited her group members to participate in the activity she had planned for her response, Lari interacted with her as she described what she envisioned.

While both Erin and Lari found enough common ground to connect some of their comments, neither ever seemed to lose focus on her own area of interest as the discussion moved ahead. Because Erin's description of her response came out of a link she made to Lari's comments, there was a base in place for a rich, detailed building of information and understanding. That did not seem to happen. Instead, Erin kept coming back to her focus on the topic of visualizing a descriptive word and Lari continued to speak about Sendak's illustrations. They were participating in parallel strands of discourse with some common elements. For example, Erin talked about the *different* ways to express the word "terrible" and Lari connected to the term *different* as she moved the conversation to a focus on the consistency of Sendak's artwork across *different* titles. Erin had reiterated that she, "just thought it was interesting because everyone would draw terrible in a different way," but none of her group members attempted to actually try her activity. In the end, her artistic response faded into the background. Because of her interaction with Erin around the artistic response, however, Lari provided her group with information on how and why Sendak created the illustrations for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), along with some details about how his artwork was consistently recognizable in

the books she had investigated. Thus there were two central topics discussed when artistic response was covered in Group D: visualizing and Sendak's art.

The Large Group Discussion

After the small groups had discussed *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) I gathered everyone in class back together and asked them to share how the discussions had gone. I specifically asked for comments about the artistic responses in relation to how things went, but no one volunteered to speak about them. In fact, the transcript of this debriefing session featured a comment I made about how my request to see and hear about the artistic responses in the large group setting had made one teacher candidate look "horrified." Instead, the large group discussion centered on the importance of the role of facilitator in the groups. After class ended I wrote in my journal that I was disappointed no one had chosen to share their artistic responses, but that I understood why, for many of the teacher candidates, sharing their art felt much riskier than sharing their verbal comments. Most were not used to creating art for a college class and I felt they were nervous about showing others what they had created. I decided not to push them to do so because they were still new to the classroom environment and the people it contained. I wrote, "I think they will be willing to share their artistic responses once they begin to trust each other a bit more – after all, this was their first time discussing books in this way" (2/8/05).

Returning the Responses

Two weeks after the teacher candidates turned in their initial response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) I returned their written papers and shared some of what I had noted they had done successfully and unsuccessfully across all response roles.

I spoke to them about things that I had read that struck me as being exceptionally insightful and well done, and I spoke to them about difficulties I had come across for each type of response. I did this by reading anonymous examples from work done in class (only after asking for the teacher candidates' permission to share what they produced) and the comments I had made in response to those examples.

When it came to artistic response I focused on several different topics in order to help both the preservice teachers and me clarify the elements of that role. In the beginning of that discussion I noted how a couple of students had mentioned the art of the book early in their papers. I explained that this had made me nervous because, "...that's not what the artistic response person is supposed to do -- she's supposed to create something -- not analyze the art in the book" (2/22/05).

I continued on to explain that a high quality artistic response paper I had read contained not only a description of the art object that had been created (not the art in the book), but also a detailed reflection on why the object had been created in that way. The author of that paper, Claire, was a member of Group B, so her work was not profiled in this chapter. However, elements found in her paper helped me outline how one artistic respondent had both described her creation and explained why she chose to form it as she did: "The forest is central to Max's adventure, so (leaving any in-depth discussions of the forest primeval to another paper) I decided to structure my project in the shape of a tree" (Claire, 2/8/05).

Along with praising Claire's explanation for why she formed her artistic response in the way she did, I also noted the attention Claire paid to the story itself. I stated,

She's not talking about trying to teach cause and effect, she's not trying to teach about what....language you might use...to write about monsters yourself. She's talking about the book, and how she responded to the book, and she keeps coming back to key things in the book -- the energy, the sense of imagination, what was central in this forest connection. (Knezek, 2/22/05)

One final area of concern I mentioned on the day I returned papers was the teacher candidates' goals for the artistic responses. I explained that some of the responses I had received had basically attempted to retell the story verbatim, used the text as a tool to teach about something that really had nothing to do with comprehension of the text, or focused almost solely on students having fun as a result of the artistic response to the text. I explained that, while I appreciated the effort each person had put into their creations, "The thing that I would remind you of over and over again is that the point of this particular type of response is to promote deeper understanding of the text, to get new perspectives on the text. Those are the things that are really central to artistic response" (Knezek, 2/22/05). While this was not necessarily a bad description, it repeated the same things I had said when I first introduced the concept of artistic response, proving that I kept reverting to the same ways of talking about it. I did not know what else to say and, at that time, could give no further insight into what artistic response really was.

Looking Back

The telling case begun here offers a good illustration of the findings that emerged from the data gathered for this study. As I coded my data I noticed several common factors I was able to highlight. First, the students were often unsure about who was

supposed to “do” the artistic response if it was designed for a group. Erin had created an activity in which she planned on having her group members illustrate their visualizations of important words from *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), but, when she interacted with her group, she did not ask the participants to engage in the activity. Instead she described how she thought the activity could be done, and, as a result, her group members had no real concrete experiences with her artistic response.

Second, artistic response can be confused with responding to or reproducing the art in the book (e.g., the illustrations). Lari’s comments about the illustrations in Sendak’s book gave Erin the chance to talk about her artistic response, but there was never any clear division made between the topics. It was as if Lari and Erin thought that, if they were talking about the art of the book or if they reproduced the art in that book, those responses constituted with artistic response.

Third, the initial discussions that many group members had about artistic response never really evolved into full discussions. Instead, like Erin and Lari, most of the teacher candidates “reported” on what they had done as an artistic response and their group members responded with evaluative comments like, “That’s great!” Once the artistic response person had presented his or her role the conversation moved on to other topics.

Fourth, the conversation about artistic response was rarely integrated with the other responses group members discussed. In the case involving Erin and Lari, Lari kept speaking about her intertextual role response the entire time Erin was talking about her artistic response. While Erin made some connecting comments to Lari’s discussion of the text’s illustrations, she mostly summarized what she, Erin, had done. As was true in most of the discussions, there was no real sense of how to close the artistic response

portion of the dialogue; instead the comments of the artistic response person just faded away and were unlikely to resurface.

Clearly, the teacher candidates and I were wrestling with the concept of artistic response as the semester began and multiple factors contributed to that struggle. Most prominent were our confusions about the characteristics of artistic response and the ways in which we were supposed to talk about it. In the next chapter I will continue to follow what happened with Lari and some of the other members of Group D as the semester progressed. In doing so I will describe how preservice teachers' understanding of artistic response developed as time passed and they interacted with each other and with me in the social context of a classroom.

CHAPTER SIX

Artistic Response As Process

Introduction

Early on a Sunday afternoon, two days before the teacher candidates in TE 348 were scheduled to hold their first discussions, I received a panicked phone call from Lari, a member of Group D. Lari was upset because she thought she was supposed to create an artistic response for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), and while she and I quickly established that she was actually responsible for producing a textual response to the book, Lari was still eager to talk about her confusions surrounding the artistic response role. According to the notes I took on that day, Lari stated, “I don’t get what I am supposed to do for artistic response. I know I’m supposed to create something, but I’m not good at art...” (2/6/05).

Lari’s phone call captured the main problem many other preservice teachers first expressed when introduced to the concept of artistic response. Her willingness to talk through her concerns, however, was not common, and was, therefore, one of the qualities that made her the central figure in this dissertation. Her verbal contributions to the first large group discussion about the different forms of literary response, along with her comments concerning the artistic response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (shared in her discussion group -- Group D), were included in Chapters Four and Five. It is in Chapter Six, however, that I will begin to look more closely at Lari’s development within the context of her discussion group as an example of how one TE 348 preservice teacher came to understand artistic response.

Goals of Chapter

The goal of this chapter is to continue the development of one telling case introduced in Chapter Five – primarily featuring Lari and members of Group D – in order to describe how artistic responses to literature can move beyond the surface level types of responses detailed in that chapter. Those responses, which included an art object that attempted to represent the story or use it as a teaching tool, did not meet the course-described expectations for a response that “promotes understanding and conversation....more thoughtful and text-centered than a simple craft or activity that is loosely tied to the book...(Appendix B, p. 227). In this chapter, therefore, I will begin to explore whether or not one of this group’s responses created later in the semester was more thoughtful and text-centered than the one detailed in Chapter Five. I will do so by telling the story of what happened with artistic response when Lari shared her artistic response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) with the other members of her discussion group (Group D). *Voices in the Park* features four short first-person narratives, with each of the characters recounting a concurrent outing to the same park from a different perspective. In it a haughty, upper-class mother visits the park with Charles, her bored and lonely son. An unemployed, melancholy father visits the park with Smudge, his independent and outgoing daughter. The illustrations, which tell the tale in far greater detail than the text, feature many hidden images and relevant symbols. Through this account of Lari’s interactions with her group members about her artistic response to *Voices in the Park*, and the descriptions it provides, I will continue to address the following dissertation questions:

- Are there patterns to the characteristics/elements of oral or written language used by students when describing artistic response that I, as the TE 348 instructor, and the teacher candidates in some way (written acknowledgement, oral reinforcement, extension, etc.) recognize as comprising genuine artistic response – one that leads to deeper understanding/new perspectives?
- What roles did the teacher candidates and I play in facilitating the development of this deeper/new understanding?

As in Chapter Five, I will relate the characteristics of artistic response that emerge from the oral and written discourse produced by Lari and her group members. I will also continue to foreground the ways that preservice teachers engage with artistic response. This telling case includes data from my field notes, Lari's written work, my written response to that work, and the transcribed dialogue from Group D's discussion concerning Lari's artistic response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998).

"It's a deeper kind of thinking!": The Struggle Continues

In the previous discussion Lari and members of Group D had had about *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), Lari proved to be an active discussant. She was the group member who engaged most readily with Erin in a conversation about Erin's artistic response. In fact, comments Lari made about the illustrations in Sendak's book provided Erin with a way to introduce her response. Throughout their exchange, however, Lari never seemed to truly invest in Erin's idea. Instead, she kept coming back to the information she had found out about Sendak's illustrations. Indeed, as she continued to return to that information, Erin seemed to give up attempting to interest her in visualizing terms associated with Sendak's monsters. I found this interesting, especially when

considering how concerned Lari had been with artistic response prior to class being held. When Lari called me on the Sunday before the groups discussed *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), she admitted her confusion about artistic response and went on to ask, “Why couldn’t I just ask my group members to do something like draw pictures of monsters they might have imagined as children?” Even though it turned out she was actually responsible for the textual response to this book, I spoke with her for about thirty minutes, beginning with a question about how she thought asking her peers to reflect on their own childhood experiences in that way would help them to better understand or discuss the book. I did not want to discourage her, but I also wanted to hear evidence that she had considered the kind of thinking and discussion her artistic response would inspire in connection to the book. When she had no ready response to my question, I encouraged her to reflect upon what it was she was trying to accomplish with such an artistic response. We ended the conversation at that point, but I could tell she was still not at all sure about what artistic response was and she was frustrated by that fact. I, too, felt frustrated and spent the afternoon thinking and writing about the exchange and possible ways in which I might be able to more clearly express my own expectations for artistic response. About three hours later my phone rang again. Lari was on the other end of the line. “I get it now, Suzy, I get it! It’s a deeper kind of thinking! I just had to call and tell you. I get it. It’s a deeper kind of thinking about the book...” Even though her comments were very like my own, I was thrilled with Lari’s definition of artistic response as “a deeper kind of thinking about the book...” and was truly excited to see what she would produce when she created something in response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998).

What Was Created in Response to this Book: Examining Artistic Response Artifacts

The art object.

The art object Lari created in response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) was a picture book. She took “the words out of the text...” and created her own story, “...*Voices from Each Season...*,” a new version of the text that, she wrote, told, “...a story of four different seasons, and four different attitudes” (Lari, 2/27/05). The book was made out of five pieces of white cardstock that were bound together by three red ribbons. Each page, including the cover, featured a copy of an illustration from Browne’s book. The title, *Voices from Each Season*, was featured on the cover of the book along with an illustration of a flower in a mug (see Figure 3). Each of the following pages featured the name of one of each of the four seasons handwritten across the top of the page in large black letters. Under the name of the season Lari placed an illustration copied directly from Browne’s book (see Figure 6.1.).

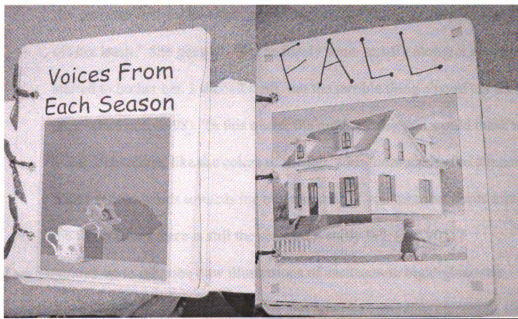


Figure 6.1: Lari’s artistic response, a picture book with illustrations copied from *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998).

The written rationale.

Lari began her written rationale for her artistic response by relating her conviction that Anthony Browne's illustrations were, "...deep, insightful and emotional..." (Lari, 2/27/05). She wrote that the illustrations worked to support the text in such substantial ways that she began to wonder what would happen if the text had no words. She was curious about what kind of story would be told if the words were removed. As a result, Lari decided to,

....take the words out of the text and create my own story, *Voices from Each Season*. This new version of the text tells a story of four different seasons, and four different attitudes. Each character brings life to a different season. (2/27/05)

Lari continued to describe her reasoning for creating her artistic response in her written rationale. She described how the original story described the attitude of the characters with words in the text.

For instance in the first voice, an elderly mother character states, "I let Victoria off her leash." She goes on, "Immediately some scruffy mongrel appeared and started to bother her. I shooed it off, but the terrible thing chased her all over the park" (Browne, 1998). In this quote, the mother, who you would think would be a warm character, like the colors of the fall, adds bitterness to the temperature with her cold words towards the other animal. If you take the words away from the illustrations there is still the sense of a chilly fall. (2/27/05)

Lari continued on to describe how illustrations of each season highlighted the personalities of each of the main characters and how, by removing the words, her version of Browne's story, "still unveiled itself with each turning page." She stated that she

found it fascinating that the book told a similar story with or without words and went on to describe why she chose each of the images she placed in her book. By closely examining those images alone, Lari argued, she could clearly see that,

Anthony Browne describes the voice of each character with different colors and images. Each character has its own attitude, each voice in this book fits its own season...The color used in each voice portrays a clear image of what season depicts each character's attitude, with or without words. (2/27/05)

Instructor response to the written rationale – then.

Lari stayed after class on the day her group discussed *Voices in the Park*. Because of our earlier conversations about the nature of artistic response, I was excited to talk with her about how things had gone. My excitement quickly abated when I saw the drawn look on her usually animated face. My field notes recorded what we talked about in the short conversation we had on that day. I wrote,

Lari said she still doesn't get artistic response. She thought she did, but she couldn't think of what to do. She couldn't stay and talk about it, but warned me that I would 'understand' when I read her rationale. I wonder what went wrong. Was there a problem with the response itself? Did her group members not engage? She had been so excited and really seemed to understand what artistic response was all about when she said it was "a deeper kind of thinking." (Knezek, 3/1/05)

After reading through Lari's written rationale for her response, I had some insight into what I thought must have troubled her. In my comments to her I wrote,

I see what you are saying about the “story” being told without words, but I am a bit puzzled about why this is so important. I see how you connected seasons, characters, and voices, but I am not certain how you would talk about this response in a way that would add greater understanding of, or a new perspective on, the text. Am I missing something? (Knezek, 3/22/05)

Lari’s rationale focused very heavily on how the illustrations in Browne’s text fully complemented the words. She saw this as an exceptional quality and wanted to draw attention to what she had noticed. Nevertheless, despite the considerable effort she put into thinking about what she wanted to portray, selecting particularly relevant illustrations and writing in detail about the process she went through in order to accomplish this task, Lari’s response and rationale failed to bring her any new insight into the book. After realizing this, I was deeply curious about what had happened when she shared her artistic response with the other members of her discussion group.

Instructor response to the written rationale – now.

After reviewing Lari’s response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) with the benefit of hindsight and data analysis, I still feel that her response does little more than focus attention on one particular aspect of the book – how its complex illustrations tell the story in as great, if not greater, detail than the text itself. That, however, is not an unimportant thing. In order to choose to do this response she had to pick what aspect of the text she wanted to highlight and by doing so she went beyond just retelling the tale verbatim. She was saying, “Pay attention to the illustrations. They matter.” Certainly her effort is “text-centered” in that respect, but it does little to expand understanding or make meaning with the text.

What Happened During This Discussion?: Examining Group Reactions to Artistic Response

Considering the students' ideas.

Erin, the person who had created an artistic response for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), was the facilitator for Group D's discussion of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). She began the group's consideration of this book by asking everyone to share what they thought about the book and whether they liked it or not. Early in the discussion, group members began to share insights and all agreed they really enjoyed the book. When they started to discuss what was especially likable about *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), most of the teacher candidates in Group D began to talk about the illustrations in the text and how they found them to be intriguing. Lari soon joined in this discussion, tying her artistic response to their comments about Browne's illustrations. I am quoting this at length below because it clearly shows how artistic response people tried to find ways to join the conversation about a text and how important their group members were in supporting and extending the contributions of the artistic response.

Sara: Yeah, I was just going to say, um, I initially read it...before we even started class, when I got my books, and I thought it was really weird. I was like, okay, but when you go back and read it again, you do find all these hidden things in the pictures and you really like start to understand the characters...I really liked the book.

Erin: Yeah. I thought it was exciting. I kept finding stuff and showing my roommates. I'd be like, "What do you see on this page?" They'd be like, "Oh, let me find it." I liked how, um, a whole bunch of stuff is hidden...I just kind of

went through and, uh, noticed certain characteristics of each voice, and, uh, one of the things that I was wondering was, if you look through the pictures, uh /// (*Erin turns pages in the book*) this one, like, second to last one, this one and then, um, ///....It's the exact same picture except completely different, because one is through Smudge's point of view and one is through the mom. And I was just kind of wondering what you guys thought about what that said about each different character, like the fact that they're so different.

Lari: Actually, that's what my artistic response was about, is about, um, how each character depicts....what the season's like in their voice. So like the mother character is supposed to be like a warm mother figure, but she's kind of chilly with the words that she uses. The little girl is more like a summer, upbeat, she looks on the brighter side of life. The father's....depressed, he shows signs of winter, and, so, that's actually what my artistic response was.

Notable here is the fact that Lari was not the only one who had focused on the illustrations in the book and on the notion that those illustrations were connected to the portrayal of each character's voice. Erin encouraged Lari to say more about this by inviting her to share her creation.

Erin: Well, why don't you go ahead and share with us what you did.

Lari: Um, I created a book called, *Voices from Each Season* and I color-copied all the pictures. And what I did was I just created each voice, it has a different season, so, the mother was fall, because all the pictures that relate to her voice, um, are in a fall-like sense, and I just cut them out and pasted them on pages....And I just thought it was interesting how, if you take the words away, it

still has the same meaning with each picture. Like, as far as the personality of the character, the illustrations show that, so....I copied each page without the words. So that's pretty much what it is./// It's just how it's a pretty similar story and how the...illustrations relate to the particular character in which that point-of-view and that perspective is taken from. So.

Lari's verbal description of her artistic response was followed by about eight seconds of silence. This made it seem, initially, like no one had anything to say in response to Lari's picture book and her rationale for creating it, but then her fellow group member, Kris, followed up on Lari's artistic response by connecting it to her textual response.

Kris: I had hit on that too with my textual response. I kind of got caught up in the pictures 'cause it's really hard to ignore that, but, um, I also noticed, which I'm sure you guys all did too, the different fonts that go through the different voices....And that really tells a lot, about, um, the characters. What I did in my paper, is I actually tried to find a font that matched up with the different voices, and I talked about how some of them are bold, which, you know, like, um, I think the father and Smudge are both [very bold...

Sara: [Uh-huh...

At this point the group's discussion veered away from Lari's artistic response as Sara began to share her intertextual response and what she had found out about Anthony Browne. They spoke for a while about a particular illustration in the book which showed a gorilla falling off of a building and how that may symbolize Browne's father's death, but no one had any specific information about whether or not this interpretation was correct. They then went on to talk about possible racial and socioeconomic issues

highlighted by the book in connection with the critical response. This led to other conversations about interpretations and what research they had found on the author and the book. Near the end of this discussion, and after a lengthy silence, Erin redirected the group back to the topic of illustrations and the portrayals of voice.

Erin: Well, is there anything else anyone wants to add, I mean?/////You all got the overall feel of everyone's voice and what the pictures meant?

Erin's last question was followed by another three seconds of silence. Then Kris reentered the discussion by noting that the theme might have had something to do with equality, and that, while readers might have initially gotten the idea that all the characters in the book were equal, they also had to notice how the mother doesn't learn anything over the course of the story. She stated that the mother was consistently played as a domineering individual, so she appreciated the way Lari's artistic response portrayed the hard nature of the mother's persona through the diamonds included in the corners of the page which featured an illustration of the mother. Lari agreed that this move had been purposeful, though not necessarily in the way that Kris had interpreted it.

Lari: Thanks. I tried to do that. I had snowflakes and I had the little suns, but I didn't have any leaves, so I just had to use just the diamonds in the spring and fall. That's my way of like, you know, doin' the Anthony Browne thing....throwin' something in there that's not expected, but that illustrates the character.

There were about ten seconds of silence that followed Lari's comment, but this time she did not let conversation about artistic response fade away. Instead of speaking about the

object she had created, or her rationale for that object, Lari instead began to talk about the difficulties she had had with the process of developing the response.

Lari: I really had a hard time with the artistic response, it's [like...

Erin: [I think] it's, // I had it last time and I think it was really [hard.

Lari: [...It was] difficult for me, I just////I spent a lot of time on that project and, in fact, I expected it to turn out totally different and when I got done, with the amount of money that I spent in color copies and all that work I put into cutting each page, and like, I just wanted to cry, cause it did not turn out the way I expected. You know what I mean? Just, I don't know. After I did my analysis of it and, I don't know. It just wasn't the impact I was going for. I wanted it to touch a little deeper, and I go into that somewhat in my writing, but I guess -- I don't know. It was kind of frustrating. My fiancée's like, "It's great." I'm like, "It sucks! What are you talking about?"

Kris: That's how most of my art projects turn out.

Kris' final comment in this section of dialogue was an important one. From what she said here it can be reasoned that she equated artistic response with an "art project." While it is not clear from this data exactly what she thought an "art project" was, it clearly had laughable and negative connotations for her and for many members of her discussion group. Kris' comment about how "all" of her "art projects" turned out the way that Lari's artistic response did provided evidence that there was still confusion about what artistic response was supposed to be and that prior experience likely played a role in determining the fearful way teacher candidates approached artistic response.

After Kris' comment the whole group burst into laughter, my voice was heard announcing that I wanted everyone to finish up their discussions, and the tape recorder was turned off. Before the end of the session, however, Lari had gotten a chance to begin describing her frustrations with artistic response. Most importantly, she had expressed her concern that her response did not have the impact she had hoped for -- that it hadn't been as deep as she had wanted.

Considering the ways the students engaged in the process of dialogue.

In Group D's first small group discussion only Erin and Lari were active participants in the conversation about artistic response. In this second discussion, however, all group members (minus comments from the group member who chose not to participate in this study) contributed remarks that connected in some way to Lari's response. Erin's original open-ended question about her peers' impressions of the book led to a discussion of the illustrations and to Sara's comments about how they helped her "understand the characters." This created a perfect opening for Lari to express how her picture book focused on that very topic. Lari's comments then allowed Kris to bring in one aspect of the textual response and the fact that it had also caused her to focus on differences between the characters' voices. Lari did not expand upon this topic, however, and, when Sara moved the conversation away from the artistic response and on to what she had found out about Anthony Browne, neither Lari nor any of the other small group participants protested. It was the facilitator of the group, Erin, who later brought the group's attention back to characterization and illustrations when she asked if all of them had gotten the, "overall feel of everyone's voice, and what the pictures meant?"

Erin's question prompted Kris to discuss how the artistic response had reinforced the notion that her initial impressions of the characters had been wrong. At first, Kris noted, she thought Browne was trying to show that all the characters were equals, but she realized that her own assessment of the dominant nature of the mother's character contradicted that notion of equality. Then Lari's artistic response reinforced her new notion that the mother was consistently hard throughout the book and that she thought herself above the others.

Through her comments about Lari's book and its representation of the mother in *Voices in the Park*, Kris emphasized an aspect of the book that Lari had not discussed in either her written response or her oral comments concerning the response. By connecting to this previously unnoticed aspect of Lari's artistic response, Kris did two things: she created a space for Lari to expand upon her comments and, in effect, she forced Lari and her response back to center stage in the discussion. While Kris' interpretation of the diamond cutouts (they represented the consistently hard nature of the mother portrayed in the book) proved to be different than Lari's reasons for including them (she wanted to represent the season but had no leaf-shaped cutting tool), this exchange removes doubt that artistic responses can inspire detailed and insightful discussions. In this case, however, comments about the art object caused Lari to reflect on the difficulty she had moving through the process of creating an artistic response. While Lari's thoughts did not prompt talk about new perspectives or deeper meanings in the text, they did allow for insight into the way Lari viewed artistic response and what she thought about as she tried to create something that fulfilled that vision. It was unfortunate that the tape and discussion session ended so soon after Lari had begun to discuss these topics.

Looking Back

By continuing the telling case begun in Chapter Five I have been able to illustrate how the findings that emerged from the data gathered for this study showed a developmental progression in how some preservice teachers came to understand artistic response. In Chapter Five I highlighted some of the characteristics of artistic response and the ways that preservice teachers (along with their instructor) initially engaged with artistic response. In this chapter I begin to show how those characteristics and kinds of engagement evolved as the teacher candidates and I continued to interact with and around artistic response and each other.

As with Chapter Five there are several common factors identified in the coding of my data that I was able to feature here. First, once the students began to comprehend that their artistic responses were supposed to do more than simply represent the story, they attempted to find ways to show “deeper meaning” or “new perspectives” concerning the text. Still unclear about what those terms really meant in connection with artistic response, they were more reflective but still confused about what the end product of an artistic response should be. Lari spoke on several different occasions about how she wanted her artistic response to reflect a “deeper kind of thinking.” When she attempted to create something that showed that kind of thinking, however, she seemed to lose focus on what she thought was important about the text. She got across the idea that she thought illustrations were vital, but she couldn’t communicate why that was such a critical point for her to make.

Second, as the preservice teachers began to think more carefully about the reasons why they were creating their responses, they became more focused on the process of

creating the artistic response than they were on the art object itself. Lari spoke in detail about the challenges she had faced as she gathered materials and purposely set forth to create a wordless variant of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). While her creation fell short of her goal, it is important to note that she had a goal and could inform others about how she had attempted to meet it through the making of her artistic response.

Third, other group members played important roles in initiating and maintaining engagement with artistic response throughout the course of a group discussion. Interestingly, it was Erin, the person who had been responsible for artistic response for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), who invited Lari to share her artistic response for *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). Later, Erin, by making a comment about how she had found artistic response difficult, enabled Lari to talk about her struggles with artistic response and why she was dissatisfied with her art object. It was Kris, however, who played the biggest role in keeping engagement with artistic response alive. By commenting that she had appreciated the way Lari's artistic response portrayed the mother in the book, Kris invited Lari back into the discussion. Lari then remained in the conversation, speaking about the artistic response role until the time allocated ran out.

Looking Across: From Discussion One to Discussion Two

In both Chapters Five and Six I have carefully delineated the patterns of characteristics and engagement found in the oral or written language used by teacher candidates and myself when we described or reacted to artistic responses. Through considering these patterns I hoped to determine if there were ways that both the students and I (through written acknowledgement, oral reinforcement, extensions, and connections) would recognize "genuine" artistic responses. This step of noting how and

when artistic responses are considered genuine and recognizable is a vital one in answering the research question guiding this study (How do preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding?).

In Chapter Five, Erin's artistic response was originally intended to get group members (or her future students) to visualize key words in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). While she did not get members engaged, perhaps because of her confusion about how to accomplish that engagement, it was clear that her original intent was to require hands-on participation from group members. She wanted her peers to draw and visualize in order to fully experience her artistic response. In contrast, Lari's picture book, representing the four seasons and four characters found in *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), did not require any active physical participation from group members – beyond the turning of pages -- but she definitely wanted them to engage with her verbally. She wanted her response to have an “impact.”

Chapter Five indicated Erin received little commentary from her group members when she introduced her artistic response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). Lari was virtually the only person who spoke with Erin about her visualization activity and only seemed to do so in an effort to continue to speak about the illustrations in the book, effectively ending Erin's efforts. Meanwhile, in this chapter Lari began the discussion on her artistic response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) in much the same way Erin had. She connected her comments to those made by group members Sara and Erin and spent time talking about how she found the illustrations to be descriptive of every voice in the book. Kris built upon Lari's comments by noting that the text did the same thing through font. Sara then turned the conversation away from the artistic

response, and it was not until Erin asked about illustrations and voice, and Kris pointed out ways the artistic response reinforced her interpretation of the text, that Lari reentered the conversation and said more about the artistic response. At that point, however, she ceased talking about the object she had created and began to focus more on the process she went through in creating it and how difficult that process had been. Because time ran out there is no way to predict what might have been discussed in connection with Lari's process-oriented comments.

In Chapter Five there was some evidence that Erin's artistic response connected back to the text in ways that would expand or create meaning. While I initially thought her artistic response had actually moved away from the text in that it used the text as a tool to teach about adjectives, I later noted that I had overlooked the visualization aspect of her response. In the current chapter, however, there is evidence that Lari's response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) accomplished something Erin's response did not. Lari selected particular portions of the story to represent to her peers, and she both wrote and spoke about why she had done so. While her response fell short of her expectations, she exhibited a desire to do more and understand more.

This chapter began with Lari's phone call and followed her as she moved through the difficulties she had clarifying what artistic response was and what she needed to do to produce one. Her distress at her response's failure to meet her expectations was palpable, and it was not a failure she alone experienced. While some preservice teachers had, like Lari, come to the conclusion that they needed to reflect carefully on how and why they were creating art in response to literature, few had found ways to make their new understandings public. The students and I were still working our way toward something

more concrete, more universally clear. In the next chapter I will follow what happened with artistic response as Lari and the members of Group D discussed their first novel. In doing so I will continue to describe how preservice teachers' understanding of artistic response was developing over time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Artistic Response as Social Experience

Introduction

Before she attempted to create an artistic response Lari had told me she understood that type of response as a “deeper kind of thinking.” This statement fit well with my own notion of what the objectives for artistic response should be: to promote a new perspective on the text or to further a deeper understanding of the text. One notable difference in how we were speaking of this response type was that Lari defined the response *itself* as a deeper kind of thinking. I saw the response as an art object that would *promote* discussion and, as a result, an in-depth or new understanding of the text. These differing definitions once again illustrate how, almost half way through the semester, the teacher candidates and I were still not thinking of artistic response in the same way. Why hadn’t I picked up on this confusion and made it visible to the teacher candidates?

When Lari described artistic response as she did, I never asked her to tell me what she meant by “a deeper kind of thinking.” I never asked her how she would know when she had created a response that represented that kind of thinking. I simply assumed she got it – whatever “it” was. The formal description of the artistic response role Lari had received in class (See Appendix B) asked for a thoughtful, text-centered response that promoted understanding and conversation. In my oral introduction to the response I noted again and again that I was looking for responses that promoted deeper understanding of, or new perspectives on, the text. But what did *I* mean when I said I wanted to see evidence of a “deeper understanding” or “new perspectives,” and how would both the teacher candidates and I know either had been achieved? This was a

fundamental part of my dissertation question, but I still did not ask Lari to clarify what she thought of as “deeper” thinking. Why? Was it possible that I did not push her to say more because I still didn’t know how to clearly share my own thinking on the topic? This was the type of dilemma that led me to believe inquiry into the nature of artistic response was necessary. After I finished teaching the course and began to analyze the field notes, transcriptions, art objects, written rationales, and remarks made in response to those rationales, I knew I needed to find a way to code for evidence of the “deeper understanding” or “new perspectives” artistic response was supposed to promote. Before I could do that, however, my dissertation questions made it clear that I should be able to ascertain factors both the preservice teachers and I identified as being associated with “real” or “successful” artistic responses.

As I moved through the data associated with the discussions of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) and *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) and decided which artistic responses best exemplified the repetitive characteristics and patterns I was seeing, I began to identify “deeper” understandings as those which went beyond surface-level retellings and summaries, past using the text to teach topics (including those topics loosely related to the story), and even further than more advanced summaries or retellings that explained why it was important to pay attention to specific events in the story. All of these elements were evident in the data I analyzed and included in this dissertation for the first two discussions. However, I was definitely looking for something more.

Along with my desire to see “deeper” understandings of the text reflected through art and the discussion of that art, I repeatedly told the preservice teachers that artistic responses could also offer “new perspectives” on the books. In planning for the analysis

of the data I had collected, I assumed it would be easy to recognize when discussants and respondents were moved to see texts in new ways. I anticipated they would say things like “I never thought about it that way before,” and I would then code for a new perspective having been reached. As I searched through the discussion transcriptions of the first two books, however, there was no evidence of artistic respondents or their group members reacting in this way. Instead, they either complimented the work or they noted how the “assigned” responses were similar to their own. They did not claim to have changed their minds about anything or to have seen things differently.

Therefore, as I proceeded with the description of the third group discussions, I had already noted how most preservice teachers in TE 348 initially interpreted artistic response as a way to represent or reproduce the story they read. I had also found in Lari a teacher candidate who exemplified how, after initial artistic responses were shared, some preservice teachers moved beyond a notion of basic reproduction and focused more on what the artistic response, and the process of creating that artistic response, meant to them in connection with the text. Most importantly, Lari had pointed out that her focus on product was not enough. She stated that she had analyzed her response and found that it didn’t “touch deeper” and that it didn’t have the “impact” she had hoped for. When I had searched for evidence of the deeper thinking and understanding I spoke about in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, Lari’s comment about impact made me question whether or not artistic response could be considered successful until it impacted the thinking of others. Lari had certainly indicated this was the case. She initially felt that *she* had command of how artistic response and its associated process could help her think in more complex ways about a text, but that she had failed in her attempt to inspire this type of

reaction in her peers. Later, she didn't seem to realize how much peer interaction had helped her, either. Lari did not seem to recognize the way that Kris responded so accurately to her distress by equating artistic response to an "art project."

Goals of the Chapter

As with Chapter Six, the goal of this chapter is to continue following and exploring one of the cases introduced in Chapter Five – the Case of Lari (and Group D) – in order to describe how artistic responses to literature can move beyond surface level and process-oriented types of responses. This chapter focuses on data gathered in association with the third book discussed in TE 348, *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Munoz Ryan (2000). In this book, set during the Great Depression, a wealthy young Mexican girl, Esperanza, loses everything of monetary value upon her father's death. Esperanza and her mother, Ramona, are forced to leave their home and accept an invitation to move with their former servants (Hortensia, Alfonso, and their son, Miguel) to California. There Esperanza, who grieves for the grandmother (Abuelita) she left behind, struggles to quell her expectations for privileged treatment as she learns to become a migrant laborer.

I approached data gathered in connection with *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) with the same dissertation questions that I had for the previous two discussions. I was looking for patterns and characteristics that helped to delineate artistic responses that promoted new or deeper ways of thinking about the book. I was also watching for factors that influenced those responses, including my own role as a TE 348 instructor. There was a difference, however, in the way that I thought about the data based on *Esperanza Rising*. In a large group discussion of the book, Lari, who was featured in Chapters Four and Five, and who acted as the artistic respondent of record for Group D in Chapter Six,

noted that the artistic creation from her group had been special. She asked the respondent, Sara, to share the poem she had created with the whole class. After Sara did so, the class burst into spontaneous applause and many people were in tears. Because I remembered these events and saw them as especially interesting, I hoped that I would see evidence of deeper or new ways of thinking about *Esperanza Rising*, and that these would be reflected in the transcriptions, written rationales and responses to those rationales, field notes, and art objects associated with the story. Knowing that this hope might influence what I would see in the data, I approached it with the same set of questions I had previously coded for, and I verified my findings by having another former instructor establish an interrater reliability rate of 94% agreement on the coding included in this study. It was important that I guard against my memories of the *Esperanza Rising* discussion interfering with the accurate coding and interpretation of its associated data.

In their written rationales for, and discussions of, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), in Chapter Five group members represented in this study presented surface-level responses to the text. In the case presented in Chapter Six, Lari had begun to work beyond the surface level. In this chapter I explore a response created later in the semester and discuss whether it was more thoughtful and text-centered than those detailed in Chapters Five and Six. I recall the incident that happened when Sara, a member of Group D, shared her artistic response to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) in both small and large group settings, and I focus specifically on how Lari reacted to Sara's response. In doing so, I plan to describe the way one preservice teacher, Lari, came to understand artistic response within the context of TE 348.

Deeper Understanding through Poetry: The Telling Case Continues

As we approached the time set aside for discussions of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), Lari had already emerged as a teacher candidate who was deeply engaged with children's literature and the concept of artistic response to literature. Because of her consistent efforts to understand that concept, and because I remembered her role in an exciting large group reaction to an artistic response, I was eager to see if there was evidence for how her understanding might have grown and changed as Group D moved on to discuss *Esperanza Rising*. During that discussion Lari was the group facilitator and was in charge of bringing in a personal response to the text. Sara was responsible for the artistic response to *Esperanza Rising* in Group D.

What Was Created In Response To This Book: Examining Artistic Response Artifacts

The art object.

As her artistic response to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), Sara created a poem entitled *Esperanza Rises*. Inspired by Maya Angelou's (1978) poem *And Still I Rise*, Sara's piece traced the life of Esperanza as she moved from her privileged life to one filled with challenges. *Esperanza Rises* was written in the first person so the narrator of the poem was Esperanza herself. Sara had noted that this was a deviation from the novel which is voiced by an outside narrator. The first person viewpoint expressed in Sara's poem asks readers to see directly from Esperanza's perspective, whereas the novel allows them a more distant view. While the arch of her poem followed directly the plot of the novel, Sara not only retold important events, she also clarified why those events were significant and noted their impact on Esperanza (see Figure 7.1).

Esperanza Rises

Inspired by Maya Angelou's And Still I Rise

*Viewed as a young queen and adored by every one who surrounds my life
Living on El Rancho De la Rosas, which would one day be mine
I know not of mountains and valleys with their lows and highs
Carefree, young, and light-hearted like a beautiful bird in the spring skies, I rise*

*Nothing could go wrong in these days to come
I dream of the day when I can become la patron
Life is great and my family is healthy, wealthy and wise
I feel like a feather in the wind, because of it I rise*

*I never thought things could have been too good to be true until Papa died
Suddenly my house went up in flames as I wondered, why this couldn't be a lie
My life is in shambles and all I have are roses, dolls and memories of my father to cherish
Like air in the atmosphere I rise, and not perish*

*You thought my life was over and so did I
Because the person who wants to take my mom's hand in marriage is an uncle I despise
I wish I could wake up from this nightmare, I wish I could just go back in time
Nothing could be worse than this so still I rise*

*On the ride to America I gain a valuable lesson from making a small girl cry
Then I learn to cook and clean, mama gets sick, and I long to hear her laugh and see her eyes
By Our Lady's grace mama comes home, although weak her strength is revived
I am learning that I too now am a peasant and although I seem low, I rise*

*Abuelita reunites with us and Miguel's prophecy seems so right
He and I lay and listen with our ear to the earth as day returns from night
As a kite set loose in the sky I allow myself to be taken away and fly
Who would have known that hope alone could make Esperanza rise*

Figure 7.1: Sara's artistic response, a poem about Esperanza's life inspired by Maya Angelou's (1978) *And Still I Rise*.

The written rationale.

Sara began the written rationale for her poem by stating that she thought of Angelou's poem before she even read *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000). She noticed that the titles of both works utilized the word rise and so approached Ryan's novel with the

prediction that she would see similarities in the themes. Upon reading the novel, she found reasons to conclude her expectation had been correct.

As I read the book it became more evident to me why this poem was the first thought that came to mind. The story took me (as the reader) through many mountains and valleys, just as it did Esperanza. Yet, I still had a feeling that in the end she and her mom would prevail through all of their hardships. Maya Angelou's poem, *And Still I Rise*, lingered in the back of my mind throughout the entire book and it was the inspiration for the piece that I wrote for my artistic response. (Sara, 3/22/05)

Sara did two things in this portion of her rationale that added to the complexity of her artistic response. She included an intertextual element, connecting the novel to a familiar poem through common terminology. Because this connection was initially based on titles and the sense that there would be a happy ending to the novel, it may have seemed a superficial move, but Sara then went on to see if her predictions about happy endings and common themes were correct. She wrote, "Due to the suspense that I was kept in by Ryan, I often had to question if I was I right in thinking that in the end things would be fine" (Sara, 3/22/05).

As suggested in the description of the art object, Sara's poem is written in a way that gives readers insight into the main character's thoughts. In her written rationale Sara discussed her reasons for narrating the poem in this way.

I have written it as if I am writing from the perspective of Esperanza through a narrative poem. The order in which events occur in the story are organized the same way throughout the poem. I brought in important thoughts, perceptions, and

feelings in addition to the events in the book. I also decided to weave in my own interpretations of some of the thoughts. (3/22/05)

Sara's intent was to highlight Esperanza's perspective by detailing what she saw as key elements of the story.

In her description of the process she went through creating her poem Sara also noted that she had included her own perspective. She went on to say that her choice of poetry for the creation of the art object had a great deal to do with the fact that it was a medium that allowed her to include her own explanations and emotions in connection with the text.

...for my response I could have interpreted my thoughts through pictures, a collage, a model or many other forms. But, for my artistic response I chose to write a poem because when I am deeply affected by something, whether good or bad, the best thing I have found for me to do is to get it out on paper. I am not a person who can just sit down and write because there has to be much emotion associated with it in order for it to allow me to become "poetic". This book definitely grabbed and held my attention from beginning to end. I laughed, cried, was relieved, felt pride (for Esperanza) as well as went through her mountains and valleys with her. In the end I gained a valuable lesson: Do not ever be afraid to start over. (Sara, 3/22/05)

In this portion of her analysis, Sara once again referenced another form of response. She wrote about her personal response to the poem – how she reacted to it in emotional ways. She stated it was her personal connection to Esperanza's journey, and the feelings that accompanied that journey, that allowed her to write her poem.

After reflecting on her strong affective response to the story, and how that response triggered her choice of medium for her artistic response, Sara wrote about how the intertextual connections she saw between *And Still I Rise* and *Esperanza Rising* did not end with the titles and happy endings. She included references to specific lines from Angelou's poem which inspired the writing of her poem by helping her to connect more deeply with Esperanza and her story.

"You may trod me in the very dirt but still, like dust, I'll rise" (Angelou, 1978). This particular quote from Angelou's poem gives me a sense of how Esperanza may have felt when her house burnt down or when her mom had Valley fever. The dirt symbolizes the ashes from her burnt house and its contents or the dust that settled in her mother's lungs after a dust storm. The quote...motivated me to write the entire fifth stanza of my poem. The dirty peasant girl on the train, the dust Esperanza learned to sweep, and the dust that caused Ramona's sickness -- all have an association to dirt and dust -- but dust rises above its circumstances.

Sara went on to describe how, like the narrator of Angelou's poem, and like the dust in Ryan's novel, Esperanza found ways to move through terrible difficulties and then rise above them. Sara explained that even the most drastic circumstances could not stop Esperanza from moving forward. In her final written comments, she reflected on how Angelou's poem, Ryan's novel, and her own poem all communicated the same message, but that they did it in different ways. Her poem, unlike the novel, included intimate, first-hand perspectives similar to those she saw in Angelou's poem. Sara wrote that she hoped by sharing her poem she would provide others with direct access to Esperanza's thoughts

and feelings so that they could better understand her determination that “nothing was going to stop her from flourishing...that is the sense that I would like others to gain from my piece” (Sara, 3/22/05).

Instructor response to the written rationale.

My written remarks to Sara’s poem focused on two things. I noted the way her response had impacted both me and the other students in class by writing, “Your poem took my breath away – and it was obvious when you read it aloud in large group that many others were similarly affected” (Knezek, 3/29/05). While I wasn’t exactly sure why we had all reacted to Sara’s poem as we did, I did indicate that the way she incorporated other forms of response into her artistic piece had caught my attention. I wrote that she had created an art object that contained, “a beautiful combination of personal and intertextual responses,” but did not include any comments about why I thought that was important or whether or not I saw inclusion of other forms of response as indicators of a high quality artistic response. My written comments to Sara were quite brief and offered mostly praise.

What Happened During The Small Group Discussion?: Examining Group Reactions to Artistic Response

Considering the students’ ideas.

Lari was the facilitator for Group D during their discussion of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000). Early in their conversation Lari asked group members how they felt about Esperanza’s journey over the course of the novel. She stated that she felt Esperanza had started out as a “spoiled brat,” but that by the end of the story Esperanza had truly changed (3/22/05). Several group members, including Erin and Sara, responded that they

perceived Esperanza had changed, too, and they thought there were specific reasons for those changes. Sara spoke about how Esperanza had strong role models in her mother and grandmother. She pointed out they were never cruel to others and that they did not at all shy away from hard work in the ways that Esperanza did. She noted that they were role models who rose above their change in circumstances. Erin discussed how another female character, Marta, had pushed Esperanza to do things Esperanza thought she could not do. Erin felt that Marta, while not a true friend to Esperanza, was an example of how strong and brave women can be and thus served as another kind of role model for Esperanza.

As this discussion of Esperanza's personal journey continued, Lari posed another question to the group in reference to Sara's comment about Esperanza's mother and grandmother rising above their difficulties. This question provided Sara with an opportunity to introduce her artistic response to the book, and Sara took that opportunity.

Lari: Um, you had brought up the question about the mother and grandmother, or you had mentioned something about them rising...I was wondering if *Esperanza Rising* -- the title -- actually meant Esperanza rising as a person from being a selfish little girl to being this more mature and understanding, family-oriented person or if it actually meant rising in her status...////

Sara: For [me...

Lari: [...in society?]

Sara: ...Well, for me,] I wrote a poem for my artistic response and like the first thing I thought of when I read the um, the title, was, *Still I Rise*, by Maya

Angelou, so...I took that poem and I kind of like, took a verse from that poem and

wrote my poem. And it takes a lot for me to actually write a poem. I have to be very upset. I have to be overcome with some sort of emotion to write a poem, so I thought this book was really good because I wrote a poem about it.

As Sara spoke her voice shook and she ended up laughing. Her group members responded initially by laughing along with her, but they quickly stopped and they encouraged her to share her poem, even though they recognized it was emotional in nature.

Lari: Share it!

Erin: I'd like to hear it.

Sara: [Okay. It might not be that good.]

Lari: [If you're going to cry, I'm going] to [cry.]

Kris: [If you cry, I'm going to cry.]

(This exchange was followed by more laughter.)

Sara: Okay, *Esperanza Rises*....*(Sara continued on to read her entire poem aloud to her group members.)*

Lari: That's beautiful. That's awesome...

Erin: [Yeah.]

Lari: [...That rocks.]

(Loud clapping was interspersed among the comments of group members found above and below.)

Sara: [Thank you.]

Kris: [Can I have a] copy of it?

Sara: Are you serious?

Kris: Yeah, no, I am.

(Talking overlapped here and was indiscernible.)

Sara: Sure. I'll email it to you.

(Talking once again overlaps and was indiscernible. This talking was followed by laughter.)

Lari: Any other points anyone wants to bring up? No? I have one more question for you. So if you do, bring them up, if not, then I'll just ask my question.

After Sara read her poem and her group members responded with praise, applause, and laughter, the conversation moved away from the poem. When Lari, as facilitator posed her question about whether or not anyone had other points they wanted to bring up, Kris responded that she wanted to talk about power, race, and gender in the book. For the last few minutes of the discussion the group members delved into those topics and Sara's voice was not heard again, except when she briefly agreed with a point Lari made. The conversation ended when Lari said, "Nice job ladies. High fives everybody!" Just before the recorder was turned off the group members could be heard slapping hands together in high fives and making cheering noises.

Considering the ways the students engaged in the process of dialogue.

As facilitator, Lari played a key role in initiating the discussion of Sara's artistic response. By asking about what the title *Esperanza Rising* meant, Lari provided Sara with a perfect segue for explaining her artistic response. Lari based her question on something she had heard Sara say earlier in the discussion. She noted that Sara had spoken about how Esperanza's grandmother and mother had risen above their trials and tribulations by accepting their new status, but she wanted to know what Sara thought

about how Esperanza changed over time. She even directed her question to Sara by saying, "...you had brought up the question about the mother and grandmother, or you had mentioned something about them rising..."

Sara immediately responded to Lari's prompt by stating that her artistic response was related to the notion of "rising" because it was inspired by Angelou's poem. She also told group members that, as a result of reading the book and feeling very connected to Esperanza's journey, she had been in an emotional place when she wrote the poem. Her group members' responded to Sara's comments with laughter and supportive remarks. They encouraged her to read the poem and let her know it was safe to do so by telling her they would cry with her if she cried. This turned out to be unnecessary, as Sara did not cry as she read the poem, but her group members once again let her know they appreciated her response when they reacted to the poem with applause and a request for a copy.

There is not doubt that Sara's peers were supportive of her artistic response, but no one went on to question her more about why she had created it or what she thought it offered in terms of understanding the book in new or deep ways. Sara did not offer any dialogue about these elements either, even though she had written extensively in her rationale about the choices she had made and how she hoped the resulting piece would impact her group members. As with the group's early discussion of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), discussion of the artistic response died quickly and, unlike the discussion of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), no one brought it back up again, even in an indirect way. If the class had ended at that point, it would be impossible to say that Sara's multi-layered artistic response had impacted her group members in any

significant way. However, class continued with a large group discussion of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), during which members of Group D reintroduced the topic.

What Happened During The Large Group Discussion?: Examining Group Reactions to Artistic Response

Considering the students' ideas.

Previous attempts I had made at trying to get the teacher candidates to talk about artistic responses in large group had fallen rather flat. I reflected in my field notes after our large group discussion of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) that in that class I had been “determined to get them talking about those responses, so I used the work of the artistic respondent in the group I had sat in on, Group C, as an example for the others to look at. I also called on the respondent, Carrie, to clarify the meaning behind her art object” (Knezek 3/23/05).

Suzy: Um, so we're going to talk for just a second about *Esperanza Rising* and what you thought. One of the things that I was able to see today was this artistic response...made for the group that I was sitting in on. And in this particular piece ...we see a blanket in the background that represents the one Esperanza was crocheting...And we see this path almost throughout her life which...Can you describe what you told us before?

Carrie: Um, well um, I started off with the grapes and how her initial life revolved around the grapes, her and her family. It was all about the grapes and, in a sense, it was all about Esperanza, 'cause she's an only child and she's self-centered...And then she starts, it goes through...her life and... she works with the potatoes, but it's still just about her. She works with the potatoes so she can make

money to save her mother, not necessarily to support the rest of her new family. And as she goes on through...each season, it becomes more and more about the whole community and her new family.

Suzy: So what we have here is a representation of Esperanza and the changes that she goes through, basically, in the book, um, from a spoiled self-centered person to a person who is much more aware and mature by the end of the book. One of the things that I really liked, though, and I wanted to ask you about was about when we were having a conversation about this and your description included the fact that it wasn't///simple, that it was a messy journey.

I went on to describe how Group C had discussed Carrie's collage and found it to be symbolic of Esperanza's journey in many ways. Carrie, I stated, had pointed out how Esperanza's life was very neat in the beginning, but that things began to get messy as time passed. She had said that she deliberately chose to portray the blanket Esperanza was crocheting as one that contained clashing colors and imperfections because she

noticed that Esperanza had choice taken away from her in many ways, so she was putting together this blanket that was her life in the best way that she knew how.

So, lots of colors are thrown together in a really haphazard way. (Carrie, 3/22/05)

I went on to say that I thought Carrie's collage, and her focus on the blanket's imagery, did an exceptional job of describing Esperanza's journey. After pausing for a few seconds to see if someone would respond to what I had said, I continued by saying, "I'm wondering if other people had similar conversations where people talked about Esperanza as the focus...Could you share with us a little bit?" Right after I posed my question Lari entered the conversation by saying, "We had a great discussion. I just want to say our

group rocks.” There was a great deal of laughter in the class and I commented that I had noticed the high fives and heard the applause. I asked Lari to tell us what had gone so well. She replied, “It was just, it was a great discussion about this text and we all enjoyed it. We talked about power, the gain of power, the loss of power.”

While I encouraged Lari to tell more details about the discussion, I wrote in my field notes that

I was disappointed that her reaction was not about an artistic response, but I hadn’t asked specifically for information on artistic response, so I didn’t feel like I could cut her off – especially since I was really curious about what had gone so well. (Knezek, 3/23/05)

Because I didn’t push for the focus to be on artistic response, Lari encouraged her group member, Kris, to speak about the critical response she had created. Kris did so, noting how *Esperanza Rising* featured some characters who experienced both the loss and gain of power. I asked her to clarify whether she was talking only about socioeconomic power, or if she also meant personal power, but Kris had no response. There were several moments of silence in the large group discussion following my question, and in my field notes I wrote that I was “just about to try to clarify what I meant by personal versus socioeconomic power,” (Knezek, 3/23/05) when Lari entered the discussion again, this time noting that her group had also had a great artistic response. In my field notes I wrote that while I hesitated to drop the idea of asking Kris to clarify her point, I was so eager to hear about artistic responses I let it go. Lari went on to prompt Sara to share her artistic response with the large group.

Lari: If Sara feels like sharing, I would really like everyone to hear this because it's beautiful.

Suzy: I would love to see it Sara, [but only if...

Sara: [It's a poem.]

Suzy: Would you...feel comfortable reading, because [if...]

Sara: [I mean] I can read it, but I tend to read fast when I'm nervous, so I'm going to try to slow down, but it was inspired by Maya Angelou's *And Still I Rise*.
Um, *(Sara proceeds to read her poem.)*

Lari: Isn't that, beautiful?!

(The class burst into spontaneous applause. My field notes from the day after this discussion, 3/23/05, indicated that at least five students were in tears.)

Suzy: Okay, all I am going say is, when I talked about artistic response, people said, but I can't paint, or I can't draw. Do you see? Looking at these pieces, do you see how important this response is?...Okay. Let's talk a little bit about this. Why did this affect your group in the way that it affected them? *(There is a three second pause here.)* Or maybe...why did it make people applaud for the first time in class? Talk to me about it.

Sara: Well, I can only write poetry when I'm really, really overcome with emotion. I can't just sit down and okay, write. It doesn't work like that. I have to be very upset, very happy, you know, just something has to really overpower me.

Suzy: I'm going to push you though, because I want to know what it was...

Sara: [Umm...]

Suzy: [...what was] it that overpowered you, what connected with [you?]

Sara: [In the] beginning, like I was, I was thinking, she's going to overcome everything, but, as I kept reading, I was like, is she? And at the end you hear her tell Isabelle don't ever be afraid to start over again. It's like, it just kind of brought the whole story together.

Suzy: So...the feelings, those emotional feelings that you had about what was going to happen to her as she...pulls through...impacted you? // One of the things that I think is interesting about this book is that Esperanza pulls through, but she doesn't pull through the way Cinderella does. She doesn't get the prize, in terms of the rich prince. But she's got an inner strength that...is priceless....I think I've heard a few of you reflect on this...and what I'm hearing you talk about now is that, in the end, she's in that place where she can now see herself in a whole new way. And it's, I think, a lot stronger and more powerful than maybe it would have been if she'd stayed in Mexico. Don't you think?

Multiple Voices: Yeah!

Lari: When I first started reading and I looked at the title and I thought that it was about her, going through these hard times, and then rising above it in her culture, um, in America. I thought she was going to rise and, and be a political leader or something. And in the end... when Sara read that poem it made me realize that she was rising as a person – morally, in her values, and in who she was and what she believed in. And I /// I thought that that was extremely powerful. And so when Sara read that, it really touched on...my misconception in the beginning. /// It changed what I ended up with.

Suzy: Nice clarification. It's sort of a journey. Let it happen. In the ways that Esperanza experienced life, in the ways that you thought that it was going to go, but let Sara's artistic response impact your thinking. All of that comes out.

Lari: I mean what she wrote, summarizes this entire experience. I could have read that...(*There was some laughter here.*)...[and then known pretty much Esperanza's experience, you know what I mean?

Suzy: [Yeah I do, I do.] Other people? In terms of what you connected with or what you didn't, in your groups? Maybe ideas that you think were interesting to talk about?

After my question about connections that other groups had made, a member of Group B, Jessie, began to discuss the ways members of her group had spoken about issues of power and gender. She talked about how Esperanza, her mother, and grandmother had left Mexico, a place where, during that time period, women had little power. Jessie stated that she and the members of her group had questioned whether or not the women in the story had actually gained power when they moved to the United States. The large group discussion continued on from this point into a more detailed conversation about power and gender, all in connection with the personal power Esperanza achieved through her journey. While this dialogue was more loosely connected to Sara's poem and Lari's comments about the impact of Sara's response, the impetus for this new direction and further deep discussion was set in motion by what had been said in connection to an artistic response.

Considering the ways the students and their instructor engaged in the process of dialogue.

Looking back over the ways that the teacher candidates and I engaged in an exchange about Sara's artistic response, I was instantly struck by two things. First, during this portion of the discussion only four students and I participated in the conversation. Secondly, Lari, as small group facilitator, was responsible for drawing her group members into the large group discussion of *Esperanza Rising*. In much the same way, I brought Carrie into the limelight with positive comments about her artistic response. Lari encouraged Kris and Sara to share their responses. She made it clear that she felt her group had done a wonderful job and she used that, along with compliments for individual members' work, as a way to get them talking about what they had done. Whether or not this involvement was a result of her genuine enthusiasm for her group members' contributions, her notion of the responsibilities of the group facilitator, her observations of my own attempts to get people engaged in the discussion -- or some other factors -- was unclear. What was clear was that her efforts helped instigate the type of discussion that changed individuals' perspectives, including her own.

After Sara read her poem everyone reacted strongly. The teacher candidates applauded, Lari commented on the poem's beauty, and I spoke about how important the moment felt. I questioned how the artistic response had caused us all to react in the ways we did. I moved the discussion in a related direction when I encouraged Sara to say more about how she had created the response and to describe the emotional connections she felt to the main characters' journey. Sara shared how the storyline had kept her

wondering about Esperanza's fate and that, in turn, had kept her emotionally engaged in the story.

After Sara finished speaking I commented on the ways I saw Esperanza's journey bringing her to a place of great strength. In my remarks I referenced Carrie's comments about the journey's messy nature and Kris' ideas that Esperanza experienced growth in power over the course of the novel. I noted that others had talked about Esperanza's experience, also. This comment was followed by Lari's explanation of how Sara's poem had changed her conception of the kinds of changes Esperanza had experienced. Instead of seeing Esperanza as someone who had become an "American," as a person who was experiencing social success, Lari began to view Esperanza as possessing stronger morals and a more powerful sense of self. Lari also noted how she felt she could have experienced what Esperanza had gone through simply by reading Sara's poem. I confirmed these comments and used them to ask if anyone else had talked about connections to Esperanza or her journey. This led to a detailed discussion of the critical response perspective, with a focus on the issues of gender and power. The discourse that ensued remained loosely connected to the ideas the artistic response dialogue had generated until the end of the large group session.

Looking Back

While the past two chapters brought to light several main characteristics of artistic response and preservice teachers' engagement with artistic response, this chapter focused almost completely on the importance of the social setting in connection with artistic response. While the significance of group members' engagement with artistic response can once again be seen when the members of Group D did little more than applaud Sara's

poem in the small group setting, it was in the large group setting that the truly transformative power of artistic response was felt.

Looking Across: Discussions One, Two, and Three

In Chapter Six I discussed how the representational and instructional characteristics of the art and rationales produced in response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) were different from the more thoughtful, process-oriented elements found in the picture book and written piece Lari created in reaction to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998). By contrast, Sara's poem and its accompanying rationale took self-reflection to a new level. Sara wrote about the personal and intertextual connections she made as she constructed her poem. She also explained why she included only certain parts of the story in her poem, writing of her desire to see the story told from Esperanza's perspective so that she and others could share Esperanza's experience in a more intimate way. This expressed desire for her peers to perceive the book in a new way also distinguished her response from those included in previous chapters.

Sara was not the first artistic respondent who stated that she intended to influence others with her artistic creation. Erin, the artistic response person for *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), described her art object and shared how that object would communicate her objectives to her peers. Lari focused more on how she thought creating her artistic response would help her to experience *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) more profoundly, but found that her creation and her written rationale had fallen short of her goal. Part of the reason she decided was because her response didn't have the impact she had hoped for. While she didn't specify whom she had hoped to affect, the implication was that her response was not intended solely for her own purposes. Of these

examples, Sara's response was most clearly intended to cause others to consider a new or deeper outlook on the book. She was the only one who expressed how she had planned for a new perspective to be introduced by writing about how she had intended for her poem to tell the story in Esperanza's own voice.

Erin and Lari both initiated discussions about their artistic responses by connecting their introductory comments to remarks made by other group members. While the methods in which these conversations were initiated were quite similar, the types of feedback received during the discussions differed. Erin experienced very little feedback outside of Lari's parallel commentary about her intertextual response. However, Kris, the facilitator for the week Group D discussed *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), built upon artistic respondent Lari's comments by noting that the font used in the story distinguished the voice of each character in much the same way that Lari had perceived in the illustrations. Kris later pointed out ways the artistic response reinforced her interpretation of the text, thus allowing Lari to reenter the conversation and say more about the process of creating that response.

During the discussion following the reading of the next book, *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), Lari provided the artistic respondent in her group, Sara, with an opportunity to transition very smoothly into her role. She asked Sara a question about something Sara had said earlier in their small group. Sara took advantage of that transition, but what she said gave little indication of the complex thinking evident in her written rationale. Instead she focused upon the emotion she felt when creating her response, a poem. Her group members reacted to this description of her emotional state by telling her they would cry with her as she read the poem, and then by declaring it

awesome when she finished reading. As with the artistic responses to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), Sara's small group peers responded with warmth and encouragement, but their exchanges did not prompt any further discussion about how Sara's piece promoted new or deeper understandings of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000).

The large group discussion about *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) yielded very different results. In that exchange Lari encouraged Sara to share her poem with everyone, and the ensuing reading prompted a detailed dialogue about Sara's artistic response and how it connected to the text. Sara explained how she had related to Esperanza's emotional journey, and I noted that others had also mentioned the importance of this journey, but with an emphasis on how it had led Esperanza to a place of newfound personal power and strength. Lari then discussed how Sara's poem had helped her to change her understanding of Esperanza's journey and what it meant in terms of who Esperanza had become.

As noted in Chapter Six, there was no real evidence that anyone represented in the telling case presented understood the text more deeply or saw it in new ways, based on their experiences creating, writing about, or discussing artistic responses to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). Lari's artistic response to the next book, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), did inspire some thoughtful discussion and writing, but she herself concluded that it fell short of the impact she had desired.

In the case presented in connection with *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), however, there was evidence that the poem written and read by Sara had prompted Lari to change her thinking about the book. In the large group discussion Lari specifically stated that the poem made her realize that Esperanza hadn't risen in the politically powerful way

she expected but instead had evolved, "...as a person – morally, in her values, and in who she was and what she believed in" (3/22/05). Lari went on to clarify how the poem had helped her understand the book more clearly by saying, "And so when Sara read that, it really touched on...my misconception in the beginning///. It changed what I ended up with." The socially situated nature of Lari's shift in perspective seems particularly important here. It indicated that, along with the premise that a "real" artistic response must impact the ways in which people comprehend the text, it also must do so in socially constructed ways. In short, an artistic response, and the thoughts behind it, must be made public and open to scrutiny in order for it to impact the thinking of others. The roles of the discussion group members, large and small, were critical in the development of Lari's understanding of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) following Sara's artistic response.

In Chapters Five and Six I noted that evidence presented in most of the cases included in this study indicated that group members who prepared other response roles sometimes connected what they have learned or discovered to the artistic piece, and vice versa. This pattern continued in the discussions held about *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000). For example, as the facilitator of her small group, Lari posed a question about how her peers thought Esperanza rose in the novel, saying,

I was wondering if *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) -- the title -- actually meant Esperanza rising as a person from being a selfish little girl to being this more mature and understanding, family-oriented person or if it actually meant rising in her status? (3/22/05)

Later, during the large group discussion of the book, Lari connected to Sara's artistic response in answering her own question. In doing so her perception of the main character's identity was permanently altered.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven all featured the telling case which elucidated the experiences of Lari and the members of Group D. As the chapters progressed, Lari, the rest of the preservice teachers, and I all struggled to understand artistic response, and though there were many moments of frustration, confusion, and distress there were also moments of clarity and recognition. In the next chapter I will discuss the findings of this study in connection with the literature that grounded it: reader response theory and socially situated learning. I will also use the lens of art history and the changing definition of art over time to frame the findings in a comprehensive way.

CHAPTER EIGHT²

Conclusion

Introduction

This dissertation began with a problem of practice – the challenge preservice teachers and their instructor were facing as they struggled to reach an understanding of artistic response to children’s and adolescent literature. Building from my role as instructor in one section of a children’s literature course, I designed and completed a study that considered the ways that the teacher candidates in that class came to understand artistic response and the factors that influenced that understanding. I also investigated the roles that the students and I played in the development of that understanding. Across chapters four through seven I demonstrated how the students and I engaged in creating, writing about, and discussing artistic response. When I later examined the data from the class sessions I found three guiding concepts, which I will call the levels of artistic response, to explain how the preservice teachers and I came to understand artistic response within the context of our children’s literature class: *artistic response as object, artistic response as process, and artistic response as social experience*.

In this concluding chapter I will pull these three concepts together with an overarching frame: the definitions and theories of art throughout history³. In doing so I will provide readers with a lens for viewing this study and a framework for reflecting on

² The author wishes to acknowledge the generous contributions of Dr. Yonghee Suh to this chapter. Dr. Suh’s work in her dissertation, *Using The Arts To Teach History: The Role Of Teacher Knowledge And Beliefs* (2006), first provided the author with insight as to how the evolution of the definition of art throughout history might serve as a lens for viewing preservice teacher artistic response to children’s literature. I relied heavily on her work when developing the structure and content of this chapter.

³ While this portion of the dissertation will examine three important historical art definitions and their associated theories, it is important to note that this analysis is largely limited to broad overviews of the art of Western cultures and is by no means definitive.

the story of how the study progressed over time. (Table 8.1 displays parallels between historical definitions of art and the levels of artistic response that will be discussed in this chapter.)

Table 8.1 – Parallels between historical definitions of art and levels of artistic response

Historic Definitions of Art	Levels of Artistic Response
<p><u>Art as Object</u></p> <p>The artwork, including its form and representational nature, is paramount The artwork is imitative of nature/real life</p>	<p><u>Artistic Response as Object</u></p> <p>Uses the book and the response to “teach something” Produces a craft-like object that moves focus away from the text – is only loosely connected to the text Consists primarily of retellings (talk and writing accompanying the art that basically equates to a plot summary) Focuses on the art object</p>
<p><u>Art as Process</u></p> <p>(1) ...A work of art is an interaction between an individual—the artist—and some means of production, intellectual or material; (2) that this interaction is the consummation of a specific history of activity on the artist’s part, funded by the qualitatively diverse experiences constituting that history; (3) that these qualities are expressed in the art product; and (4) that through the art product, a spectator or audience can have an experience that is, to a significant extent, a ‘reconstruction’ of the artist’s experience” (Kelly, 1998, p. 24)</p>	<p><u>Artistic Response as Process</u></p> <p>Respondent represents specific events from text for specific reasons Features themes or a sense of cohesiveness emerges (not too far removed from the visual retellings) Focus moves to the artist/artistic respondent and her process, including the choices she makes, the reasons for those choices, and the effects of those choices on the artist/artistic respondent</p>
<p><u>Art as Aesthetic Experience</u></p> <p>Old Perspective: Art can be something that is not created by humans – something that was not created with any sort of artistic intent. Cognitive distance is necessary Newer Perspective: Art still involves attending to details that can be in abstract, but the cognitive aspect is being welcomed back in – intellectual thought is encouraged Recognition that the social and contextual nature of the viewers will impact the way they interpret and respond to art</p>	<p><u>Artistic Response as Social Experience</u></p> <p>Invites people to enter into the experiences of characters in the books Challenges assumptions that might be in the book/reflects critical analysis of the book Further exploration into characters, situations, themes Focus includes the art object, the artist/artistic respondent (her process and choices), but looks more toward the social -- the impact the art (process or product) has on others’ responses to the book.</p>

I have found these historic definitions and theories correspond in many ways to the journey my students and I took as we struggled to define, enact, recognize, and evaluate

artistic response and, by utilizing them as a lens for this study, I hope to describe the development of our perception of artistic response, what I make of that development, and how I now understand it. Finally, I will reflect upon what undermines and complicates the use of that lens in my effort to describe how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response to children's and adolescent literature.

Background: Definitions and Theories of Art

No discussion of the art of Western cultures would be complete without an examination of how the definition of art has evolved throughout history. Because debates concerning the definition focus on the nature of art, including its significance and value (L. E. Beyer, 2000; Suh, 2006), it is also clear that any art descriptions would be incomplete without acknowledgement of the accompanying theoretical stances on what the nature of art entails.

The three definitions of art highlighted in this chapter have been at the center of numerous debates across time. The first focuses on the "art object" itself. In this approach, the product of artistic creation, such as a piece of sculpture or a photograph, is emphasized and examined. The second definition differs from the first in that the process of creating art is considered more important than the end product. The art object is still recognized, but it is the manner in which the object is made that, along with the intent and emotional engagement of its creator/artist, is considered paramount (Kelly, 1998).

More recently, Western art philosophers have come up with a third definition for art, termed the "aesthetic experience." The focus of this definition continues to evolve but has at its center the quality of the empirical experience that art objects create for those

who view or interact with them. As with the definition of art as object, those who regard art purely as an aesthetic experience value the product of artistic creation, but only in its ability to inspire an emotional response from viewers. Early aestheticians considered the process of artistic creation and any involvement on the part of the artist to be of little importance. Within recent history, however, many of those defining art as experience have begun to note the importance of not only the process and the artist, but also of the larger, socially-situated nature of the context in which the art object is encountered. Current trends indicate that the emphasis in the history of the philosophy of art in Western culture has been moving away from an object or process definition toward one that stresses art as experience (L. E. Beyer, 2000; Dickie, 1971).

Changing Definitions, Theories, and Understandings: Art and Artistic Response

Level One

As I coded the data gathered for this study I noted there was a pattern in the initial artistic responses created after reading *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) and in a few that were created in response to other books as the semester progressed. As stated in Chapter Three, I wrote a memo about this pattern, pointing out that many of the early responses – and a few that came later – seemed to reproduce the text or its illustrations (Sendak, 1963). Earlier in the semester I had written about this phenomenon in my instructor's journal and reflected briefly on why it troubled me:

I noticed that I have been struggling with how to respond to artistic responses that seem to “retell” the story. While this is different than using artistic response and the books as tools to “teach something,” it doesn't seem to meet our stated goals of developing deeper understanding or new perspectives. (Knezek, 3/10/05)

I later came to realize that this initial noted pattern shared common characteristics with the historical definition of art as object.

Art as object.

“mi·me·sis” *noun*

1. The imitation or representation of aspects of the sensible world...in literature and art.” (“mimesis,” 2004, 2000)

Philosophers who focus primarily on the analysis of art products have often attempted to define art by what might be considered its most universal qualities. These qualities, especially those that are “exhibited” (perceived characteristics of the work itself), are thought to define what is unique and significant about artworks. “Exhibited” characteristics favored within this definition tend to be those qualities that emphasize the representational quality of art.

What is most important in art according to these views is the way in which the work represents the subject matter. The use of proper art media and rules which govern the patterns or the formal structures an artist employs are also important. But, according to these theories, the idea of representation or mimesis is the most essential feature in defining and evaluating art. (Werhane, 1984, p. 5)

Ancient Greeks, including both Plato and Aristotle, were among the first philosophers to search for definitions of art. Plato was not a proponent of the arts in society and felt that art was mimetic -- that the artist “reproduces nature in works of art just as the fine craftsman reproduces almost perfect chairs or beds” (Werhane, 1984, p. 6). In the *Republic*, Plato claims that the artist procures images straight from nature and thus is less creative than the craftsman who conceives of a mental ideal for what he crafts

(Conford, 1941). The artist only imitates the essential nature (form) of the reality and, therefore, has very little to contribute to society.

As a pupil of Plato, Aristotle also subscribed to the idea that an art object was essentially a replication of the mental and physical world. In *The Poetics*, however, he argued that the artist does not merely imitate particular phenomena or report experiences. Instead, the artist depicts general types of human character and human nature (Fyfe, 1932). The artist represents nature not as it is but as it should be (Werhane, 1984). Aristotle claimed that, by imitating nature (which included human emotions), art placed nature (and those emotions) at a distance. This distance allowed people to both purge and purify their emotions through art -- in a way deemed safe for society (Kelly, 1998).

Like Aristotle, philosophers Clive Bell (1914) and Suzanne Langer (1953) supported the notion that art objects can represent human feelings and emotions. Bell argued that “significant form,” which features particular combinations of lines and colors, depicts human emotions -- a quality shared by all artworks. Langer further argued that works created for utilitarian purposes can actually be defined as art when their form represents human feelings and emotions. Despite their emphases on the emotive aspects of the definition of art, like Aristotle, Langer and Bell continue to fundamentally conceive of art as imitative objects.

Artistic response as object.

Just as the definitions of art have changed over time, the definition of artistic response in TE 348 evolved as the semester progressed. Prior to and throughout this study I had difficulty defining artistic response for my students and my colleagues. When attempting to explain what artistic response *was* I often ended up naming things

that it *was not*. It was not a craft-like activity loosely tied to the text, a tool used to teach a topic unrelated to the text, or a fun form of “busy work.” So, what *was* it? In attempting to describe what I thought it was – or what I thought it should be -- I returned again and again to the written terminology the Children’s Literature Team had produced, which described the role of the artistic response person as someone who fashions a “text centered” artistic creation. Verbally I added that artistic response should promote “deeper thinking” and/or “new perspectives” on the text, but I never gave concrete examples of what I meant by those terms.

As the teacher candidates in TE 348 first attempted to create artistic responses after having read *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) the majority of their art objects, their writing, and their discussions reflected an understanding of artistic response as object – much as Plato originally defined art as object. Most of those early artistic responses were reproductive in nature. For example, in the written rationale he provided for a song he had written and recorded as his artistic response to *Where the Wild Things Are*, Steven stated that he wanted to

capture the adventure and story of *Where The Wild Things Are* by retelling the story just about verbatim, word for word, in a folksong ...to give the story a new but accurate life in another medium. (2/8/05)

Others at this level attempted to retell the story through the illustrations found in the book. Becca, for example, created a collage poster that consisted of copies of Sendak’s original artwork from the book and found objects. The poster she created depicted four separate scenes from the story: the main character in *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max, alone in his bedroom, wearing a wolf suit; Max seated in a sailboat on a

wave-filled ocean; the wild things featured in the book in the middle of their “wild rumpus”; and Max commanding a wild thing to do his bidding. In each of these pictures at least one part has some sort of texture-filled item incorporated into it: a soft fabric blanket on Max’s bed; rough canvas sails on Max’s boat; soft curls and feathers on the wild things’ heads; and silky fur on Max’s tail. Becca expressed why she felt it was important to make the illustrations of those scenes more realistic by using the found objects in her artistic response paper. She wrote,

By taking these small aspects of each picture and highlighting them realistically Max's world grew more authentic for me. It was no longer an idea in Max's head, but it began to be more of an actual world. Through the project it became easier to imagine going from inside Max's bedroom to the land where the wild things are. (Becca, 2/8/05)

Becca, it seemed, had achieved a text-centered goal for herself by focusing on and reproducing illustrations from the book. She had found a way to realize Max’s world. At the same time, she did not provide details about why she chose the scenes she did in her artistic response paper or in the discussion of the artistic response with her peers. As a result, what was obviously important insight to her was lost to her discussion group members and me. Therefore, her artistic response was interpreted more as a retelling of the book through its own illustrations. Because of this, I began my written response to Becca by asking her to specify why she chose the scenes depicted on her collage. I explained that I felt like she was on the brink of helping me to comprehend the book in new ways, or that at least I thought she was going to offer me a new perspective – her perspective – on what was important in the book, and why those parts were important.

Instead, I wrote, I came away from her response feeling like I had simply read the story again and that she held secret insight that I could not access.

Along with responses that retold the story, others whose responses fell into the category of “artistic response as object” created art as instructional tools for teaching topics which, at best, were loosely connected to the story. Chapter Five featured Erin’s artistic response as a part of the telling case because it displayed a number of the “artistic response as object” characteristics. The group activity she designed required participants to create drawings that illustrated monster images based on particular terms or phrases from the text. She wanted to “use the descriptive words of the text to enlighten the students of the certain characteristics that the monsters *should* [italics added] have” (Erin, 2/8/05). By drawing attention to descriptive terms, how students visualized those terms, and how Sendak portrayed them, Erin set up a representational scenario in which visualization among the students would lead to varied portrayals of “terrible” monsters. Erin’s own drawing of a monster, provided as an example for the activity, looked quite similar to monsters in the text and thus was largely representational. The goal of this activity was not to expand students’ thinking or their meaning-making. Instead, Erin hoped that talking about the similarities and differences between monsters in the text and monsters created by the students would help the students see that the word “terrible” can be portrayed in many ways and that, “even in this book, all of the monsters are described the same and yet they are so different” (Erin, 2/8/05). In her artistic response Erin planned for students to imitate -- as Plato thought artists did -- images and concepts that were already present in the book, leaving little room for expanded thinking.

Initially I saw Erin's artistic response as an activity that used the text as a tool to teach adjectives. With hindsight, however, I noted that she intended to connect the activity back to the text by having participants compare the images they drew to those in the book. This added a visualization element to her activity and made it seem more text-centered. That tie to the text was underdeveloped, however, as Erin did not indicate how her artistic response activity might create meaning or increase understanding of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). And, because her group members did not engage in the activity she prepared and interacted very little with her as she talked about that activity, Erin's artistic response instead, as previously stated, followed Plato's description of an art object. It was largely representational and the focus was centered on the art objects (what the students were to create) themselves.

Another aspect of Plato's definition of art as object was that he saw the object as contributing little to society. Erin's artistic response followed Plato's description even though she originally had planned for it to involve social interaction. The social (and imitative) nature of the learning associated with Erin's response corresponds to the concept of appropriation, the process by which learners adopt ideas, strategies, and language that have been introduced and shared in the public-social quadrant of the Vygotsky Space (see Figure 1.1) (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Harre, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). Erin's artistic response required learners to take part in public and social transactions with one another in ways that would allow them to adopt language (e.g., "terrible") and concepts (e.g., "terrible" can be portrayed in many different ways). Interestingly, however, the artistic response was never truly enacted. Erin introduced and described it to her discussion group members, but, because they had little to say in

response, there was actually minimal opportunity for appropriation to occur and no real evidence that it took place or that it had any impact on her peers.

Level Two

A short time after I had noted the pattern of retellings (which I later categorized as artistic response as object) that occurred primarily among the early artistic responses to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), I realized I was seeing something else in a number of the responses that followed. I knew that some of them went “beyond” the reproduction of the texts and a focus on the art object itself, but I was not certain how to define the ways in which they did so. As I struggled to understand what I had noticed in my data, I was also searching various sources to see how others had written about artistic response. I came across an interesting article in the *New York Times* (Gussow, 2001) discussing artists’ responses to horrific events (e.g., 9/11, the Holocaust, etc.) and how artists’ first responses to such events were often documentary in nature:

How do artists respond to momentous acts of violence? Some are stunned into silence, others rush forward to express their feelings with a poem or a painting.

But many allow for a time of reflection until they can begin to grasp the meaning and approach it within a creative context....In the short term the artistic response to horrific events is not a deep one, said Detlef Hoffmann, a German art historian.

"You can have documentary pictures from Auschwitz," he said. "But they really don't reach the second level, to feel what has been destroyed." (Gussow, 2001)

As I read this article I began to reflect on how I felt it connected to what I was seeing in my data. In response to the article I wrote in my journal:

The idea was that the artists are too close to the events, and to do more than just document would be too difficult. It's only with time that artists can get into the deeper emotional aspects of these tragedies. That started me thinking about the documentary nature of the responses I got in class and how I was confused about their place in our conception of artistic response (as TE 348 instructors).

However, I also started to really reflect on the idea that documentaries don't just retell. They are usually planned around themes of some kind. You are supposed to walk away with some distinct messageI started wondering about what kinds of talk I heard in my own class around artistic response, along with the written responses I have seen that accompany the art. Here's what I have in mind so far – there might be “levels” to this talk/these responses. (Knezek, 4/14/05)

This notion of levels existing within oral and written talk about artistic response to literature – levels that went beyond retellings where the focus was on the art object – was not one I had considered before. However, I knew that some of the responses I had seen in my data – especially those connected with the second book we discussed, *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) – were documentary in nature. In many ways they still reproduced the book, but they did so in ways that took stances on the stories, and they contained references to the processes artists experienced as they created their works.

Art as process.

“Art is not a copy of the real world. One of the damn things is enough.”

(Goodman, 1984)⁴

⁴ Goodman reported this quote might have occurred in an essay on Virginia Wolf. However, he was unable to locate the source.

George Dickie (1971) claimed that a work of art was an artifact, which places his definition of art clearly in the category of “art as object.” He began to break out of that category, however, when he also argued that something becomes a work of art only when it has been located in an artworld context. Dickie’s emphasis on institutional context came from his observation that whether or not a piece of work is regarded as art is decided by the art world. According to this perspective, “art is a matter of collective and constructed taste” (Suh, 2006).

John Dewey also located the roots of art in collective experience, but he departed from Dickie’s views when it came to who he believed participated in that collective. Like Dickie and several other philosophers who defined art as artifact, Dewey claimed that art is a reflection of emotions and ideas that are both personal and associated with society in general. Unlike Dickie, however, Dewey argued that, historically, the arts of drama, music, painting and architecture were created not for theaters, galleries and museums. Instead, paintings, sculpture-decorated buildings, music and songs were inseparable from the ceremonies and rites used to memorialize people’s communities, traditions, and lives; drama celebrated and reenacted the legends and history of a group’s experiences (Dewey, 1934). For Dewey the collective was cultural, and he considered art as a cultural practice (Suh, 2006). Like Dickie, he had begun to look beyond the art object toward the people who were creating the art.

As Dewey (1934) expanded upon his definition of art, he “worked to restore the continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings recognized to constitute experience”

(p.1). In his view, art was literally a form of experience. The *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Kelly, 1998) indicated that Dewey's definition of art implies:

...(1) that a work of art is an interaction between an individual—the artist—and some means of production, intellectual or material; (2) that this interaction is the consummation of a specific history of activity on the artist's part, funded by the qualitatively diverse experiences constituting that history; (3) that these qualities are expressed in the art product; and (4) that through the art product, a spectator or audience can have an experience that is, to a significant extent, a 'reconstruction' of the artist's experience. (p. 24)

Like Dewey, other art philosophers have focused more heavily on the activities involved with creating art, rather than on a resulting finished artifact. Further, they found this definition recognized the feelings, emotions, and intent of those involved in the creative process by giving those emotions a definite form (Collingwood, 1938b; Croce, 1953). Collingwood, for example, argued that artistic creation comes from the artist's imagination and Croce emphasized the role of artistic intuition as the artist's motivation. For these philosophers, making art can be a process, performance, or action that blurs the boundaries between visual art, dance, media art, and theater. This is sometimes referred to as performance art or process art (Center, 2004).

Artistic response as process.

The first artistic responses in TE 348 were created in connection to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), and the majority of them were representational in nature. The second round of artistic responses were inspired by *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) and, in many ways, the majority of them also reproduced the book. As

stated earlier, however, these teacher candidates reproduced the text in slightly different ways than those who had generated the first round. Nina, for example, noted that she had portrayed certain images from the book in a poster that illustrated the main setting of the book -- a park. Her illustration portrayed the park much as it was seen at different times throughout the book when each of the four main characters encountered it. One difference between Nina's renditions of the park and those found in the book, however, was that hers featured pairs of eyes dispersed throughout the trees. In her artistic response paper, Nina wrote,

After reading *Voices in the Park*, what really seemed relevant to me was how different the world looked through each of the characters eyes. This idea is what I based my project on. (3/1/05)

Nina went on to describe how she chose elements of the park scenes and quotes from the text in order to reinforce her notion that the world looked different to each character. In some ways Nina's response is similar to Becca's, which is described earlier in this chapter. She focused on how the artistic response was relevant to her and she used reproductive images of the text – with slight variations – to retell the story. What makes Nina's response different from Becca's, and defines it as artistic response as process, is that she gave reasons *why* she chose to depict certain images in the way that she did. She described her interpretation of one aspect of the text when she wrote:

Something caught my eye after I had already read the book many times. When Smudge and Charles first meet, the dogs are running past a light pole. The picture shows as if both dogs are *one*, half-black half-white. When both Smudge and Charles tell their point of view, they talk about how the dogs are having fun as

well as themselves. They do not see themselves as different from one another. I put this picture of the half-black half-white dog as the pupil of a single eye. To me, Smudge and Charles seem to see the same world, and to see that world through the same eyes. (Nina, 3/1/05)

Like Dewey (1934), Collingwood (1938), and Croce (1953) suggested, Nina's focus was no longer centered on the art object she was creating, but was, instead, centered on herself as artist and her interpretation of the text through art, including the choices she made (her creative process).

In Chapter Six Lari's artistic response, a wordless picture book based on *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998), was presented as a part of the telling case because it featured some of the qualities of "artistic response as process." The book she created featured images taken right from the text, so it did have representational qualities. However, Lari put the book together in such a way that she highlighted the importance of the illustrations in the book, and, more importantly, she drew attention to the way the seasons in the book complemented the voices of each character. For example, she noted that scenes involving a chilly, upper-class woman took place in fall, while scenes involving a cheerful, optimistic girl were set in summer. By virtue of her choosing to represent one aspect of the story, Lari's response had the potential to focus her discussion group members' attention on the book in a way that might have been new to them. The thought and care Lari put into choosing to represent a particular aspect of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) was one of the reasons why I found her artistic response to be distinct and more expansive than those that centered only on the art object.

Another reason Lari's response falls into the category of artistic response as process is because of the way she spoke about her angst in planning for and executing her piece. While she did not show evidence of interacting with the creation of her artistic response in a way that drew on her prior life experiences, as Dewey (1934) might have expected, she did recognize that her artistic response was supposed to represent and inspire "a deeper kind of thinking" (Lari, 2/6/05). She struggled with what that actually meant, thinking she had a good grasp on it after she had called me, but later concluding that she did not "get" artistic response after all. Lari paid attention to what she created, but her focus was more on how and why she created her artistic response and what it meant to her. In this way her experience aligned most closely with the perspective of philosophers and scholars who believed that the feelings, emotions, and intent of the artist should be included in the definition of art (Collingwood, 1938; Croce, 1953; Dewey, 1934).

Lari's artistic response was not planned to be social in the same way as Erin's. She did not intend for her discussion group members to participate in an art activity with her. As noted before, however, she wanted her response to have more of an "impact" and to "touch deeper," a goal she felt had not been attained. Her artistic response did instigate some discussion among her group members, though in an unintentional way, when Kris noted that the diamond-shaped cutouts in the corners of one of the pages of Lari's book had really captured the hard edge of one of the book's main characters. Lari had not planned that the diamond images would reflect a character, but she was able to build on this comment to make her dissatisfaction with her artistic response known.

As with Erin, Lari's artistic response displayed some of the elements of learning by appropriation. She had adopted some of my language in stating that she wanted her response to relate a "deeper kind of thinking" about the text and she shared her thinking in the public-social quadrant of the Vygotsky Space (see Figure 1.1) (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Harre, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). However, Lari's artistic response also indicated that she had privately struggled to transform her thinking, by making the concept of "a deeper kind of thinking" her own. Though her artistic response fell short of her expectations, her group members' engagement with her about her efforts added a public dimension to her artistic response that Dewey hinted at when he noted that, through the art object, the viewer can have an experience that is, to a significant extent, a "reconstruction" of the artist's experience (Kelly, 1998). While Lari's art object did not fully recreate her experience for her group members, her comments during the group discussion certainly gave them insight into what she had done and what she had tried to do.

Level Three

As I considered the nature of the group interactions around both Erin's and Lari's artistic responses I realized that, once again, the data gathered for this study indicated a pattern that had not yet been distinguished. When looking at the data gathered in connection with *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) and *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) I noticed two artistic responses that both actively engaged students in discussion in particular ways and expanded their thinking about those texts. Because there were just two responses that displayed these characteristics, I was initially hesitant to identify the commonalities I saw in them as patterns. As I read the data collected in

association with *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), however, and compared it to what I had seen previously, my attitude changed. As the semester progressed teacher candidates began to produce more artistic responses that focused not only on the art object, the artist, and/or the artistic process, but also on the socially-situated context in which these responses were shared and discussed. Their understanding of artistic response began to include that context in new and powerful ways that once again corresponded to a historic definition of art.

Art as aesthetic experience

The artists may not know in advance the exact outcomes of their activity and chance occurrences or unpredictable events that become an important part of their works. (Center, 2004)

Plato's notion of "art as object" focused almost entirely on the art object itself and its imitative qualities, and, while Dewey liberally used the phrase "art as experience" when capturing his notions of the nature of art, his definition of art centered on the artist and his or her artistic process. Dewey's idea of "art as experience" is thus very different from the historical notion of "art as an aesthetic experience" as defined by Landon Beyer (2000), which places great importance on the *viewer's* attention and intent when viewing art objects and considering the process used by those who created them.

What is required of those who take part in aesthetic experiences is the separation of the affective tendencies and responses from their perceptual understandings, so that the objective properties of the object can become manifest and, in a significant way, control those experiences. (Landon E. Beyer, 2000)

Beyer (2000) noted that the early philosophers (Baumgarten, 1954; E. Bullough, 1912; Kant, 1972) who originated the idea of aesthetic experience argued that, in order to view an aesthetic object objectively, the audience must cognitively distance themselves from their affections and normal responses. Emergent renditions of this definition became widely associated with the phrase “art for art’s sake,” because those who championed aesthetic experience saw the act of viewing the arts as inherently valuable – an end in itself.

Beyer’s definition of “art as aesthetic experience,” which incorporates both the art object and the artist, moves one step farther than those that came before it: it centers on the *art audience* and how *they* experience the art. In this study, therefore, the definition that incorporates the art object and the artist, but focuses primarily on the impact art has on individuals who view it, is called “*art as aesthetic experience*.” By incorporating elements of the prior definitions, art as aesthetic experience exemplifies an additive structure that can be found in historical definitions of art. This structure is depicted in figure 8.1.

Art as Object		
Art as Object	Art as Process	
Art as Object	Art as Process	Art as Aesthetic Experience

Figure 8.1: The additive nature of the historical definitions of art. The top row represents the definition of Art as Object, which focuses attention entirely on the art object itself. The second row portrays the definition of Art as Process, which focuses on the artist and his or her creative process, while also noting the importance of the art object. The third row depicts Art as Aesthetic Experience, which focuses on audiences’ responses to art, while also incorporating the key characteristics of art as object and art as process.

Some philosophers have tried to identify the qualities needed to turn artistic experiences into “aesthetic experiences.” Maxine Greene (1991), for example, discussed meanings the arts can create by aesthetic experience. She departed from the original idea of the need for cognitive distance between art viewers and their affections and normal responses, however, when she argued that when people see, hear, and interact with artwork, they do not passively accept what the artists express through their artwork. She noted that since artifacts do not tell stories, the viewers have to participate in understanding the art.

The movement of the definition of aesthetic experience toward a recognition of the significance of audiences is important, but it also seems too closely aligned with the fourth tenet of Dewey’s definition of art, “that through the art product, a spectator or audience can have an experience that is, to a significant extent, a ‘reconstruction’ of the artist’s experience” (Kelly, 1998). The aesthetic experience is supposed to be based upon people paying particular attention, at times to the point of abstraction, to certain aspects of an art object. Instead of reconstructing the artist’s experience, there should be a recognition that people focus on different elements of the object or bring to bear distinct preferences or points of reference. To that end, more recent art philosophers have argued that,

in order to understand the value and meaning of the arts, we must situate them within the cultural, social, political, economic, and ideological contexts out of which they emerge and from which a significant part of their meaning is derived. This perspective places the arts within a complex, often contradictory set of tendencies and valuations, making the understanding of any particular work of art

much more complicated than its meaning when filtered through, say, theories that hold significant form or beauty as the center foci for artistic appreciation.” (L. E. Beyer, 2000)

Therefore, audience experiences are situated experiences, and the people who undergo them bring along their prior experiences, beliefs, and knowledge. This brings the definition of art out of its formerly representational, institutional, or procedural contexts and straight into the complex, messy real world: the world in which most schools exist.

Artistic response as social experience.

As chapters five and six noted, the majority of artistic responses created by teacher candidates in TE 348 became increasingly complex as the semester progressed. The early artistic responses were largely representational in nature but later creations began to show individual perspectives on texts and a focus on both the artistic response person and the process he or she had gone through creating the artistic response. A few of these responses, however, accomplished something more, and as students read and responded to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) I began to see more artistic responses that not only invited students to experience texts in new and interesting ways, but they also brought to light the importance of the socially situated nature of the classroom in meaning-making with texts. For example, Trish created a collage that contained imagery she saw as important in illustrating the way the author (Pam Munoz Ryan) developed both the secondary characters and events in the story to show the main character’s growth. Trish portrayed different symbols in her collage and then asked her group members to speculate as to why they thought she had included those symbols. In her artistic response paper Trish wrote,

Ryan's book for me was very successful in showing the audience Esperanza's growth and development. As a reader, I grew attached to the characters and felt like I was part of the story experiencing their difficulties. With this in mind, for my artistic response I gained inspiration from the characters who influenced Esperanza and wanted to try and demonstrate her character's growth. The question I kept asking myself, and wanted to prompt others to ask, was how did the author show us that Esperanza was able to "rise" (3/22/05)?

Trish's response described not only the art object she had created and why she created it in the way she did. It also purposely attended to the ways that others would interact with the art in connection with the text. As Beyer (2000) suggested in his definition of art, responses like this one clarified that, in order to understand the value and meaning of artistic response, we must situate it within the context from which it emerges and from which a significant part of its meaning is derived.

In Chapter Seven I told the story of what happened when Sara shared her poem, created in response to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), with both her discussion group members and with the entire class. Based on the experiences Sara, Lari, and several other students had in connection with the poem, I included this story as part of the telling case because it featured some of the qualities of "artistic response as social experience." The poem Sara created was inspired by Maya Angelou's (1978) poem *And Still I Rise* and was written in a similar style. Though it might have initially been interpreted as representational because of the way it related many of the same events found in *Esperanza Rising*, Sara had deliberately written the poem using a narrator with the first person perspective. (The book was written in the third person, allowing readers to feel

removed from Esperanza's experiences.) By telling the story directly from the main character's (Esperanza's) perspective, Sara invited readers to experience what Esperanza did in more intimate ways. In her artistic response paper Sara wrote,

I am writing from the perspective of Esperanza through a narrative poem....bringing in important thoughts, perceptions, feelings....that...I would like others to gain from my piece (3/22/05)

Sara's acknowledged forethought of the ways her group members might feel the character's experiences as they read her poem put Sara's artistic response into the category of artistic response as social experience. Not only did she consider her audience, she considered how her artistic response might influence their perceptions of the main character, and thus, the book itself.

Another important reason why Sara's artistic response falls into the category of artistic response as experience is because of the way Lari reacted to the poem within the socially situated context of the classroom. Lari had been quite verbal throughout the semester about her struggle to understand artistic response. She had recognized that the piece she produced after having read *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) did not impact others the way she wanted it to, and that it did not promote the deeper kind of thinking she had sought to initiate. After she invited Sara to share her poem with the whole class, however, Lari stated that,

When I first started reading and I looked at the title and I thought that it was about her, going through these hard times, and then rising above it in her culture, um, in America, I thought she was going to rise and, and be a political leader or something. And in the end....when Sara read that poem it made me realize that

she was rising as a person – morally, in her values, and in who she was and what she believed in. And I///I thought that that was extremely powerful. And so when Sara read that, it really touched on...my misconception in the beginning./// It changed what I ended up with. (3/22/05)

While Lari herself did not create an artistic response that she felt would alter or deepen thinking about the text, she was able to realize and verbalize when Sara's artistic response had helped her to reach that goal. Sara had planned for her group members to experience the text from a different perspective. Because of this, Lari was able to transform the way she thought about the text by connecting Sara's response with her own prior thoughts about what had occurred, based on her reading of the book. The connection she made changed both her individual knowledge of *Esperanza Rising* and the ideas and concepts she originally appropriated while reading and responding to that text – both on her own and with her discussion group. Lari then went a step further and made her new knowledge about the text public in an explicit way. In doing so, she moved through all four quadrants of the Vygotsky Space and conventionalized her new understanding by acknowledging her transformed thinking publicly (Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Harre, 1984; McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). As Maxine Greene (1991) might have argued, when Lari saw, heard, and interacted with Sara's artistic response, she did not passively accept what Sara expressed through her poem, but instead, because of Sara's artistic response and because of the people around her, converted her own thoughts and, in the process, achieved a new and deeper understanding of the story.

The examples provided in this chapter, and in the previous three chapters, show that, as with some the historical definitions of art used as a lens in this study, artistic response has an additive structure. In some artistic responses, such as Erin’s adjective activity, the art object can act as an endpoint and no expanded talk occurs about the text as a result of the response. In other artistic responses, like Lari’s, both the art object and the process the artistic response person went through to create the object can provide insight into the text – and how it connects to his or her experiences and knowledge -- for the artist. In these examples specific events are highlighted and purposefully emphasized, but talk about the text doesn’t really go much farther than basic retellings. Finally, artistic responses like Sara’s not only acknowledge the importance of the art object and the artist and his or her process, they also provide evidence of intentional impact on the those discussing the book. In these instances, talk around the text may include new and thought-provoking interpretations. The additive configuration as indicated by these levels of artistic response is depicted in Figure 8.2.

Artistic Response as Object		
Artistic Response as Object	Artistic Response as Process	
Artistic Response as Object	Artistic Response as Process	Artistic Response as Social Experience

Figure 8.2: The additive structure of artistic response. The top row represents the definition of artistic response as object, where the art object is a means to an end. The second row portrays the definition of artistic response as process, which focuses on the artistic response person and his or her creative process, while also noting the importance of the artistic response as object. The third row depicts artistic response as social experience, which focuses on audiences’ experiences in connection to artistic response, while also incorporating elements of artistic response as object and artistic response as process.

Reconsidering the Historical Definitions of Art as a Lens for Artistic Response

While I have found historical definitions of art to be a helpful lens for viewing the various levels of artistic response and their associated characteristics, I have also realized those definitions are limiting in several important ways. First, the use of historical definitions of art implied a linear progression to the levels of artistic response teacher candidates experienced in TE 348. Like Lari, many of the students in the class did seem to progress through these levels of understanding in fairly linear ways. However, there was one student who created an artistic response that fit into the level of “social experience” in connection to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), and there were several students who created artistic responses at the “object” and “process” levels all the way through the semester. Using the format of a telling case did not allow for any serious discussion of these discrepancies and the complexity they added to the understanding of artistic response through developmental levels.

A second limitation was that I did not always have telling case examples that fit the characteristics of the lens in specific ways. For example, once I placed Lari’s artistic response to *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) into the level of artistic response as process category, I could see that her response did not have the focus on process that it should have had to be in that category. When I initially planned for the presentation of the telling case and the use of the art definitions as a lens, I viewed Lari’s artistic response as one that was quite reflective because of all the comments she had made about her struggles to understand and create something that reflected “deeper” thinking and that had “impact.” Once I tried to present her response as one that brought in the prior

knowledge of the artist or one that showed how the artist had interacted with the artistic response, I quickly saw that hers was a weak example for the lens I had chosen.

A third limitation of using the lens of historical definitions of art was that the lens sometimes felt too restrictive and artificial when I used it to describe the social nature of each of the different levels of artistic response. While both of the stories I told in order to describe artistic response as object and artistic response as process featured limited engagement on the part of discussion group members, I did consider how the lens might be applicable if the levels of engagement around these responses had increased. I was especially concerned about this at the level of artistic response as object, where the art object was to have little to no impact on people who viewed that object. I wondered what might happen if people found aspects of these artistic responses that connected to their own prior knowledge or their own response roles in powerful ways. It seemed to me that there was always the possibility that an artistic response involving the most reproductive of art objects might meet with an especially inspired, thoughtful, or skillful group member who could have taken the discussion to another level of meaning based not on the artistic response person's objectives, but on that group member's ability to make connections. While this concern never came to fruition in the data gathered for this study, I still see it as something that could occur but not be accounted for in the use of historical definitions of art as a lens for understanding artistic response.

After examining, in this chapter, these three major approaches to thinking about the nature of art (art as object, art as process, and art as social experience) and three parallel levels of understanding of the nature of artistic response to children's and adolescent literature (artistic response as object, artistic response as process, and artistic

response as social experience), it is clear that the boundaries between these approaches can get quite blurry. However, by debating and acknowledging these three approaches, this chapter has also attended to many educational features of art and artistic response. As I have noted here, both art and artistic response can be simply defined by an art object's visible characteristics. Conversely, they can also be defined in complex ways that include analysis of the artist, the artist's creative process, art objects that represent a multitude of human emotions, thoughts, interpretations, and understandings, and the context in which the art or the artistic product is viewed. Not all elements of the historical definitions of art, used as a lens in this chapter, were clear or fully applicable, but I found that utilizing those definitions helped me clarify several levels in preservice teachers' developing understanding of artistic response.

In the next chapter I conclude this dissertation by revisiting and clarifying the definition of artistic response and the differences between post-reading "activities" and artistic response. I will also explain how the findings in this study can be helpful to students and educators at several different educational levels and I will close the chapter by discussing possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER NINE

Implications

Introduction

The research reported in this dissertation grew from a problem of practice that my colleagues and I experienced as we attempted to teach preservice teachers about artistic response in a children's and adolescent literature class. Because we, as instructors, struggled to find common ways to define and talk about artistic response over the course of several semesters, we considered dropping it as a form of literary response covered in class. What stopped us was the knowledge that artwork can give students a wider range of ways to represent their understanding of a text and can lead students to "more reflective responses on more abstract levels," because it can provide them with "a concrete reference and anchor from which to engage in more risky explorations" (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 142). Though we were often troubled by the surface-level explorations of texts that occurred in connection with artistic response, we also noted moments in our classes when students created artistic responses that deepened and changed the ways books were read and understood by both the readers and their peers.

The dissertation asked these questions:

- How do preservice teachers come to understand artistic response and what factors influence their understanding?
 - Are there patterns to the characteristics/elements of oral or written language used by students when describing artistic response that I, as the TE 348 instructor, and the teacher candidates in some way (written acknowledgement, oral reinforcement, extension, etc.)

recognize as comprising genuine artistic response – one that leads to deeper understanding/new perspectives?

- What roles did the teacher candidates and I play in facilitating the development of this deeper/new understanding?

In order to determine what this research tells us about artistic response, beginning teachers, and teacher education, this chapter is arranged as a set of questions that are pertinent to discussions about the meaning of artistic response and about preparing teachers to teach with literature. Possible answers this research contributes to those questions are then considered. The questions include:

- What can this research tell us about the nature of artistic response?
- How are the findings in this study relevant to TE 348 students and instructors, elementary teachers, and teacher educators?
- What are the methodological implications for this research?
- What are the possibilities for future research?

What Can This Research Tell Us About the Nature of Artistic Response?

As noted in Chapter One, one of the reasons I initially decided to develop this study was because my colleagues and I had experienced difficulty finding ways to communicate to preservice teachers the difference between craft-like activities and artistic response. These craft-like activities were often loosely tied to the text and involved the use of varied artistic mediums, and while we did not see them as “bad” activities, we noted that they usually did not engage students in ways that expanded their understanding or helped them to view literature in new ways. Artistic response, on the other hand, was supposed to help students make meaning with texts. Chapters four

through seven provided multiple examples of how I struggled to communicate the difference between craft-like activities that had little to do with the text and artistic response that clarified and deepened understanding of text. I often attempted to do so by telling the teacher candidates what artistic response was *not* or repeating that artistic response was supposed to lead to “deeper understanding” or “new perspectives on the text.”

As a result of the work done for this study I now have access to language that better enables me to define artistic response for myself, my students, and my colleagues. The research and analysis completed for this dissertation resulted in the following definition.

Artistic response is the creation of an art object in response to literature in order to promote understanding of that literature. It is:

- art in a broad sense – it can involve virtually any art form (e.g., painting, sculpting, drawing, drama, dance, music, poetry, etc.)
- a literary response -- it should always move readers “toward” text, instead of “away” from text
- a means toward expanded or transformed understanding of text on the part of both the producers of the artistic response and the audience who views and interacts with the response, the artist, and/or the socially situated context
- a way to stimulate rich conversation around the text

How Are The Findings In This Study Relevant To TE 348 Students and Instructors,
Elementary Teachers, and Teacher Educators?

TE 348 Students

Perhaps because I was unable to provide a clear definition of artistic response at the beginning of the semester, my students started out with a number of questions about expectations and how they would be “graded” on their artistic responses. Most were not sure of the difference between a response activity that led “away” from the text and one that enriched and led “toward” the text. They were, however, pretty certain that to be successful at artistic response, they needed to be able to draw. As Lari put it, “I don’t get what I am supposed to do for artistic response. I know I’m supposed to create something, but I’m not good at art...” (2/6/05).

As the instructor I was not as concerned about the artistic abilities the teacher candidates in my class possessed as I was about how well they could respond to and discuss literature. Teachers in elementary and middle school classrooms are not necessarily engaging their students in “meaningful” and “educative” discussions or activities when responding to literature (Apol, 1998; Apol et al., 2002). For example, Taylor, et al (2002) found that literacy teachers in highly effective schools more often facilitated literature discussions in their classrooms and asked higher-level comprehension questions about the stories students had read than did teachers in moderately effective schools. However, the same researchers discovered there was a *low* rate of more cognitively challenging comprehension activities presented in all fourteen (including the most effective) of the geographically widespread schools they studied.

Teachers at all levels need to be able to connect their students with texts in meaningful ways. It appears, however, as mentioned above, that many are not doing so. Perhaps this is because, traditionally, their own experiences as students who interacted with literature in classrooms were teacher-centered instead of *student*-centered. In such settings teachers would have directed any conversations about texts, and those conversations might often have taken place in a directed question-answer format (Mehan, 1979).

The teacher candidates in TE 348, however, experienced firsthand the deepened understanding that can come from the *student*-centered nature of artistic response – either through creating and talking about their own artistic responses or by interacting with an artistic response created by someone else and talking about that response in a socially situated setting. They were able to create artistic responses and participate in discussions about those responses in *student*-centered ways. In short, by participating in literature discussion groups themselves, teacher candidates were learning how to be discussants. They were learning what it meant to listen thoughtfully, but they were also learning what kinds of dialogue and material they could contribute in order to impact the thinking of others.

Because the preservice teachers in TE 348 had these direct experiences with artistic response and were involved with the concept of artistic response throughout the semester, it is possible that those featured in this study will go into classrooms and ask their own students to engage in artistic response that is educative, student-centered, and meaningful. Such interactions are more likely, however, from future teacher candidates

who, because of the findings of this study, might have the opportunity to become familiar with a clear definition of artistic response and the levels of artistic response.

While it is exciting to speculate about how teacher candidates who have firsthand knowledge of what it means to create artistic responses will engage their students with the creation of art in connection with text, it is equally worthwhile to reflect on the ways in which artistic response has already transformed the textual understanding of many of the teacher candidates. As Lari said, Sara's artistic response touched on misconceptions she had about a text and changed her understanding of the book. Lari's altered perspective is evidence that artistic response changed the ways some preservice teachers perceived the books they read. It also serves as evidence of the likelihood that some of those teacher candidates recognized the transformative power of such responses.

The level of recognition the teacher candidates had about the transformational properties of artistic response has another interesting implication. It implies that preservice teachers responsible for providing artistic responses to children's and adolescent literature might not only need to *consider* how those responses could help others comprehend the literature in new and substantial ways, but that they should be expected to plan for such results – that they should realize they are *responsible* for envisioning and assessing for these possible outcomes. Sara's artistic response paper stated that she intended for others to experience Esperanza's important feelings and perceptions through her narrative poem. Evidence of this level of recognition of the social nature of artistic response speaks to the ways in which TE 348 students can and should consider the impact of this role on others' understanding of a text.

TE 348 Instructors

As I have noted throughout this work, I, along with other members of the Children's Literature Team, had endeavored for several semesters to reach a shared understanding of artistic response with our students, our colleagues, and even among ourselves. The findings of this study have the potential to refine our understanding of what we are expecting preservice teachers to do when we ask them to create an artistic response to literature, and they can also provide some insight into how we can talk about artistic response. One example that shows these findings have already impacted the language and practice of TE 348 instructors can be found in how the fall of 2005 explanation of the artistic response assignment (see Appendix B) changed after this study took place (spring semester, 2005). Table 9.1 shows that the description of fall, 2005, contains two significant differences from the spring description.

Table 9.1 – Original (Spring) and Revised (Fall) 2005 TE 348 Discussion Assignment

TE 348 Spring 2005 syllabus	TE 348 Fall 2005 syllabus
<p>The person responsible for artistic response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• creates a creative, artistic response to the book that <i>has the text at its center</i> and that promotes understanding and conversation (for example, a collage of literary passages, a choral reading, a poem, a poster, a song, a drama). This is more thoughtful and text-centered than simply a craft• presents this response to the group or guides the group in creating it (though it should not take up more than a fifth of the allotted discussion group time)	<p>As the person responsible for artistic response, you will NOT write a one-page paper ahead of time. Instead, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create an artistic response to the book that <i>has the text at its center</i>, (for example, a collage of literary passages, a choral reading, a poem, a poster, a song, a drama). This should be a thoughtful, text-centered response -- more than a simple craft that is loosely connected to the book. Whatever you create should work toward helping all group members, including yourself, understand the book in new or deeper ways. This isn't a piece to show what a terrific artist you are; it's to show what a terrific thinker you are. The best artistic

Table 9.1 – cont’d

TE 348 Spring 2005 syllabus	TE 348 Fall 2005 syllabus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes (in the write-up) a rationale and explanation for her chosen artistic response, and hands in whatever artistic product she has created 	<p>responses are those which provoke richer conversation around the text, perhaps prompting a group member to say, “Ah-ha! I never thought about the book that way!”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present this response to the group or guide the group in creating it (though it should not take up more than a fifth of the allotted discussion group time) <p>After the discussion, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete a 1-2-page write-up in which you include an explanation for your chosen artistic response and a description of how your group responded to its creation/presentation submit this write-up and your artistic product <i>the week following</i> the conversation.

First, the new fall syllabus expands upon language created in the spring syllabus to try to move students away from craft-types responses. The original description states that the artistic response “...is more thoughtful and text-centered than simply a craft.” Because the initial findings of this study indicated that students had difficulty discerning just what an artistic response was and were concerned that their limited artistic skills would undermine their abilities to create artistic responses, the revised description gives examples of the impact artistic responses should have and states that it is not necessary for students to be skilled artists in order to produce a quality response. It says that the artistic response

...should be a thoughtful, text-centered response -- more than a simple craft that is loosely connected to the book. Whatever you create should work toward helping all group members, including yourself, understand the book in new or deeper

ways. This isn't a piece to show what a terrific artist you are; it's to show what a terrific thinker you are. The best artistic responses are those which provoke richer conversation around the text, perhaps prompting a group member to say, "Ah-ha! I never thought about the book that way!"

The fall description is also different from that of the spring in a second important way. The spring version required teacher candidates to turn in a written rationale for the artistic response *on the day that response is discussed*. This study found that, while some of the teacher candidates considered how their group members' might experience deepened knowledge of text by interacting with their artistic responses, others did not show any evidence of having considered this possibility. Because of this, TE 348 instructors realized that the spring assignment did not require candidates to be explicit about the ways in which their artistic responses might help either them or their peers to connect back to the text. Instructors also realized that, even if students were required to show evidence (in their written response papers) that they had considered the social impact of their artistic response, the spring assignment description offered no opportunities for them to report results of their shared response because their written responses were due on the day the books were to be discussed. As a result, the updated fall description requires them to, *after the class when the response was discussed*,

- complete a 1-2-page write-up in which you include an explanation for your chosen artistic response and a description of how your group responded to its creation/presentation.
- submit this write-up and your artistic product *the week following* the conversation.

By adding these elements, the Team members hoped to prompt students to think about the impact of their responses *before and after* they brought them to class.

Along with the changes made to assignment descriptions, the findings from this study could prompt TE 348 instructors to speak about artistic response in a more clearly defined way and provide them with scenarios (from the telling case) they can share with their students in order to delineate the characteristics of the various levels of artistic response.

To Elementary Teachers

This research focused on preservice teachers' understanding of artistic response to children's and adolescent literature, but its findings also have a great deal to offer when it comes to the work of practicing teachers. Because almost all the prior research done in this area has focused on *students* in elementary through high school, there is little known -- beyond the craft-driven nature of their applications -- about how *practicing teachers* think of artistic response to literature. The findings of this study could assist them by, at the very least, introducing them to the notion that artistic response can promote higher level thinking among their students. Once they are exposed to the idea that it is important to ask students (of any age) for meaningful artistic responses, not just those activities or busy work that are loosely tied to text, they will be more likely to question their own practices and intents in connection to this topic. Similar to TE 348 instructors, practicing teachers who come in contact with this work, and who are interested in providing their students with a variety of ways to make meaning with texts, will encounter terms,

phrases, and assignment descriptions they can utilize when describing artistic response to their students.

This work also has the potential of providing new information to practicing teachers about how they might merge literary understandings of literature with the practical, day-to-day aspects of their teaching. It provides examples of response roles that are closely tied to the responses themselves and asks teachers to carefully consider the purposes behind each of those forms of response. This might seem like something that teachers are likely to be doing already, but the study illustrates how complex different forms of literary response can be. It also shows how teachers and students alike are more apt to focus on tasks (e.g., the creation of monster masks in response to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963)) in association with literary response, rather than the reasoning behind those tasks (and how they might bring about greater and more varied understanding of text). This study implies that elementary and middle school teachers need to be made aware of the differences between craft activity and artistic response, so that they can correctly recognize literary response roles that are more task-driven than concept-driven.

The work done here provides elementary and middle school teachers with a clear definition of artistic response that they can share with their students. These teachers could also use the descriptions of the different levels of artistic response provided here to help students realize what kind of artistic responses they are creating. If students are primarily creating artistic responses that retell the story, then teachers could describe to them how these responses fall into the category of “artistic response as object” and do not do much to increase or inspire others to comprehend books in meaningful or inspired

ways. Teachers could use Lari's and Sara's to explain why it is important for students to take responsibility for each others' learning when describing artistic response as social experience. Finally, both teachers and students could take the characteristics of the different levels of artistic response described here, just as the TE 348 instructors did, and use them to create or modify assessments for artistic response. For example, teachers who wanted to make a real effort to ensure that their students' artistic responses would instigate engaging and evolving discussions about a piece of literature might have those students write explicitly about the ways their artistic response could inspire such discussion. For assessment purposes, teachers could then have both the artistic respondents and their group members write about the impact of the artistic response on members' interpretations of the text and the quality of the group's discussion.

I began this study with the desire to learn about how preservice teachers come to understand artistic response to children's and adolescent literature. What I found, however, also has implications for practicing teachers who are interested in helping students to: 1) expand their thinking about literature and, 2) to respond to literature in ways that might increase their abilities to share those responses with others. One final way this study might impact the thinking and practice of elementary and middle school teachers is by offering them insight into the importance of the many layers of literary discussions. In this study preservice teachers reflected on their own personal interactions with the text, and shared their thoughts in small discussion groups; after small discussion groups, those ideas were or were not expressed within the context of the larger group setting. Each of these configurations had something to offer artistic response people in connection with text comprehension, but what comes through most clearly is the

importance of offering all of them and providing students with modeling and instruction about how to function within each of the settings. Sara developed her poem in response to *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) alone in her room. She then read the poem in her small discussion group, which prompted Lari to share it with the class as a whole. As a result of that whole-group sharing session, Lari expressed the importance of the poem and gave the entire class opportunity to see the book in a new light. While there is a good deal about the construction of these varied group sizes that went unexplored in this study, the examples it provides speak to the importance of multiple literature discussion configurations and offer teachers insight as to how they might design and implement discussion groups in their own classrooms.

To Teacher Educators

The findings of the study are relevant to teacher educators in several ways. Like TE 348 instructors, TE 348 students, and practicing teachers, teacher educators who are interested in sharing artistic response with their students can look to this study for language that could prove helpful in talking about that response. While classes and teaching experiences can vary widely from semester to semester, this research indicates that having clear definitions and effective examples is important when introducing artistic response to preservice teachers. It also points out that teacher educators and their students can challenge and support one another in the building of knowledge when a common language or definition is missing.

By reading about how the Children's Literature Team, the teacher candidates, and I struggled to understand, define, and discuss artistic response, teacher educators might, in addition, gain insight into how preservice teachers comprehend complicated aspects of

literature response. When Lari told me that she “got” artistic response, that she knew it was a “deeper kind of thinking,” I did not push her to explain what she meant. Instead, I accepted that she knew what artistic response was because she had adopted some of my language in describing it. The result of my easy acceptance of her interpretation was that Lari created and wrote about a response that she knew did not fulfill the criteria for artistic response. Her thoughts about artistic response were too undeveloped and confused for her to be successful in her endeavor. This portion of the telling case highlights the importance of the teacher educator’s role in helping students to work through those difficulties. While I did not ask Lari to share what she meant when she said artistic response was a “deeper kind of thinking,” I did prompt her to talk about why she had responded so strongly to Sara’s poem. In doing so I provided her with the time and place to make her transformed learning public.

Like elementary and middle school teachers, teacher educators may not necessarily be familiar with the idea that artistic response can be valuable in transforming not just a respondent’s understanding of the text, but also the understanding of the group (large or small) of which that respondent is a member. In lecture halls with chairs nailed to the floor, teacher educators can easily fall into teacher-led discussions of literature. As I stated in the implications for practicing teachers, Lari’s and Sara’s interactions with multiple group configurations show how very important varied social settings can be to the development of concepts about a book – especially in connection with artistic response to literature. By providing teacher candidates with varied group environments and instruction and modeling as to how those groups can and should interact, teacher

educators can help new teachers become better prepared to facilitate such groups in their own classrooms.

As with practicing teachers, this study also affords teacher educators with opportunities to discover new ways to combine literary understandings of literature with their daily responsibilities as professionals. In my own experience as a teacher educator the importance of reading and responding to literature *as literature* was sometimes lost when I spoke about how I might use a piece of literature to teach a particular topic. By bringing literature into the classroom setting in ways that encourage many types of response, I have found that important topics may surface during discussion, but that those topics can then be related directly back to the text and picked up later for expansion, when the literary aspects of the text are no longer the center of attention.

What Are The Possibilities For Future Research?

My work on this dissertation has left me with many questions and a desire to do additional research. As this study concludes I have plans to follow some of my former TE 348 students into their own classrooms, as I am interested in discovering whether or not they will teach any forms of literary response. If they do, I would like to observe their practice as they proceed: What types of response do they include? How do they introduce response forms? If they choose to teach artistic response, what motivates them to do so? How do they define artistic response to their students? How do they evaluate their own students' artistic responses? How do they measure whether or not an artistic response is successful? How do their students come to understand artistic response? I believe there is a definite need for research on how beginning teachers teach artistic

response and how children in elementary classrooms perceive it – especially since they are often heavily oriented toward craft activities.

Another potential area of inquiry involves expanding this type of investigation into other kinds of responses. While the students in TE 348 seemed most confused about artistic response, I am curious about whether or not there are levels in their developing understandings of the other types of responses as well. I am also interested in finding out more about how preservice teachers understand each of these responses. Do their definitions match those of their instructors? What role do their discussion group and class members play in developing their understanding of the other responses? What role does their instructor play? Are there parallels between how teacher candidates come to understand artistic response and the ways they come to comprehend other forms of response?

This study regards children's and adolescent literature seriously. The research discussed here is based on the premise that children's literature, long valued as a part of the K-12 curriculum, has literary and scholarly value as well. If that is the case, then instruction in children's literature should be a part of all literacy training for elementary and middle school teachers, and teacher educators should be investigating the best ways to include it in the curriculum. How is it being taught in teacher education programs right now? Is it treated as a completely separate topic or is it integrated into literacy curriculums? In what ways are teacher educators approaching children's literature as it connects to all aspects of literacy learning, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing? Are there ways to use children's literature as a tool to teach content areas while also managing to teach the literary qualities of books?

Conclusion

Does art have a role to play in the making of meaning? As Beyer (2000) put it, “The arts can, through imaginative rendering of people, events, values, places, feelings, and ideas, help to disclose worlds that are not yet in place, and thus serve as a force to bring about their creations” (p. 85). Seeing artistic responses to literature bring about transformed understanding of texts in socially situated settings speaks to the power of artistic response, literature, and community in the construction of meaning. The preservice teachers and I collectively learned with and from each other as we explored the multifaceted interactions between readers and texts, the importance of public engagement with literary ideas, and the complexities involved with coming to understand artistic response to children’s and adolescent literature.

The telling case format and the lens of historical definitions of art offer a conceptual framework for describing how preservice teachers came to understand artistic response in one section of TE 348, yet the aim of this dissertation was not to offer narrow views of artistic response perspectives and practices. Instead, I intend for this dissertation to encourage educators to incorporate artistic response into the teaching of literature in reflective and provocative ways.

In the culture of *No Child Left Behind*, the focus of educators has had to turn to the learning product and what can be measured. By contrast, artistic response focuses on the *process* and *experience* of engaging with literature in socially situated ways. It is one of an array of responses to literature and, while it is often misunderstood, it allows for both creative and intellectual interaction around text. My work will help teachers and teacher educators better understand and implement this type of literature response.

APPENDIX A

Syllabus

TE 348 – Reading And Responding To Children’s Literature

Spring 2005
Section: 006

Instructor: Suzy Knezek
Home Phone: 517-333-8280
Email: knezeksu@msu.edu
Office hours by appointment

Class Sessions: Tuesdays, 6:10-9:00
Location: 107 Erickson Hall

COURSE OVERVIEW

Welcome to TE 348 - Reading and Responding to Children's Literature. This course focuses on literary understanding and genres in reading and teaching children's literature. We will discuss critical and theoretical perspectives in evaluating children's literature. We will also concentrate on the literary, social, and pedagogical issues encountered in the study of children's literature. Our course readings, activities and projects are designed to help you explore and learn about the following key ideas:

- Evaluating and selecting materials -- Looking at, Evaluating, and Talking About Children’s Literature
- Taking a literary stance -- The Differences Between Literary and Curricular Uses of Children’s Literature
- Appreciating genre elements – Picture Books, Folklore, Fantasy and Science Fiction, Contemporary Realistic Fiction, Nonfiction, Historical Fiction, Biography, and Poetry

This is primarily a discussion-based course and was planned to encourage dialogue and an exchange of views. This sharing process will require you to read, purchase, and bring in a variety of books that you will use to demonstrate and support your developing knowledge. You will be required to purchase both course texts, including the overall text and discussion literature (which can be found at local college bookstores), along with eight children’s books that will comprise a text set.

COURSE TEXTS & LITERATURE

Course Text: *Literature and the Child (fifth edition)* – Cullinan and Galda
Discussion Literature: *Where the Wild Things Are* – Sendak
Voices in the Park – Browne
Esperanza Rising -- Ryan
City of Ember – Duprau
Group Choice (this can be a library book)

Text Set: You will be required to select eight children's books (some will be picture books; others will be young adult novels) in addition to the books already detailed in the course literature and course text sections above. These eight books, one representing each of the eight genres covered in this course, will comprise the literature used in your text set assignment (see assignment section below).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMS

Library/Bookstore Visit – 10 Points Total

We will not meet in Erickson for class on **Tuesday, February 1st**. Instead, you are to visit a bookstore, **and** either a public or school library. Spend some time observing in the children's section at each location. While you're at each location, make notes (we will provide a description of the note-taking format in class), draw a sketch diagram of the children's section at each location, and write a 1-2 paragraph piece in which you discuss what assumptions about books, children, and reading are reflected by your observations. The notes, diagrams, and written pieces will be due on **Tuesday, February 8th**. The goal of this assignment is for you to focus on how books are presented for "consumption." By looking closely at the places where readers go to find children's books, we learn something about assumptions about books, children, reading... and marketing. You will receive a handout detailing expected review contents, along with a rubric summarizing evaluation information, later in the semester.

Text Set– 25 Points Total

In this course we wish to encourage aspiring elementary school teachers to begin constructing their own high-quality libraries of children's literature. Schools today have limited budgets, and though we may wish that teachers did not have to spend their own money to supply their classrooms, the reality is that many must do so. The text set assignment is designed to help you begin your own collection. It is also designed to help us make certain that you have *quality* books that represent each of the genres presented in the Cullinan and Galda text. Because TE 348 has become a required course for elementary education students at Michigan State, instructors who teach junior- and senior-level courses can now expect that students will have these text sets to use in lesson planning and actual classroom instruction in TE 301, 401/402, and beyond.

In compiling your text set you will be required to:

- **Select eight children's books, one representing each of the eight genres addressed in Cullinan and Galda**

You will be reading about and discussing genre elements in class. Please *do not* select or purchase books in advance. You will be expected to bring in library books as you read and discuss the Cullinan and Galda chapters (as per your instructor's directions). You are to select your text set books *after* you have explored a particular genre in class.

- **Select books that reflect an awareness of multicultural perspectives and issues in children's literature**

Your overall text set should include books that indicate your awareness of the importance of multiculturalism in children's literature. This means that we expect to

see books in your collections that include realistic and positive portrayal of people who have traditionally been underrepresented in children's books.

- **Choose four of the eight books you selected and write critical reviews about those books (based on genre criteria, literary elements, and artistic elements) – 5 Points/Review; 20 points total**

Portions of these reviews will be due three times during the semester. You will write reviews with input from a peer review partner. You and your partner will be given time in class to decide which of you will write reviews for each genre. Your first two reviews, along with bibliographic information for the other two books you selected, but are NOT writing about, will be **due Tuesday, March 1st**, and should represent two of the following genres: picture books, folklore, fantasy or science fiction, and/or contemporary realistic fiction. Your partner will write two reviews, also. Between the two of you, you must have a set of reviews that covers all four genres. This means that if you write reviews of your picture book and science fiction selections, then your partner must write reviews on her folklore and contemporary realistic fiction selections. The same system will apply to the second set of books, including your historical fiction, biography, poetry, and nonfiction selections. Your second set of two reviews (and bibliographic information for your other two books) will be **due on Tuesday, April 12th**. You will receive a handout detailing expected review contents, along with a rubric summarizing evaluation information, later in the semester.

- **Write a short reflection paper about what you have learned from the selection, review, and partner writing processes – 5 Points Total**

In this paper, you will be expected to detail your current understanding of children's books as response-worthy literature. You should use this piece to take stock of your thinking and learning throughout the course. This final reflection should include your list of the eight books you selected, along with the four completed and graded reviews. It is **due Tuesday, April 26th**. You will receive a handout detailing expected reflection topics, along with a rubric summarizing evaluation information, later in the semester. **You must bring in the text set itself for class examination and discussion on April 26th.**

Book Discussion – 30 Points Total

Throughout this course, you will be participating in discussion groups. Similar to literature discussion circles found in many elementary classrooms, these groups will discuss the four books that you are required to purchase, along with one book your discussion group selects, for this portion of the course. You will be discussing five books in all. Each group will read and discuss *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Voices in the Park*, *Esperanza Rising*, *City of Ember*, and a group choice text.

The book discussion groups will be comprised of five students and will meet five times during the semester. Each student in a discussion group will be expected to be particularly responsible for responding in one of five ways in each meeting:

1. Group Facilitator/Personal Response – 10 points
2. Literary Response – 5 points
3. Critical Response – 5 points

4. Intertextual Response – 5 points

5. Artistic Response – 5 points

Each student in a group will be expected to take on each of the five roles by the end of the semester. For example, the first time a group meets a student may be responsible for a critical response, the next time she may be responsible for an intertextual response, etc. Four of the five responses (literary, critical, intertextual, and artistic) will be written up before class and turned in to the group facilitator/personal response person on the day of the discussions. These responses will each be worth 5 points. When students take on the group facilitator/personal response role, however, they will provide their response the week *after* the group meets, and her response will be worth 10 points.

The group facilitator will come to class with a list of discussion questions and a personal response in mind. During the discussion, the group facilitator will take notes. She will then collect the other papers in the group on the day the discussion groups meets, read the 1-page papers from the other group members at home, and then complete a 2-page write-up summarizing what was discussed (and whether there were significant differences between the group members writing and the discussion), as well as what went well and what might have gone better in the group, noting the individual members participation. The summarizer will turn in her responses, along with those of her colleagues, the week after the discussion takes place. The notes made by the summarizer will be taken into account when I calculate the participation/attendance grades for each member of the class.

You will receive a handout describing each of the discussion group roles later in the semester. **The dates of the discussion meetings (and most response due dates) are as follows:**

***February 8th – Role Response & Discussion I**

*** March 1st – Role Response & Discussion II**

*** March 22nd – Role Response & Discussion III**

*** April 5th – Role Response & Discussion IV**

***April 19th – Role Response & Discussion V**

(*Please remember that when you have the group facilitator/ personal response role, your response will be due the week following the discussion.)

Midterm/Book Talk – 10 Points Total

During this semester you will be engaged in a variety of experiences that will inform your thinking about children's literature. One of the important ways that teachers and librarians share their interest in particular books with children is through book talks. Book talks usually include critical review-based recommendations about whether or not the book presented should be read by others. On **Tuesday, March 15th**, each of you will be expected to present a book talk to our class about a book that you have read outside of those required for the course. This talk may focus on a library book, but it cannot be centered on a book you have purchased for any other portion of the course. You are expected to be both creative and critical in your presentation. Later in the semester you will receive a handout that will detail the critical elements of a book talk for this course. You will also receive a rubric with evaluation information on the topic.

Final/Book Critique – 10 Points Total

For your final exam in this course you will be given a children's book to evaluate. The book could be from any of the genres covered in Cullinan and Galda and will be provided by your TE 348 instructor. You will be expected to critically evaluate the book using the criteria (genre, literary elements, critical elements, artistic elements) you have read, written, and talked about during the semester. This final exam will take place on the final day of class.

Final Exam: Tuesday, April 26th.

Sharing Text Sets: Tuesday, April 26th.

Attendance, Preparation, & Participation – 15 Points Total

It is essential that you not only attend each class session (and be on time!), but that you are also prepared to be an active class participant. An important aspect of any classroom learning community is the active engagement of students and teachers around worthwhile content. Your contributions to class discussions and activities are essential to your learning as well as to the health and learning of our own classroom community. It is your responsibility to attend all class sessions, prepared to be an active participant by having completed the assigned readings and related written assignments prior to class. Additionally, you will be expected to be an active class participant who raises relevant questions, makes contributions that promote discussion, is sensitive to eliciting the ideas of others in the class, and actively engages in small group work. Your attendance, preparation and participation will contribute 15 points to your final grade. Please see the course policy section of the syllabus below for details.

COURSE POLICIES

Your final grade for the semester will be based on written assignments and your class attendance and participation.

- **Class Attendance:** Your attendance and class participation are vital to your development as a teacher. Your colleagues depend on you to share ideas, experiences, classroom observations, etc. Tardiness and early departure from class will be noted and documented. **This is a dynamic learning environment. You need to be here.**
- **Absences:** One unexcused absence in this course is allowed for unexpected occurrences. After the one absence, each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 0.25 points on a 4.0 scale. If you are unable to attend a class session, you should call or e-mail your discussion group members and me in advance.
- **Attendance Policy:** In accordance with the Teacher Preparation Program's Professional Conduct Policy, attendance and punctuality in class meetings is critical to your success in this course and the program. More than a total of 2 unexcused absences (e.g. absences without timely communications with your instructor) in class will affect your grade and may result in a grade of 0.0 for the course.

Incompletes (University Policy)

When special or unusual circumstances occur, the instructor may postpone assignment of the student's final grade in a course by use of an I-incomplete. The I-incomplete may be given only when: The student (a) has completed at least 12 weeks of the semester (6 weeks in the summer session), but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reason; and (b) has done satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Written Work

The written work that you hand in should be quality work, both in its content and form. The content of your written work should reflect your careful and thoughtful consideration of the ideas we are exploring in the various readings and activities that we use – and you should refer to these where this serves to support your ideas. This does not mean you need to write pages and pages for these assignments, but it does mean you should carefully craft what you write - be clear, succinct, and support what you say. Your work should be typed, double-spaced, and presented in an edited format (you have checked it for spelling and grammar).

The grading scale will be approximately as follows:

94-100%	4.0
88-93%	3.5
82-87%	3.0
77-81%	2.5
70-76%	2.0

Each assignment will be graded separately and the graded assignments will be combined to reach a final grade for this section. **At any point, any attendance deductions will be taken.** Please note, a grade of 4.0 is considered exceptional work, a grade of 3.5 is considered strong work, a 3.0 is considered good work and a 2.5 is considered to be adequate work. It is the responsibility of each student to obtain class notes, handouts and assignments from a fellow student in the event of an absence.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: The Value of Children's Literature

Tuesday, January 11

- Introduction to the course
- Reading/literature memories
- Sharing books (*Yo! Yes!* and others)

Week 2: Categories of Literature/ Overview of Genres

Tuesday, January 18

- C&G Chapter 1 (*Children's Literature Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*)
- C&G Chapter 12 (*Developing Responsive Readers*)

Week 3: Learning to Talk About Books (Literary and Artistic Elements)/Genre: Picture Books/Introduction to Response

Tuesday, January 25

- C&G Chapter 3 (*The Art of Picture Books*)
- C&G Chapter 4 (*The Content of Picture Books*)
- Bring in a picture book

Week 4: Where to Find Children's Literature

Tuesday, February 1 – **We will not meet this week!**

- Individual visit to local public or school library
- Individual visit to local book store
- Create maps, notes, and connection pieces

Week 5: Book Discussion I (*Where the Wild Things Are*)/Genre: Folklore

Tuesday, February 8

- C&G Chapter 5 (*Folklore*)
- Bring in Folklore text
- **DUE: Role Response I – be prepared to discuss *Where the Wild Things Are***
- **DUE: Library/Bookstore maps, notes, and connection piece**

Week 6: Genre: Fantasy and Science Fiction

Tuesday, February 15

- C&G Chapter 6 (*Fantasy and Science Fiction*)
- Bring in Fantasy text
- Bring in Science Fiction text
- **DUE: Group Facilitators ONLY – Response for *Where the Wild Things Are***

Week 7: Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Tuesday, February 22

- C&G Chapter 7 (*Contemporary Realistic Fiction*)
- Bring in Contemporary Realistic Fiction text

Week 8: Book Discussion II (*Voices in the Park*)/Genre: Historical Fiction

Tuesday, March 1

- C&G Chapter 8 (*Historical Fiction*)
- Bring in Historical Fiction text
- **DUE: first four text set book reviews**
- **DUE: Role Response II – be prepared to discuss *Voices in the Park***

Week 9: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Tuesday, March 8

Week 10: Midterm/Booktalks

Tuesday, March 15

- **Midterm – Booktalks**

- **DUE: Group Facilitators ONLY – Response for *Voices in the Park***

Week 11: Book Discussion III (*Esperanza Rising*) /Genre: Biography

Tuesday, March 22

- C&G Chapter 9 (*Biography*)
- Bring in biography text
- **DUE: Role Response III – be prepared to discuss *Esperanza Rising***

Week 12: Response Review/Genre: Nonfiction

Tuesday, March 29

- C&G Chapter 10 (*Nonfiction*)
- Bring in nonfiction text
- **DUE: Group Facilitators ONLY – Response for *Esperanza Rising***

Week 13: Book Discussion IV (*City of Ember*)/Genre: Poetry

Tuesday, April 5

- C&G Chapter 2 (*Poetry*)
- Bring in book of poetry
- **DUE: Role Response IV – be prepared to discuss *City of Ember***

Week 14: Culturally Diverse Literature

Tuesday, April 12

- C&G Chapter 11 (*Building a Culturally Diverse Literature Collection*)
- **DUE: second four text set book reviews**
- **DUE: Group Facilitators ONLY – Response for *City of Ember***

Week 15: Book Discussion V (*Group Choice*)/Literature-Based Instruction

Tuesday, April 19

- C&G Chapter 13 (*Literature-Based Instruction in Preschool and Primary Grades*)
- C&G Chapter 14 (*Literature-Based Instruction in Intermediate Grades and Middle School*)
- DUE: Role Response V -- be prepared to discuss Group Choice text

Week 16: Final Exam

Tuesday, April 26

- **Final Exam**
- **DUE: Summarizers ONLY – Response for Group Choice Text**
- **DUE: Text Set Reflection**
- **DUE: Text Set (bring in your text sets and be prepared to share them)**

Final Exam Week

Tuesday, May 3, 8:00-10:00 p.m. (We will not meet, unless we have to cancel a class earlier in the semester.)

APPENDIX B

Discussion Group Assignment: Roles

There are 5 “roles” that will take place in each literature discussion group, based on five different ways of responding to literature. For each book, one of you will be responsible for each type of response on a rotating basis. By the end of the semester, then, you will each have been responsible for each role and will be better prepared as a teacher to facilitate literature discussion groups in your own classroom.

When you come to class for a literature discussion, you should bring your copy of the book (already read!). If you are responsible for textual response, critical response, intertextual response, or artistic response, a 1-page write-up in which you respond to the book according to your assigned response is due *at the start of class* on the day you talk about the book. This 1-page write-up will be worth 5 points. If you are the Group Facilitator for the day, you will have extra responsibilities and will receive 10 points for your role that day. You will lead your group’s discussion and write up a summary of the discussion **afterwards, turning it in the following week**. Specific responsibilities are outlined below.

The five roles, based on five kinds of responses to literature, are outlined below:

1. Textual response

The person responsible for **textual response**

- finds and shares significant literary passages, explaining their significance
- talks about the genre of the book
- brings literary elements into the conversation (setting, plot, characters, theme, style)

2. Critical response

The person responsible for **critical response**

- explores questions about issues of power surrounding race, class and gender (who has power in this book and who does not) and voice (who is heard in this book and who is not)
- talks about the book’s expressed and implied beliefs
- talks about what the author might want readers to believe, how the author works to make that happen and what the author seems to assume about readers and about the subject

3. Intertextual response

The person responsible for **intertextual response**

- reads and connects one or two other works by author or another author (picture books, novels, poems, biographies, non-fiction, etc.)
- finds and discusses articles, reviews, or interviews
- may find and discuss other media forms of the text (movies, CDs, etc.)

4. Artistic response

The person responsible for **artistic response**

- creates a creative, artistic response to the book *that has the text at its center* and that promotes understanding and conversation (for example, a collage of literary passages, a choral reading, a poem, a poster, a song, a drama). This should be more thoughtful and text-centered than a simple craft or activity that is loosely tied to the book (No “busy work.”).
- presents this response to the group or guides the group in creating it (though it should not take up more than a fifth of the allotted discussion group time)
- includes (**in the write-up**) a rationale and explanation for their chosen artistic response, and hands in whatever artistic product they have created

5. Group Facilitator/personal response

As the **Facilitator** for the discussion, you will **NOT** write a one-page paper ahead of time. Instead, **on the day of the discussion you will:**

- prepare a list of questions or prompts to guide your group around important issues of the book
- begin the discussion and keep it moving throughout the group meeting. You do not need to *do* all the discussing; merely make sure the discussion begins and continues in a strong and relevant way
- bring personal response into the conversation, making relevant connections to prior experience (i.e. life) and articulating relevant emotional reactions to text (and their basis)
- monitor whether everyone gets a chance to talk, whether all voices in the group are heard and keep track of the time to make certain that all the responses get covered in the allotted time period
- takes notes during the discussion

After the discussion, you will:

- collect the other papers in the group on the day the discussion groups meet (there should be four papers: textual, critical, intertextual, and artistic)
- read the 1-page papers from the other group members

- complete a 2-page write-up summarizing what was discussed (and whether there were significant differences between the group members writing and the discussion), as well as what went well and what might have gone better in the group, noting the individual members participation. Include your list of questions and discussion prompts, explaining why you felt they were relevant to the conversation
- hands in to the instructor *as a packet* the following: the four response papers from the discussion meeting, the summary of the group's conversation, and the discussion questions or prompts
- This summary is usually due the week *following* the conversation and is worth 10 points.

APPENDIX C

PowerPoint Slides Introducing Response

TE 348: Reading and Responding to Children's Literature

Session 2:

- Responsive Readers
- Reader Response Roles

Life Doesn't Frighten Me

- Poem by Maya Angelou; paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat
- As you listen to, look at, and think about this book, write:
 - This book is about...
 - This book makes me feel.....
 - The most important word or phrase in this book was....
 - This book reminds me of....

Developing Responsive Readers

- Teachers must know children and books
- Who you are determines how you read
- Reading is a transaction among reader, text, and context
- 3 essentials for response-based curriculum:
 - Time and choice
 - Reading aloud
 - Activities to support children's developing understanding of literature

Literary Responses

- Address the text
- Response centers on the text itself
- Address the text as valuable in itself
- Response continually uses the text as the primary reference point
- Address the text as a literary creation

Non-Literary Responses

- See the text as a tool to accomplish other purposes
- Use the content of the text as a source of information or instruction (Skills development, academic instruction, moral development)
- Do not address the text itself as a primary focus
- Primary focus is on what the text can do to help further non-literary goals, not what it is
- Ignore or background the literary qualities of the text
- Foreground the immediate practical or functional value of the text

Modes of Response

- Personal
- Textual
- Critical
- Intertextual
- Artistic

Personal Response

- Readers make connections between texts and their own lived experiences (Rosenblatt)
- Personal connections between reader, text, and reader's life
- How does the book make me feel? What does it remind me of?
- Taps into reader's life experiences, memories, hopes, dreams, fears
- Tends to be spontaneous and strongly affective

Textual Response

- Readers closely examine literary elements of texts (i.e., setting, character, plot, theme, style)
- Deliberate connection between reader, text, and author/illustrator
- How does the book work? What did the author, illustrator do to make it work this way?
- Taps into reader's knowledge and experience with other texts
- May be analytical, evaluative, comparative
- Tends to be cognitive, but may include affective

Critical Response

- Readers see texts and responses as historically, socially and politically situated
- Analytical connection between reader, text, sub-text, and social context
- What is the book *really* saying? Do I want to accept this view of the world?
- Taps into reader's awareness of issues of race, class, gender, power and social justice
- Surfacing and interrogating the assumptions of texts and readers are key aspects of critical response
- Tends to be cognitive, may also be affective

Intertextual

- Literature is the context in which the text is explored and our understanding of literature depends on knowledge of its conventions
- Readers study the work by comparing and contrasting it to other texts (or other media forms of the text, including movies, CDs, etc.)
- What other books (or media forms of text) does this book remind me of?
 - In terms of genre characteristics
 - In terms of literary elements
 - In terms of artistic elements
 - In terms of response evoked

Artistic Response

- Readers react to material read with an artistic creation
- The response must deepen or in some way connect to readers' comprehension of the literature itself
- Avenues for expression may include artwork in any medium (music, poetry, collage, etc.)

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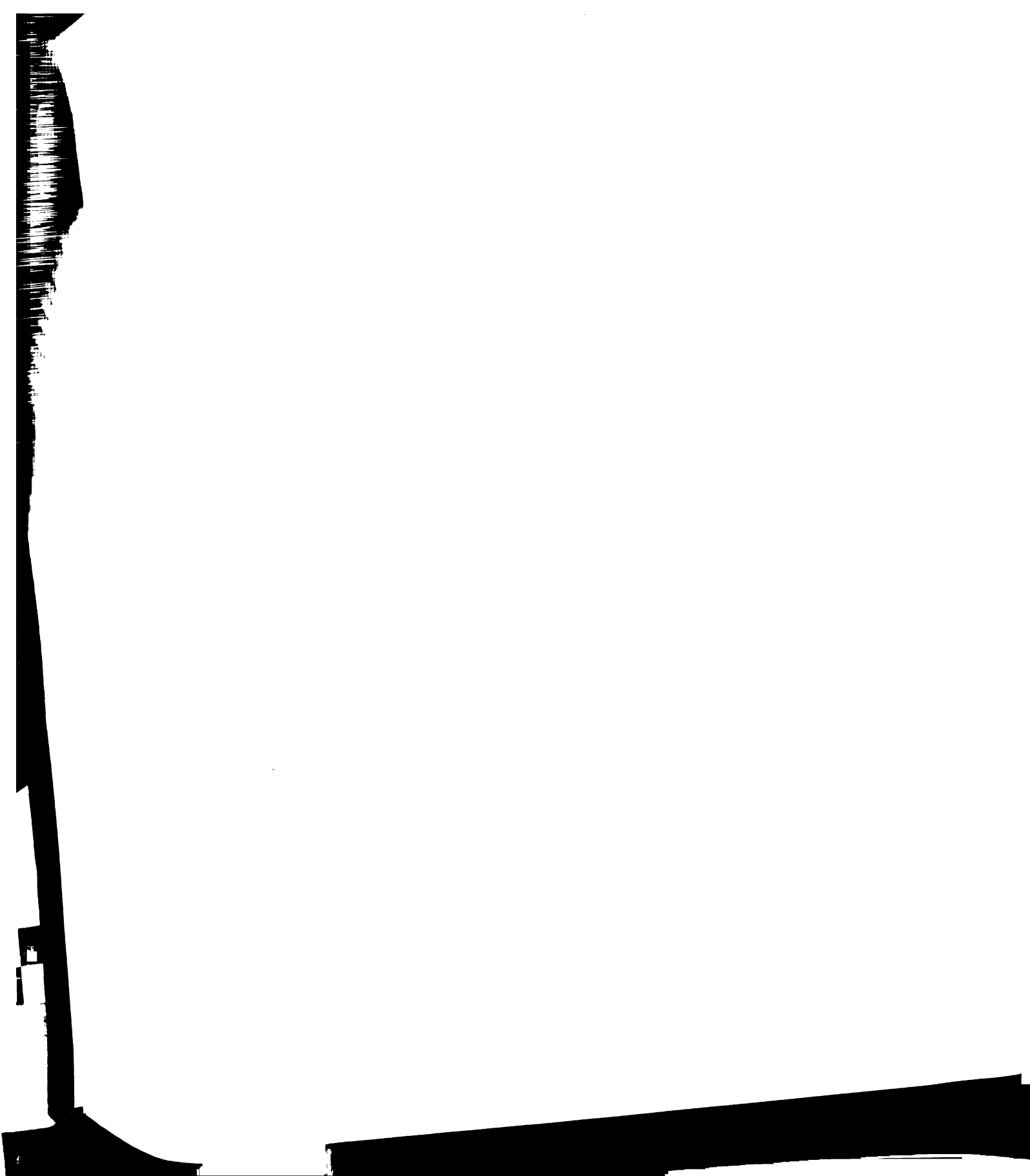
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