

Inkshed ✓

Newsletter of the Canadian Association for the Study of Writing and Reading
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Rhetoric teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of passing on to young people a given society's sanctioned rules governing reading, writing, and speaking. The main business of rhetoric teachers is in fact to inculcate these rules and to determine who has learned them and who has not. The rules themselves are usually tacit--are usually beyond the realm of discussion, falling in the realm of epistemology. . . . In teaching writing and speaking, we are providing our students with instructions for the correct experiencing of reality, offering implicit directives for what ought and ought not to be expressed and communicated.

--James Berlin (257-66)

"Rhetoric and Literacy in American Colleges."
Oldspeak/Newspeak Rhetorical Transformations.
Ed. Charles W. Kneupper. Arlington, TX:
Rhetoric Society of America, 1985.

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Inkshed provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use. Subscribers are invited to submit informative pieces such as notices, reports, and reviews of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, and workshops, as well as polemical discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to teachers in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

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THE SOUTHAM LITERACY SURVEY: TWO COMMENTS AND A CODA

/// Rick Coe

The survey of functional literacy in Canada that Southam Press published in September demands serious discussion. Here are two quick responses, which I hope will help get that discussion going.

1. Although the Southam articles discussed functional illiteracy as a disjunction between people's actual literacy and the particular literacy abilities needed to function effectively in Canada today, much of the response has been speculation about why literacy has declined. Some commentators have blamed immigration, though without presenting evidence that immigration levels are higher than they used to be or that today's immigrants are less likely than those of the past to become functionally literate in one of Canada's official languages. Other commentators, like Howard Peitch, president of the University of Victoria, have blamed such things as television and mothers who work outside the home. In fact, it is much more plausible to argue that literacy levels have not generally declined--certainly, no one has offered direct evidence of such a decline--but that our society has changed such that more people need more (and different) reading/writing abilities to function in Canada today than ever before (cf. Coe 271-286).

Southam's survey defined as "functionally illiterate" a lot of literate people, who lack the reading and/or writing abilities to function effectively as workers, citizens and consumers in Canada in 1987. Thus people who read the newspapers every day, know what today's major news stories are, can tell you who won last night's hockey game, can find which stores are having sales on stuff they want to buy--are defined as functionally illiterate if they can't locate and understand the details of news stories. Thus people who write notes, lists, cheques, and so forth, but cannot fill out forms demanded by various government agencies (e.g., for a driving license or unemployment insurance)--are defined as functionally illiterate. It would be more accurate to define such people as literate, but less than functionally literate by today's Canadian standards.

There is good reason to believe that if the Southam survey standards were applied to the Canadians of the 1950s or the 1920s, a higher percentage would fail. But in those "golden epochs" the average Canadian needed a lot less literacy to function at work or in interaction with government and corporate bureaucracies. In those "golden epochs" the average Canadian dropped out of school after Grade 10, so senior high school teachers (to say nothing of postsecondary instructors) did not have to deal with them. Thus the high school graduates of the 1920s and 1950s may have been more literate than today's graduates--but if so, only because the less literate students had dropped out before graduation.

Today's Canadian realities demand more (and different)--historically unprecedented--literacy abilities than ever before. Remarkably, we could probably achieve these levels. But only if we allocate equally unprecedented resources to our schools, colleges and universities. The

politicians who want the schools to do something about today's "functional illiteracy," however, are not yet willing to allocate those resources-- money, staff, smaller classes, more teacher education (especially after certification). Until the politicians and the public understand our literacy problems not as a decline, but as a challenge to achieve new heights, such resources are not likely to be allocated.

2. One of the most intriguing conclusions about "functional illiteracy" drawn from the Southam Press survey is this: a lot of people can't read well enough to function as citizens, consumers or on their jobs because much of what they have to read is written in gobbledygook. We could reduce this "functional illiteracy" problem by educating all Canadians to read gobbledygook written at the Grade 13 level and higher--or we could insist that everything government and corporate bureaucracies write for the public be written in straightforward plain English.

I have a wonderful fantasy in which we attach to every bureaucrat's wordprocessor readability software that refuses to print text rated beyond the Grade 10 level (unless, of course, the writer were to certify in blood that the document was to be read by specialists and other bureaucrats only). In reality, however, I must admit that bureaucrats write the way they do (a) because the bureaucracy rewards people who write bureaucratese (for, when it is competently done, bureaucratese often makes the mundane seem impressively complex) and (b) because university training encourages such writing.

Virtually all these bureaucrats are, after all, university graduates. And virtually everything one writes at university is written to impress (i.e., to "earn" a grade), and clear, direct, jargon-free writing receives lower grades than the same ideas communicated in competent academese (cf., e.g., Hake and Williams). Virtually everything one writes at university, however, is addressed to highly literate specialists. We do very little to educate students that there are various kinds of "good writing" appropriate to various kind of rhetorical contexts. We do very little to prepare them for writing clearly to the general public. Until we do--and until the bureaucracy is restructured to reward such clarity--Canadians, to be "functionally literate," will need the ability to read gobbledygook at the Grade 13 level and above.

In the aftermath of the Southam survey, Southam newspapers printed various articles about various efforts to provide basic literacy instruction for adult "illiterates." The articles I saw, however, missed the irony: the programs reported, while highly commendable, produce literates who probably would not meet the Southam survey's standards of functional literacy.

* * * * *

As a kind of apparently irrelevant coda to my comments or perhaps preface to the continuing discussion, let me cite Shirley Brice Heath's identification of two "precursors or concomitants of literacy":

the ability of a group (a) to take language apart for analysis and (b) to create institutional settings in which knowledge

gained from written materials can be repeatedly talked about, interpreted, and extended. A question that is as yet unanswerable is: Did these features or the potential for their development previously exist in groups that adopted modern literacy, or did the adoption and spread of literacy bring these features. (211)

To understand literacy as a social process and encourage high levels of literacy among social groups that have traditionally gotten by with lower levels, we need to identify all such precursors/concomitants of literacy and to help students create such contexts--which may suggest a Freirean approach.

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A BY-LINE ON LITERACY

/// Audrey Watson

Many literate people in North America have serious misconceptions about illiterate adults and about illiteracy. Unfortunately, the press often helps to foster these misconceptions. In this paper I shall refer to a number of press clippings collected by Nancy Miller, a literacy worker, to illustrate the kinds of reporting that prevent a clear understanding of illiterate adults and illiteracy.

Illiterate adults tend to conceal their lack of reading and writing skills--and with good reason. Most North Americans thoughtlessly link illiteracy with negative assumptions about native peoples, the unemployed, criminals, and the retarded. It is true that there are some illiterate adults in these groups of people, and that their situation is aggravated by a lack of literacy skills. On the other hand, today there are enough literate adults among the ranks of native peoples, the unemployed, the criminal element, and the retarded, to give us pause before making generalized and pejorative assumptions. Nevertheless, many of these harmful assumptions are implicit in newspaper reporting.

Sometimes, when the press mentions a person's inability to read or write, the reader might wonder whether that is relevant to the news story. For instance, the Toronto Star (27/8/86) reports that a victim of a false accusation of murder is "an illiterate Inuit"; another item about job training programs for the mentally handicapped (TS 17/11/86) reports that a 24-year-old man cannot read or write, implying that, since he is retarded, he is unable to do so. In fact, there are mentally handicapped people who do learn to read and write.

The press also tends to indiscriminately categorize illiterate adults with the criminal and other "disadvantaged" segments of society. Two examples from Miller's clippings follow:

OTTAWA - Canada's penitentiaries are doing little to help the vast majority of inmates who are either functionally illiterate, addicted to drugs and alcohol, or burdened with severe mental and learning disabilities.

(TS 12/3/86)

And, from an article on re-instating the death penalty:

Greenspan's fear is that the disadvantaged in Canadian society-- "illiterates, the uneducated, native people"--would end up on death row if the death penalty was restored.

(TS 1/3/87)

In the following news item, the second security guard equates being illiterate with being a moron. While the press points out that all strata of society attend wrestling matches, it fails to correct an unsavoury suggestion about illiterate people.

"Wrestling fans are ... How can I say this?" wonders a uniformed security guard at the Rochester Community War Memorial Arena. "Wrestling fans are ... less than well-educated."

His partner snorts, "Call them illiterate. You'd have to be a moron to fall for this."

Wrong. Wrestling fans, according to the demographic studies reported by the WWF, are spread across the entire socioeconomic spectrum. They aren't dumb or poor. Many are rich, bright and powerful.

(TS 22/8/86)

Adults who, for various reasons, have not learned to read and write, are not necessarily "dumb or poor" either. Most are bright intelligent people who share the same ups-and-downs of employment and family life as the rest of us. Some are self-employed, operating their own businesses, some work for others, and, yes, some are unemployed; some own their own homes, others rent, and, yes, others live on welfare and in public housing; some are satisfied with their level of achievement and education, and others who are not try to take evening classes in subjects that will help their job prospects, or that are of interest. Local school boards and community colleges offer many courses in basic reading and writing. However, until public attitudes toward illiterate adults change, the number willing to risk their self-esteem by disclosing their need and registering in these courses will be small.

In many ways, there need be no great divide between those of us who can read and write, and those who cannot. To read and to write is not so much an ability--something you can do or can't--as a practised skill--something you can learn to do with varying degrees of expertise. The press is at fault when its modes of reporting imply a dichotomy of Us (literate) and Them (illiterate).

The press implies a dichotomy between literate and illiterate people when it uses metaphors of war or disease in connection with illiteracy. Such metaphors imply that the literate are empowered to act on behalf of, and for the ultimate benefit of, illiterate people. Such headlines as HOW CANADA WAGES WAR ON ILLITERACY (TS 17/9/87) and CONQUER ILLITERACY OR PERISH (Financial Post, 21/9/85) are unwarranted and arrogant. Headlines that refer to illiteracy as a "Curse", or in terms of REMEDYING THE BURDEN THAT AFFLICTS (Ottawa Citizen, 19/2/84), are offensive.

Although the press may be partly correct in reporting that some illiterate young people turn to lives of prostitution and crime because they cannot fill job applications, this is not true of most illiterate adults. And there are literate adults who also turn to prostitution and crime. The failure of our social structures must not be laid upon illiterate adults. At one time, employers found it advantageous to employ illiterate and semi-literate workers; today, the needs of employers have changed, and workers who are aware of their rights will not tolerate inadequate wages and poor working conditions.

Public good-will, funding, and the kind of benevolent despotism that decrees that penitentiary inmates who refuse to take advantage of literacy courses will forfeit family visits and parole, will not necessarily ensure higher levels of literacy. Nor will simplistic measures such as "going back to basics", or finding new names for old methods. Far better that funding should be used to make it possible for literate and illiterate to meet together to design a new concept of literacy appropriate for our time. As a wise and perceptive illiterate adult has written:

We all have different levels of literacy needs--some want to be able to fill in job applications or get a better job, and some, like myself, want to make a better life for themselves.

(Chatelaine, Apr.87)

Let us, then, be alert to the fact that it may be our own thoughtless attitudes towards illiterate people, and our own false assumptions about illiteracy, that are reflected and propagated in the press.

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**OUTSIDE THE "MAGIC CIRCLE" OF THE LITERATE:
OBSTACLES TO ADULT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

/// Fred Burghardt

The problem of adult illiteracy has justifiably received considerable public attention in the last two years. In the fall of 1986, College Canada dedicated an entire issue to the topic; this fall, Southam News funded considerable research on the topic and dedicated columns of print to the issue in newspapers throughout Canada. All this public concern is, without doubt, gratifying to adult educators. In the past, as they tried to focus attention of adult illiteracy, they often felt like voices crying in the wilderness. Sudden public interest has renewed hope that increased awareness will result in the political will to fund more adult literacy programs and thus finally adequately address the problem of adult illiteracy.

No one can blame educators for seeking more reading and writing programming for adult illiterates now that public interest has been awakened. Nevertheless, before adult educators rush forward with new programming schemes and demands for money, a call for caution is necessary. Literacy development for a large group of Canadian-born illiterates may be very problematic. More literacy programs may not help some adults to develop significantly higher reading and writing skills.

Considering only the estimated 850,000 Canadians who lack basic literacy, that is, those who lack the ability to read and write at a grade five level (Thomas, 1983), there is evidence to suggest that reading development (not to speak of writing development) is not at all a simple task. American research (Amoroso, 1984), and work done in Canada (Norman and Malicki, 1985) points this out clearly. Malicki and Norman found that adults at a 1-2 grade level of reading made less progress than did individuals at a 3-6 level. Findings at Alberta Vocational Centre confirm these results.

READING IMPROVEMENT OF ONGOING ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS
ENROLLED AT ALBERTA VOCATIONAL CENTRE, EDMONTON, NOVEMBER 15, 1986.

GRADE EQUIVALENCY LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY	AVERAGE GAIN IN READING SCORE
0 - 3	18	46 wks	.81
4 - 5	22	30 wks	1.90
6 - 7	18	20 wks	2.00

Students at Alberta Vocational Centre made progress in reading, but it was often hard-won and reading levels attained were not such as to enhance the skills of participants significantly. Faced with comparable low reading gains, reading experts in the United States and Canada have come to the view that literacy development may not be an educational issue that can be addressed in literacy classes that focus on reading and writing

development. Reading development may well involve addressing broad social issues (Amoroso, 1984; Malicki and Norman, 1985).

Both Amoroso and Malicki/Norman strongly suggest that literacy development is difficult for low literacy level adults because these individuals lack the necessary "state of grace" (Scribner, 1984:13) that literate members of society possess. Bhola (1981) expresses the same thing rather poetically through his image of exclusion from "the magic circle of the literate" (p. 11). This paper's origins lie in an effort to concretize what the researchers mean when they claim that illiterate adults lack "a state of grace" or find themselves "outside the magic circle."¹

A simple eleven item instrument was developed and completed in writing (orally in some cases) by twenty-five Canadian students. These students were enrolled in 0-3 and 4-5 reading level classes held at Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton, in April and May of 1987. After the questionnaires were completed, the questions and answers were discussed with the students, both individually and in two groups. Finally, students' instructors were interviewed with a view to ascertaining their perceptions of student responses.

What emerged was that the research seemed to be on the right track. Alberta Vocational Centre's adult basic education students' approach to reading, and their socio/psychological world view, was like that of individuals studied by Amoroso and Malicki/Norman. Study of Alberta Vocational Centre's low literacy level adults showed that they harbour ideas about learning to read which stand in the way of reading development, and that they are plagued by socio/psychological problems which either make reading difficult or give it such a low priority as to make further reading development irrelevant in their lives.

NON-FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES TO READING

One of the most important questions specifically asked students to indicate how they thought they could learn to read better. Students were asked to recall how they were taught to read in classes. Approaches used in class include sounding out words (phonetic approach), learning new words (vocabulary development), having stories read to them which the students then also read and discuss (immersion approach), and having students dictate a story or event to an instructor who then has the passage typed and asks the student to read the item (whole language approach). In their written responses, students indicated that they felt the need to learn how words sounded; two students answered they needed to learn to "spell better." In discussion which followed completion of the questionnaires, students indicated that by spelling they meant recognizing the sounds which specific letters made. They felt that if they could do this, and knew more words, then they could improve their reading skills.

In their questionnaire responses, students did not mention immersion or whole language approaches. This was very surprising since these are the methods advocated by research (Malicki and Norman, 1983), and those which instructors use most. When asked what they thought the purpose of having stories read to them was, or what the purpose of having students read passages dictated to them might be, comments were slow in coming. A few

students indicated that the stories were "interesting" and that it was "interesting" or "nice" to see things they had expressed orally in clear print. Few understood the purpose of reading stories written by others or stories written by themselves. Surprisingly, the immersion and language experience methods advocated by Norman and Malicki (1983) were rejected by students. Basic literacy students tended to see reading as a kind of decoding process similar to the task a literate person might undertake when trying to decipher some ancient hieroglyphic symbols. Language immersion and whole language approaches which aim at encouraging students to seek meaning were almost totally rejected. These findings concur with Amoroso's 1983 study. Alberta Vocational Centre's students, like the individuals Amoroso studied, could not recognize that reading involves a search for meaning. As long as these students continue to view reading as a kind of decoding, rather than a search for comprehension and meaning, progress beyond a grade 4-5 reading level cannot be expected. Adults at a basic reading level simply do not see reading in a manner conducive to higher levels of reading development.

SOCIO/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO LITERACY

The second major finding was that students' socio/psychological view of themselves and the world stood in the way of reading development. This finding was not surprising. Research suggested this to be the case. Essentially, these students are socially "marginal in their ability to undertake literacy tasks" (Malicki and Norman, 1985:4). Over a decade ago, the then Alberta Vocational Centre Supervisor, W. Romanko, said much the same thing:

A startling number of students manifest unawareness of and alienation from ... the social processes operative in the immediate broader communities. They see themselves as victims of society rather than participants in it. It should be emphasized that the [negative] socio-psychological characteristics identified ... are most prevalent among those students with the lowest level of formal education. (Romanko, 1976:6).

The question which asked students to indicate why they wanted to read better produced unexpected insights. Sixty-five percent of students surveyed indicated what may be called instrumental motives for wanting to read better; they wanted improved career choices or employment opportunities. Goals students discussed, with minor exceptions, were low skill level vocational goals that required reading levels greater than students possessed but at best required grade 9 levels of reading. Students clearly had rather modest ambitions. Three students indicated answers similar to one student's comment that he "wanted to be like everybody else." Modest career goals demonstrated that students saw themselves as low on the social scale. The comments of these students showed that they see themselves as having low status when compared to others in society.

Discussion of motives for improved reading led to a very wide ranging discourse. In these discussions, one of the main things that emerged was that most students suffered from low self esteem. Repeatedly, students talking to one another or to the interviewer prefaced their remarks with

conditional comments like "if I can, I'd like to..." Students were not at all sure of their own capabilities. They evidenced a lack of self confidence.

Students' self esteem and their relation to the world also emerged in response to the question "How do you think you could learn to read better?" Almost half the students indicated that if they received more individual help from instructors, they could perhaps make greater progress. This assertion on the part of students was interesting from two points of view. First, it calls to mind one of Romanko's assertions that adult basic education students tend to be highly dependent on "authority figures" (1976). The idea of learning independently did not seem to occur to students. Second, when the responses regarding how to improve reading were correlated with responses to the question "Do you feel good about learning to read and write?", more than half the students indicated they felt good about participating in the program; little mention was made about reading or writing.

Among the students who responded in this way, half again indicated that unlike experiences they had had in schools in the past, they felt supported by instructors and this helped them to stay in the program. One student's comment was typical: "I can't believe I've stuck with it. [Instructor's name] has helped me a lot." Besides indicating dependency on instructors, comments like this point out that the desire to belong and the desire for self worth and social acceptance have greater priority than reading and writing, which were hardly mentioned by students.

In addition to suffering from low self esteem and having little confidence in themselves, basic literacy students face other difficulties. On the basis of discussion with instructors and interviews with students, another socio/psychological factor emerged. Of the twenty-five students, almost all were victims of social ills in the past, or were still suffering from the ills current in our society.

A surprising number of literacy level students were victims of sexual abuse. This was discovered accidentally. Some months prior to the administration of the questionnaire, a speaker from the Edmonton Rape Crisis Centre visited one of the grade 4-5 level classes. In the discussion which followed, one courageous middle aged woman shared that she had been sexually assaulted by a male relative; three other women then indicated that they had had similar experiences. The following day, as is customary, students wrote for five minutes in their journals. The instructor was shocked to find that slightly less than half the women in her class wrote of having been sexually abused in their childhood or early teen years. Marie Laing, former head of the Rape Crisis Centre, has suggested that the trauma of sexual assault is often so severe that victims--even long after the actual event--have difficulty communicating both feelings and concrete events. She speculated that learning to read and write may be extremely hard for abuse victims.

Other social problems afflicting low literacy level students are perhaps less dramatic but equally inhibiting in terms of attending to the abstract task of literacy development. Almost all of the twenty-five students involved in the study were economically dependent on social

assistance, half were single mothers with children, and only about one fifth of students were involved in relationships which they considered as semi-permanent and supportive. Instructor comments indicated that histories of wife abuse were not uncommon among literacy level students. A number of male students had struggled with alcohol in the past and, from instructor reports, some had not mastered their addiction.

The prevalence of low self esteem, the high degree of dependence on authority figures, and the high incidence of social problems all indicate that basic literacy students form a disadvantaged group within society. In light of the many problems facing the individuals within the group, what is surprising is not that they find it difficult to learn to read; what is surprising is that they can find the courage to attempt to improve their reading.

FEAR OF CHANGE AND LITERACY

The final observation to be made about those outside the "magic circle" of the literate is that they fear entering the circle. As Taylor points out, low literates have accommodated to their situation (Taylor et. al., 1980:74). Stories may serve as illustrations. In the spring of 1987, students involved in the study were learning how to do simple banking tasks. One of the students indicated that she was particularly proud of being able to fill out deposit and withdrawal slips. Another student listening to these comments, and apparently present when the first student was doing her banking, said, "Then how come you asked the teller for two blue ones [presumably two five dollar bills]?" Clearly the first student, though able to do elementary banking, was feigning ignorance not only of banking procedure but of numbers. Not at all embarrassed, the first student answered that she was afraid she might make a mistake, so it was better to rely on the teller. Another student indicated that being illiterate was not totally bad. "People are nice to illiterates. They help them find jobs." The suggestion was that if the student became literate, then such help might not be forthcoming. These incidents point out that at some level illiterates understand that literacy involves a dramatic change in their lives--it involves taking responsibility for their own actions and their own lives. This may be asking too much. Literacy development for such individuals means giving up known survival skills in favor of unknown hazards.

Literacy development is not simply a process of learning to read and write; it involves changing one's view of reading itself, it involves overcoming dependency on others and developing a positive self image, and it involves willingness to change. This is what is meant by entering the "magic circle" of the literate. Considering the social and psychological handicaps many poor readers face, the degree of courage required to read better can only be imagined. Seen in this manner, reading better becomes a nearly impossible task.

What does all this mean in terms of improving literacy in our society? First, it may mean that literacy in our developed society, as in the underdeveloped world Freire (1972) discusses, is a social/political issue that can only be addressed in terms of the overall social/political process. If this is the case, educators should change their approach from emphasizing educational program funding to the broader social/political concomitants of illiteracy. Second, existing literacy programming must approach literacy development in a therapeutic rather than instructional

mode. That is, literacy development must be carried out in a manner which assists individuals to develop self-worth and independence, and allows the internalization of personal change which can then lead to action.

What is required is a much more open-ended exploration of how society as a whole and adult education must evolve. Accustomed as our society is to timetabled, institutional, organizational responses to specific problems with specific prescriptions, it may well be that solutions to the problem of illiteracy will be elusive unless more comprehensive, non-institutional, and entirely novel solutions are considered.

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NOTES

¹The views presented in this paper reflect those of the author and are not in any way intended to reflect the position of Alberta Vocational Centre, Edmonton.

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LITERACY: A HIGHLY SELECTIVE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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A review of four books on literacy: John Oxenham, Literacy: Writing, Reading, and Social Organisation; Robert Pattison, On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock; Hillel Goelman, Antoinette A. Oberg, and Frank Smith (eds.), Awakening to Literacy; Shirley Brice Heath, Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms. This is a good review for the neophyte literacy researcher because it compares definitions of literacy. Although Brandt suggests that there will likely never be interdisciplinary agreement on the nature of literacy, the writers of these books agree on one main idea: that literacy involves more than reading and writing.

BRUNER, JEROME. "Language, Mind and Reading." In Awakening to Literacy. Ed. Hillel Goelman, Antoinette Oberg, and Frank Smith. Portsmouth, N.H.: Educational Books, 1984.

Bruner proposes, through using the dramatic story and the personal narrative, to teach reading in a way that allows readers to enter a world of possibilities not available to them in various impersonal modes of reading. He argues that reading is often problematic because of the way it is taught; it ought to be 'affective' and all language must have a context if it is to be meaningful. He suggests that when children read meaningful narratives, they will pick up language quicker because the personal stories most closely resemble the spoken language of children.

CERVERO, RONALD M. "Is a Common Definition of Adult Literacy Possible?" Adult Education Quarterly 36 (1985): 30-34.

After exploring various definitions of literacy, Cervero concludes that a common definition of literacy is not likely to be found because of the pluralistic values underlying literacy programs. The article is not very informative partly because the focus shifts from the initial question to a discussion of the needs within the various literacy programs.

CLARK, ROGER A. "Definitions of Literacy." Adult Literacy and Basic Education 8 (1984): 133-46.

Clark outlines the four major definitions of literacy as he sees them: the traditional, the functional, the statistical and the contextual. The essay is a useful overview of various theories and their implications for literacy programs based on diverse philosophical frameworks.

D'ANGELO, FRANK J. "Luria on Literacy: The Cognitive Consequences of Reading and Writing." In Literacy as a Human Problem. Ed. James C. Raymond. U of Alabama P, 1982.

D'Angelo's article is a review of the work of several psychologists, emphasizing the Russian A.R. Luria, whose field studies in 1931-2 seemed to indicate that literacy alters the consciousness of those who acquire it, and that as a powerful engine of politics, it can effect either liberation or enslavement.

Bruner, Olson, and Labov are mentioned as providing some support for the conclusion that "cognitive processes change qualitatively as a result of literacy and radically alter our perceptions of reality." The work of Scribner and Cole (q.v.), on the other hand, contradicts this claim. Still, D'Angelo concludes that "the ability to conceptualize and to handle abstract symbols is absolutely necessary in a technical society", when a society needs these skills it will develop them along with literacy.

DAVIS, VIVIAN I. "Literacy: A Human and Legal Problem." In Literacy as a Human Problem. Ed. James C. Raymond. U of Alabama P, 1982.

This article is a criticism of the inequalities of accessibility of literacy to those who learn standard English, at least American English, as a second dialect. Davis states that educators do a better job of second language teaching of English than they do of educating Americans who speak a local dialect. She sees a possible solution if writing is approached as problem-solving, if skills needed to perform writing tasks are analyzed, and if curricula to develop these skills are then developed.

FINGERET, ARLENE. "Social Network: A New Perspective on Independence and Illiterate Adults." Adult Education Quarterly 33 (1983): 133-46.

This article documents the results of a case study involving 50 illiterate adults to determine the fabric of their lives: the extent to which being illiterate limits them, the methods they use to cope with their deficiencies, and the various resources they employ to function in society. The article is good in that it gives a human face to illiteracy. However, it is somewhat long-winded and its implications are vague.

FITZGERALD, GISELA G. "Functional Literacy: Right or Obligation?" Journal of Reading 28 (1984): 196-99.

Drawing heavily on the arguments of John Stuart Mill, Fitzgerald forcefully demonstrates that society has the obligation to ensure that all its citizens are functionally literate: that they are able to use reading and writing skills to function adequately in society. The state's obligation, she argues, overrides any "rights" the individual may have to remain illiterate. The argument is couched in utilitarian rather than humanitarian principles, for literacy, writes Fitzgerald, is a way in which society protects itself from intolerable financial harm.

FREIRE, PAOLO. Education for Critical Consciousness. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Freire argues that education ought to liberate people and give them the confidence and strength to manage their own lives. Literacy programs should teach people a critical awareness of their concrete situations, giving them skills and knowledge to involve themselves actively in recreating their lives. In his educational program, the illiterate person must collaborate with the educator to make the process of education relevant and empowering. Freire's ideas are provocative and urgent.

GRAFF, HARVEY J. The Legacies of Literacy: Continuation and Contradiction in Western Culture and Society. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

An extensive historical analysis of the idea and implications of the idea of literacy. The result is a challenging restructuring of our idea of what literacy means and how it works. The author produces and supports ideas like, "Literacy is vitally important to contemporary Western societies, but it does not result in personal competence or autonomy."

_____. Literacy in History: An Interdisciplinary Research Bibliography. New York: Garland, 1981.

In this book Graff attempts to introduce the non-historian and non-academic to the literature of literacy studies, as well as establishing areas which are important to anyone seriously interested in studying literacy past or present. The text is divided into four main sections: specific studies on literacy; contextual areas such as religion and education; social development and social change; and questions of interpretations and impact.

_____. The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century City. New York: Academic Press, 1979.

A comprehensive discussion of the promise of literacy. Graff sheds light on the complexity of this subject through analysis of the discontinuities and contradictions in the role of literacy in social progress and structure. "Our present dilemma in understanding literacy is confused by our application of 19th century assumptions."

Harman, David. Illiteracy: A National Dilemma. Cambridge, MA: Adult Education Co., 1987.

A general discussion of questions surrounding literacy: What is today's "bench mark for literacy"? Is there a shadow system of education? Do schooling and literacy necessarily relate? Is literacy more than a set of skills?

HOYLES, MARTIN. The Politics of Literacy. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1977.

The Politics of Literacy looks at political issues such as literacy for whom, in what way, and for what purpose. Political decisions affect literacy, and in the rush for economic recovery, the fate of education seems linked to monetary concerns.

"The aim of this book is to re-introduce to the discussion of literacy precisely the suppressed, wider implications. What are the motives which order the use of language in specific social instances? . . . History, ideology, class and culture, sex and race . . . are the contexts, the relationships and practical connections examined" (8).

This is a collection of essays, extracts, articles, poems, and pieces of secondary school students' writing. The book utilizes the practical experience of London secondary school teachers and is written for them, as well as others.

ONG, WALTER J., S.J. "Reading, Technology and Human Consciousness." In Literacy as a Human Problem. Ed. James C. Raymond. U of Alabama P, 1982.

Ong sees our fascination with reading as one stage in the evolution of relating the "human interior to the exterior world and to itself." Historically, in the West, as consciousness has evolved, our narrative is "less and less about the outside world and more and more about the interior consciousness," a process which marks the evolution of consciousness, and of which reading and writing are a part.

PATTISON, ROBERT. On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.

In an exhaustive preface, Pattison outlines his general conclusions about literacy through the ages: "that literacy is foremost consciousness of the problems posed by language, and secondarily skill in the technologies, such as rhetoric and writing, by which this consciousness is expressed; . . . that different cultures may have different concepts of language and different technologies to express these concepts, thus there can be no universal standard of literacy; . . . that economic and social development depends on a pragmatic concept of the uses of language shared among the leadership of the evolving community, and therefore imposition of Western ideas about literacy on developing populations at home or abroad is not automatically beneficial; . . . that literacy changes in step with changing notions about language and with new technologies, and American literacy is currently undergoing a fundamental redefinition of literacy" (vi).

Pattison reaches his "politically radical" conclusions through an extensive examination of the history of literacy, its eternal connection with power, and "modern liberalism's contemporary social hysteria" about its supposed failure. Notes and an extensive annotated bibliography are keyed to specific chapters for easy reference. This is a good source book for information on literacy.

RAYMOND, JAMES C., ed. Literacy As A Human Problem. U of Alabama P, 1982.

This collection of papers from a symposium on literacy held at the University of Alabama brings together the disparate viewpoints of journalists, historians, linguistic scientists, cognitive psychologists, and sociologists. The articles are organized into three general categories:

Part I. Law, Linguistics and the English Language: This section focuses on the conflict between standard English and minority dialects in the U.S.

Part II. Testing - Art or Illusion: This section examines the controversies surrounding standardized testing. The general conclusion is that testing merely separates the haves from the have-nots, meaning that less advantaged groups of students test out as less literate than middle and upper class white students.

Part III. Literacy, Culture and Human Consciousness: These articles illustrate the inability of literate people to agree about the nature and value of literacy.

SCRIBNER, SYLVIA, AND MICHAEL COLE. The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.

A detailed research report of the literacy practices and characteristics of the Vai people who live in an area between Sierra Leone and Liberia and who are exposed to the writing systems of Vai, Arabic, and English. The authors' conclusions, contrary to claims made by others working in this area, is that there are no "deep psychological differences" between literate and non-literate people. Other influences such as urban residence enabled non-literates to do as well as literates on cognitive-based tasks.

SMITH, FRANK. "The Creative Achievement of Literacy." In Awakening to Literacy. Ed. Hillel Goelman, Antoinette Oberg, and Frank Smith. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1984.

Smith begins with a rather grand definition of literacy-- "the ability to make full sense and productive use of the opportunities of written language"-- and goes on to demonstrate the functional dimensions of literacy in children. He argues that three areas--content, convention and demonstration--are the basis for children's wanting to learn to read and write. However, he says very little about the creative aspects of literacy.

Compiled by Doug Duplessis, Jeff Goin,
Ron Guetter, Ardiss Mackie, and Margaret
Stothart
Department of English
University of Alberta

WRITING SEMINARS

/// Anthony Paré

The Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing at McGill University is offering the following seminars this term. All sessions will be tape-recorded and the tapes made available to anyone interested.

All seminars will be held at the Faculty of Education, McGill University, 3700 McTavish, between Doctor Penfield and Pine Avenue.

For further information or copies of tapes, contact: Anthony Paré, McGill University, Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing, 3700 McTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 1Y2. Telephone (514) 398-6963.

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| Wed. Jan. 20
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Aviva Freedman & Ian Pringle (Carleton University)
"Effects of computer use on the writing process" |
| Thurs. Jan. 28
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Rm. 434 | Rick Coe (Simon Fraser University)
"Form and process, structure and strategy: Teaching academic and professional writing" |
| Wed. Feb. 3
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Graham Smart (Bank of Canada)
"Collaboration in the workplace: The role of the writing instructor" |
| Thurs. Feb. 11
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Rm. 434 | Carolyn Pittenger (McGill University)
"The journal: Creating style, confidence, and authority" |
| Wed. Feb. 17
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Bob Bracewell (McGill University)
"Semantic and surface features that influence students' revisions of their writing" |
| Thurs. Feb. 25
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Rm. 434 | Russ Hunt (St. Thomas University)
"At last it can be told: Why Russ Hunt never marks student papers" |
| Wed. March 2
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Mark Aulls (McGill University)
"Tension in writing: Between social growth and composition knowledge" |
| Thurs. March 10
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Rm. 434 | Linda Shohet (Dawson College)
"Collaborative learning in the writing classroom" |
| Wed. March 16
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Mary Maguire (McGill University)
"Writing in a first and second language" |
| Thurs. March 24
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Rm. 434 | Frank Greene (McGill University)
"COWs, sacred or not: Computer Organized Writing" |
| Wed. March 30
12:00-2:00 p.m.
Rm. 211 | Patrick Dias & Anthony Paré (McGill University)
"Group writing, group learning: Who needs teachers?" |

Editorial Inkshedding

/// Kay Stewart

Thanks to all of you who contributed material for this issue. Thanks also to those who sent notices of sessions at CCCC. If you have not yet done so, please send the material as soon as possible so that I can get the next issue in the mail by March 1. I would also appreciate early submissions on Writing Programs: Problems and Possibilities, the subject of the March special issue. The absolute deadline for submissions is February 15.

CCCC participants: please send short reviews of sessions you find of particular interest, for the May issue. Deadline: April 15.

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In the May issue we will inaugurate a column of notes on and reviews of members' publications, including three recent texts: Rick Coe, oward a Grammar of Passages, Southern Illinois UP, 1988; Michael Moore, The Writer's Handbook of Current English, Gage, 1988; and Paul Nay-Brock, who's Doing What: The Senior English Curriculum in Australian Schools, Australian Association of Teachers of English, 1988, available from CCIE. Please send news of your publications and conference presentations.

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About 60 names have been lopped (note the passive) from the mailing list because of failure to renew. The DELETE key hovers over a few more. So please urge dilatory colleagues to send in their \$5; take copies of the subscription form to conferences as a conversation starter; stand on the street corners crying "Inkshed, Inkshed"

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Russ Hunt writes that he is likely to be in Australia from June to October this year, and would like the names of any people there it would be useful for him to contact. He also wonders whether anyone has ever had any success making electronic mail contact with Australia, particularly through NETNORTH.

CONFERENCE NOTES

Western College Reading and Learning Association, Sacramento, California, March 23-26, 1988. For information, write to Dorothy Gray, Regional Co-Director, Academic Services, Grant MacEwan Community College, 10030 107 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3E4.

Inkshed and CCIE Conferences, St. John's, Newfoundland, August 12-14, 14-20 1988. Deadline for program proposals for CCIE, April 2, 1988. Information about and proposal forms for both conferences available from Phyllis Artiss, Department of English, Memorial University, St. John's, Nfld., A1C 5T7.

The Right to Literacy, Ohio State University, September 16-18, 1988. Information available from Andrea Lunsford, Department of English, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210, U. S. A.